Neti, neti: the Search for the Ultimate Principle in the Vedic Upaniṣads

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2018

Abstract

This thesis explores the teachings of the ancient Indian texts known as the Vedic Upaniṣads in relation to ultimate reality. Compiled into their quasi-canonical forms[1] between approximately 700 BCE and the early years of the Common Era, the Vedic Upaniṣads were interpreted by a number of later Indian philosophical schools as promoting a single, consistent worldview with regard to the entity, power, or principle which creates, animates, supports and sustains all of existence (which I refer to in this thesis as the 'ultimate principle'). However, those schools offer competing theories about what that worldview might be, what that ultimate principle might be called, and the nature of its relationship (if any) with the material world, on the one hand, and the divine, on the other.

As has been widely acknowledged in more recent exegesis, the Vedic Upaniṣads in fact present a variety of teachings about this ultimate principle - in Signe Cohen's words a 'rich tapestry of complex and occasionally contradictory ideas'.[2] The question which this presents, and which I address in this thesis, is whether, rather than either seeking an elusive and illusory consistency, or dismissing the teachings of the Vedic Upaniṣads as simply an inconsistent anthology, we can detect any patterns in the presentation of these complex and contradictory ideas.

In this thesis, I will explore certain specific themes in the development of the Vedic Upaniṣads' teachings about the ultimate principle, and will argue that, if we read the Vedic Upaniṣads closely with an eye to how teachings about the ultimate principle progress, both within individual Upaniṣads and by reading the Vedic Upaniṣads inter-textually, it is possible to identify certain important trends and directions of enquiry into the nature and identity of the ultimate principle. In many cases, these trends highlight the questions which the Vedic Upaniṣads ask about the ultimate principle more than the answers which they provide. In addition, I will suggest that, in places, the editorial processes which brought the Vedic Upaniṣads into their quasi-canonical forms may

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[1] See Chapter 1.
[2] Cohen 2018l: 412-418.

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have been, at least in part, a deliberate attempt to highlight their strands of enquiry into the ultimate principle, so that, as a result, we can fairly say that, while the Vedic Upaniṣads undoubtedly do not present uniform dogma, they nevertheless show a degree of structure in their search for the ultimate principle.

Contents

Acknowledgments

From 1981 to 2004 I worked for a major lawfirm in the City of London. For most of my time there, my role involved drafting complex international financial agreements, often running to over a hundred pages. In the early part of my career, I received some advice which stayed with me throughout that career and beyond - namely, to say what I have to say in as few words and as clearly and straightforwardly as possible, to avoid the 'hereinbefores' and 'notwithstandings' that characterised much legal drafting in those days, and to trust in the common sense of the reader. I am indebted to my former colleague Geoffrey Woolf for that advice: I have tried to adopt it in this thesis.

Towards the end of the last millennium, I was introduced to the practice of yoga, and subsequently qualified as a yoga teacher. I also made the first of many trips to India in 2000. I was fortunate that my main yoga teachers at the time introduced ideas from yoga's complex history and philosophies into their teaching, and whetted my appetite to learn more. In 2002, I took evening classes on Indian philosophy and Buddhism at Birkbeck, University of London, taught by Mr. Brian Black, and, after a few years of unstructured self-study, came to SOAS in 2008 to take an MA in Religions, where my first lecturer was the now Dr. Brian Black. I am very grateful to him for introducing me to the Vedic texts, and to the Upaniṣads in particular.

In the preparation of this thesis, I have benefitted enormously from the perceptive insights of my main supervisor, Dr. Theodore Proferes. I have never left a meeting with him without my ideas being challenged and refined. I am grateful too to Prof. Ulrich Pagel, my second supervisor, for his helpful (and sometimes challenging) comments and constant support, and to the staffs of SOAS Library and the British Library, my fellow SOAS doctoral students, and the undergraduates I have taught at SOAS, who often ask the most obvious questions which I have overlooked.

Finally, I must acknowledge with huge gratitude my partner, Elizabeth, both for her endless tolerance of my time spent immersed in the religious and philosophical literature of a long distant time and place and the ever-present pile of books on our living room floor, and for her constant support of this project.

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Table of Abbreviations

AU	Aitareya Upaniṣad
AV	Atharva Veda
BhG	Bhagavad Gītā
BS	Brahma Sūtra
BSBh	Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya
BU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
CU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
ĪU	Īśā Upaniṣad
JB	Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa
JUB	Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa
KaU	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
KeU	Kena Upaniṣad
KṣU	Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad
Manu	Mānava Dharmaśāstra
MāU	Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad
MBh	Mahābhārata
MuU	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad
PU	Praśna Upaniṣad
ṚV	Ṛg Veda
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
ŚU	Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad
SV	Sama Veda
TB	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
TU	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
YV	Yajur Veda

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Introduction and Methodology

'*Since this whole world is woven back and forth on water, on what, then, is water woven back and forth?*'[3]

1.   Introduction: The Vedic Upaniṣads and the Sub-stratum of the Universe

It is a little before the middle of the first millennium BCE. A group of *brahmins* from the central part of northern India had, if we adopt Patrick Olivelle's translation of *abhisameta*[4], 'flocked' to the eastern kingdom of Videha to attend a sacrificial ritual to be offered by king Janaka. Janaka, in turn, was keen to know which of the *brahmins* was 'the most learned' (*anūcānatama*), and offered a reward of a thousand cows, each with ten pieces of gold fastened to its horns, to the one who so proved himself.

Thus is set the scene in BU 3.1 for one of the best known of the narrative episodes of the group of texts known as the Vedic Upaniṣads.[5] In the succeeding parts of BU 3, we read of the unsuccessful attempts of eight *brahmins* to better Yājñavalkya, who had immediately claimed the cows and the gold, in a *brahmodya*, or debate, in order to win Janaka's reward. The topics discussed in the debate ranged from Yājñavalkya's knowledge about the mechanics of the sacrifice about to be performed to the whereabouts of some of the Kuru royal family, but the subject of the most intense and sophisticated questioning and speculation was the identification and analysis of the ultimate sub-stratum of the universe, that on which the whole universe is 'woven back and forth'.[6] Yājñavalkya was quizzed about this ultimate sub-stratum both by those who were confident in their own ideas about its identity, and wanted to test his claim to be

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[3] BU 3.6.1: … *yad idaṃ sarvam apsu otaṃ ca protaṃ ca kasmin nu khalu āpa otāś ca protāś ca…*

[4] 'Gathered' or 'assembled'.

[5] I discuss in Chapter 1 the term 'Upaniṣad' and the positioning of the Upaniṣads as part of the broader Vedic textual corpus. I also identify the texts which fall into the category of Vedic Upaniṣads, and those which form the subject of this thesis. From now on, I will refer to those texts simply as 'Upaniṣads'.

[6] The weaving metaphor is used by the one female protagonist in the debate, Gārgī. I discuss it further in Chapter 3.

the most knowledgeable, and by those who had doubts about what they had been taught elsewhere. Although several different theories were discussed, ultimately all of the other *brahmins* were silenced by Yājñavalkya's expositions.

It is perhaps a few years later.[7] One of the *brahmins* who had debated with Yājñavalkya is teaching his son about 'the rule of substitution (*ādeśa*) by which… one perceives what has not been perceived before'[8] as a way of explaining his understanding of the ultimate sub-stratum of the universe. Critical of *brahmins* who assert their status solely by reason of birth and ability to recite the Veda, Uddālaka Āruṇi invites his son to question him about this *ādeśa*. He stresses the importance of acquiring 'real' knowledge of the nature of things, before presenting his view of the way in which the universe unfolds and is brought to life, using a series of powerful metaphors, ultimately reaching a conclusion somewhat different to that of Yājñavalkya.

I will analyse the contexts and contents of both of these episodes in more detail later in this thesis. There is no evidence that the events depicted in either of them actually occurred or, even if anything approximating to them did, that the records of them handed down in the BU and CU respectively are remotely accurate. However, whether entirely fictional or based on some historical reality, the two episodes highlight one of the major concerns of the Upaniṣads as a textual genre, namely speculation and debate about the identity and analysis of what in this thesis I call the 'ultimate principle', the ultimate sub-stratum from which the universe derives, on which it is woven and sustained, and by which it is animated in its ongoing existence.

What these two episodes, when read in conjunction with each other, also make clear is that the Upaniṣads' ideas about this ultimate principle are not fixed, but in fact display both a distinct sense of enquiry and quite noticeable differences between individual teachings. This is not in itself a novel observation, but the immediate question which it raises is whether the teachings of the Upaniṣads about the ultimate principle do in fact show any consistency - as is frequently asserted by later schools of Indian systematic

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[7] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of the difficulties of dating the Upaniṣads with any precision.
[8] CU 6.1 2-3: *tam ādeśam… yena… avijñātaṃ vijñātam...* The term *ādeśa* is a significant term in the Upaniṣads, and Olivelle's translation, following ideas put forward by Thieme and others, as 'rule of substitution' has not received universal acceptance: see Chapter 4, note 606.

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philosophy[9]; whether they are in fact little more than a bunch of unconnected, or only loosely connected, ideas - as Joel Brereton puts it, 'a loosely structured collection of assertions, observations and aphorisms about the nature of things'[10]; or whether we can detect certain patterns in their teachings, falling short of consistent dogma.

I believe that, while it is clear that, as a textual genre, the Upaniṣads do not present a single, uniform vision, their teachings about the ultimate principle are more than just a random collection. In this thesis, I will argue that in fact the hallmark of the Upaniṣads' teachings about the ultimate principle is that they evidence a *search* to identify and explain that principle. This is a search which, in places, perhaps influences the structure of the texts themselves, and one in which the questions which the texts ask about the ultimate principle often seem at least as important as the answers which are given. I will argue that, if we read the Upaniṣads together, rather than focussing too closely on individual texts or sections of texts, we can identify certain distinct trends in that search, sometimes within individual texts but also through reading inter-textually. My purpose in this thesis is to identify certain of those trends and explore them in detail.

2.   The Context of the Search

In **Chapter 1**, I place the Upaniṣads as a textual corpus in context. I discuss the meaning of the term '*upaniṣad*', and explore questions of dating and the place of the Upaniṣads in the Vedic 'canon'. I also offer a brief outline of the social background to the compilation of the Upaniṣads, and look at how they have historically been interpreted, both in Indian systematic philosophy and in western academia. Chapter 1 concludes with a discussion of the Upaniṣads' use of narrative as a means of conveying teachings, looking in particular at some of the more common narrative tropes encountered particularly in the early Upaniṣads.

The Upaniṣads are often classified as the fourth and final group of Vedic texts. They were compiled in Sanskrit in northern India over a period of somewhere around 700

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[9] I discuss later interpretations of the Upaniṣads briefly in Chapter 1.
[10] Brereton 1997:3 n.7.

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years, from approximately 700 BCE to the early Common Era.[11] They were transmitted orally, and the 12 of them which form the basis for my study appear to have achieved a quasi-canonical status as part of the divinely revealed - or *śruti* - Vedic corpus by the first few centuries of the Common Era.[12] The Vedic texts in general (including the Upaniṣads) were the products of different groups of *brahmins* from different areas of northern India, representing different 'schools' or traditions, and they evidence quite clearly in places both differences of opinion between different schools, and interactive debate and competition between different schools.[13] It is not surprising that texts compiled over such a relatively long time period, and in such competing schools, display marked differences of content. However, the *śruti* status which they acquired has perhaps been one of the factors which led later Indian philosophers to attempt to find consistency of teachings in them. By contrast, I will argue that the obviously speculative quality of much of the debate portrayed in the Upaniṣads suggests that the ideas being discussed and argued over are not yet fixed: they are still the object of a search.

The period of compilation of the Upaniṣads is frequently characterised as a transitional period in Indian religion and thought[14], and the Upaniṣads are sometimes considered to have marked the birth of Indian philosophy, in contradistinction to the more ritual orientation of the earlier classes of Vedic text.[15] However, as I shall explain in Chapter 1, the boundaries between these classes of text are not as sharply defined as sometimes presented, and it is important to consider the Upaniṣads in the broader overall context of the Vedic corpus. Indeed, I argue that doing so is essential if we are properly to contextualise and understand some of the currents of enquiry in the Upaniṣads' search for the ultimate principle. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the Upaniṣads do mark an acceleration in the movement from the earlier Vedic sacrificial religion, and the ideas which underpinned that religion, to a more inward looking way of thinking about the universe, in which philosophical enquiry began to assume much greater importance. As

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[11] See Chapter 1.
[12] See Chapter 1 pages 31-32.
[13] See, e.g., Brereton 1997:1, Black 2007 Chapter 2.
[14] See, e.g., Thapar 1994.
[15] See Chapter 2.

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is often said, they reflect a shift towards favouring the power of knowledge over the power of action. They also reveal evidence of greater interaction with the non-Vedic world. The question, therefore, which I address is whether, given this shifting and speculative background, we can nevertheless find patterns of enquiry in what they have to say about the ultimate principle.

3.   What is the Ultimate Principle?

In setting a framework for this enquiry, we need to consider precisely what we mean by the 'ultimate principle' in the Upaniṣadic context. **Chapter 2** addresses this, considering what the essential qualities of the ultimate principle are, before looking at how the earlier Vedic texts approached its identification. This chapter also addresses some of the most important terminology used in the Upaniṣads to refer to the ultimate principle. I explore how the meanings of terms such as *brahman*, *ātman* and *puruṣa* shift from the meanings which they had in earlier Vedic texts as the Upaniṣads develop their search; how the important term *brahman* - probably the most common term used of the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads - may in places be better understood as a place-holder term than as an ontological entity; and how that impacts on the common perception of the Upaniṣads as teaching an identity between *ātman* and *brahman*. Chapter 2 also addresses briefly the reasons *why* it was considered important in the Upaniṣadic period to identify the ultimate principle.

In Chapter 2, I propose a definition of the 'ultimate principle' as *the single entity, power, or principle which creates, animates, supports and sustains all of existence.* Those distinct, yet related, functions - creation, animation, support and sustenance - are all important and necessary qualities. In Chapter 3, I analogise them to a puppet, which needs, first, a manufacturer; secondly, strings to keep it together and to control it; and, thirdly, a puppeteer to manipulate the strings.[16] If there is to be a single ultimate principle, that principle will need, at the ultimate level at least, to exercise all of those functions.[17] As I shall demonstrate, one of the most prominent aspects of the Upaniṣads'

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[16] See page 122.
[17] Even if it 'delegates' some of them to a 'sub-principle'.

search for the ultimate principle is the way in which they seek to identify those different functions, before considering whether any single principle is able to exercise them all. I will argue that, in places, the editorial processes which have brought the Upaniṣads into their quasi-canonical forms appear to highlight this enquiry into the functions of the ultimate principle.

4.   The Search

A reading of the Upaniṣads will clearly show that their enquiry into the functions and identity of the ultimate principle is in general more speculative than systematic. Systematic philosophical enquiry of the sort which we meet in later schools of Indian philosophy is still in its infancy at the time of the Upaniṣads. Nevertheless, certain of those later schools, particularly the different schools of Vedānta[18], relied quite heavily on the Upaniṣads to support their own dogmatic ideas about the ultimate principle, its qualities, and its relationship (or non-relationship) with the individual and with the wider manifest world. In the process, those schools insisted on finding coherent teachings about the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads, even if they disagreed among themselves about what those coherent teachings were. This insistence on finding coherence, and the imposition of a more or less systematic process of philosophical enquiry, has had a strong influence on the ways in which the Upaniṣads have been interpreted, both within the schools and outside them, over many centuries.[19]

In fact, however, it is unrealistic to imply that the Upaniṣads either present consistent teachings about the ultimate principle[20], or even, as, for example, does one recent Western commentator, that their sole project is enquiry into the ultimate principle.[21] The

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[18] See Chapter 1.

[19] I discuss this further in Chapter 1.

[20] As Olivelle says (1998a:4), 'it is futile to try to discover a single doctrine or philosophy in them', something which is generally accepted by the more objective students of the later philosophical schools. Deutsch, for example, points out in his study of the Advaita system that: '… most of us who are acquainted with the ancient Indian religious-philosophical texts are quite convinced that [the Upaniṣads] do not express a single, consistent viewpoint, but that they express a very rich diversity of experience and reflection on it' (Deutsch 1969:5).

[21] 'The Upaniṣads are philosophical texts exploring the relationship between *brahman* and *ātman*.' (Cohen 2008:2); 'As a genre, the Upaniṣads can be defined as philosophical texts

Upaniṣads discuss a wide variety of topics, from the cosmogonic to the contraceptive. Not only do they clearly not present a single, consistent theory about the identity of the ultimate principle, they also present no obvious effort to enunciate a single consistent doctrine or philosophical idea. They adopt a variety of terminology for the ultimate principle, reflecting, in places, the different functions outlined above. In doing so, they take terms which had appeared in earlier Vedic texts - most notably *brahman*, *ātman* and *puruṣa* - and, as already noted, adapt their meanings.[22] The conclusions which they reach about the ultimate principle are sometimes subtly, and sometimes apparently radically, at odds with each other. To borrow Franklin Edgerton's wording, they are 'tentative, fluid and unstable'[23], or, in Jonardon Ganeri's more recent description, 'plastic in meaning and… hermeneutically pliable'.[24] And, as Brereton, among others, has highlighted, they also employ a variety of ways of analysing the nature of reality.[25] They were composed over a time span of over half a millennium, in a number of different geographical locations in northern India, and in different and rapidly changing social, cultural and religious environments. Rather than reading them as propounding a single coherent doctrine, it would be just as easy to dismiss them as no more than a random hotchpotch of stories and teachings. Can we really, therefore, argue that they evidence a *search* for the ultimate principle?

I believe that we can. In the transitional age in which they were compiled, the lack of systematic enquiry and clear conclusions should not be particularly surprising. Yet, although enquiry into the ultimate principle is not their only project, a reading of the Upaniṣads as a textual corpus will show that it is probably their most important one. If we then strip away any desire to find an overall consistency in the Upaniṣads, but at the same time treat them as more than random compilations, certain themes in their exploration of the ultimate principle reveal themselves, both within individual Upaniṣads and within the Upaniṣadic corpus as a whole. These themes reveal themselves, first, if we treat the Upaniṣads as a textual genre in which the compilation

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exploring the relationship between *brahman* and *ātman…*' (Cohen 2018a:1). I discuss the important terms *brahman* and *ātman* in Chapter 2.

[22] See Chapter 2.
[23] Edgerton 1965:28.
[24] Ganeri 2018:146.
[25] Brereton 1990.

of individual Upaniṣads into their quasi-canonical forms has not been an arbitrary process, but, rather one of conscious editorial decision, and, secondly, through considering how both questions and answers about the ultimate principle might be illuminated through reading different Upaniṣadic episodes in conjunction with each other.

In **Chapter 3**, I consider three narrative episodes of the BU, two of which form part of the debate with which I opened this Introduction. I show, first, how those narratives make clear that the identity of the ultimate principle was not, at the time of the compilation of the BU, a given. I show how the three narratives emphasise different specific functions of the ultimate principle, and argue that the questions which they raise may, at least for the narrative purposes of the BU, be at least as important as the answers given. Although I do not express an opinion about the origins or relative chronology of the original narratives, I suggest that reading them together makes it at least arguable that (whatever other factors may have driven the structure of the BU in its quasi-canonical form) the editorial processes which led to the compilation of the BU both edited and positioned these three narratives in a way which highlights different stages in an overarching search not just to identify the ultimate principle, but also to establish its key qualities. One of the three narratives studied, that of BU 2.1, has a counterpart in KṣU 4, and I will also show how reading that particular narrative in conjunction with its KṣU counterpart helps illuminate its teachings.

Chapter 4 also reads a number of narratives together, here three from the CU and one from the BU. The common feature of all of these narratives is the prominent role given in them to Uddālaka Āruṇi. The exposition of the ultimate principle which Uddālaka Āruṇi gives to his son in CU 6 is one of the best known passages of the Upaniṣads, yet it has been interpreted in different ways by different Indian philosophical traditions. In this chapter, I re-visit CU 6 and, through looking at its structure, reading it in the light of the other Upaniṣadic narratives involving Uddālaka Āruṇi, and focussing on the functions of the ultimate principle which it addresses, I suggest how those other narratives in the CU and BU might inform a reading of CU 6. I again argue that the juxtaposition of the three CU narratives, and the use in them of the character of

Uddālaka Āruṇi, may have been a conscious editorial decision, intended to emphasise the way that the teachings attributed to him developed.

Finally, in **Chapter 5**, I turn to a different aspect of the search for the ultimate principle. The idea that the necessary qualities of the ultimate principle may be found in a single, supreme, personified deity is sometimes considered to have been introduced into Indian thought by the ŚU, one of the later Upaniṣads. In this chapter, however, by looking at theistic and personified ideas of the ultimate principle throughout the Vedic period, I identify how both personified and deified ideas of the ultimate principle may be found throughout the Upaniṣads, even if sometimes subordinated in importance to more abstract ideas. As a result, therefore, the identification of the ultimate principle as a personified deity in the ŚU also represents the result of a search, strands of which run throughout the Upaniṣads, rather than a radical intrusion into Upaniṣadic thought, as it is sometimes presented.

The Upaniṣads' search for the ultimate principle does not reach a neat single end. They continue to display inconsistencies and contradictions. However, reading the Upaniṣads in the way(s) which I propose reveals evidence of a search for the ultimate principle which manifests itself primarily through a process of identifying and refining the key questions which speak to the essential qualities of that principle. I believe that the Upaniṣads in fact display more unity through the questions which they ask, rather than the answers which they give. In short, the Upaniṣads challenge the reader to ask him or herself what he or she understands the essential qualities of the ultimate principle to be, and lead that reader on a journey of exploration into the nature and identity of the fundamental sub-stratum of the universe.

5.   Methodology: Reading the Upaniṣads

My primary methodological approach is a close reading of the texts, focussing on what they actually say about the identity and nature of the ultimate principle, rather than on how they have been interpreted later. Exploring the themes and trends which they present in their search requires us to look at the Upaniṣads together, reading inter-textually as well as intra-textually, rather than approaching individual texts, or passages

within texts, in isolation. It also calls for a reading of the Upaniṣads which both acknowledges their social background and relationship with the textual tradition which preceded them, and which accentuates the manner in which different passages sit together. It assumes, at least in part, that the compilation of the Upaniṣads into their quasi-canonical forms was not an arbitrary process, but that the compilers and editors of the Upaniṣads made deliberate editorial decisions about the positioning of certain narratives and teachings (which may have had independent origins) in relation to each other.

For the purpose of this thesis, therefore, I have considered the Upaniṣads in the forms in which they have been effectively canonised for many centuries.[26] In doing so, I am not dismissing the probability that they are in many cases composite amalgamations from a number of different original sources, perhaps built up through several layers.[27] Rather, I will argue that the editorial processes which produced the texts in these forms may in many cases have been a conscious bringing together of diverse teachings and narratives in a way which gave prominence to the range of questions about the ultimate principle. As Paul Hacker has emphasised, it is a valid scholarly exercise to explore the texts in these forms, rather than attempting to dig up and dissect the individual component strands.[28] Black and Geen adopt a similar interpretive approach, when they say:

> '… we have taken more of a synchronic approach, accepting an individual text
> as it now exists and treating it as a unified whole. In taking such an approach, we
> do not naively assume that all the texts with which we are dealing were

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[26] See Chapter 1.

[27] As, for example, stressed by Hanefeld (1976:1): '*Die Upaniṣaden sind ja nicht Werk einzelner Verfasser - besonders bei den beiden großen Texten (BṛĀUp. and Ch. Up.) ist eindeutig, daß Zusammengehöriges neben zeitlich und sachlich Verschiedenem unvermittelt steht oder sogar miteinander verschmolzen ist.*' ('The Upaniṣads are clearly not the work of a single composer - especially in the case of the two large texts (BṛĀUp. and Ch. Up) it is clear that adjoining materials show abrupt differences of time and content, or are even blended together.') and by Olivelle (1998a:11): '… some of the earliest and largest Upaniṣads… are anthologies of material that must have existed as independent texts before their incorporation into these Upaniṣads by an editor or series of editors', possibly drawing 'upon a common stock of episodes and teachings'.

[28] See his observations *Zur Methode der geschichtlichen Erforschung der anonymen Sanskritliteratur des Hinduismus* ('On the Method of Historical Exploration of the Anonymous Sanskrit Literature of Hinduism') in Hacker 1961. See also Olivelle 1999b.

originally composed in the form that we have them now, without interpolation, incision, or other modification. Rather, we merely suggest that a preoccupation with uncovering textual layers often results in a glossing over of the creative and deliberate ways by which early South Asian narratives have been composed, compiled, and edited.'[29]

In other words, my purpose is to assess the Upaniṣads in their quasi-canonical forms as a framework within which to explore the themes and ideas which they present about the ultimate principle, rather than seeking to identify the detailed origins of those themes and ideas. In order to do this, I need to make certain assumptions about the relative dating and compilation of the Upaniṣads, which I shall explain in Chapter 1. In my analysis, I note how ideas of the ultimate principle develop differently in different texts, or even in different parts of the same text, but also read inter-textually to look at specific themes in the development of those ideas. I take into account the different assumptions and contexts which may have underpinned different texts, but also seek to draw out common trajectories of thought and progressions of ideas within and between texts and passages within texts. I also argue that the Upaniṣads should not be read in isolation from the broader Vedic textual corpus. Ideas of the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads were most likely influenced, at least in part, by ideas from outside the Vedic world, but they also reflected a development of ideas which had been signposted in places in earlier Vedic texts. Those ideas developed as the society in which they were compiled and redacted changed significantly, and as the overarching focus of Vedic religious practice and thought progressively shifted.

Narrative is an important way of communicating Upaniṣadic teachings, especially in the early Upaniṣads. The narrative episodes which feature prominently in certain of the early Upaniṣads were often marginalised in early western Upaniṣadic exegesis (though in some ways the tide has now perhaps turned almost too far in the opposite direction). I believe that, where narrative is used, the narrative structure of texts plays an important

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[29] Black and Geen 2011:10. Black and Geen's paper is an introduction to a series of papers focussing on literary characters from South Asian religious narratives (including, of most significance for this study, Lindquist 2011b and Black 2011a).

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role in understanding what they teach about the ultimate principle, and, for reasons which I shall explain in Chapter 1, that teachings presented through the medium of narrative may in fact be the most important teachings of the early Upaniṣads. However, this thesis is neither a narratological nor a philological study: that work has been done by others.[30] Rather, it is a work of philosophical exegesis which aims to explore the teachings of the Upaniṣads about the ultimate principle in a new way, and which, in places, uses certain of the Upaniṣads' narrative episodes to frame that enquiry. An analysis of the ways in which the Upaniṣads as a genre develop their questions and answers about the ultimate principle is best served not by dwelling on detailed narratological or philological investigations of individual texts, or textual extracts, for their own sake. While both approaches to the Upaniṣads are undoubtedly valuable, they also run the risk of obscuring both the relationships between texts, or parts of texts, and the development of ideas which those relationships demonstrate.

I am conscious that, in focussing on the Upaniṣads themselves, rather than the interpretations which later philosophical schools gave to them, I run the risk of dismissing centuries of Indian hermeneutic tradition and instead super-imposing my own eisegetic interpretations. As Olivelle stresses in the note which precedes his annotated text and translation of the Upaniṣads, the 'interpretive history of a text is especially rich when it happens to be a *sacred text,* a text that is perceived by a community or a group of communities as religiously authoritative',[31] perhaps especially when those communities have developed sophisticated hermeneutic strategies to interpret the texts. Patricia Mumme notes that 'It is remarkable how metaphysics in Indian thought are so tightly bound to interpretive strategies' and that 'It seems that success in Indian philosophy demands at least one good interpretive device that can defuse the major scriptural passages that run counter to the views one is attempting to put forth.'[32]

In fact, this interpretive history presents both a challenge and an opportunity. As Olivelle also stresses, the fact that 'there is no one native interpretation of the

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[30] See Literature Review in Appendix B.
[31] Olivelle 1998a:xx.
[32] Mumme 1992:69-70.

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Upaniṣads'[33] has led to a multiplicity of translations, commentaries and interpretations with specific sectarian and/or theological purposes, often with the aim, as Brereton has pointed out, of 'closing' the text.[34] My challenge, therefore, is to read the texts, as Olivelle has attempted to do in his translation, with the benefit of the insights of commentators, but without favouring any one interpretation over another. The opportunity, again following Olivelle's example, is to use recent scholarship in an attempt to reconstruct the 'understanding of these documents that their authors had'[35], taking into account the religious, social and political contexts which gave rise to the texts in the first place[36], while at the same time being open to what Matthew Kapstein calls 'the full spectrum of interpretive possibilities'.[37] As Kapstein points out through the three examples in his essay on the challenges of interpreting Indian philosophical texts, '… matters we may think we know well in respect to Indian philosophy are often still questionable'.[38]

This reconstruction may ultimately be a futile task at such a distant remove in both time and place, for we can never put ourselves in the shoes of the original Upaniṣadic teachers or students. However, the faithful and relatively consistent transmission of the texts themselves provides a good starting point, and the detailed philological work done by Olivelle and others over recent years, added to the extensive western academic study of the Upaniṣads since the late 19th century, creates a sound base on which to begin the exercise. Ultimately, however, as Olivelle again acknowledges in his own work, interpretation must to some degree precede understanding, and the exercise which I have set myself is impossible without, to some extent, imposing my own interpretations on the texts.

In my analysis of the Upaniṣads, I have in all cases referred to the Sanskrit. However, for ease of exposition in this thesis, I have used Olivelle's translation into English, first published by Oxford World's Classics in 1996 as *Upaniṣads* and subsequently

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[33] *Ibid.*
[34] Brereton 1999:258.
[35] Olivelle 1998a:xxi.
[36] An approach also emphasised by Grinshpon in Grinshpon 2003.
[37] Kapstein 2015:1.
[38] Kapstein 2015:12.

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published, including the Sanskrit and some additional notes, in 1998 as *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*. This is now probably the most widely used English translation in academic circles. Olivelle's stated aim was to produce a translation which is 'accurate without being literal', accessible to 'ordinary readers', using 'idiomatic and informal' English, while respecting the, to some readers, sacred nature of the texts.[39] In doing so, he seeks to 'distinguish the interpretive history of the documents… from their original context', arguing that, while study of the interpretation of texts is 'an important and legitimate part of historical scholarship', it is not the primary function of a translator. It is for this reason, which accords well with my own approach, as well as the accessibility and acknowledged accuracy of his translation[40], that I have chosen Olivelle's work as the main source for the translations of the Upaniṣads used in this thesis. All translations from the Upaniṣads, therefore, are from Olivelle 1998a unless otherwise indicated.[41] However, I have not relied on Olivelle unquestioningly. In all cases, as well as referring back to the Sanskrit, I have compared Olivelle's translations with the other major translation collections of the twentieth century, namely those by Hume, Radhakrishnan and Roebuck, as well, where relevant, as translations of individual Upaniṣads, or extracts, by others.[42]

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[39] Olivelle 1998a:xxi.
[40] See, for example, the review of Olivelle 1996 at Doniger 1997, and the observations of Lindquist at Lindquist 2013:11.
[41] The source of translations of other Sanskrit texts is as noted in footnotes.
[42] In the Literature Review in Appendix B I will discuss these translations further.

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Chapter 1

Positioning the Upaniṣads

'An Upaniṣad was above all else a mystery.'[43]

1.1 Introduction

Composed orally in north India over a period from approximately 700 BCE to the early Common Era, and transmitted in Sanskrit, the Upaniṣads are probably today the best known of the texts produced in the Vedic period in India.[44] Their influence on later Indian philosophy and religion has been profound, perhaps because they contain some of the most evocative teachings of ancient India. A possible reason for this is that everyone loves to be let into a secret, and many of the teachings of the Upaniṣads are explicitly presented as 'secret', not for general dissemination but passed on by a single teacher to a single student, or small group of students, often with at least a show of reluctance on the teacher's part. As I shall explain below, the idea of secrecy is entwined with the etymology of the Sanskrit word *upaniṣad* itself, and there can be little doubt that the motif of secrecy works to make the teachings themselves seem 'special' or 'important' and to give the recipient of the teachings, whether a character in the texts themselves or receiving the teaching subsequently, a sense of privilege.

In this Chapter, I will place the Upaniṣads in context, in order to set the background to my enquiry into their teachings about the ultimate principle. I will briefly discuss their place in the Vedic textual 'canon' and their social background, the key questions which they address in relation to the ultimate principle, and how they have been interpreted, both in Indian philosophical tradition and in western academia. I will also consider the Upaniṣads as literature, focussing especially on their use of narrative episodes to present their teachings, and will discuss some of the more common literary motifs encountered in them. An important thread of my study will be to argue that the questioning approach

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[43] Winternitz 1927:244.
[44] From around 1500 BCE until the very early years of the Common Era.

of the Upaniṣads, and the questions themselves, in places influenced the literary structure and content of the Upaniṣads as they have come down to us in their quasi-canonical forms. I believe that approaching the search for the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads both from the point of view of the questions which they address, and through the lens of their literary presentation of their teachings, not only provides a new, and perhaps more balanced, understanding of the ways in which ideas of the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads developed, but also reveals certain clearly discernible trajectories in the progression of teaching about the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads as they were ultimately compiled and edited.

1.2   What does '*upaniṣad*' mean?

The Sanskrit word *upaniṣad* is generally thought to derive from the verbal root √*sad* (to sit), with the prefixes *upa-* and *ni-* denoting proximity and downward motion respectively.[45] Historically, this was popularly interpreted as a reference to Upaniṣadic teachings being transmitted confidentially by a teacher to a student 'sitting down near' him. However, while literary motifs of teacher and student and of secrecy are important in the Upaniṣads, the word *upaniṣad* is not obviously used in this way in the texts themselves. Olivelle argues that '… the older view… that the term… refers to a group of disciples at the feet of a teacher imbibing esoteric knowledge is clearly untenable', and this rejection of the earlier popular interpretation now has broad currency.[46] Noting that the earliest usages of the term all carry the meaning of 'connection' or 'equivalence', generally a hidden connection or equivalence set in a hierarchical framework[47], Olivelle concludes:

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[45] In his commentaries on the BU and KaU, and TU and MuU respectively, Śaṅkara chose to interpret it as meaning 'that which destroys ignorance' or 'that which leads to *brahman*'. See Deussen [1899] 1906:10-15 (especially at page 10, where he describes Śaṅkara's interpretations as '… justifiable neither on grounds of philology nor of fact'); Radhakrishnan 1953:19-20.

[46] Olivelle 1998a:24n29 and the sources cited there. See also Lindquist 2016:306. Cf. Cohen 2018a:2 where she argues that 'It is perhaps reasonable… that the texts themselves are named after the act of sitting down at the feet of a teacher…'.

[47] See, for example, CU 1.1.10: *yadeva vidyayā karoti śraddhayopaniṣadā tadeva vīryavattaram bhavatīti*, translated by Olivelle as 'Only what is performed with knowledge, with faith, and with awareness of the hidden connections becomes truly potent.' Radhakrishnan translates the word *upaniṣad* in this verse as 'meditation'. See also Witzel's translation as 'formula of magical

'*Because of the hidden nature of these connections* [my emphasis], the term *upaniṣad* also came to mean a secret, especially secret knowledge or doctrine. It is probably as an extension of this meaning that the term came finally to be used with reference to entire texts containing such secret doctrines...'.[48]

Olivelle's translation of the word *upaniṣad* when it appears in the texts themselves accordingly emphasises the qualities both of secrecy and connection. However, as with important terms such as *ātman* and *brahman*[49], he rightly adopts a nuanced approach, for example, rendering *upaniṣad* as 'hidden name' in BU 2.1.20, 'hidden connection' in BU 3.9.26, 'hidden teaching' in CU 3.11.3 and TU 1.11.4, or 'teachings on hidden connections' in ŚU 1.16.

Signe Cohen provides an intriguing alternative suggestion as to why the word *upaniṣad* came to be used to denote a class of texts. She notes Olivelle's emphasis on 'hidden connections', but also other etymologies which have been proposed, including Oldenberg's suggestion of a connection between *upaniṣad* and *upāsana* ('worship' or 'veneration')[50], and Falk's idea of *upaniṣad* carrying the meaning '*bewirkende Macht*' ('effective power')[51], in particular his suggestion that the phrase 'A is the *upaniṣad* of B' usually indicates that 'A is that which causes B to come into existence'.[52] I will argue in Chapter 2 that inherent power is an essential quality of the ultimate principle, but Cohen takes these interpretations to an interesting conclusion, when she suggests that the combination of √*sad* with *upa-* and *ni-* could be construed not as a reference to an individual 'sitting down near' a teacher, but rather to 'that which sits/lies beneath', in other words to an esoteric 'underlying reality', 'the ultimate cause and basis of the

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equivalence', referred to at Cohen 2008:4. Renou (1953a:139n2) argues that the earliest use of the term *upaniṣad*, which he places in ŚB 10.4.5, is as a '*connexion de type ésotérique entre une notion rituelle et une notion speculative*' ('an esoteric form of connection between a ritual idea and a speculative idea'). Note, however, that hierarchy is only one of the hermeneutic paradigms suggested by Brereton in Brereton 1990 (see Chapter 2), and I believe that Olivelle's suggestion that the 'hidden connections' are 'generally' set in a hierarchical framework goes too far.
[48] Olivelle 1998a:24.
[49] See Chapter 2.
[50] Oldenberg 1896:457-462, cited at Cohen 2008:3, though doubted by Oldenberg's near contemporary Deussen at [1899] 1906:13-15. See note 433 below in relation to the word *upāsana*, and cognate terms, in the Upaniṣads.
[51] Falk 1986 *passim* for a detailed discussion of the word '*upaniṣad*'; Cohen 2008:3-4.
[52] Cohen 2018a:3, citing Falk 1986:80-97.

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universe'[53], or, in the terms of my own enquiry, the ultimate principle. Her tantalising conclusion is that 'the genre name *Upaniṣad* originated precisely in the texts' preoccupation with the ultimate, underlying reality'.[54] In other words, Cohen suggests, the textual genre is so-called precisely because of its concern with the ultimate principle, a notion which supports my own thesis that the editorial processes which brought the Upaniṣads into their quasi-canonical forms had the search for the ultimate principle very much in mind. Acharya too, in his analysis of the widely used term *ādeśa* in the early Upaniṣads[55], argues that *ādeśa* (which, in his view, is a term used to signify a 'teaching indicating a higher reality' or indicating 'the ultimate omnipresent reality') was 'once the formal name of the type of Vedic teachings now classified as Upaniṣad, and also of its corpus'[56], also implying an association between the texts as a genre and their concern with the ultimate principle.

1.3   The Upaniṣads in the Vedic 'Canon'

Traditionally, the Upaniṣads form the fourth and final part of the Vedic textual corpus, following the Saṃhitās (collections of hymns), Brāhmaṇas (ritual manuals) and Āraṇyakas (so-called 'forest teachings'). They are often collectively referred to as '*vedānta*' ('end of the Veda'), both in a temporal sense and in the sense of representing the culmination of Vedic teaching. It is, however, simplistic to consider each of the four groups of Vedic texts as a distinct body in isolation from the others, with a clear 'horizontal' dividing line in time or space between each. The horizontal boundaries are undoubtedly 'fuzzy'[57], as can be seen by the fact that, as Appendix A to this Chapter shows, the texts of seven of the earliest Upaniṣads can be found embedded in either a Brāhmaṇa or an Āraṇyaka, or, in the case of the ĪU, a Saṃhitā.[58] Others may have been

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[53] Which she acknowledges is broadly the same as Falk's *bewirkende Macht*. (Cohen 2008:4)
[54] Cohen 2008:5; 2018a:3.
[55] See note 606 below.
[56] Acharya 2017:551 and 565.
[57] Black 2011a:119.
[58] Though the ĪU may well have been a later addition to the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā of the YV. Renou (1953:139-140) also argues that the KṣU and CU may have originally been independent texts, and added later to the Kauṣītaki Āraṇyaka and Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa.

similarly embedded in texts which have been lost.[59] Some early Upaniṣads clearly contain material which seems 'more properly' to belong in, say, the ritual manuals, the Brāhmaṇas.[60] Conversely, parts of some Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas (and even parts of the AV Saṃhitā) have contents which would not look out of place in an Upaniṣad, and there are a number of passages which appear in broadly similar (or sometimes subtly different) form in more than one class of text. The differences between presentations of similar contents between, say, the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, may, I suggest, be significant in the Upaniṣads' enquiry into the ultimate principle: the editing which went into the version which appears in the Upaniṣads may, in places, have had as its primary purpose the emphasis of a particular aspect of teaching about the ultimate principle.[61]

The 'traditional' fourfold division may well have been a later imposition on Vedic tradition: fourfold classifications were a common organisational tool in ancient India.[62] As has been shown in other contexts, they were often a later way of classifying that which did not necessarily originally lend itself to an obvious fourfold classification.[63] Alternatively, as Deussen suggests,[64] the fourfold division may simply reflect stages in the order in which a Vedic student was taught the learning of his particular school, rather than any attempt to classify the four types of text by their contents. Although all three of the other categories contain philosophical speculation to some degree, Frauwallner has persuasively argued that the early Upaniṣads are no more nor less than

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[59] The use of the term 'text' in this context has a quality of convention about it, for the Vedic 'texts' (including the Upaniṣads) were not originally 'texts', in the sense of written works, at all: they were transmitted orally, and not committed to writing until centuries after their original compilation (Jamison and Brereton (2014:18) suggest possibly as late as 1000 CE). Although that oral transmission was guided by strict rules to ensure accuracy, it is misleading to think of the Upaniṣads as 'texts' in the sense of having been composed in written form. I am therefore using the word 'text', as Lipner does (2004:25), to signify '… a concatenation of signifiers… committed to some form of recognizable, transmittable expression in the public domain', which does not necessarily need to take written form.

[60] See, e.g., the discussion at Deussen [1899] 1906:4. An obvious example is the discussion of the esoteric symbolism of the *aśvamedha* horse sacrifice in BU 1.1.

[61] A good example of this is the transformation of teachings about *agni vaiśvānara* in ŚB 10.6.1-11 into the enquiry into *ātman vaiśvānara*, in a very similar narrative context, in CU 5.11-24. See further in Chapter 4.

[62] Perhaps originally rooted in the idea of the quadruped. See Bhattacharya 1978.

[63] Examples are the later 'addition' of the AV to the original threefold Veda (see, e.g., Olivelle 1998a:8) and the addition of *mokṣa* to the original three *puruṣārthas* (see, e.g., Lipner 1994:160, Scharfe 2004:250).

[64] Deussen [1899]1906:3.

'… the philosophically valuable parts of the liturgical' Brāhmaṇas, which became separated and transmitted independently, in a somewhat arbitrary way.[65] As Olivelle points out, the Upaniṣads only really acquired 'a literary and theological life of their own' once they were separated from their Brāhmaṇas and/or Āraṇyakas as distinct *manuscript* texts.[66] The important point is that, while new ideas undoubtedly appear in them, the Upaniṣads as a genre do not represent a sharp, clean break with the thinking of the preceding Vedic textual tradition, but, rather, a continuation and development of it in new directions, probably with some influence from non-Vedic sources. It is important both to read the Upaniṣads in that context and to understand that their ideas continue to develop from the early Upaniṣads to the later.[67] As Proferes stresses, 'an overly rigid attachment' to the traditional fourfold scheme 'often obscures the structure of the corpus and the relation between individual texts'[68], and I believe that it is essential, when reading the Upaniṣads, to keep these relations between texts firmly in mind.

Witzel describes the Upaniṣads as texts containing 'the secret teaching, by a variety of late Vedic scholars, of early philosophical speculation about the nature of the world and of humans and their fate after death'.[69] Although this description is incomplete, as it fails to take into account the range of Upaniṣadic contents, from creation myths, to attacks on Vedic ritualism, to family planning advice, it is helpful in emphasising both the *variety* of sources of Upaniṣadic teaching and also the anchoring of the Upaniṣads in the *late* Vedic period. The socio-political setting in which the Upaniṣads were compiled is, I believe, important in understanding their concerns.[70] Witzel's description is also helpful in reminding us that, for all the possible influence from outside, the Upaniṣads were texts compiled and propagated by Vedic scholars, *brahmins.*[71]

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[65] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:30.
[66] Olivelle 2009:42.
[67] See also Jamison and Witzel 1992:75. Cf. Frauwallner [1953] 1973:73.
[68] Proferes 2009a:27.
[69] Witzel 2003a:83
[70] See below.
[71] Even though, by the time of the Upaniṣads, the position of certain *brahmins* in Vedic society had shifted from that of a ritual performer in an extended family/village context to one of a more itinerant urban religious specialist, often associated with a royal or noble 'court' - see further below.

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While the 'horizontal' divisions between classes of text tend to be over-emphasised, the 'vertical' dividing lines between the texts of the individual Vedas - ṚV, YV (in its two branches: *śukla* (white) and *kṛṣṇa* (black)), SV and AV[72] - tend to be under-explored. As Appendix B to this Chapter shows, of the 12 Upaniṣads which form the subject of this study, two are associated with the ṚV, two with the White YV, three with the Black YV, two with the SV, and three with the AV. A word of caution is needed in relation to the AV: it seems that certain Upaniṣads were associated with the AV rather late in the day, and somewhat by default, where they had no obvious association with any other Saṃhitā.[73] Despite this caveat, and although the Upaniṣads later became 'somewhat detached' from their Vedic affiliations and 'the common property of all Brahmins'[74], an awareness of the particular Veda to which an Upaniṣad belongs, at least for those whose attribution to a particular Veda can be reasonably attested, can be helpful in considering both the ideas which that Upaniṣad presents about the ultimate principle and the ways in which it presents those ideas.[75] It is also worth noting that the Upaniṣads not

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[72] Though see note 63 above about the later addition of the AV to the traditional 'threefold Veda'.

[73] Deussen ([1899] 1906:25) suggests that the MuU and PU are 'the original legitimate Upaniṣads' of the AV, though he appears to base this conclusion largely on the fact that they were commented on by Śaṅkara centuries after their original compilation.

[74] Olivelle 1998a:10.

[75] As Black (2012:12) notes, the term *ātman* 'does not have one consistent meaning across all of its textual appearances, yet there can be considerable uniformity within a particular text or within a group of texts aligned to the same school'. See also Witzel 1997a:371n19; Cohen 2008, especially at 6-7, 10-12 and 291-2. Within the traditions of each of the four Saṃhitās there existed a number of different schools, or *śākhās*. Renou (1947:208) argues, perhaps rather optimistically, that the *śākhās* are the key to understanding Vedic thought: if one were to succeed in establishing the affiliations of the various schools, one would understand how the whole of Vedic thought developed. Proferes (2009a:28) notes evidence of influence between one *śākhā* and others, but that 'each conceived of itself as a distinct organization identifiable by its particular recension of its Veda and by individual peculiarities, at the level of detail, in the performance of the Vedic rituals'. See also the observations at Jamison and Brereton 2014:15-16. However, while an understanding of the *śākhā* affiliations of individual Upaniṣads would potentially be highly instructive in tracing the development of ideas of ultimate reality, much of the literature of individual *śākhās* has been lost, which makes attempting to associate individual Upaniṣads with individual *śākhās* problematic, not least too because, at some point after the conclusion of the Vedic period, an effort was made to harmonise the various strands of the Vedic tradition and to find a unified message through the systematised exegesis of the Mīmāṃsā school (see further below). Although Cohen's argument (2008:6) that 'some very interesting patterns begin to emerge if we study each of the older Upaniṣads in the context of its Vedic *śākhā*' is intriguing, she does not in fact develop that idea, instead analysing individual Upaniṣads, not according to *śākhā*, but simply according to the Veda with which that Upaniṣad is associated. (See the observations at Proferes 2009b:149.)

infrequently contain quotations from other Vedic texts, by no means always of the same Vedic affiliation.[76]

Unlike in certain other religious traditions, in the Vedic tradition no great councils or central authorities determined the canonicity of texts. The name 'Upaniṣad' was given to hundreds of texts composed up at least to the mediaeval period.[77] Some early Western Upaniṣadic scholars, such as Deussen, considered many of these later texts part of the Vedic canon.[78] However, in general, these 'minor' Upaniṣads are not considered 'Vedic', and they will not form part of my study. The religious focus of many of them is avowedly sectarian, rather than reflecting the questioning approach which is a key characteristic of the Vedic Upaniṣads. Throughout the history of modern Upaniṣadic scholarship they have tended to be studied separately, as not forming part of the *śruti* tradition of revealed Vedic knowledge.

The 12 Upaniṣads listed in Appendix B to this Chapter seem to have established a relatively fixed quasi-canonical status as 'Vedic' (and accordingly *śruti*, or revelation) at quite an early stage, possibly through the work of the Mīmāṃsā philosophers.[79] This thesis will therefore focus on those 12.[80] However, for all that they share the Upaniṣad

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[76] A point noted at Cohen 2008:116.

[77] As Cohen notes (2018a:3) the mediaeval Muktikā Upaniṣad lists 108 Upaniṣads.

[78] As evidenced by the title of his collection of translations, *Sechzig Upaniṣad's des Veda* (*sic*) ('Sixty Vedic Upaniṣads').

[79] See below. Certainly, by the time of the BS, there appears to have been a reasonably well-established consensus about the canonical status of many of the 'core 12' (Proferes 2009b:149). See also Proferes 2009b:149-150, criticising some of the observations on canon contained in Cohen 2008.

[80] To the 12 there are sometimes added one or more of the Maitrī, the Mahānārāyana, and, less frequently, the Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa (which, as its name suggests, is also classified as a Brāhmaṇa and contains within it the KeU). Of the most important modern translators and commentators (some of whom also add some of the minor Upaniṣads), Olivelle sticks to the core 12, while the Maitrī is added by Müller, Hume, Keith, Deussen, Radhakrishnan, Roebuck, Cohen and Brockington, and the Mahānārāyana by Keith, Deussen, Cohen and Brockington. The JUB is rarely included in modern compilations, although Olivelle (2009:42) acknowledges its claim, along with that of the Maitrī and the Mahānārāyana, to serious consideration. So too does Keith (1925:499), who sees it more properly as an Āraṇyaka, noting that the schools of the SV, to which the JUB belongs, do not generally have Āraṇyakas. Chemparathy 2007 discusses the difficulties in determining which Upaniṣads are 'truly' Vedic, concluding only that the number is 'about a dozen', not taking into account any which may have existed but have been lost. The mediaeval Muktikā Upaniṣad's list of 108 Upaniṣads refers to the 12 plus the Maitrī as the *mukhya* ('main' or 'principal') Upaniṣads.

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name, it would be wrong to assume that these 12 Upaniṣads show consistency in form or style. They were most likely compiled over a period of perhaps 700 to 800 years, and, just as it is natural to expect linguistic and stylistic differences between our contemporary writings and those of Chaucer, there are many linguistic and stylistic differences between the earliest Upaniṣads (by common consent, the BU and CU) and the latest (probably the PU and MāU). In addition, the composite, or anthological, nature of certain of the Upaniṣads means that the 'canonical' form of the text which we know today most likely draws from more than one original source, perhaps varying significantly in age.[81] As with the English language from the time of Chaucer to the present day, the form of Sanskrit used shifted from a more archaic form aligned with that of the earlier Vedic texts to a more 'classical' form in greater alignment with the Pāṇinian grammatical tradition. Stylistically, the earliest Upaniṣads - BU, CU, TU, AU and KṣU - are almost entirely in prose, and the BU and CU are significantly longer than any of the others. The KeU is partly in verse and partly in prose; the KaU, ĪU, ŚU and MuU almost entirely in verse; the PU and MāU largely in prose again. While the BU in English translation occupies 92 pages in Olivelle 1996 and the CU 82, the ĪU occupies a little over two pages and the MāU little more than a single page.

1.4   Dating the Upaniṣads

Accepting the composite, or anthological, nature of many of the Upaniṣads as the 'literary products of scholarly collectives'[82], it is important to keep in mind the distinction between the time when the

> 'textual material was collected, organized, standardized and fixed for posterity in the form of the traditionally recognized parts of the corpus, and the time when individual portions of that textual material were produced'.[83]

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[81] See, for example, Hume's observations on the relative dating of the prose second half of the KeU and its verse first half (1921:52), though his conclusions are doubted by Killingley at 2018d:162.
[82] Cohen 2018c:19.
[83] Proferes 2009a:29.

The age of an individual passage, or a particular idea, in any given Upaniṣad may be far removed from the dating of that text in its 'canonical' form. However, one of my arguments in this thesis will be that the editorial process of drawing those passages and ideas together into the redacted texts had a purpose. As I shall demonstrate in later Chapters, in places inter-textual reading of similar passages or ideas between texts, as well as the ordering and juxtaposition of passages within texts, casts important light on how certain Upaniṣadic teachings might be interpreted. I will accordingly be considering the Upaniṣads in the forms in which they have come down to us in their broadly 'canonical' recensions, a process which involves making certain assumptions about their relative chronology in that 'final' form. I shall not be delving into the history of the texts *qua* texts (the 'archaeology' of the texts): a detailed analysis of their actual dates of composition or compilation - even if such a thing were possible - is not particularly helpful for my purposes; a relative chronology is much more valuable.

Any discussion of the likely dates, actual or relative, of the Upaniṣads is well served to take into account Olivelle's warning that 'any dating of these documents that attempts a precision closer than a few centuries is as stable as a house of cards'.[84] As well as their sheer antiquity and (in many cases) composite structure, the '*śruti* ideal' - the orthodox notion that the Upaniṣads are divine revelation - further complicates the task. As Roebuck stresses

> 'For many traditional Hindus, the question [of the dating of the Upaniṣads] is irrelevant, since in essence, at least, the whole of *śruti* literature is considered to be *apauruṣeya*, not of human origin, and of primordial antiquity, containing truths to be rediscovered in every age of the world.'[85]

Antiquity too, as Lipner, amongst others, has also noted, is considered a 'great guarantor of authenticity'.[86] This is perhaps especially so in a tradition in which no central authority established the canonical nature of individual texts, so that commentators have often attempted to give the Upaniṣads and their teachings earlier

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[84] Olivelle 1998a:12.
[85] Roebuck 2003:xxiv.
[86] Lipner 1994:42.

origins than reasonable scholarship would allow, in order to confer greater apparent authority on them.[87]

We can derive little dating assistance from internal evidence in the texts. As Roebuck says:

> 'The most that we can say with confidence is that the material culture described in the earlier Upaniṣads appears entirely compatible with what the archaeological evidence tells us of the city-based culture of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE.'.[88]

A number of characters are mentioned, but there are none whose actual dates can be accurately attested, and several who feature in Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads clearly composed over a period much greater than a single lifetime. In the absence of any meaningful internal evidence, or any manuscript data, the only methodology available to establish actual or relative dates for the Upaniṣads is an analysis of their language, literary structure, and content, each of which may be influenced not just by temporal but also by geographical and doctrinal considerations. Subject to those caveats, there is a fairly clear consensus that the BU and CU are the two oldest. Both are generally considered composite, with some parts older than others.[89] Olivelle considers that a reasonable dating for both in their final form would be seventh to sixth centuries BCE; Frauwallner suggests between 800 and 600 BCE.[90] There is also reasonable consensus that the next oldest are the three other early prose Upaniṣads - TU, AU and KṣU - a

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[87] Melvyn Bragg (2011:134-5) notes a similar trend in later Christian circles with the deliberate use of archaic language in the 1611 King James Bible, a process which Bronkhorst considers also applied to Vedic texts (2007a:176-7).

[88] Roebuck 2003:xxv, though the Upaniṣads themselves contain few, if any, references to urban society: see the discussion at Bronkhorst 2007a: 250-255 on the significance, or otherwise, to be attributed to this fact.

[89] Particularly in the case of the BU, which has survived in two distinct recensions: the Mādhyaṃdina and the Kāṇva, which, although containing broadly the same text, differ in their arrangement of that text and also show linguistic differences. Cohen argues (2008:98 and 287) that the Mādhyaṃdina is older than the Kāṇva. In this thesis, following Olivelle 1998a, references to the BU are to the Kāṇva recension. Cohen also argues, at 2008:132, that linguistic and metrical analysis suggests that, aside from certain quotations from the ṚV, the CU may in fact not be a composite text. Here she differs from Olivelle, who believes that, like the BU, the CU 'is the work of an editor or a series of editors who created an anthology of passages and stories that must previously have existed as separate texts'. (1998a:166)

[90] Olivelle 1998a:12; Frauwallner [1953] 1973:34.

century or two later. Olivelle places the verse (or part verse) Upaniṣads in the order KeU, KaU, ĪU, ŚU, MuU in 'the last few centuries BCE' and the PU and MāU around the beginning of the Common Era[91]; while Frauwallner, without specifying precise dates, argues that later Upaniṣads, such as the KaU and ŚU, came 'a considerable lapse of time' after the early ones.[92]

Writing almost exactly a century earlier, Deussen proposes the same basic order as Olivelle.[93] Of more recent commentators, Roebuck also largely follows Olivelle's order, though she considers, without expressing a conclusion, that the ĪU, despite its verse form, may be older (perhaps because of its appearance in the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā of the YV). She puts the other four verse Upaniṣads in the range 500 to 100 BCE, broadly consistent with Olivelle. Cohen adopts a more sophisticated approach, analysing what she calls the 'textual layers' within individual Upaniṣads through consideration of the 'metres, types of *sandhi* … linguistic forms, and the internal coherence' of each text.[94] While she agrees with the general consensus about the order of the early prose texts (though with the TU later than the AU and KṣU, and the Kāṇva recension of the BU coming between the KṣU and TU), she places the PU earlier, after the ĪU but before the other verse Upaniṣads. She also places the KeU as the latest of the verse Upaniṣads. While acknowledging these differing views, I have for working purposes adopted the

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[91] Olivelle 1998a:13; Olivelle 2009:44.

[92] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:32. The relatively well attested dates for the life of the historical Buddha, probably in the 5th century BCE (see Bechert 1982 and 1991), are often used as a tool in dating the Upaniṣads. The fact that certain later Upaniṣads appear to demonstrate an awareness of ideas found in Buddhist teachings is frequently used as an argument to place those texts after the life of the Buddha. Conversely, the fact that certain Buddhist teachings appear to demonstrate an awareness of ideas found in the Upaniṣads is used as an argument that those Upaniṣads must pre-date the life of the Buddha. However, caution is advisable, first because the date of a text may well differ significantly from the date(s) of the ideas which the text puts forward, and, secondly, because analysing what influenced what and how from a couple of millennia distance can never be an exact science. Bronkhorst, for example, suggests that the *karma* theory in Buddhism and the Upaniṣads had common origins external to both traditions (2007a:141), an idea also put forward by Chandra (1971:322), who argues that early Buddhist teachers may not have even been aware of the Upaniṣads, let alone influenced by them. Bronkhorst (2007a:135) suggests that the evidence for actual Buddhist influence in the Upaniṣads (as opposed to influence from non-Vedic and possibly non-Buddhist sources) 'ranges from weak to non-existent'. Developing this (2007a:175ff), he argues for a later date than generally attributed for many of the Upaniṣads, though, in this argument as in some others, he tends to be a minority voice.

[93] Deussen [1899] 1906:23-25.

[94] Cohen 2008:25.

Olivelle/Deussen chronology (the order in which the texts are listed in Appendix B to this Chapter).[95]

1.5 The Social Setting of the Upaniṣads

The Vedic Upaniṣads were the product of a society whose geographical centre of gravity was shifting, and which was undergoing significant social and political change. The nucleus of the area of composition of the earliest Vedic texts appears to have been in the north-west of what we now know as India, particularly the area now known as the Punjab. Although direct archaeological evidence is sketchy, early Vedic society, from the late second millennium BCE up to around the likely dates of compilation of our earliest Upaniṣads in perhaps the seventh or eighth century BCE, appears to have been largely pastoral, probably semi-nomadic, and lineage based. Prayer and ritual had as their primary focus the propagation and protection of the clan (and its cattle): priestly reward was likely to have taken the form of a share of the cattle garnered in cattle raids on other clans.[96]

The middle part of the final millennium BCE saw a rise in agriculture in northern India.[97] This chiefly took place further east than the early heartland of Vedic thought and practice, in the central Ganges Valley, with its lower altitude and higher rainfall. The actual stimulus for this eastward movement is a matter of conjecture. There is little

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[95] There is a degree of controversy about the dating of the ŚU. Oberlies 1998 puts it potentially in the second or third century CE, on the basis that the verses which it shares with the BhG seem to belong more easily to the BhG. He therefore argues for a 'borrowing' by the ŚU from the BhG. Roebuck (2000:448) describes this theory as 'attractive', though elsewhere argues that the KeU, KaU, ŚU and MuU 'seem to belong together' (2000:xxv). Mallinson and Singleton (2017:xxxix) suggest a date for the ŚU of as late as 6th century CE, though without elaborating on their reasons. Most recently, Cohen has maintained her argument, based on an analysis of language and metre, that the ŚU was 'likely composed around the same time' as the KaU (2018j:332), though with later additions. She does not offer a specific date, but her relative chronology places the ŚU earlier than the KeU or MāU (2018b:17). The relative dating of the ŚU and the BhG is itself a matter of debate, which I will touch on in Chapter 5: see note 844.
[96] Thapar 1980:656-7. Cf. Janaka's offering of 1000 cows to the most learned *brahmin* in the debate in BU 3.
[97] A variety of reasons has been advanced for this, but changing agricultural methods based around the emergence of iron tools may have played a part. (Erdosy 1998:129, though cf. Samuel 2008:45 and Gombrich 1988:38 and 51-52, suggesting that iron in this period may have been more widely used for weapons than for tools.)

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evidence to suggest that it was forced by military conquest. Rather, it appears to have been a gradual movement which may simply have been driven by a desire to find more fertile land. As the growing of food, particularly barley and rice, developed, population increased rapidly, food surpluses appeared, and trade began to assume importance.[98] By the latter half of the first millennium BCE, the dominance of pastoralist extended family sub-structures gave way to more static and larger urban centres. These changes encouraged political and religious shifts too: in at least some of these urban centres, brahmanical ritual became more elaborate as the former clan chiefs' status became closer to that of monarchs who were reliant on religious sanction for their authority.[99]

As often happens in contemporary society, the move to towns and cities brought a loosening of ties to the family and village units which had thitherto been the principal guardians of orthopraxy. This loosening of ties was perhaps reflected in an increasing prominence being afforded in religious practice to the individual rather than the family or other group, to solitary reflective or meditative 'internal' practice in contradistinction to complex and mechanical external ritual, and to 'the ascetic challenge to the Brahmanical definition of the ideal religious life'.[100] As Lubin points out, the:

> 'new cosmopolitan centres, and the new political structures that accompanied them, provided a magnet for wandering 'holy men'… and ample funds from the newly rich and powerful that could be used to patronize movements of wanderers who shared the highways with the traders and soldiers of the new cities'

while 'the village-based Vedic priests' suffered a loss of influence and of financial patronage.[101]

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[98] It is thought that coins began to circulate reasonably widely in India from around 500 BCE (Gombrich 1988:53; Olivelle 1992:31). There is archaeological evidence from this period of metals and stones being found in the Ganges Valley which originated from some distance away, suggesting that trade was expanding in importance (Erdosy 1988:115).

[99] Thapar 1980:661.

[100] Olivelle 1992:29. Lindquist (2018b:103) suggests that it might also have led to a proliferation of disease, which (he suggests) may, at least partially, account for the Upaniṣads' frequent eschatological discussions.

[101] Lubin 2013:5. The extent to which ascetic and renunciate practices entered brahmanic thought through interaction with non-Vedic religious and social groups, as opposed to developing 'orthogenetically' has been much debated (cf., e.g., Heesterman 1985 and Olivelle

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The eastward movement clearly did not take place into a social vacuum. Those moving east undoubtedly encountered people, probably initially at least in the numerical majority, with social and religious ideas and practices different to their own, and the burgeoning urban centres no doubt attracted adherents of a range of religious traditions, with the resultant cross-fertilisation of ideas. Put at its simplest, the interaction between the eastward moving *brahmins* and groups with different beliefs and practices, such as the early Buddhists and Jains, helped make the north east of the Indian sub-continent in the final half of the first millennium BCE something of a melting pot, whose ideas and practices would inevitably differ from those of the old western heartland of Vedic orthodoxy and orthopraxy. It is easy to see how these social changes and interactions, and competing ideas, perhaps led to a greater focus on enquiry into the nature of reality. By their nature, these interactions both encouraged debate and speculation of the sort we find in the Upaniṣads, and likely brought new ideas into the thinking of the compilers of the Upaniṣads. Any reading of the Upaniṣads should take these interactions, and the social changes summarised above, into account, while at the same time remembering that, for all their seemingly novel ideas, the Upaniṣads continued to be compiled and propagated by *brahmins* and thereby assimilated into Vedic tradition.

There has been little direct research on the geographical origins of individual Upaniṣads. Witzel has investigated the possible geographical homes of the Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas, and the association of individual Upaniṣads with a particular school of the Veda means that the geographical positioning of the Saṃhitās and their branches may be instructive in looking at the likely geographical homes of the Upaniṣads.[102] However, while the earlier Vedic texts may well have been the work of a localised group of priests and theologians, we must remember not only the greater mobility in north Indian society

1992, as well as some of Dumont's work). Thapar (1980:663) suggests that the rise in the importance of wealth as a trading medium meant that wealth became used less for supporting complex ritual, with the consequential decline in those forms of ritual. Gombrich (1988:50) stresses that both Buddhism and Jainism developed as largely 'urban' religions. In general, the Buddhist Pali Canon is a useful source of information about this period of urbanisation, though no doubt one with its own particular agendas.

[102] Witzel 1987:173. Although Sharma 1985 presents much interesting information on geographical references in the Upaniṣads, he is light on any real theories about their geographical origins. Tamaskar 1989 lists geographical references in the Upaniṣads, but, again, draws no real conclusions about their geographical homes.

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at the time of the Upaniṣads[103] but also the composite nature of many of them, which may mean that different parts of a text originated in different geographical locations. Any conclusions about the geographical origins of individual Upaniṣads must therefore be considered highly tentative.[104] Nevertheless, I have included in Appendix B to this Chapter a note of the geographical origins tentatively attributed to the Upaniṣads, very largely drawn from the map at Olivelle 1998a:14, which he in turn derives substantially from Witzel's work.

1.6   The Questions of the Upaniṣads

The idea of attempting to identify and analyse the ultimate principle of existence is not unique to the Upaniṣads, nor to Indian philosophy more widely, but rather speaks to a common concern of the ancient world. Investigation of the ἀρχή, or basic principle of the universe which accounted both for creation and for continuity within that apparently constantly changing creation, occupied the thought of certain classical Greek philosophers at broadly the same time as the Upaniṣads. Several of the Greek ideas about the identity of that basic principle (for example, as water or air) find reflection in the Upaniṣads, even if there ultimately rejected in favour of a more abstract ultimate principle - often, though not always, called *brahman* - in a similar way to that in which Thales' theory of water as the ἀρχή was rejected by Anaximander in favour of the more abstract ἄπειρον.[105]

I am not arguing for any direct relationship between the Greek and Indian explorations of ultimate reality, nor attempting to import Greek theories about the ἀρχή into my study

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[103] ŚB 1.4.1.14-16 describes the eastern area of Videha as having originally been unsuitable for *brahmins* as Agni had not 'burnt over' the Sadānīrā river (probably now the Gandaki river), but also makes clear that, by the time of the ŚB, there were many *brahmins* to the east of the river, and that the formerly marshy land to the east was 'very cultivated'.

[104] Though it seems reasonable to assume that the BU originated in the eastern Kosala-Videha area, given its prominent and favourable portrayal of king Janaka of Videha. As Olivelle notes (1998a:13), this eastern area may at the time have been seen by those in the more westerly Kuru-Pañcāla heartland as 'something of an unsophisticated frontier region', which may account for the prominence given in BU 3 to Yājñavalkya's proficiency and sophistication in debate with Kuru-Pañcāla *brahmins* from further west, whose cause seems to have been championed by the CU.

[105] Both Thales and Anaximander are thought to have lived around the late 7th/6th century BCE.

of the Upaniṣads. A cross-cultural study of ideas of the ultimate principle around this period would potentially be a fascinating exercise, but is beyond the scope of this thesis.[106] However, it is worth noting not just the similarities in the ideas which the two cultures suggested and rejected, but also that the questions about this fundamental principle addressed similar concerns. Those questions, in the Upaniṣadic context, can be summarised briefly as follows. The first, as in the speculative parts of the earlier Vedic texts[107], is the mystery of existence itself: the identification of the creator of, or the creative principle behind, the manifest world, both at the cosmic level and at the level of the individual. Then, recognising that the ultimate principle must do more than simply create the world, the Upaniṣads question what is the force or element which sustains existence on an ongoing basis, which persists through change, and which keeps the elements of the universe in their respective positions. From there, they progress to an enquiry about what it is which underpins human consciousness and controls human physical and mental activity, which animates the beings in the world. In Chapter 3, I will show how reading certain of the narratives of the BU together demonstrates a progression in the approach to questioning the identity of the ultimate principle through addressing these questions individually.

The question also arises whether it is one and the same entity or principle which performs these diverse, though related, functions, or whether different functions are performed by different, though possibly related, entities or principles. Here, the early Upaniṣads in particular display a refreshing uncertainty. While, in general, they undoubtedly look towards a unified form of ultimate principle, in other places there is a clear separation in the minds of certain Upaniṣadic teachers between some of the ultimate principle's key functions. I will demonstrate in Chapter 4 how an inter-textual reading of certain important passages highlights this approach.

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[106] And would probably be inconclusive: see the observations of Cohen at 2018l:414, and the sources referred to there. Bronkhorst 2016, especially at 259-274, argues that the rise of *systematic* (my emphasis) philosophical enquiry in ancient India may have been the result of interaction between the Greeks of Alexander the Great's mission to India in the 4th century BCE and early Buddhist thinkers, which filtered down into 'orthodox' thought, perhaps via the Vaiśeṣika school. However, he accepts that the early Upaniṣads pre-date any Graeco-Indian interaction. As he rightly points out, the philosophical speculations of the early Upaniṣads can hardly be called 'systematic'.
[107] See Chapter 2.

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In the early Vedic period, as in other ancient cultures, many of the attempts to identify the ultimate principle revolved around attributing some or all of the qualities of that principle to a personified god. A further question which arises in the Upaniṣads is whether the single principle which can bring all of the necessary qualities together is in fact some form of mythical personality. The early Upaniṣads generally shy away from theistic ideas of the ultimate principle, in many places seeing the ultimate principle as 'above' the numerous deities of the early Vedic tradition. However, those deities continue to feature in the speculations about the ultimate principle, often being put forward and rejected in debate. I will argue in Chapter 5 that the idea of a personified ultimate principle was never far from the fore in the minds of those asking the questions. As a result, the identity of a theistic ultimate principle in certain of the later Upaniṣads is not, as some have argued, a radical intrusion into Upaniṣadic thought, but rather a way of bringing together certain of the earlier, perhaps not entirely satisfactory, speculations about the ultimate principle under the over-arching umbrella of a personified deity.

In speculating about the ultimate principle, the Upaniṣads develop a terminology which revolves around the terms *ātman* and *brahman*. Knowledge of the ultimate principle is frequently characterised in terms of knowing either *ātman* or *brahman*. In Chapter 2, I will explore the development of certain of this terminology, and will argue that (contrary to the doctrines of certain later philosophical schools) neither *ātman* nor *brahman* invariably carries the same meaning each time that it appears in the Upaniṣads. Rather, just as the questions and answers about the ultimate principle change, so too do the meanings of these two important terms, as well as others used to designate the ultimate principle, such as *akṣara* and *puruṣa*. In particular, *brahman*, probably the most common term used of the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads, has a complex, and much debated, etymology, aspects of which I believe influence its usage in the Upaniṣads as a denominator of the ultimate principle. In earlier Vedic texts, *bráhman* commonly meant a verbal 'formulation'[108], and I will argue that in many instances in the Upaniṣads the identification of some entity or other 'as [a] *brahman*' in fact amounts to no more than an attempt to give that entity the status of ultimate principle, because it is considered to

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[108] Thieme 1952:117ff.

have satisfied the relevant criteria for that status. In other words, '*brahman*' is often commensurate with 'ultimate principle' as a concept rather than signifying a particular entity in its own right, so that the identification of an entity (whatever it may be) as *brahman* amounts to no more than the designation of that entity as the (formulation of the) ultimate principle. The more important question, therefore, is what are the criteria which allow an entity to be referred to as '*brahman*'?

1.7   Interpreting the Upaniṣads: the Indian Philosophical Schools

The teachings of the Upaniṣads about the ultimate principle have been subjected to a number of different hermeneutic strategies, both in India and in Western academia.[109] The proponents of the early exegetical school of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā[110] considered the Veda in general to be infallible authority, and were, as a result, keen to find coherence in Vedic teachings. However, an emphasis on enjoined ritual action meant that they considered the Upaniṣads subordinate in importance to other Vedic texts, particularly the Brāhmaṇas. The Mīmāṃsakas' concern with the Upaniṣads, such as it was, was focussed less around philosophical speculation about the ultimate principle, and more around seeking a coherent interpretation of the Upaniṣads as enjoining certain types of action, especially meditation. Nevertheless, their emphasis on finding coherence influenced later schools: as we move further into the Common Era, the notion of coherence remained dominant in the interpretive methodology of philosophical schools whose concern revolved much more around theories of the ultimate principle.

The term '*vedānta*', frequently used of the Upaniṣads themselves, was appropriated by a number of later schools which take the Upaniṣads as foundational doctrinal texts.[111]

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[109] Hanefeld 1976:1-19 presents a useful survey of these.

[110] Which, as a system of thought, may pre-date the earliest Upaniṣads (see, e.g., Hiriyanna 1995:129), though its principal literature is later.

[111] The argument that the Vedānta schools were a direct relation, and continuation, of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, so that the Mīmāṃsakas were, in effect, early Vedāntins, is put forward in, e.g., Parpola 1981b and 1994, but challenged by Bronkhorst, who argues that the schools of Vedānta philosophy attached themselves to the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā 'in order to provide speculations about Brahma with the solid underpinning of serious Vedic interpretation' (2007b:77). Aklujkar 2009, in turn, refutes Bronkhorst's arguments.

While some Vedāntic interpreters[112] produced detailed commentaries on individual Upaniṣads, most, if not all, of the most significant Vedāntic interpreters based their interpretations not just on the Upaniṣads themselves (or, more accurately, on specific passages from them), but also on the BS, attributed to Bādarāyaṇa.[113] These schools adopted a hermeneutic process referred to in the BS as *samanvaya*, 'coherence' or 'reconciliation'[114], in order to find in the Upaniṣads consistent and authoritative teachings, particularly about the ultimate principle. BS 1.1.1 makes clear that the purpose of the text is *brahmajijñāsā*, the enquiry into, examination of, or desire to know, *brahman*, so that, as Nakamura rightly notes, the BS approaches its enquiry by setting up an entity called *brahman* as the absolute and then tries to interpret Upaniṣadic passages which appear to contradict that idea as in fact using apparently competing terms as synonyms for *brahman*.[115]

Despite this emphasis on coherence, the different schools of Vedānta, which developed over many centuries, differ radically in some of the interpretations which they place on the teachings of the Upaniṣads with regard to the ultimate principle and its relation both with the individual self and with the world of material reality. Indeed, these particular differences of interpretation largely characterise the differences between the schools of Vedānta. The BS itself expressly takes into account and refutes the views of other early exegetes, indicating that controversies over Upaniṣadic interpretation were known at this relatively early stage, and the attempts to systematise the teachings of the Upaniṣads in the BS too met with widely differing interpretations, for, as Hiriyanna notes, the BS is in many respects even 'more ambiguous than the Upaniṣads'.[116]

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[112] Notably Śaṅkara.

[113] The date of the BS is uncertain: arguments have been advanced for the second century BCE (Radhakrishnan 1960:22) and for a date as late as 450 CE (Jacobi, cited both at Radhakrishnan 1960:22n5 and in a summary of some of the theories about the date of the BS contained at Adams 1993:7-9).

[114] BS 1.1.4: *tat tu samanvayat* (referring to the idea that *brahman* is the main purport of all Vedāntic texts). The first chapter, or *adhyaya*, of the BS is sometimes referred to as the *samanvaya adhyaya.* The main thrust of the BS is towards finding both *samanvaya* and *avirodha* ('non-contradiction').

[115] Nakamura 1983:430.

[116] Hiriyanna 1995:151. We can speculate whether it is the terse *sūtra* style of the BS, the divergent theories of the Upaniṣads themselves, or the sheer difficulty of expressing coherent ideas about the subject matter, which has led to such a plethora of different interpretations of the BS, and thereby of the teachings of the Upaniṣads as mediated by the BS. Dasgupta believes, as

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Radhakrishnan summarises the arguments of twelve Vedāntic interpreters, though there are suggestions that there were several more.[117] Of these twelve, perhaps the five most significant schools deriving authority from the BS whose teachings have come down to us are the Advaita associated primarily with Śaṅkara[118], the Viśiṣṭādvaita associated primarily with Rāmānuja[119], the Bhedābheda of (amongst others) Bhāskara[120] and Nimbārka[121], the Dvaita of Madhva[122], and the Śuddhādvaita of Vallabha.[123] While Śaṅkara perhaps did the best job in drawing a coherent philosophical system from the Upaniṣads, this is not the same as saying that the Upaniṣads teach Śaṅkara's system. As Ghate says in his useful summary of these five schools, the Upaniṣads are 'nothing but free and bold attempts to find out the truth without the slightest idea of a system'[124] and that, when the exponents of the five systems try to show that theirs is the only philosophical system taught by the Upaniṣads

> '… and attempt to explain passages, even when directly opposed in tenour (*sic*) to their doctrine, in a manner so as to favour their doctrine, the artificiality and the unsatisfactory character of the attempt is at once evident'.[125]

The exegetical methods of the different schools in many cases involved lengthy, complex and, one might argue, tendentious textual analysis.[126] For the Advaitins, the

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I argue in this thesis, that the source of the disagreements amongst later commentators was the fact that the ideas on which they were commenting 'were still in the melting pot, in which none of them were systematically worked out' ([1922] 1988 (1):50.). Nakamura 1983 discusses at length the development of early Vedānta philosophy before Śaṅkara, looking at the relationship between Śaṅkara and the commentators who came before him as well as his contemporaries.

[117] Radhakrishnan 1960:26.

[118] Traditionally 778-820 CE (Ghate 1926:17), though now generally thought to have been earlier (see the discussion at Suthren Hirst 2005:25-26).

[119] Traditionally 1017-1137 CE (Lipner 1986:1).

[120] *Circa* eighth/ninth century (Nicholson undated).

[121] Perhaps mid-14th century (Dasgupta [1922] 1988 (vol.3):420).

[122] Traditional dates 1199-1278 CE (Hiriyanna 1995:187).

[123] Traditional dates 1478-1530 (Barz 2012:448).

[124] Ghate 1926:9.

[125] Ghate 1926:10-11. Or, as Hock (2007:11) puts it: 'While… philosopher commentators such as Śaṅkarācārya, Rāmānuja, and Madhvācārya provide unified accounts of the transcendental principle underlying the phenomenal world, the early Upaniṣads present a state of flux, in which different theories are juxtaposed and compete with each other.'

[126] For a useful discussion of the Advaitin approach to Upaniṣadic exegesis, see Suthren Hirst 2005 generally, and Chapter 3 in particular, Rambachan 1992, and Clooney 1992.

purpose of their exegesis was to show that the ultimate principle, in the form of *brahman*, was a single undifferentiated reality, with which the individual self, or *ātman*, was ontologically identical, and that apparent difference was exactly that - apparent, but not ultimately real. Knowledge of this fact was itself conducive to liberation, and the only valid means of acquiring the requisite knowledge of *brahman* was through scripture, mediated by an appropriate teacher. Almost by definition, this idea pre-supposed consistent and harmonious interpretation, via the process of *samanvaya*, of the texts, which the Advaitins considered eternal and authorless. The challenges of squaring such an approach with the diversity of Upaniṣadic teachings, which even Advaitin commentators acknowledged, led to the adoption and adaptation of the sophisticated exegetical techniques of the earlier Mīmāṃsakas in ways which, when we consider the Upaniṣads as literature, seem highly imaginative, and in which certain Upaniṣadic passages, such as Yājñavalkya's '*neti… neti…*' in the BU and Uddālaka Āruṇi's '*tat tvam asi*' in CU 6 were creatively interpreted to provide support for the requisite non-dual conclusion.

Scriptural exegesis was also the cornerstone of the theology of Rāmānuja, usually described as Viśiṣṭādvaita ('qualified non-dualism'). Also relying on the Upaniṣads, as well as the BhG and BS, Rāmānuja saw a personal god as the ultimate principle, while nevertheless retaining a place for *brahman*, and differed from the Advaitins in seeing the material universe as real. Unlike the Advaitin idea that material reality was no more than an illusory manifestation of *brahman*, for the Viśiṣṭādvaitins, the 'final Upanishadic teaching' was that *brahman*, the individual soul, and the physical world '… are all different and equally eternal' yet '… at the same time quite inseparable'.[127] When, therefore, the Upaniṣads identify the world or the self with *brahman*, they are simply stating their mutual dependence and inseparability, rather than their ontological identity. Many of the same Upaniṣadic statements relied on by the Advaitins to support their conclusions were also relied on by Rāmānuja in support of his.

The Bhedābhedins too saw *brahman* as the ultimate principle and, like Rāmānuja, posited a 'kind of identity-in-difference'[128] between *brahman* and individual selves. In

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[127] Hiriyanna 1995:178.
[128] Mohanty 2000:90.

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their eyes, however, *brahman* actually differentiated itself into individual, finite entities without in the process jeopardising its integrity. While individual selves cannot exist without *brahman*, they are at the same time different from it. The Dvaita doctrine associated with Madhva involved not just belief in a personal god, but also a pluralistic view of reality. Individual souls are distinct from each other: statements such as *tat tvam asi* indicate not an identity, but merely a resemblance.[129] Vallabha, on the other hand, argues for a pure theistic non-dualism (Śuddhādvaita) in which *brahman* is identified with Kṛṣṇa who is 'at once the one and the many'.[130]

For each of these philosophical schools, the scriptural authority of the Upaniṣads was an important root of their teaching. Yet each of them came up with a markedly different way of explaining the nature of reality. As we have already seen, this is because, in fact, the Upaniṣads set up questions and provide terminology for an analysis of the ultimate principle, but in them there are

> '… many divergent views, as the Upaniṣadic sages struggled to discover the underlying reality of macrocosm and microcosm… There is no single account of ultimate reality, of the means by which it may be realized, of its relation to the self of the individual… Rather, each commentator tried to show how the interpretative framework of his teaching tradition made best sense of scriptural diversity'.[131]

As van Buitenen says in a different context, 'It is always difficult to prove one's case by calling on the upaniṣads as witnesses: they are at once too willing and too evasive'.[132]

1.8   Interpreting the Upaniṣads: in Western Academia

No doubt influenced by the Indian quest for 'coherence', many early Western Upaniṣadic scholars from the late 19th century onwards (as well as some more recent scholars) also operated from an assumption that the Upaniṣads represented a coherent

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[129] Hiriyanna 1995:192.
[130] Mohanty 2000:90.
[131] Suthren Hirst 2005:61.
[132] Van Buitenen 1957a:21.

body and presented a single, consistent philosophical doctrine (what Stephanie Jamison, in a slightly different context, calls interpretation at a 'very macro' level).[133] This was most frequently aligned with the teachings of the strictly non-dualistic Advaita Vedānta school, and in particular with its emphasis on the ontological identity of *ātman* and *brahman*.[134] Paul Deussen was perhaps the most prominent early example of this approach, which was also followed by, amongst others, Moritz Winternitz.[135] Other early Western scholars also viewed the Upaniṣads as a more or less homogeneous group, some considering them to contain not so much 'high philosophy' as a form of 'primitive mysticism'[136] - Hermann Oldenberg considered them '*ein eigenartiges Gemisch von Kunstlosigkeit und Kunst, hilflosem Gestammel und Inspiration des Genius*'[137] - and others to be mysticism of the highest development.[138]

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[133] Jamison 2004:237. There were a few honourable exceptions: as early as 1913, Bhandarkar noted that '… a close examination will show that [the Upaniṣads] teach not one, but various systems of doctrines as regards the nature of God, man and the world and the relations between them' ([1913] 1980:1); Keith described Deussen's idea that the Upaniṣads contained a 'definite doctrine of idealism' as 'contrary to all probability and reason' (1925:593).

[134] As I shall explore in Chapter 2, that identity is in fact rarely expressly and unambiguously made in the Upaniṣads themselves

[135] Examples include '…the fundamental thought of the entire Upanishad philosophy may be expressed by the simple equation:- Brahman = Âtman.' (Deussen [1899] 1906:39); '*… die Grundlehre, die sich durch alle echten Upaniṣads hindurchzieht, und welche in dem Satze zusammenfassen läßt: 'Das Weltall is das Brahman, das Brahman aber ist der Ātman.'*'. (Winternitz 1907:210) ('…the fundamental doctrine, which runs through all the true Upaniṣads, and which allows them to be brought together doctrinally: 'The universe is *brahman,* but *brahman* is *ātman.*'), though, to be fair to him, at 1927:266 he sees the 'real value' of the Upaniṣads in their presentation of what he describes as the 'wrestling' of their thinkers in search of truth; the Upaniṣads have 'a general tendency' to search for 'a single unitary principle' (Edgerton 1916:199); 'From the earliest Upaniṣad we have, the view is clear that there is a unity' (Keith 1925:516); 'In general, each Upanishadic teaching creates an integrative vision, a view of the whole which draws together the separate elements of the world and of human experience and compresses them into a single form' (Brereton 1990:118); 'It is well known that the central theme of the Upaniṣads is the identity between *ātman* and *brahman*' (Cohen 2008:289). To be fair to Cohen, she also acknowledges that: 'The older Upaniṣads do not present a unified world view; these texts differ significantly from one another in their teachings. Often, one Upaniṣadic text will invoke concepts and ideas that are completely absent in another' (2008:39) - yet, later, she says: 'There are hundreds of texts called Upaniṣads, all dealing with the same central theme - the mystical identity between the cosmic force *brahman* and the immortal inner self of a living being, *ātman*' (Cohen 2018a:1). See also Hanefeld 1976:9-10.

[136] Hanefeld 1976:3.

[137] 'A peculiar mixture of artlessness and art, helpless stuttering and inspiration of genius': Oldenberg 1915:148.

[138] See the discussion at Hanefeld 1976:5.

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What these early Western approaches to interpretation have in common with the Indian philosophical schools is a starting point in which passages which support the preconceptions of the interpreter are emphasised to the exclusion, or at least marginalisation, of apparently contradictory passages. In many places certain, often questionable, assumptions are made, or interpretations offered, in order to support the basic premises.[139] This is perhaps most obvious in the equating of *ātman* and *brahman*, which frequently proceeds on the basis of assumptions about, or interpretations of, other terms.[140]

These interpreters also generally paid scant attention to the methods of presentation of the teachings, most notably the use of narrative to set frameworks for teachings. It was only as the 20th century progressed and moved into the 21st that much of Western academia began to pay greater attention, first, to the diversity of teachings which the Upaniṣads contain[141]; secondly, to what Timm calls '… the crucial task of assessing the authenticity of inherited presuppositions'[142]; and, thirdly, to the ways in which the Upaniṣads present their teachings.[143] In this later period, however, many (though not all) Western commentators, perhaps in reaction to the idea of 'coherence', preferred either to see the Upaniṣads as anthologies of unrelated, or only loosely related, teachings, or to focus on detailed analyses of individual texts or parts of texts, sometimes as small as individual words or phrases (in Jamison's terminology, the 'very micro' level).[144] While

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[139] As Sawai says of the Indian schools: 'The scriptural interpretation in the Vedānta religious traditions is not the mere explanation of the Upaniṣad texts, but rather a creative interpretation of the texts in that the interpreters provide the meanings of the scriptures through their own views' (2006:147).

[140] See in particular my discussion in Chapter 4 of the famous phrase '*tat tvam asi*'.

[141] 'We cannot accept uncritically the Indian commentaries, written so many centuries later… which… force all these texts into the narrow framework of absolute monism' (Renou 1957a:38); 'Even though this equation [i.e. between *ātman* and *brahman*] played a significant role in later developments of religion and theology in India… it is incorrect to think that the single aim of all the Upaniṣads is to enunciate this simple truth.' (Olivelle 1998a:27); '… the Upaniṣads present several different, and sometimes conflicting, teachings about the nature of the self…' (Black 2007:1).

[142] Timm 1992:2.

[143] Brereton 1990; Olivelle 1999b; Grinshpon 2003; Black 2007; and Lindquist 2008 are prominent examples of this approach.

[144] Jamison 2004:237. There are far too many examples to list exhaustively here, but, for representatives of this approach to Upaniṣadic scholarship, see Hauschild 1927 and Johnston 1930 (on the ŚU); Thieme 1965 (on the ĪU); Smith 1975 and 1976 (on the ŚU and MuU); Morgenroth 1970 (on CU 6); Oberlies' work on the ŚU, culminating in Oberlies 1988;

this latter approach is hugely valuable in aiding detailed understanding of the texts, it can easily lead to a tendency to marginalise such consistency, or, just as important, development, of speculation and thought as the Upaniṣads as a group do display.

I believe that neither the 'very macro' nor 'very micro' approach really takes us to the heart of what the Upaniṣads bring to the discussion of the ultimate principle in Indian thought. The Upaniṣads' continued importance in Indian religious and philosophical traditions, and a close reading of the texts themselves, suggests that there is more to them than a random bunch of stories, even if attempting to find 'coherence' in their teachings is a futile task. Reading the Upaniṣads (or sections of the Upaniṣads) as unstructured anthologies or in isolation from each other runs the risk of losing sight of how the texts, both individually and as a genre, develop ideas of the ultimate principle. I will instead argue for a 'middle path' approach, in which I acknowledge the Upaniṣads' diversity, yet at the same time show how their overriding concern with identifying and analysing the ultimate principle reflects in the raising of a number of specific questions about the functions of that principle. As a result, we start to see some distinct progressions, as well as variations, in the way in which those questions are answered, and some clear trajectories in the Upaniṣads' teachings.

The idea of exploring the development of ideas of the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads is not in itself a new one: Robert Hume in the 1920s and Erich Frauwallner in the 1950s adopted a similar exegetical approach. However, Hume focussed primarily on the usage of the term *brahman*, arguing that its meaning shifted from indicating a creative principle, to standing for 'the all', to eventually being identified with the more personal principle *ātman*. Accepting that the Upaniṣads did not teach a single coherent system, he traced a progression of ideas about the ultimate principle from mythical cosmologies through a 'realistic materialism' to a 'speculative idealism'[145], while at the same time dismissing much of the Upaniṣads' speculation as 'childlike'[146] or 'guesses at

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Bodewitz 1985 (on the KaU), 1991/92 (on CU 6.13), and 2001 (on CU 6.8-16); Brereton 1986 (on CU 6) and 1988 (on BU 1.5); Slaje 2001 (on BU 2.4.12); Hock 2002 (on the BU) and Freedman 2012 (on TU 2).

[145] Hume 1921, especially at 69.
[146] Hume 1921:1.

truth'.[147] In Frauwallner's analysis, the Upaniṣads developed theories about the '*Träger des Lebens*' (the 'carrier' or 'vehicle' of life) first as water, '… a life-carrying element' which became '… clothed in the mysterious symbolism of the sacrificial mystique'[148] but 'did not turn out to be very fruitful'[149]; secondly as wind (or breath), which also faltered because, although it could explain life, it could not satisfactorily account for knowledge or consciousness; and thirdly as fire, a doctrine which metamorphosed, not entirely convincingly, into a doctrine of *brahman* ('the all-supreme World-Soul') as the ultimate principle.[150]

While both Hume and Frauwallner put forward some interesting ideas about the Upaniṣadic approach to investigating the ultimate principle, I do not find either of their analyses entirely convincing. Hume, while acknowledging the etymological background of the term *brahman*, does not develop the implications of that etymological background sufficiently, and ends up caught in the Advaitin *brahman* = *ātman* identity. Frauwallner rightly notes some of the earlier Vedic ideas of the ultimate principle as a natural force or element, but does not adequately address some of the ideas which particularly the later Upaniṣads put forward. Neither Hume nor Frauwallner had the benefit of the extensive Upaniṣadic scholarship of the last fifty or so years, and neither of them paid great attention either to the questions asked, as opposed to the theories presented, or to the context or methods of presentation of the Upaniṣads' teachings, most specifically to their use of narrative. I will show in this thesis that paying attention first to the specific underlying question and then to the context and method of presentation of teachings can demonstrate certain trajectories of thought perhaps overlooked by those earlier commentators.

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[147] Hume 1921:9.
[148] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:38.
[149] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:41.
[150] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:54. Frauwallner's individual theories are analysed in Schneider 1961 (the '*Wasser-Kreislauf-Lehre*', or cycle of water doctrine); Hanefeld 1976 (the '*Feuer-Lehre*', or fire doctrine); and Bakker 1982 (the '*Atem-Lehre*', or wind/*prāṇa* doctrine). Bakker argues persuasively (1982:120) that Frauwallner's conclusions about the demise of the *prāṇa* doctrine should be reconsidered and that it remained influential in later theories of consciousness. See also the criticisms of the fire doctrine at Connolly 1992:49 and Killingley 1997:7.

1.9 The Narratives of the Upaniṣads

One of the most compelling characteristics of the Upaniṣads, particularly the early ones, is their use of narrative episodes to elaborate their teachings. In general, narrative plays a minor role in the earlier Vedic texts, and, except perhaps towards the end of the Brāhmaṇa period, tends to be set in a more 'cosmic' realm, with its chief characters being gods, demons and their respective entourages.[151] The Upaniṣads display a significant shift in rhetorical style by including many instances, especially in the early Upaniṣads, in which important teachings are presented by ostensibly human characters in realistic narrative situations.[152] Although, for reasons explained in the Introduction, this is not a narratological study, I will focus much of my analysis in Chapters 3 and 4 of the development of teachings about the ultimate principle within and around some of these narratives. I do not suggest that they record actual historical events, but I do believe that certain of the literary devices employed in them provide useful frameworks in which to consider the texts' teachings. I also argue that the questions which the Upaniṣads raise about the ultimate principle may in some cases drive the structure and content of the narratives themselves and the relative positioning of the narrative episodes within the texts in their redacted quasi-canonical forms. As Patton suggests in the context of dialogue and narrative presentations of teachings more generally, the Upaniṣadic narratives serve as ways both of making the listener 'sit up and listen better' and of 'establishing religious authority'.[153] However, I suggest that the Upaniṣadic narratives operate less as 'dramatic enforcers of doctrine'[154], but rather, as Lindquist suggests, that they operate as processes in which what are often later perceived to be central doctrinal concepts are in fact the objects of questioning and enquiry and may be 'defined differently or contested in any given context'.[155]

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[151] There are a few exceptions, e.g. ṚV 7.103, discussed in Patton 2015.

[152] The CU is particularly rich in 'stories'. With the notable exceptions of Naciketas' story in the first part of the KaU, and the frame story of six *brahmins* coming to Pippalāda for teaching in the PU, the later Upaniṣads do not employ narrative to any meaningful extent.

[153] Patton 2015:25. See also the observations at Bronkhorst 2016:409-412.

[154] Patton *ibid.*

[155] Lindquist 2018c:7.

In his study of narratology, Ong emphasises the importance of narrative in the dissemination of knowledge in oral cultures (such as that of the Upaniṣads). In societies in which other methods of disseminating knowledge are absent, 'Oral cultures… use stories of human action to store, organize, and communicate much of what they know'[156], largely because the use of narrative makes the knowledge communicated more readily accessible and more easily memorable than that communicated through, for example, the medium of recitation of specialist ritual material. As he says, 'In primary oral cultures, where there is no text, the narrative serves to bond thought more massively and permanently than other genres'.[157]

However, despite this important point, and despite the conviction of BSBh 3.4.23-24 that the Upaniṣadic narratives were designed to illuminate the teachings of the texts, it was common in early Western exegesis largely to ignore the 'story-telling' of the Upaniṣads when trying to extract philosophical teachings and religious doctrine. Commentators tended to treat the narratives as an 'adornment' to the texts' philosophical teachings[158], and assume that they were most likely later embellishments 'destined for inferiority'.[159] As Grinshpon put it as recently as 2003:

> 'The attention of the world has focused on the great and abstract philosophy expounded in the Upaniṣads, while the stories themselves have been under-read. Scant attention has been paid to the context of transmission of knowledge…'.[160]

Grinshpon identifies two 'modes of under-reading': '… neglecting the subtext and details of the story' and 'discarding the story as irrelevant in pursuit of the 'teaching''.[161] However, in his view, 'The Upanishadic story is indispensable to learning about the

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[156] Ong 2002:137.

[157] Ong 2002:138. We should also bear in mind that narratives disseminated in a way which promote the positions or viewpoints of a dominant group, such as the *brahmins*, may also 'generate counter-myths or retellings of myth that reverse imposed orders'. (Hawthorne 2017:261).

[158] Lindquist 2011a:35.

[159] Grinshpon 1998:373.

[160] Grinshpon 2003:vii. Black and Geen also note (2011:25) that: '… the Upaniṣads… have been mined for their philosophical content, yet not enough attention has been paid to how they present their ideas'.

[161] Grinshpon 2003:103.

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nature of Upanishadic knowledge'[162], a view shared by Lindquist who argues that it is '… a fundamental mistake to disassociate the philosophical argumentation from the grander narrative it is a part of'.[163]

In this thesis, I too argue that reading teachings through the lens of their narrative presentations helps show how the quest for the ultimate principle developed. In doing so, I take as a premise that the fact that the texts have achieved quasi-canonical status in the forms which they have is important, following Hacker's approach to the 'historical exploration' (*geschichtlichen Erforschung*) of ancient Sanskrit texts. Hacker argues that, while the texts as we have them may well be made up of pieces which had once stood alone, the fact that we have them in the form in which we do should be considered significant. Study of those texts should accordingly also concern itself with the historical, cultural and intellectual reasons why an individual text ended up in the form in which it did.[164] In other words, even though the Upaniṣads as they have come down to us are undoubtedly in many cases composite, the final redaction of the texts is as it is for a reason, and the narratives accordingly represent an integral part of them. The Upaniṣads should not be considered 'loosely structured collections of assertions, observations and aphorisms about the nature of things'. [165] Rather, they should be read in a way which 'accentuates the connections between the parts of the dialogue, and… assumes that the passage should be seen as a coherent composition'.[166] This is an approach which Grinshpon calls 'Good-Enough Reading'[167]: the narratives should be considered as integral parts of the teachings. I would go further and argue that the teachings communicated through the medium of narrative, which are more easily and

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[162] Grinshpon 2003:116.

[163] Lindquist 2008:407. In recent years, more attention has been paid to the stories of the Upaniṣads, especially by scholars such as Olivelle, Brereton, Grinshpon, Lindquist and Black, who have begun to look more closely at how the narrative detail assists in understanding the argument or teaching of the narrative in question.

[164] Hacker 1961. See also Halbfass 1995:5, where he notes Hacker's approach to philology which is 'not restricted to dissection', and his idea that '… changes and transformations [in texts] themselves have to be explored as meaningful historical processes'. As Olivelle puts it (1999b:47), 'The story is told not just in the oldest [version] but in the changes we can see from the older to the newer.'

[165] Brereton 1997:3n7.

[166] *Ibid.*

[167] Grinshpon 2003:1, where he says: 'The Upanishadic story is never offered for its own sake. Nor are the sublime messages delivered context-free.'

readily remembered than those communicated in other ways, should, as Ong implies, be considered to be the most important teachings of the Upaniṣads.[168]

This approach to the texts also implies that the narratives, even if of diverse origins, have been placed in the order in which they appear deliberately. It is accordingly a legitimate enquiry to consider the development of ideas from a narrative which appears earlier in a text to one which appears later, rather than simply studying each narrative in isolation. Reading the texts in this way also allows us to look critically and inter-textually at situations where the same character appears in more than one story, and at situations where what is substantially the same narrative appears in more than one place. Doing so highlights what the, often subtle, differences in the presentation of that character, or that situation, can tell us both about the religious, philosophical or social standpoints of the compiler or editor of the particular narrative incident, and, importantly, about the apparent development of the teachings attributed to that character.[169] A literary study of the texts which is mindful of the development of characters and narrative episodes, whether within the same text or between different texts, enables one to consider the progression of ideas within the contexts in which they were being presented to a much greater extent than is allowed by the simple mining of the texts for 'nuggets' of philosophical teaching isolated from their context.

As explained earlier, the Upaniṣads also reflect the traditions of different teachers, lineages, and Vedic schools. The literary presentation of Upaniṣads which come from different scholarly traditions (and perhaps different geographical areas) may very well imply different underlying agendas, perhaps set up in competition with each other in what Black calls a 'competitive marketplace of ideas'.[170] In his detailed analysis of the

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[168] Hawthorne (2017:248), drawing on the work of Foucault and others, also highlights the use of myth as a strategy to legitimise and preserve social structures, in our case the pre-eminence of the *brahmins*.

[169] This does not imply that the characters are necessarily historical figures, or that the episodes in which they feature accurately record historical events, but rather that, putting teachings into the mouths of certain characters carried a particular message. In Chapter 4, I will argue that reading the various Upaniṣadic narratives involving Uddālaka Āruṇi in this way illuminates his teachings about the ultimate principle, which find their final expression in the well-known narrative of CU 6.

[170] Black 2012:12. As Lincoln says (2006:127): '… we need to ask [when reading religious texts]: Who is trying to persuade whom of what in this text? In what context is the attempt situated, and what are the consequences should it succeed?'

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'Young Śvetaketu' story which appears in more or less similar forms in BU 6.2, CU 5.3-5.10, and KṣU 1[171], Olivelle emphasises the importance of the different literary presentations of the story in the three Upaniṣads in which it appears. As he points out:

> 'Close attention to language, style, narrative strategy, and choice of words helps us understand what the author is aiming to do, what message, subtle or otherwise, he is attempting to impart…'.[172]

Olivelle highlights a number of subtle differences between the three presentations of what is ostensibly the same story (probably deriving from one or more common sources). By looking in particular at the narrative contexts, he detects throughout the BU a motif of 'humiliations of proud Brahmins, especially the learned Brahmins from Kuru-Pañcāla, the ancient center of brahmanical culture' and 'a literary effort to establish Videha as a rival center of theological learning, with Yājñavalkya as leading theologian'.[173] From the same analysis, he sees the CU, on the other hand, as presenting on the whole a more conservative approach, with Kuru-Pañcāla *brahmins* such as Uddālaka Āruṇi playing a prominent role.

It is also part of the Upaniṣads' attraction that characters in them - from Raikva scratching himself[174], to Śvetaketu, the arrogant *brahmin* boy, to Maitreyī, the confused wife - in general bring with them a degree of verisimilitude. It is not difficult to visualise Śvetaketu in CU 6.1.2 returning proudly to his father and being brought down to size, nor Yājñavalkya in debate with the Kuru-Pañcāla *brahmins* in BU 3. The characterisations which the texts employ add greatly to the dramatic impact of the narratives, helping to set context and to prepare the listener for the teachings which follow. A number of the characters we meet in the Upaniṣads have appeared in earlier Vedic texts[175], often as revered teachers, so that their appearance in the Upaniṣads would have carried a message to the well-prepared listener, which, as we see in Olivelle's

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[171] Olivelle 1999b. I will discuss the underlying narrative in more detail in Chapter 4.
[172] Olivelle 1999b:47.
[173] Olivelle 1999b:65.
[174] Bakker (1982:119) memorably describes Raikva as 'the itchy ascetic'.
[175] Especially in the ŚB.

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Young Śvetaketu study, may have been related to the political or theological standpoint of the text in which the character appears.

As part of the recent trend towards studying the narratives, a number of scholars have either studied individual characters in depth[176], or explored more generally certain types of character in their narrative context.[177] However, the verisimilitude of the Upaniṣadic characters does not mean that they were genuine historical figures nor that the episodes in which they appear actually took place or, even if they did, that they are accurately recorded. We must also be cautious about assuming that the Upaniṣadic stories teach us anything significant about life in their period, for, as Schopen reminds us, surviving 'sacred' texts tend to be 'literary expressions of normative doctrine', rather than any sort of historical record.[178] The narratives are literary techniques, rather than journalistic reporting, which fact emphasises their positioning in the texts in order to assist in understanding what the texts are telling us.

1.10 Important Narrative Themes

In the final part of this Chapter, I will discuss briefly certain of the most important literary devices found in the Upaniṣads. There are a number of these which feature sufficiently commonly, and/or are given sufficient prominence, to be noteworthy. In his

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[176] Lindquist has focussed much of his work on one Upaniṣadic character, Yājñavalkya, from his discussion of BU 3.9.28 in 2004, through his 2008 study of women in the BU (the two most important of whom, Gārgī and Maitreyī, both appear in dialogue with Yājñavalkya), to his consideration of the historicity of Yājñavalkya in 2011 and his complete book on Yājñavalkya (forthcoming). Other characters have been analysed in works such as Fišer 1984, Reinvang 2000, Hock 2002, and Witzel 2003b (all on Yājñavalkya); Findly 1985 on Gārgī; Bodewitz 2001 on Uddālaka Āruṇi; Black 2011b on Śvetaketu; and Lindquist 2011a on Śākalya. Although now somewhat dated, Macdonell and Keith 1912 contains a useful encyclopaedia of Vedic characters. Ruben 1947 contains some more detailed (though rather speculative) studies of individual Upaniṣadic 'philosophers' set in their textual contexts, Olivelle 1998a:478-486 a useful list of Upaniṣadic characters, and Lindquist 2018b an overview of some of the more important individuals.

[177] Notably Black 2007. Grinshpon (2003:vii.) argues that the Upaniṣadic narratives are 'narratives of crisis', whose characters are 'awakened to their inferiority' and suffer 'metaphysical (or ontological) weakness', the transcendence of which is 'the crux of Upanishadic storytelling'.

[178] Schopen 1997 discusses the primacy given to textual sources over archaeological and other evidence in western Buddhist studies, arguing that one source of this tendency may lie in the Protestant Christian emphasis on scripture over external religious symbols (relics, statues etc.).

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analysis of the Young Śvetaketu story, Olivelle highlights three of these: first, the motif, especially in the CU, of teachings being presented in the context of teacher and student; secondly, the motif of secrecy[179]; and thirdly the presentation of important teachings as coming from 'unorthodox' sources, whether human, such as the non-*brahmin* Raikva[180]; animals and birds[181]; or inanimate sources such as fire.[182] These literary devices, as well as the motif of debate between *brahmins*, serve a number of important contextual purposes.

By the time of the early Upaniṣads, Vedic studentship, *brahmacarya*, appears to have been an established social procedure open (unlike in its later formulations in the Gṛhyasūtras and the *dharma* texts) to adults as well as adolescents.[183] It had a distinct ritual element, generally requiring formal initiation (*upanayana*).[184] This formalised transmission of Vedic knowledge not only helped preserve the Vedic texts and ritual practices, and ensure a ready supply of trained *brahmins,* it gave the teachings transmitted greater religious authority.[185] The teacher/student relationship is probably the most common social relationship which we see in the Upaniṣads. Its appearance is generally signposted by the formulaic approach of the candidate *brahmacārin* to the intended teacher with words such as *upaimyaham* ('I come to you as a student')[186] or *brahmacaryam vatsyāmi* (slightly loosely translated by Olivelle as 'I have come for *brahmacarya*')[187] and, sometimes, by the offering of firewood by the intended student to the proposed teacher.[188] Narrative episodes set in this framework are not mere

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[179] Olivelle refers in particular to the reluctance of many Upaniṣadic teachers to impart their teachings, even to initiated students, and the tendency of teachers to give half answers, imposing a burden on the student both to recognise the half answers and to be persistent in his quest for the full truth. The story of Indra and Virocana at CU 8.7-12 is probably the clearest example of this.

[180] CU 4.1-3.

[181] E.g. in CU 4.5-8.

[182] CU 4.6.

[183] See ŚB 11.5.4.

[184] Though, at this stage, the initiation process was probably much simpler than the complex form which developed later: see, e.g., the discussion at Bronkhorst 2016:140ff.

[185] 'The reproductive mechanism of [the Vedic] tradition was the regimen of *brahmacarya*, which sanctified the teacher-pupil relation as a spiritual filiation, and ensured the preservation and expansion of the texts and practices…'. (Lubin 2005:92)

[186] BU 6.2.7 (from the verbal root √*upe*).

[187] CU 4.4.3. Hume has the syntactically more accurate 'I will become a pupil [of yours]'.

[188] The tending of the teacher's fire was one of the roles of a *brahmacārin*.

'adornment', nor simply an obvious pedagogical device, but a way of investing teachings with the religious and social significance inherent in the process of initiation and the institution of Vedic studentship. This, at least on the face of it, locates them firmly within Vedic tradition, however radical their contents and even though frequently done in a way critical of traditional hereditary brahmanism.[189]

The story of Satyakāma Jābāla brings in another narrative motif, namely the placing of teachings into the mouths of 'unorthodox' teachers (here a bull, a fire, a wild goose and a water-bird).[190] Black puts forward two suggestions about this motif: first that the 'unorthodox' teachers might represent 'other cultural traditions' or, secondly, that they may be demonstrating that it is possible to learn about ultimate reality through observation of natural phenomena.[191] While these suggestions are not mutually exclusive, I believe that the first of them is the key to understanding the narratives in which teachings are transmitted by 'unorthodox' teachers: the motif of the 'unorthodox' teacher indicates a teaching which has come, in whole or in part, from outside the traditional ritually dominated brahmanical environment.[192]

In the Young Śvetaketu story, Śvetaketu is sent by his father, Uddālaka Āruṇi, to substitute for him at a ritual to be performed in the king's court.[193] The king asks the young man a number of questions about, amongst other things, the different paths taken by the dead. Śvetaketu, unable to answer the questions put to him by 'that excuse for a prince' (*rājanyabandhuḥ*)[194], returns angrily to his father, chiding him for not having

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[189] As, e.g., in the stories of Satyakāma Jābāla in CU 4.4-9 and of Śvetaketu in CU 6 (the latter discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). See also Tsuchida 1991 for a discussion of the development of 'Brahminhood', though in a period a little later than the CU, and Lindquist 2011c for a discussion of the motif of non-familial teaching taking precedence over familial teaching: as he says, speaking of the Upaniṣads in general, 'proper knowledge trumps traditional filial standards' (2011c:36). Grinshpon 2003:101-103 also discusses CU 6.1, especially some of its 'hidden messages'. We should also not overlook the extensive lists of teachers which feature in three different places in the BU (2.6, 4.6 and 6.5), emphasising the importance of teachings being transmitted through lineage. These lists have been studied by Bronkhorst (2007a:219ff), and in Lindquist 2011c and Black 2011c.

[190] CU 4.4-4.9.

[191] Black 2007:55.

[192] Nevertheless, the conservative agenda of the CU still required that teaching to be confirmed by a *brahmin*, as a way of demonstrating its incorporation into the Vedic tradition.

[193] At least in the version in the KṣU, though the reason for his visit to the king is less explicit in the BU and CU.

[194] CU 5.3.5.

educated him properly. Uddālaka admits that he too is unable to answer the king's questions, so takes himself to the court to seek teaching from the king. Not only does this prominent narrative, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4, highlight adult *brahmacarya*[195], it also places its teachings in the mouth of a *kṣatriya*, rather than a *brahmin*. While this serves similar purposes to the broader motif of the 'unorthodox' teacher in highlighting novelty or radicalism, the fact of the teacher being specifically presented as a *kṣatriya*, here and in narratives such as those in BU 2.1.1, where Bālāki is taught by Ajātaśatru, king of Kāśi, and CU 5.11-5.24, where Uddālaka Āruṇi and five companions are taught by king Aśvapati Kaikeya, adds an additional layer.[196] In the BU and CU versions of the Young Śvetaketu story,[197] Pravāhaṇa Jaivali welcomes Uddālaka Āruṇi with due reverence and formality, before expounding to him a doctrine concerning the paths of the dead and the cyclical nature of life which, he says, has up to that point 'never reached *brahmins*'.[198]

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[195] At least in the BU and KṣU versions. Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra 1.22 contemplates the re-initiation of one who has previously been initiated, which may explain why adult *brahmins* in the Upaniṣads (who had probably already gone through some form of adolescent *upanayana*) had no qualms about offering themselves as students.

[196] It has also been suggested that both Sanatkumāra, who teaches Nārada in CU 7.1-7.26, and Yama, god of death, who instructs Naciketas in KaU 1-3, are *kṣatriyas*. (Deussen [1899] 1906:18; Black 2007:48)

[197] BU 6.2 and CU 5.3-5.10. In his discussion of these two versions of the narrative, Renou (1955:100) concludes that neither is the original, but that both probably derive from a common third source. Söhnen has suggested that the similar, though shorter, story, which appears with a different king at KṣU 1, may be earlier than the version in either BU or CU (Söhnen 1981, doubted at Olivelle 1999b:48; see also Killingley 1997:4). Killingley suggests (*ibid.*) that Citra Gāṅgyānani, the teacher in the KṣU, may not be a *kṣatriya*, though that seems debatable as he is expressly referred to as the patron of an intended sacrifice, with power to select the officiating priests, a role generally assumed by a *kṣatriya*. Olivelle (1998a:582) and Cohen (2018f:279) both note that in some manuscripts of the KṣU he is referred to as 'Gārgyāyaṇi', suggesting a connection to the Gārgya lineage and potentially making him a *brahmin.* However, he is referred to as *para* by Uddālaka Āruṇi in KṣU 1.1, which Olivelle translates as 'outsider', suggesting that he is not a *brahmin*.

[198] CU 5.3.7: … *yatheyaṃ na prāk tvattaḥ purā vidyā brāhmaṇān gacchati*…. See also BU 6.2.8. In the CU, the exclusive knowledge of the doctrine by *kṣatriyas* is presented by the king as the justification for government being the preserve of *kṣatriyas* (CU 5.3.7: … *tasmād u sarveṣu lokeṣu kṣatrasyaiva praśāsanam abhūd iti* …). In CU 1.8, we meet Pravāhaṇa Jaivali again, taking part in a discussion about the High Chant, and teaching his interlocutors, Śilaka Śālavātya and Caikitāyana Dālbhya. Here Jaivali is not explicitly presented as a king, but as a man 'who had mastered the High Chant' (*udgīthe kuśalā babhūvuḥ*), which might suggest a *brahmin* of the SV. However, the reference in CU 1.8.2 to his interlocutors using the dual form *brāhmaṇayoḥ* (i.e. 'the two *brahmins*') is usually taken as implying that Jaivali is a non-*brahmin*, and therefore possibly the same character as in CU 5.3 (see, e.g., Radhakrishnan 1953:350).

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The significance of the '*kṣatriya* teaching' motif has been extensively debated. While the Dharmasūtras specifically allow *brahmins* to study with non-*brahmins* 'in times of distress'[199], the Upaniṣads do not present their *kṣatriya* teachings in this context. Relying on the fact that some of the doctrines imparted by *kṣatriyas* appear particularly radical and innovative, notably the notions of cyclical existence and karmically conditioned rebirth which feature in the Young Śvetaketu story[200], it has been argued either that the Upaniṣads as a genre may be of *kṣatriya* authorship; or that the narratives in which *kṣatriyas* teach *brahmins* are of *kṣatriya* origin; or, at the least, that the doctrines presented as being put forward by *kṣatriyas* to *brahmins* were of non-brahmanical, though perhaps not *kṣatriya*, origin.[201] Frauwallner has argued that the motif of *kṣatriya* teaching 'is evidently taken out of the actual life itself', on the basis that it would not otherwise have featured in texts propagated by *brahmins*.[202] He suggests that the *brahmin* sacrificial priests 'never felt at home' in Upaniṣadic philosophical speculations, so that it made sense for them to attribute some of the more radical speculations to non-*brahmin* sources, perhaps as a kind of defence mechanism in case the teachings failed to win acceptance. Frauwallner does acknowledge, however, that attributing to *kṣatriyas*

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[199] See the sources cited at Scharfe 2002:194-5.

[200] Though note the teaching of conditioned rebirth by Yājñavalkya, a *brahmin*, to Ārtabhāga in BU 3.2.13. As Bronkhorst has pointed out (2007a:120), there is no suggestion that Yājñavalkya learned this doctrine from a *kṣatriya* source, which he uses to argue that Janaka's *brahmodya* is a later story than the Young Śvetaketu story. See also Hock 2002.

[201] Garbe argued that these stories and teachings showed a *kṣatriya* recognition of 'the hollowness of the sacrificial system and the absurdity of its symbolism' and opened 'a new world of ideas'. (Garbe 1897:78, first published in German in 1873). Garbe's argument is prefaced by a virulent attack on *brahmins* as grasping, corrupt and morally depraved and is generally characterised by a strong anti-clericalism, as when he says that 'Intellectual enlightenment is opposed by its natural enemy, the priesthood, until it has become too strong in the people to be successfully opposed any longer. Then the priest, too, professes the new ideas, and tries to harmonise them as far as possible with his hollow shams.' (1897:79). In 1899, Deussen concluded that the 'doctrine of the *ātman*' was in all probability 'taken up and cultivated primarily not in Brahman but in Kshatriya circles', was 'transmitted in a narrow circle among the Kshatriyas to the exclusion of the Brahmans' and 'was fostered and developed by the Kshatriyas in opposition to the principles of the Brahmanical ritual'. (Deussen [1899] 1906:19-20. See also Deussen [1897] 1980:8 and 18-19.) Winternitz (1927:227) also supported the notion that some of the 'early sceptics and thinkers' were not *brahmins*, on the basis that *brahmins* were too entrenched in ritual. Edgerton, however, as early as 1916, dismissed the idea of *kṣatriya* authorship as a 'strange theory… now… rejected by practically everyone' (1916:202).

[202] 'The Brahmanas, who have handed down the text, would hardly think of contriving this sort of thing, if in actuality there would have been no basis for it.' (Frauwallner [1953] 1973:34).

'*the chief role*' (my emphasis) in expounding the speculations of the Upaniṣads 'remains… problematic'.[203] Dasgupta, in 1922, took a more 'middle path', arguing that certain *kṣatriyas* were philosophical enquirers who influenced the teachings of the Upaniṣads. In his view, the Upaniṣads were

> 'not the production of the growth of Brahmanic dogmas alone, … non-Brahmanic thought as well must have either set the Upaniṣad doctrines afoot, or have rendered fruitful assistance to their formulation and cultivation, though they achieved their culmination in the hands of the Brahmins'.[204]

Given the greater cross-fertilisation of ideas in the early Upaniṣadic period, putting teachings into the mouths of *kṣatriyas* may indeed have been a coded way of incorporating teachings which originated outside the Vedic fold. However, this does not necessarily mean that they were, as Frauwallner suggests, *in fact* the teachings of *kṣatriyas* (though the Buddha and Mahāvīra were both *kṣatriyas*), nor that any parts of the Upaniṣads were actually of *kṣatriya* authorship. The Upaniṣads, whatever the origins of their teachings, continued to be propagated in *brahmin* circles in forms which include the motif of the *kṣatriya* teachers. As Lindquist says, 'Given the preponderance of positive portrayals of Brahmin dominance in the Upaniṣads… this self-critique does not suggest any radical questioning of Brahmin hegemony.'[205] Olivelle persuasively suggests that the *kṣatriya* motif may have been a deliberate literary device aimed at aligning new doctrines to the burgeoning class of urban, often court based, *brahmins*, in contradistinction to their more conservative rural counterparts, so emphasising the 'modernity' of the teachings and the development of ideas within the *brahmin* fold.[206] He stresses that the reasons for propagating the teachings in this way may have been

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[203] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:35.
[204] Dasgupta [1922] 1988(1):31.
[205] Lindquist 2018a:85.
[206] Olivelle 1992:38 and 41. Thapar goes further and suggests, in an argument which presupposes the non-*brahmin* origin of these teachings, that they were propagated by 'dissidents seeking alternative philosophies' (1994:310) and that 'the *brahma-kṣatr* hierarchy was reversed in the acquisition of mystical knowledge' (1994:313). In line with his general anti-clericalism, Garbe, also noting the propagation of these teachings in *brahmin* texts, questions whether the *brahmins* at the time even appreciated their significance (1897:78).

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driven not just by literary factors, but also by political and social driving forces. The relationship between *brahmins* and kings was always to some extent a symbiotic one, and was becoming more so in the light of northern India's changing socio-political landscape, where the stature and authority of the king were on the rise[207], and where kings needed *brahmins* both in order to conduct the ever more complex traditional rituals and to add spiritual authority to their growing temporal authority.[208] *Brahmins*, particularly urban *brahmins*, needed the patronage of kings as a source of income and reputation (a point emphasised in the relationship between Yājñavalkya and Janaka throughout the middle parts of the BU).[209] The presentation by *brahmins* of kings as teachers may well, therefore, have operated as a form of flattery which enhanced the status of those *brahmins* at court and in society, and potentially their wealth.[210] It also helped the kings by portraying Upaniṣadic knowledge as a key facet of royal power and authority. In other words, '*brahmin* composers had nothing to lose, and a lot to gain, in portraying *kṣatriyas* as the authors'.[211] Putting teachings into the mouths of *kṣatriyas* potentially, therefore, fulfilled a two-fold purpose: as with the other 'unorthodox' teachers, a literary one, in emphasising the 'modernity' and radicalism of the teachings, but also a socio-political one, in helping to preserve and develop the symbiotic *brahmin/kṣatriya* relationship in an increasingly urban society.[212]

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[207] As reflected in the royal consecration ceremonies depicted in the Brāhmaṇas.

[208] And perhaps to validate their knowledge and/or to provide a religiously justified basis for their secular power: see Black 2007:129, Bhattacharya 1983. As Aitareya Brāhmaṇa 8.2 points out: '*Brahma* and *kṣatra* are established on each other' (… *brahmaṇi khalu vai kṣatram pratiṣṭithaṃ kṣatre brahmātho sāmna eva sayonitāyai*). This may also be a reflection of the symbiotic relationship which pertained in early Vedic times between humans and gods. Olivelle, while acknowledging this symbiotic relationship, makes the point that, at another level, the *brahmins* and kings were 'rivals for power and prestige' (1998a:11).

[209] See Black 2007 Chapter 3.

[210] As Scharfe says: 'Flattering a ruler and attributing one's own work to him was routine at princely courts.' (2002:196)

[211] Black 2007:129.

[212] Killingley has pointed out (1997:4) that, not only is it the case that radical teachings in the Upaniṣads are at least as likely to be put into the mouths of *brahmins* as *kṣatriyas* (e.g. Uddālaka Āruṇi's teaching in CU 6), but also that the motif of *kṣatriya* teaching has appeared prior to the Upaniṣads, in particular at ŚB 11.6.2, where Janaka teaches Yājñavalkya and is said thenceforth to have 'become a *brahmin*'. Janaka is also presented as teaching Yājñavalkya, Uddālaka Āruṇi and others at JB 1.22-25. As Olivelle points out (1998a:12), 'What is important… is not whether a particular doctrine originated among the *kṣatriyas*, but that the new religious climate in northern India, of whih the Upaniṣads were a part, was created through the intellectual interaction among 'new thinkers' within both groups' (i.e. *kṣatriyas* and *brahmins*).

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Upaniṣadic teachers, whether *brahmin* or *kṣatriya*, human or otherwise, often appear reluctant to impart their knowledge freely. Teachings are frequently presented as 'secret', or couched obliquely or obscurely; and persistence of enquiry is sometimes, though not always, rewarded. The Upaniṣads themselves emphasise these motifs: BU 4.2.2 and AU 1.3.14 both teach that 'the gods in some ways love the cryptic'.[213] As Ganeri stresses, however, the Upaniṣadic teachers are not 'covert' or 'insincere', nor do they resort to 'trickery'. Rather, their 'coyness' reflects a respect for the power of the teachings, and an acknowledgment of the importance of transmitting them only to suitably qualified recipients.[214] As Lorea notes, 'The most precious truth is hidden underneath layers and layers, not because it is transgressive, but because it is highly cherished and valued.'.[215]

These 'secret' teachings can be further divided into those which are relatively freely given to the limited audience considered worthy of receiving them, and those which have to be 'extracted'. In BU 3.2, Jāratkārava Ārtabhāga, the second of the eight *brahmins* who debate with Yājñavalkya at Janaka's court, asks Yājñavalkya to explain what happens to a person at death. Famously, Yājñavalkya declares that '… we cannot talk about this in public… let's go and discuss this in private'[216], whereupon he imparts the apparently radical teaching that 'A man turns into something good by good action and into something bad by bad action.'.[217] Although this teaching is imparted by

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[213] *parokṣapriyā iva hi devāḥ*. Black (2011a:104) suggests that the Upaniṣads 'revel in their own secrecy'.
[214] Ganeri 2007:13. Ganeri explores secrecy and the reluctant teacher motif in some depth in Chapter 3 of Ganeri 2007. As he says: 'Good use is made of the trope of the reluctant sage by the Upaniṣadic storyteller: to engender in the reader a sense of respect for the profundity of the wisdom about to be imparted, as well as to convey the idea that a gift is about to be given and a very precious one at that.' (Ganeri 2007:14). Black 2011a also focusses on this motif. He identifies two types of 'secret' information: that which by its nature is not observable or immediately apparent, and that which is intentionally concealed. Although the first category takes us to the philosophical core of the challenge of defining ultimate reality - teachings are couched in metaphor, paradox and contradiction, at 'the shadowy edge of experience' (Ganeri 2007:37), which demonstrate the conceptual difficulties of expressing the ultimate principle using words, whatever questions the aspirant asks - it is the second category, teachings presented as intentionally concealed, which is more significant in a discussion of the literary presentation of ideas.
[215] Lorea 2018:8.
[216] BU 3.2.13: … *āvām evaitasya vediṣyāvaḥ na nāvetat sajana* …
[217] BU 3.2.13: … *puṇyo vai puṇyena karmaṇā bhavati pāpaḥ pāpena…*

Yājñavalkya 'in private', it appears to have been volunteered readily enough, presumably after Ārtabhāga had convinced Yājñavalkya of his suitability to receive it, either through his earlier questioning or in another forum. He does not have to push Yājñavalkya to impart the teaching, nor, aside from his reluctance to do so in public, does Yājñavalkya appear unwilling to share it.[218]

We can contrast this with the reluctant teacher, seen most clearly in the story of Naciketas in the KaU. Sent by his father to the realm of Yama, god of death, Naciketas is given three wishes as compensation for having been kept waiting three nights on his arrival. While the first two are granted freely, when Naciketas asks about the fate of a person after death, Yama seeks to persuade him to ask for another boon, and to release him from his promise to answer, offering Naciketas 'sons and grandsons who'd live a hundred years… Plenty of livestock and elephants, horses and gold… a wide expanse of earth… lovely girls… unobtainable by men' and even immortality. When Naciketas declines all of these tempting offerings, Yama still prevaricates before eventually imparting his teaching.[219]

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[218] This raises the question of why Yājñavalkya was not willing to impart this teaching before the whole assembly. Presumably he felt that some of his audience - the other (more conservative) *brahmins*? King Janaka? A wider audience? - were not ready or suitable to receive it. Perhaps he was only willing to share it with a fellow YV *brahmin*, as Cohen suggests (2008:77-78). Lincoln sees it as identifying the teaching as 'a sacred secret, a mystery reserved for the private conversations of the most elevated sages' (1986:123), though without offering any explanation why that might have been the case or why Ārtabāgha was a more 'elevated sage' than any of Yājñavalkya's other interlocutors. Black has argued that Yājñavalkya's taking of Ārtabāgha's hand is indicative of Yājñavalkya intending formally to initiate Ārtabāgha as a student before imparting the teaching (2007:77 and 2007:184n31), though that seems to me rather speculative.

[219] I discuss this narrative further in Chapter 5. We see similar examples of the reluctant teacher and persistent student elsewhere. In CU 8.7-8.12, Indra is repeatedly fobbed off by Prajāpati with false or incomplete teachings about *ātman* until he has lived with Prajāpati as a student for 101 years. Prajāpati's tactic was to 'feed' Indra a 'preparatory doctrine' and wait for Indra to work out for himself the falsity of that doctrine, so that Indra's final understanding was the result of his own 'personal investigation and discovery'. Ganeri sees this 'graded teaching' as a successful 'pedagogic narrative' in its own right, in which 'progressively more sophisticated accounts of the self are presented as the grudging concessions of a recalcitrant god'. As he says, 'Indra could not begin even to appreciate the virtues of the less obvious doctrine… had he not already understood as wrong the more obvious idea…'. (Ganeri 2007:18-19). In CU 4.1-4.3, Raikva refuses Janaśruti's initial entreaties, only conceding to teach on receipt of 'a thousand cows, a gold necklace,… a carriage drawn by a she-mule,… a wife,.. and the village' where he lived (CU 4.2.3-4); in CU 4.4.4-9, Satyakāma Jābāla is sent off to tend his teacher's 'most skinny and feeble cows' for 'a number of years'; the six students of the PU are required in PU 1.2 to live with Pippalāda for a year practising 'austerity, chastity and faith' (*tapasā*

As with the *brahmacarya* motif, the tropes of secrecy and persistence emphasise the importance of teachings. They also perhaps serve to present the teachings of the tradition presenting them as 'superior to those of competing traditions'.[220] In addition, they confer on the teachings a degree of exclusivity, and a suggestion that they are for an élite audience.[221] In Ganeri's view, they also indicate a shifting of the responsibility for receiving and acting on the teaching onto the student.[222] The concealment of the truth is not just a way of emphasising the importance and/or exclusivity of the teaching, it also promotes in the student who knows which questions to ask a quest for self-knowledge. These motifs too, therefore, highlight the importance which the Upaniṣads place on seeking the truth through questioning and enquiry, rather than through traditional rote learning and ritual.

It would be wrong to ignore the fact that the Upaniṣads suggest that it is possible to be *too* persistent. In places, they use the threat of a burst, or shattered, head[223] to bring an end to debate. Although this might be thought of as a metaphor[224], we see in the story of Vidagdha Śākalya in BU 3.9 an apparent example of a head actually bursting, when Śākalya is unable to answer one of Yājñavalkya's questions in the debate in Janaka's

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brahmacaryeṇa śraddhayā) before he will even hear their questions. Note the use of the word *brahmacarya*, here translated by Olivelle, Hume and Radhakrishnan as 'chastity'. At the outset of the year, Pippalāda can only promise to answer the students' unknown questions if it transpires that he himself knows the answers. Scharfe (2002:236) points out that testing students through means such as setting impossible tasks, putting them through extreme deprivations, or posing them ethical dilemmas was also a common motif in the MBh.

[220] Black 2011a:102. Black argues in a number of places in 2011a that secrecy in the Upaniṣads may be an indicator of the rivalry between Vedic traditions (see especially 2011a:115-118). Cohen also sees the secrecy motif as a claim to ownership by the *śākhā* with which the particular Upaniṣad is affiliated (2008:11; 2018d:26): as she says, '… the air of secrecy creates boundaries…' (2018d:26). The motif of secrecy is intertwined with the word '*upaniṣad*' itself, discussed above. It could be argued, therefore, that secrecy is the very hallmark of the Upaniṣads' teachings.

[221] Which Bronkhorst suggests was in itself not conducive to 'coherent systems of thought' (2016:272).

[222] Ganeri 2007:14. He argues that the Upaniṣads often present ultimate reality as hidden 'in order to make possible a project of self-discovery', noting (2007:22) that it must not be hidden too deeply 'or the viability of that very project will be undermined'. Cobley (2001:12-14) points out that, in order to be effective, narrative must entail some impeding of the progress of the story, in order to give greater significance to its climax.

[223] Olivelle notes that the verb generally used (*vi+√pat*) can mean 'fly off in many directions' or 'burst asunder' (1998a:491).

[224] See the observations at Olivelle 1998a:491.

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court.[225] However, head bursting (or, at least, the threat of it) is not just reserved for losers in debate: in the same debate, Gārgī is also threatened with it by Yājñavalkya if she 'asks too many questions'.[226] Witzel argues that the need for the threat demonstrates the pre-eminence of Gārgī above Yājñavalkya's other interlocutors, as she is the only one to receive this threat as a result of her persistent questioning.[227] However, we might also ask why persistent questioners in other Upaniṣadic stories, such as Naciketas and Indra, got away with their questioning without attracting any threat: indeed, they often received the final teaching only as a result of their persistence.[228] Whatever the explanation (and, despite the threat, Gārgī later returned to ask Yājñavalkya more questions), we see in Gārgī's example that persistent questioning was not always immediately rewarded with élite knowledge.

The debate in Janaka's court in BU 3 is one of the longest and most prominent Upaniṣadic narratives, and I will analyse some of its contents in Chapter 3.[229] It is by some distance the clearest example in the Upaniṣads of formal debate between *brahmins*, though, in CU 5.11, the five householders who take their questions to Uddālaka Āruṇi and then, with him, to Aśvapati Kaikeya, are said to have 'got together' to conduct a 'deep examination' of *ātman* and *brahman*.[230] Similarly, the whole of the

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[225] BU 3.9.26. Lindquist 2011a interprets the whole Śākalya episode as intimately tied into the discussions about death in BU 3, and therefore as central to understanding the teaching, rather than merely a narrative 'adornment'. Note also that death is the topic of Yama's reluctance when addressing Naciketas' third wish in the KaU (see Chapter 5).

[226] BU 3.6.1: … *mātiprākṣīḥ mā te mūrdhā vyapaptat…*

[227] Witzel 1987a:406. Śākalya, on the other hand, received the threat for not knowing the answer to a question, rather than asking too many questions. The 'shattered head' motif is also discussed in Insler 1989-90.

[228] One explanation could be that being female was thought to render Gārgī unworthy of receiving the 'élite' teachings, at least in the context of a royal *brahmodya*. Elsewhere in the BU, Yājñavalkya seems to have had no qualms about teaching Maitreyī, though in private rather than in a public *brahmodya*. Perhaps it reflects the '*śākhā* propaganda' of this part of the BU in wishing to present Yājñavalkya with exalted status as a teacher, and not wishing to address the possibility that he would either be shown as not knowing the answer to Gārgī's likely next question, or that there would be no answer to the next question, with the result that Gārgī would have defeated Yājñavalkya in debate. Lindquist (2011a:47) suggests that it may have been a way of bringing abstract discussions back down to earth. It is worth noting too that the persistence of Naciketas and Indra led to them receiving teachings from gods, not from human teachers.

[229] In the specific context of the debate motif, it is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of Black 2007. See also Brereton's analysis of the structure of the debate in Brereton 1997.

[230] CU 5.11.1: … *sametya mīmāṃsāṃ cakruḥ ko na ātmā kim bhahmeti.*

PU is set within a frame story of a group of six *brahmins* who together approach Pippalāda as students, with a strong inference that we are to understand that they had been debating their questions amongst themselves.[231] The fact that 'learned *brahmins*' are shown discussing such matters amongst themselves, especially in a setting with no ritual context, emphasises again the questioning nature of the Upaniṣads: other than in a ritualised setting, there would be no need to debate teachings already well established in Vedic thinking.[232]

What the debate motif speaks to most is 'the interactive and competitive nature of Upanishadic philosophy'[233]: not just the different concerns of different Vedic schools, but also the fact that ideas of the ultimate principle were still fluid. The answers to questions about the ultimate principle were neither universally known nor universally understood, and needed to be extracted and tested in the competitive environment of discussion and debate. The lengthy presentation of the BU 3 debate, which results in

[231] Olivelle (1998a:456) suggests that the setting of the PU is borrowed from that of CU 5.11, though the names of the *brahmins* and their questions are quite different - see Chapter 5.
[232] Debates between *brahmins* also feature in the ŚB, where we see Uddālaka Āruṇi in two debates, both featuring a single opponent and no audience: he is victorious in one, but defeated in the other (see Black 2007:63-67; Witzel 1997a:366). The BU 3 debate itself is set within a frame story (Janaka's sacrifice) also found in the ŚB. Different forms of debate between *brahmins* (*brahmodya*) have a history going back to the Saṃhitās, especially to the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā of the YV. Thompson, drawing on the work of Renou in 1949, notes the distinction between the Saṃhitā *brahmodyas*, which appear as fixed, scripted liturgical dialogues, and the debates of the later Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, which tend to be more fluid and 'improvised' (1997:13). He also draws a distinction within the earlier *brahmodyas* between shorter 'riddles' (which tend to juxtapose two sets of names, one known and ordinary and the other unknown and secret, to test the respondent's command of 'the set of equations' which they demonstrate) and longer 'scripts', which invite from the respondent a 'self-assertive' response, in which the respondent asserts his own knowledge (1997:20). Cf. the brief story in CU 4.3.6 which originates from JUB 3.2.2 and has the quality of a rudimentary *brahmodya* (Renou 1955:101). The key defining feature of both liturgical and improvised *brahmodyas* is that they comprise a series of questions and answers, sometimes in riddle form, which highlight the verbal dexterity of the participants. Brereton notes similarities in some of the Gāthās of the Zoroastrian tradition. He analyses the structure of the BU 3 debate extensively, noting certain repetitive features which 'recall the repetitive framework of the [early Vedic] rite'. (1997:3). Black (2012:24) suggests that some of the arguments of Yājñavalkya's interlocutors appear similar to the 'scripted statements' of early Vedic ritual texts. Bronkhorst suggests that what he refers to as 'rational' debates at royal courts in ancient India may have originated from Greek traditions of debate (2016:271); he acknowledges the existence of debates recorded in the Brāhmaṇas and early Upaniṣads, but points out (with some justification) that those debates '… cannot in any way be called rational', for the 'winner of a debate… is not the one who knows better, but the one who knows more' (2016:272, citing Ruben 1928).
[233] Black 2007:100.

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Yājñavalkya's triumph over the other Kuru Pañcāla *brahmins*, is on one level a way of privileging the more 'modern' eastern tradition, represented by the BU, over the 'conservative' western tradition(s). At the same time, as with the *brahmacarya* motif, it provides a literary mechanism to anchor the BU's teachings into Vedic tradition, through the presentation of the debate in the context both of a royal sacrifice and a more or less structured *brahmodya*, albeit in the more 'improvised' form.[234]

All of the motifs discussed above draw attention to the fact that the Upaniṣads' teachings about the ultimate principle are not settled dogma, but are the subject of ongoing enquiry. This is emphasised particularly in the setting of teachings within the framework of debate and in the motifs of secrecy and persistence. At the same time, the setting of teachings within the ritualised framework of Vedic studentship and/or of the *brahmodya*, the secrecy with which some teachings are clothed, and the need for persistence to acquire the true teaching, all emphasise both the importance of the teachings and their 'élite' or 'exclusive' quality. The *brahmacarya* and *brahmodya* settings ostensibly ground seemingly novel teachings in Vedic religious and cultural tradition, distinguishing them from other 'unorthodox' teachings, and conferring authority on them through apparent orthodoxy, whatever the reality of their actual origins. The unorthodox teachers, including the several *kṣatriya* teachers, highlight the novelty of the teachings, as well as indicating the possible influence of ideas from outside the *brahmin* fold and/or developed through the 'modern' urban *brahmins*, and (in the case of the *kṣatriyas*) locates the social context of the teachings in the increasingly symbiotic relationship between certain urban *brahmins* and their patrons.

When looking at these devices, it is important to keep in mind the social and political milieux in which the narratives were developing, and the apparent underlying religio-political standpoints of the individual texts, or even of teachers within individual texts. Rather than being 'adornments' to the Upaniṣads' philosophical teachings, the narrative contexts of those teachings, and the literary devices used to set those contexts, are

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[234] We should also note the association of the *brahmodya* with the White YV, both in the riddles of the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā and in the more improvised *brahmodyas* in the ŚB and the BU. None of Yājñavalkya's interlocutors represent Yājñavalkya's own school, the White YV: five (probably) come from the tradition of the RV, two from the Black YV, and one from the SV (Cohen 2008:74 and 80).

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important tools in understanding those teachings. Indeed, the importance which the Upaniṣads clearly give to the narrative presentation of teachings strongly suggests that teachings set in narrative contexts should be considered more significant than those which are not.

Upaniṣad	Part of
Bṛhadāraṇyaka	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
Chāndogya	Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa
Taittirīya	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka
Aitareya	Aitareya Āraṇyaka
Kauṣītaki	Kauṣītaki Āraṇyaka/Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
Kena	Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa
Īśā	Vajāsaneyi Saṃhitā

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Upaniṣad	Veda (and branch)	Possible geographical location
Bṛhadāraṇyaka	White Yajur	Kosala Videha (furthest east)
Chāndogya	Sāma	Kuru Pañcāla (south)
Taittirīya	Black Yajur (Taittirīya)	Kuru Pañcāla (north)
Aitareya	Ṛg	Kosala Videha (west)
Kauṣītaki	Ṛg (Kauṣītaki/Śāṅkhāyana)	Kuru Pañcāla towards Kāśi
Kena	Sāma (Jaminīya/Talavakāra)	Matsya/Satvan
Kaṭha	Black Yajur (Kāṭhaka)	Kuru Pañcāla (north)
Īśā	White Yajur (Vājasaneyi)	Kosala Videha
Śvetāśvatara	Black Yajur (Taittirīya)	Possibly Kuru Pañcāla (north)
Muṇḍaka	Atharva	-
Praśna	Atharva	Possibly Kosala Videha
Māṇḍūkya	Atharva	-

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Chapter 2
The Ultimate Principle

'*That from which these beings are born; on which, once born, they live; and into which they pass upon death - seek to perceive that!*'[235]

2.1   Introduction

It is sometimes said that the Upaniṣads mark the beginning of Indian philosophy.[236] However, it is wrong to think that the idea of seeking to identify an ultimate principle of existence began, in Indian thought, in the Upaniṣads. Certain earlier Vedic texts clearly contain philosophical speculation to some degree, and, as already noted, it is misleading to read the Upaniṣads in isolation from the texts which preceded them. The major contribution of the Upaniṣads to Indian thought is not that they *introduce* philosophical speculation, but rather that they take certain existing speculative ideas about the ultimate basis of reality, including ideas which may have originated outside the Vedic tradition, and set in train certain specific strands of enquiry around both the identification and characterisation of that principle. They often do this is in a rather unstructured way, and do not arrive at consistent conclusions. As Hume rightly says,

> 'The heterogeneity and unordered arrangement and even contradictions of the
> material makes it difficult, indeed impossible, to set forth in systematic
> exposition a single system of philosophy'.[237]

However, although strict philosophical method is yet to develop,[238] the Upaniṣads undoubtedly 'establish a set of questions and provide a terminology for addressing these

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[235] TU 3.1.1: *yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti yat prayanti abhisaṃviśanti tad vijijñāsasva…*

[236] E.g. Edgerton 1965:28: 'The Upaniṣads are the earliest Hindu treatises, other than single hymns or brief passages, which deal with philosophic subjects.'

[237] Hume 1921:70.

[238] See Kapstein 1988:239. Larson (2016:70) argues that 'There is hardly any 'philosophy' in any of these texts in the western classical sense or European sense, or even in the later Indic

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questions that would remain influential throughout the subsequent Indian textual tradition'.[239] I argue in this thesis that it is the questions, rather than the answers, which really define the Upaniṣads as a genre, and that it is looking first at the questions that enables the reader to trace the progression of Upaniṣadic ideas of the ultimate principle.

Before embarking on a more detailed exploration of how these questions manifest and are dealt with in the Upaniṣads, it is important, first, to question the term 'ultimate principle' as I use it in this thesis; secondly, to consider earlier Vedic ideas about that principle and how they inform the speculations of the Upaniṣads; and, thirdly, to look at some of the key terminology used of that principle in the Upaniṣads. In this Chapter, I will consider the most important characteristics of the ultimate principle, and will show how early Vedic ideas of that principle were not fixed, but demonstrate both an ongoing sense of enquiry and a noticeable development, just as I will show the Upaniṣadic ideas to do in subsequent Chapters. I will also explore some of the most important terminology which the Upaniṣads use to identify the ultimate principle. I will show how the meanings of some of those terms also develop in the Upaniṣads, and will consider why certain terms came to prominence and others were rejected. I will then discuss the propensity of the Upaniṣads, and other Vedic texts, to analyse reality by making correlations or connection between things. Finally, I will explore why the Upaniṣads considered it important to identify the ultimate principle.

2.2   What is the 'Ultimate Principle'?

What, then, do we mean by the 'ultimate principle' and what are its chief characteristics? This is something which has tested many commentators, not least because the use of the language of materiality imposes a limiting factor on designations of something which, almost by definition, must be either beyond material reality or in some way encompass all of material reality. The efforts of Western commentators have often focussed on one or more particular aspects of the ultimate principle. Hume speaks

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sense, beyond the most elementary speculative intuitions…'. See also Bronkhorst 2016:271-272.
[239] Black 2007:4.

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of the 'unitary world-ground'[240], suggesting a single foundation of the origin or creation of the universe. Gonda refers to '… a sustaining principle,… a… firm and ultimate ground of existence'[241], emphasising not just origin, but also the ongoing role of the ultimate principle in maintaining the existence of the cosmos. Olivelle talks about 'the ultimate and basic essence of the cosmos'[242], which he relates to Varuṇa's teaching in the TU that one should seek to know 'That from which these beings are born; on which, once born, they live; and into which they pass upon death'[243], drawing attention to the ongoing role of the ultimate principle in directing existence, as well as its possible role as a post-mortem destination.

What these commentators and the questions of the Upaniṣads make clear is that the ultimate principle is not simply either a personified creator or an abstract creative principle, though creation of the universe, or at least being the impetus for its creation, is one of its functions. It must also support and sustain existence on a continuous, ongoing basis, accounting for continuity within an apparently changing cosmos; it must be the principle which animates and directs human activity; and it must underpin human consciousness. Whether of necessity it must also be a post-mortem destination, as suggested in TU 3.1, is a more moot point, though knowledge of the ultimate principle certainly ends up influencing post-mortem destination. At the ultimate level, it must also be a *single* principle, even though some of its functions may be performed by different products or parts of that single principle.[244] Reflecting these concerns, therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, I propose a working definition of the ultimate principle as *the single entity, power, or principle which creates, animates, supports and sustains all of existence.*

An immediate concern is whether that single entity, power or principle is material or abstract. Some of the earliest ideas in the Upaniṣads consider it to be a material element,

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[240] Hume 1921:9.
[241] Gonda 1950:43. Gonda argues that '… the ancient Indians were deeply concerned about a firm and ultimate ground to rest upon, an imperishable and immovable support of existence' (*ibid.*).
[242] Olivelle 1998a:26.
[243] TU 3.1: *yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti yat prayanti abhisaṃviśanti.*
[244] See Chapter 4.

such as water, or a material force, such as wind or breath[245], raising the inevitable question of what, if anything, might be the underlying 'ground' of that element or force. This is a challenge which dominated much of the early speculation about the ultimate principle which we find in the ṚV. In other places, such specific materialistic ideas are rejected in favour of a generic form of 'being-ness', generally called *sat*.[246] Often, terms which may previously have had more concrete meanings, notably *brahman* and *ātman*, are employed to designate the ultimate principle, eventually developing into abstract terms of art.[247] Some Upaniṣadic teachers, in order to surmount the difficulty of giving the ultimate principle materiality, or even attempting to limit it in any way through the medium of language, see it as totally abstract, by definition beyond definition or description. One of the most accomplished of Upaniṣadic teachers, Yājñavalkya, resorts (at least arguably) in several places to defining the ultimate principle by exclusion as *neti neti* ('not… not…').[248] Others resolve the question by attributing some or all of the functions of the ultimate principle to personified deities, notably Prajāpati, and, in the ŚU, Rudra.[249]

I will explore a number of these trajectories of thought in this and subsequent Chapters. For now, I simply highlight their diversity, a diversity which Brereton emphasises when he argues that, while the

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[245] E.g. BU 5.5.1, CU 7.10.1 (the waters); CU 4.3 (wind).

[246] E.g. CU 6, discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

[247] See further below. Nakamura (1983:104-6) has identified fourteen putative ideas of the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads. As he rightly notes, the mutual relations between these principles form the central problem of the interpretation of the Upaniṣads by the later philosophical schools.

[248] BU 2.3.6, 3.9.26, 4.2.4, and 4.4.22. Black argues that the repetition of this teaching gives it 'a rhetorical force', even if the passages in which it appears may originally have come from separate texts (Black 2012:14, cf. Brereton 1997, Hock 2002). Slaje (2010:10) suggests that its later prominence in Indian thought derived from 'the obscurity of the phrasing', and argues (developing an earlier theory put forward by Hillebrandt and Geldner) that, rather than either the traditional rendering as 'not… not…' or 'not so… not so…', it should be read as a double negative, with the result that it does not define the ultimate principle by exclusion, but rather emphasies *ātman* as the ultimate principle, translating it as 'nothing is not in that way'. As he points out, *ātman* in the Upaniṣads, aside from these passages, is rarely, if ever, defined by negation, but is generally given a range of positive characteristics (*ibid.*:34). He also notes that Buddhist commentators - who might have been expected to have picked up on a description of *ātman* characterised by negation - did not highlight the *neti neti* passages (*ibid.*:45).

[249] I discuss theistic trends in the Upaniṣads in more detail in Chapter 5.

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'broad theme that encompasses much of [the Upaniṣads'] thought… [is] an integrative vision, a view of the whole which draws together the separate elements of the world and of human experience and compresses them into a single form… the Upaniṣads differ among themselves in the shape they give to that vision of totality and the means by which they create it'.[250]

In other words, although the Upaniṣads generally accept that there *is* an ultimate principle, there is no consistency about precisely what that principle is. I believe that Brereton's view that this 'integrative vision' is created, in general, by 'each Upanishadic teaching'[251] is too sweeping and falls into the trap of over-generalisation. However, I do agree with his analysis that, when they do seek to create the 'integrative vision', the Upaniṣads do so by 'identifying a single, comprehensive and fundamental principle which shapes the world', a principle which, in the Upaniṣads overall, is probably most commonly called *brahman*.[252] However, as Brereton perceptively highlights, *brahman* in the Upaniṣads is fundamentally '…the designation given to whatever principle or power a sage believes to lie behind the world and to make the world explicable'.[253] That principle or power might be the wind or water, might be sound, might be the individual self, might be God, or might indeed be beyond identity other than through the term '*brahman*'.

This is an extremely important point. While the term *brahman* in the Upaniṣads is generally interpreted by later philosophical schools as always referring to a separate ontological entity, an abstract form of universal principle in its own right, there are many places in the Upaniṣads where another principle, or a set of factors such as those in TU 3.1.1, is identified with, or as, *brahman*. Developing Brereton's argument, and in

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[250] Brereton 1990:118-9.

[251] *Ibid.*

[252] 'Among all the varied formulations of the First and Supreme Principle, none recurs more constantly throughout the late Vedic texts than the *brahman*' (Edgerton 1965:23). Muralidharan's researches indicate that the term *brahman* appears in the Upaniṣads about 20 fewer times than the term *ātman* (2003:144-146), but, as explained below, neither term necessarily always designates the ultimate principle.

[253] Brereton 1990:118. Edgerton (1916:199) argues that the Upaniṣads have a 'general tendency' to search for a 'single unitary principle… on the basis of which, in some way or other, the multifariousness of the world as it presents itself to us' may be explained, though, as he also points out, to say this is 'scarcely more than to say that they are interested in filosofic (*sic*) problems'.

opposition to some of the later interpretive tradition, particularly that of the Advaita Vedānta philosophers, I argue that such statements are not necessarily statements of identification, but rather of predication. In other words, in many places in the Upaniṣads, '*brahman*' should be read as, in effect, a place-holder term to refer to the ultimate principle. Statements such as 'one should venerate *x* as *brahman*' should in fact be read as statements that *x* **is** the ultimate principle, rather than positing an identity between two concepts.[254] The tendency of many later Upaniṣadic interpreters always to translate terms such as *brahman* and *ātman* in exactly the same way has, in my view, clouded the interpretation of the Upaniṣads' investigation into the ultimate principle. Both terms, as well as other key terms involved in the analysis of the ultimate principle are, as we shall see, susceptible to a number of different meanings.[255]

The Upaniṣads also employ a number of different methods to identify the ultimate principle, however it may end up being described or defined. Brereton also addresses the Upaniṣads' methodology for embarking on this quest. He presents five paradigms which he sees the Upaniṣads' teachings on the ultimate principle as following, describing each of the five as 'a method or pattern through which the Upanishads construct a totality out of the multiplicity of the world'.[256] These five paradigms represent a useful hermeneutic framework when looking at the philosophical teachings of the Upaniṣads, and I will refer to them from time to time in my own analysis. In summary, they are:

- Correlation: the identification of correspondences among things belonging to different domains, for example between parts of the body and aspects of the universe, and therefore ultimately between the individual 'self' and the universal reality.

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[254] As, for example, in CU 3.19.4: *sa ya etam evaṃ vidvān ādityam brahmeti upāste…*or the several suggestions made by Nārada to Sanatkumāra in CU 7. I am grateful to Dr. Theodore Proferes (personal communication) for first highlighting this.
[255] Halbfass (1995:4) notes Hacker's criticism of the idea of *konsequentes Übersetzen* (consistent translation) of terms used in ancient Indian texts, with particular reference to his challenge to the approach of Thieme, Lüders, and Schmidt. See also Gonda [1961] 1975:10 and 16.
[256] Brereton 1990:119.

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- Emergence and resolution: the idea of the material world emerging from a single reality at creation, and returning to that single reality on destruction, as a spider spins out its web and ultimately draws it back into itself.

- Hierarchy: the setting up of a system of levels, which shows that certain powers are included in, or dependent on, other powers, with the aim of identifying the single fundamental power or principle on which all others are established.

- Paradox: the connection of a single principle to apparently opposite and mutually exclusive objects, with the implication that the single principle therefore comprehends everything else in the universe.

- Cycles: the consolidation of the natural events of life, such as life and death, the seasons, and the divisions of time, into ever-recurring cycles. Unlike the other four, however, this paradigm ultimately had to be rejected in order to allow for the possibility of escape from the cycle of constant death and rebirth.[257]

These paradigms do not just provide a helpful hermeneutic framework. They also serve to highlight both the diversity of the methods of presentation of the Upaniṣads' philosophical teachings and the fact that the Upaniṣads do not offer a 'one size fits all' explanation for reality. Rather, different Upaniṣadic teachings emphasise different characteristics of the ultimate principle, and use different methodologies to attempt to resolve the key questions about the single entity, power, or principle which creates, animates, supports and sustains all of existence. As Brereton explains, the Upaniṣads '… are not catechisms of direct answers to religious questions, which obviate the need for any further reflection. Rather, they stimulate thought and challenge interpretation'.[258] Or, as I suggest throughout this thesis, they provide questions and suggest possible answers, rather than promulgating dogma.

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[257] The five paradigms are explained more fully, with examples from the Upaniṣads, at Brereton 1990:119-133.
[258] Brereton 1990:117.

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2.3 'Architectural, Generative and Sacrificial': the Ultimate Principle in Early Vedic Texts

If, as I argue, it is important not to read the Upaniṣads in isolation from the earlier Vedic texts, we should also assess how those earlier texts looked at the ultimate principle. While it is likely that ideas from outside the Vedic tradition were influential in certain strands of Upaniṣadic enquiry, and that some of the Upaniṣads' narrative presentation of their teachings serves to signpost these 'external' ideas[259], the questions and answers about the ultimate principle which we find in the Upaniṣads did not arrive there suddenly, as if planted completely from outside. As Witzel has stressed, the Upaniṣads 'do not break with tradition but rather continue it, influenced by the current and local religious background', which included interaction with other religious and philosophical traditions.[260] While the Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas are not primarily renowned for their philosophical speculation, it would be wrong to assume that they are devoid of serious enquiry about the ultimate principle. As with the Upaniṣads, they do not reach consistent answers, but they do highlight some of the challenges inherent in trying to identify a single sub-stratum of the universe, not least the question of whence that single sub-stratum itself originated. In this context, the principal concern, at least of the ṚV, was to identify the creator of, or the force behind the creation of, the universe: its ideas were 'architectural, generative and sacrificial'.[261] Yet, as with the progression of ideas in the Upaniṣads which we will see developed in subsequent Chapters, the Saṃhitās too show a broad trajectory of thought about the ultimate principle in which the other essential characteristics of the ultimate principle also play a role, even if a relatively marginal one.

In certain early Upaniṣadic speculations[262], the elements and forces of the natural world were considered candidates for the role of ultimate principle. This no doubt reflected the fact that several of the prominent early Vedic deities were deified forms of those natural elements and forces, for example Agni (fire), Vāyu (wind), and Sūrya (sun). It also

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[259] See Chapter 1.
[260] Witzel 2003a:83.
[261] Hume 1921:10.
[262] See Chapter 3.

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showed an appreciation that a key quality of the ultimate principle was its inherent power. Propitiation of those deities through sacrificial ritual with a view to securing both earthly prosperity and eventual immortality represented an effort to control or harness the power of those deities and contained an inherent acknowledgment of the power of the natural world both to create and to sustain the cosmos - as, for example, in rain and sun causing seeds to germinate and plants to grow - as well as to destroy it, as by fire, wind or lightning. The self-reference paradox involved in attributing creation to any created being or worldly action (even one as powerful as the sun or the wind) is obvious, and this clearly concerned the early Vedic thinkers. Just as in the Upaniṣads these materialistic ideas were eventually rejected, in the Saṃhitās no single one of those deities, powerful though they may have been, assumed absolute status. The elemental forces, with their ability to sustain and direct the functioning of the universe, were a product of creation: none of them was itself the ultimate principle. However, while the Upaniṣadic speculations in general characterise their quest as a search for a more generic underlying *power* which could also account for creation, the early Vedic sages were generally more concerned to identify the ultimate *creator* of these diverse elemental forces.[263]

There was, however, no consistent identification of that creator. In the ṚV, cosmogony was variously attributed to deities such as Indra, Viśvakarman (the 'Maker of Everything'), or Tvaṣṭṛ (the divine builder or architect and, in places, father of Indra)[264], or to the product of divine parenting by Dyaus (father heaven) and Pṛthivī (mother earth).[265] Yet even the attribution of creation to a single deity left questions unanswered. In ṚV 10.81/82, the creator is Viśvakarman, described by Doniger O'Flaherty as 'the artisan of the gods'.[266] However, the challenge of identifying the ultimate source of the

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[263] I will show in Chapter 3 how the speculations of the early Upaniṣadic narratives quickly moved beyond a concern simply to establish a creator.
[264] See ṚV 3.55.19, 10.110.9, 1.160.4, 10.81.
[265] ṚV 1.160.2, 6.70.2.
[266] Doniger O'Flaherty 1981:34. He is also referred to in ṚV 10.81.7 as Vācaspati, the 'Lord of Speech', reflecting the importance of speech and sound in Vedic cosmogony which I will also discuss below.

materials which Viśvakarman used in creation remained: as ṚV 10.81 itself asks, 'What was the wood? What was the tree? - out of which they fashioned heaven and earth…'.[267]

In places, the ṚV attempts to deal with this conundrum by seemingly assuming that the material constituents of the universe had existed eternally in a kind of primeval chaos, sometimes characterised as 'the waters'.[268] In order to create the universe, this primeval chaos needed re-arranging and giving shape and form, as, for example, by Indra in his conquering of Vṛtra and releasing the waters of creation in ṚV 1.32.[269] However, even this relatively late hymn does not directly address the question of the origin of the primeval waters themselves, nor, indeed, of Indra or Vṛtra: here, the real creation of the universe lay in the secondary act of organising something which already existed, the 'differentiation of an amorphous primordial whole'.[270] Indeed, many early Vedic cosmogonies tend not to be creation myths in the strict sense, for they often pre-suppose certain pre-existing components[271], or, resort, as in the early hymn ṚV 6.24, to the idea of a deity, here Indra, making the existent out of non-existence.[272]

Certain late hymns of the ṚV clearly show a shift towards a more abstract idea of ultimate reality. In ṚV 10.121, the world came about through the appearance, again probably from the 'lofty waters'[273], of a 'golden embryo' (*hiraṇyagarbha*) which, once born, was the 'king of the breathing, blinking, moving world'[274], but ṚV 10.121

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[267] ṚV 10.81.2: *kíṃ svid āsīd adhiṣṭhā́nam ārámbhaṇaṃ katamát svit kathā́sīt yáto bhū́miṃ janáyan viśvákarmā ví dyā́m aúrṇon mahinā́ viśvácakṣāḥ*; ṚV10.81.4: *kíṃ svid vánaṃ ká u sá vṛkṣá āsa yáto dyā́vāpṛthivī́ niṣṭatakṣúḥ mánīṣiṇo mánasā pṛchátéd u tád yád adhyátiṣṭhad bhúvanāni dhāráyan*. In this thesis, translations from the ṚV are, unless otherwise indicated, from Jamison and Brereton 2014.
[268] The idea of creation coming about from a kind of 'watery chaos' was a common idea in ancient thought. See, e.g., the Babylonian and Hebrew creation myths discussed in Hawthorne 2017.
[269] Though Indra's weapon was a thunderbolt fashioned for him by Tvaṣṭṛ, who must, therefore, have already existed and had access to thunderbolt making materials. Cf. BU 5.5.1: 'In the beginning only the waters were here. Those waters created the real, the real created *brahman*, that is, Prajāpati, and Prajāpati created the gods.' (*āpa evedam agra āsuḥ tā āpaḥ satyam asṛjanta satyam brahma brahma prajāpatim prajāpatir devān.*)
[270] Kuznetsova 2007:8.
[271] Kuiper 1983:10.
[272] ṚV 6.24.5: *anyád adyá kárvaram anyád u śvó ásac ca sán múhur ācakrír índraḥ.* This idea also appears in ṚV10.72.2 but is directly refuted in CU 6.2.1-2 (see Chapter 4).
[273] If one takes the *hiraṇyagarbha* of ṚV 10.121.1 to be the same as the *garbha* of 10.121.7.
[274] ṚV 10.121.3: *yáḥ prāṇató nimiṣató mahitvá éka íd rā́jā jágato babhū́va.*

repeatedly questions the ultimate source of that creation by asking 'Who is the god to whom we should do homage with our oblation?'[275] In ṚV 10.121.10, that god is identified as Prajāpati, but it is widely believed that this verse is a later addition[276] and that the repeated refrain is more likely a rhetorical question with no direct answer, accepting that, as ṚV 10.82.7 puts it: 'You will not find him who gave birth to these things'[277], and in fact signposting a move away from attempting to identify the ultimate principle as a single personified creator deity.[278]

ṚV 10.121 uses paradox as it seeks to explain creation - in ṚV 10.121.7 the embryo emerges from the waters, yet in ṚV 10.121.9 the creator deity creates the waters.[279] Paradox, a technique which flows into the Upaniṣads and one of Brereton's five interpretive paradigms[280], is also employed in another important ṚV creation myth. In ṚV 10.90, where the primeval man (*puruṣa* - himself paradoxically said to give birth to Virāj and to be born of Virāj[281]) is sacrificed by the gods in order to create the manifest world, the sacrificial act itself is given the cosmogonic qualities of an ultimate principle: ṚV 10.90 concludes with the paradoxical statement *yajñéna yajñám ayajanta devā́s tā́ni dhármāṇi prathamā́ni āsan* ('With the sacrifice the gods performed the sacrifice for themselves: these were the first foundations').[282]

Eventually, the ṚV comes to acknowledge that the fundamental quest is not so much to identify a personified, deified, creator as to identify the underlying force or power behind the universe, even if the primary function of that power remains cosmogonic. It

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[275] *kásmai devā́ya havíṣā vidhema.*

[276] Brown 1965:25; Proferes 2007:138n301; Jamison and Brereton 2014:1592 (citing Oldenberg).

[277] ṚV 10.82.7: *ná táṃ vidātha yá imā́ jajāna...*

[278] I will nevertheless argue in Chapter 5 that Vedic thought never entirely gave up the idea of a personified deity as the ultimate principle. When, however, that idea returns to prominence in the later Upaniṣads, the focus is much less on the creative role of the ultimate principle and much more on its broader power to sustain and direct the functioning of the universe.

[279] ṚV 10.121.7: *ā́po ha yád bṛhatī́r víśvam āyan gárbhaṃ dádhānā janáyantīr agním...*; ṚV 10.121.9: ... *yáś cāpáś candrā́ bṛhatī́r jajāna* ... Jamison and Brereton (2014:1593) note Thieme's assertion that 10.121.9 may also be a later addition to the hymn.

[280] As he points out at 1990:130: '... perhaps even paradoxically, paradoxes can also create a unified vision'.

[281] ṚV10.90.5: *tásmād virā́ḷ ajāyata virā́jŏ ádhi púruṣaḥ. Puruṣa* itself becomes an important term, both in Indian philosophy generally and in places in the Upaniṣadic search for the ultimate principle. See Chapter 5.

[282] ṚV10.90.16.

is this force or power which is the key both to the creative role of Viśvakarman and to the efficacy of the sacrifice of ṚV 10.90, and Brown has argued that the Indra/ Vṛtra myth of ṚV 1.32 may be interpreted allegorically as a 'symbolic representation of Potentiality striving with Inertia, and overcoming Inertia through the aid of the Power or Energy existing in the universe'.[283] He argues that this may make this myth 'the first recorded philosophical speculation in India',[284] though, in making this suggestion, Brown overlooks the philosophical speculation of the probably earlier ṚV 6.24.5.[285] However, the idea of creation coming about through the operation of an inherent 'Power or Energy' within the universe is, I believe, an important factor in the development of ideas of the ultimate principle, which require that principle to have the power not only to create, but also to sustain and animate.

The ṚV highpoint in the shift of speculation away from a personified to a more abstract form of ultimate principle is probably ṚV 10.129. Doniger O'Flaherty describes this important hymn as 'conceptually extremely provocative' and 'meant to… raise unanswerable questions, to pile up paradoxes'.[286] Brereton considers it 'engagingly obscure' in its narrative and 'tantalizingly opaque' in its aims.[287] It is worth quoting ṚV 10.129 in its entirety:

10.129.1   *nā́sad āsīn nó sád āsīt tadā́nīṃ nā́sīd rájo nó vyomā paró yát*
            kim ā́varīvaḥ kúha kásya śármann ámbhaḥ kím āsīd gáhanaṃ gabhīrám

            'The nonexistent did not exist, nor did the existent exist at that time. There existed neither the airy space nor heaven beyond. What moved back and forth? From where and in whose protection? Did water exist, a deep depth?

10.129.2   *ná mṛtyúr āsīd amṛtaṃ ná tárhi ná rā́tryā áhna āsīt praketáḥ*
            ā́nīd avātáṃ svadháyā tád ékaṃ tásmād dhānyán ná paráḥ kíṃ canā́sa

            Death did not exist nor deathlessness then. There existed no sign of night nor of day. That One (*tad ekam*) breathed without wind by its independent will. There existed nothing else beyond that.

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[283] Brown 1965:24.
[284] *Ibid.*
[285] See above.
[286] Doniger O'Flaherty 1981:25.
[287] Brereton 1999:248.

10.129.3 *táma āsīt támasā gūḷhám ágre apraketáṃ saliláṃ sárvam ā idám*
tuchyénābhū ápihitaṃ yád ā́sīt tápasas tán mahinā́jāyatáikam

Darkness existed, hidden by darkness, in the beginning. All this was a signless ocean. What existed as a thing coming into being, concealed by emptiness - that One was born by the power of heat.

10.129.4 *kā́mas tád ágre sám avartatā́dhi mánaso rétaḥ prathamáṃ yád ā́sīt*
sató bándhum ásati nír avindan hṛdí pratī́ṣyā kaváyo manīṣā́

Then, in the beginning, from thought there evolved desire, which existed as the primal semen. Searching in their hearts through inspired thought, poets found the connection of the existent in the non-existent.

10.129.5 *tiraścī́no vítato raśmír eṣām adháḥ svid āsī́d upári svid āsīt*
retodhā́ āsan mahimā́na āsan svadhā́ avástāt práyatiḥ parástāt

Their cord was stretched across: did something exist below it? Did something exist above? There existed placers of semen and there were greatnesses. There was independent will below, offering above.

10.129.6 *kó addhā́ veda ká ihá prá vocat kúta ā́jātā kúta iyáṃ vísṛṣṭiḥ*
arvā́g devā́ asyá visárjanena athā kó veda yáta ābabhū́va

Who really knows? Who shall here proclaim it? - from where was it born, from where this creation? The gods are on this side of the creation of this (world). So then who does know from where it came to be?

10.129.7 *iyáṃ vísṛṣṭir yáta ābabhū́va yádi vā dadhé yádi vā ná*
yó asyā́dhyakṣaḥ paramé vyoman só aṅgá veda yádi vā ná véda

This creation - from where it came to be, if it was produced or if not - he who is the overseer of this (world) in the furthest heaven, he surely knows. Or if he does not know...?'

Although the primary focus in this hymn remains on the creation of the universe, we see that 'that One' (*tad ekam*), which was in place before both the existent (*sat*) and non-existent (*asat*)[288], came to life through its own potentiality, born 'by the power of heat' (*tápasas*), breathing 'without wind' (*avātáṃ*) through its own 'independent will'

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[288] Cf. ṚV 6.24.5.

(*svadháyā*). It was not a god, for 10.129.6 makes clear that it existed before the gods. And, although ṚV 10.129.1 appears explicitly to reject the idea of existence arising from non-existence, it also speculates on the now familiar possibility of primeval waters, 'a deep depth', and, in 10.129.3, suggests that water (the 'signless ocean') may in fact have been the first existent.[289]

ṚV 10.129's identity of this single, un-named unitary principle ('that One') with its inherent power has had a powerful influence in later discussions of cosmogony in Indian thought. Brereton argues that cosmogonies from the ŚB to Manu via the MBh 'interpret or reconfigure' it[290], and Maurer points out its influence on the radically different philosophical schools of Sāṃkhya and Advaita Vedānta.[291] However, as Brereton also rightly notes, it is 'remarkably contrary' for a cosmogony, and 'is really an anticosmogony'[292], for it in fact rules out the possibility of identifying the material cause of the world.

Maurer and Brereton have both analysed ṚV 10.129 in detail. Maurer sees 10.129.4 as the key to an understanding of the hymn's ideas about the ultimate principle. He argues that it is thought (*manas*) which, producing desire (*kāma*), operated as the 'primal semen' (*retas*) which gave rise to creation. Preferring to translate '*tad ekam*' as 'that alone', rather than the more common 'that One', he argues that the 'thought' of 10.129.4 is the 'that' of 10.129.2. Brereton develops this idea and ultimately agrees with Maurer's conclusion, as does Gonda.[293] Seeing 10.129.4 as an 'axis' on which the hymn turns, and noting the relationship between the 'One' and heat (*tapas*) in 10.129.3, Brereton suggests that the hearer of the hymn would likely go on to equate the 'One' and heat with the thought and desire of 10.129.4, observing too that later Vedic cosmogonies frequently link desire and heat.[294] This is a relationship which continues

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[289] Cf. BU 1.2.1 where death, as the creator, emanated water from himself through 'liturgical recitation' (*arc*).
[290] Brereton 1999:248.
[291] Maurer 1975:220.
[292] Brereton 1999:249.
[293] Gonda 1983:38.
[294] Brereton 1999:254-5. Brereton refers specifically, by way of example, to Taittirīya Saṃhitā 3.1.1.1, where Prajāpati, desirous of producing offspring, 'heated himself' (*prajā́patir akāmayata prajā́ sṛjeyéti sá tápo'tapyata*).

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into the Upaniṣads, for example in BU 1.2.6 and TU 2.6.1. And, in CU 6.2.3, which I discuss in Chapter 4, heat is the first product of *sat*, when *sat* decides (presumably as a result of some desire) to propagate itself. As Brereton also points out, the remainder of 10.129.4 supports the argument that 'thought is the first creative activity' when it refers to the poets' discovery of the bond between the existent and the non-existent through 'inspired thought' (*manīṣā*).[295] In presenting its teaching in what is, in effect, a series of riddles, the hymn returns its listeners to thought itself:

> '… if its function is to create thinking through questioning, then the poem must avoid a final resolution which would bring an end to questioning and an end to thought… it must leave its readers between knowledge and ignorance… the openness of the poem points to the process of thinking as an approximate answer to the unanswerable riddle about the origin of things.'[296]

Although the Upaniṣads ultimately deny *manas* as the ultimate principle[297], I believe that this hymn potentially influences the speculations about the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads in five ways. The first is its identification of a single, somewhat abstract, ultimate principle, not a deity and distinct from the various deities of early Vedic thought. Second is the idea of a *svadhā*, an 'independent will', or, as Brereton translated it in 1999, an 'inherent force'[298], operating within *tad ekam* and, by extension, within the universe. This highlights the function of the ultimate principle as a universal 'Power or Energy' underpinning material reality, at both the creative and sustaining levels, and foreshadowing the greater emphasis which the Upaniṣads place on the ongoing power of the ultimate principle. Thirdly, we see again the speculative nature of early attempts to identify the ultimate principle, and the importance placed on questioning. At the same time, this raises the argument that the speculation occurs not simply as a result of lack of knowledge, but because the very act of speculating draws the speculator back to the idea of the thought process itself being the ultimate principle, even though this ends up

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[295] Brereton 1999:255.
[296] Brereton 1999:258.
[297] E.g. in BU 3.7.20 and CU 7.5.3.
[298] Brereton 1999:256.

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begging the question of who or what created the thinker. The fourth is the highlighting of the identification of the ultimate principle as being an 'unanswerable riddle': its identity is simply beyond human capacity to explain, as in Yājñavalkya's celebrated *via negativa* descriptions of the ultimate principle in the BU as 'not…, not…' (*neti neti*).[299] Finally, the emphasis on thought sets the stage for the Upaniṣads' shift of focus from ritual to knowledge as the primary means of understanding the ultimate principle.

We can see, therefore, that, while early ideas of the ultimate principle in the ṚV tended to focus on attempts to identify 'a more remote active agent than any assumed in other theories'[300], which tended to founder on the requirement to identify not just the origin of that agent itself but also the origin of the components on which the agent acts,[301] at least by the time of ṚV 10, more abstract ideas had begun to grow up. The early Vedic sages had begun to speculate about the idea of a single inherent *power* underlying the universe. Brown sums up the ṚV ideas about the ultimate principle as follows:

> '… the personal anthropomorphic demiurge of the Indra-Vṛtra myth was replaced in various ways by a definitely specified supreme deity operating within a dualistic universe… This was succeeded, ideologically speaking, by a view of the sacrifice as supreme, again in a dualistic universe… Finally,… there developed the notion of a monistic basis for the universe, impersonal in character, neuter, mechanistic in operation….'[302]

Although most of the ṚV speculations about the ultimate principle focus chiefly on its cosmogonic role, there is one important later Saṃhitā passage which instead emphasises the ultimate principle's important quality as the ongoing sustainer, and perhaps director, of existence. That passage is AV 11.4, in which *prāṇa* (lifebreath or, in more abstract form, 'life force' or energy) is offered homage as 'the lord of the all, on whom the all is

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[299] Though see note 248 above for an alternative interpretation of *neti… neti.*
[300] Brown 1965:27.
[301] I will discuss later how the Upaniṣads in places use a similar approach, e.g. in Gārgi's questioning of Yājñavalkya in BU 3.6.
[302] Brown 1965:28.

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supported'.[303] *Prāṇa*, 'the lord of… all that breathes, and does not breathe', 'clothes the creatures, as a father his dear son'.[304] It is identified as the energy which nourishes plants and gives them fragrance, and which brings forth rain, an important part of the cycle of existence which we shall see drawn out in the Upaniṣadic narratives of BU 6.2 and CU 5.3-5.10.[305] In *prāṇa* is all ultimately established (*prāṇe sarvaṃ pratiṣṭhitam*).[306] Although a cosmogonic function is not stressed, in Ewing's analysis *prāṇa* here is clearly 'the primeval cosmic principle'[307], but with an emphasis on its sustaining and directing powers (giving plants fragrance, bringing rain etc.). *Prāṇa* maintains an important role as a sustainer of existence in the Upaniṣads, and it has been argued that, at least in CU 7, it assumes the role of the ultimate principle more generally.[308]

The shifts of emphasis which we see brought to the fore first in ṚV 10.129 and then in AV 11.4 are important in the development of the Vedic enquiry into the ultimate principle. First, they indicate a movement away from seeing that ultimate principle as either a material element or force or a personified deity, accepting the paradoxical nature of any attempt to explain the ultimate principle, and resorting in the end to a neutral, though clearly monistic, designator. As Belvalkar and Ranade put it:

> 'This 'One' which belongs to the last phase of Vedic cosmogony was not considered as a person, nor was He endowed with definite characteristics… the Vedic poets delight to leave Him in a nebulous condition, assigning Him contradictory qualities and uncertain functions.'[309]

Secondly, while the ultimate principle must always have power, there is an increasing emphasis both on that power being inherent within the ultimate principle (and perhaps, as a result, immanent within the universe) and on the functions of that power as not just

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[303] AV 11.4.1: *prāṇā́ya námo yásya sárvam idáṃ váśe yó bhūtáḥ sárvasyeśvaró yásmint sárvaṃ prátiṣṭhitam.* Translations of AV 11.4 are from Bloomfield 1897.
[304] AV 11.4.10: *prāṇáḥ prajā́ ánu vaste pitā́ putrám iva priyám prāṇó ha sárvasyeśvaró yác ca prāṇáti yác ca ná.*
[305] See Chapter 4.
[306] AV 11.4.15.
[307] Cited at Connolly 1992:16.
[308] Connolly 1992:65-66. More commonly, however, it tends to be subsumed in, or seen as subordinate to, *ātman.*
[309] Belvalkar and Ranade 1927:23.

creating the universe, but also sustaining and directing that universe. When we come to explore the ideas of the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads, we will see a similar progression from the cosmogonic to the sustaining and directing functions of that principle.

2.4 Sound and Power: *brahman* and *akṣara*

When we consider the term *brahman*, perhaps the most commonly used designator of the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads, we see a broadly similar progression from the material to the abstract and from the creative to the sustaining. *Brahman* is a term with a strong association with the power of sound, especially in the form of speech. In Vedic thought, speech plays a significant role in the quest to identify the ultimate principle. In the ṚV, speech is considered in places to have a cosmogonic function[310], and the importance of speech is reflected in the Upaniṣads not just in the prominence of terms related to sound being used to denote the ultimate principle, notably *brahman* and *akṣara*, but also in the importance given to teachings passed orally from teacher to student and propagated through debate.[311]

The etymology of the word '*brahman*' has been the subject of much debate. Traditionally, it has often been thought to derive from √*bṛh* (to 'grow', to 'be great' or to 'burst forth', with obvious connotations of inherent power).[312] However, this idea is strongly criticised by Thieme, who prefers to see its derivation in √*brah* (to 'form' or 'arrange'), emphasising the idea of *brahman* (*bráhman* in Vedic Sanskrit) as a verbal 'formulation' rather than something which 'bursts forth'.[313] Nevertheless, the connotation of power is important whatever the actual derivation of the word itself.[314] The fact that a derivation from √*bṛh* was pretty much taken for granted in Indian circles suggests that a 'popular etymology' involving the idea of power may well have

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[310] See further below.
[311] See Chapter 1.
[312] This was Śaṅkara's suggested etymology (Suthren Hirst 2018:107). See also, e.g., Miller 1974:46, Hiriyanna 1993:54, Ram-Prasad 2010:724.
[313] Thieme 1952:125.
[314] As pointed out by Gonda 1950:58; [1961] 1975:28.

developed[315], and Thieme too accepts that, even if not 'powerfully bursting forth', the Vedic *bráhman* as a 'formulation' had an inherent power: '*Die Formulierung wirkt…*' ('The formulation has an effect.').[316] Certainly by the time of the Upaniṣads, and probably earlier, the meaning of *brahman* is more nuanced than is indicated by simple reliance on either the √*bṛh* or √*brah* derivations.

The fact that the Vedic texts, including the Upaniṣads, are traditionally considered *śruti*, 'that which is heard', itself suggests that speech has within it some innate power transmitted to the hearer.[317] Indeed, the idea of speech as powerful underpins much of Vedic ritual belief. The Vedic priestly tradition was an 'emphatically verbal one', in which 'preoccupation with language' was all pervasive.[318]As Jamison and Brereton put it, an

> '… important aspect of Vedic ideology is the belief in the power of the word: words make things happen… it is the skillfully crafted, properly formulated hymn, the verbal portion of the ritual, that makes the liturgical acts effective.'[319]

Although ultimately the hymns of the ṚV 'hardened' into the 'thoughtfully arranged collection'[320] which became canonical, the early Vedic *bráhman* was a specifically created formulation for a particular purpose, and 'the contemporary religious system of the Ṛgveda required ever-new formulations of the truth'.[321] There is no suggestion that the composers of these formulations necessarily subscribed to any unitary worldview. As Jamison and Brereton note: 'To force the hymns into the straitjacket of a unitary view of the world underestimates the power and originality of the poets…'.[322]

The composition of these formulations by the Vedic priests, and, later, the accurate recitation of the Vedic hymns, was a key element of Vedic sacrificial ritual, considered

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[315] Gonda [1961] 1975:27.
[316] Thieme 1952:103.
[317] See too the observations of Ong about the power of narrative in oral traditions (page 52 above).
[318] Thompson 1997:21.
[319] Jamison and Brereton 2014:8.
[320] Witzel 1997:261.
[321] Jamison and Brereton 2014:23.
[322] Jamison and Brereton 2014:9.

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to have the power to attract the gods. This, in turn, became linked to a broader priestly power: for the Vedic priests, control over speech and thought formed the 'basis of their religious authority and status'.[323] This is reflected in the association between the terms *bráhman* - the formulation itself - and *brahmán* (in later Sanskrit *brahmaṇa* and eventually Anglicised as '*brahmin*', which is the form I use in this thesis) to designate the formulator of the *bráhman*, the 'priestly poet'.[324] Priestly 'ownership' of the recitation of the Veda was an essential component in cementing the authority of the *brahmins* within Vedic society: it was therefore in the interests of the *brahmins* to promote speech as an important concept at the cosmic level as well as the worldly level. As a result, Elizarenkova is able to argue that, in the ṚV '…metrical speech … was regarded as the supreme cosmogonic force, linked to sacrifice and mediation between gods and men'.[325] That the formulations were also seen as powerful in the worldly realm is exemplified by ṚV 2.2.10, where the poets invoke their 'sacred formulation' (*bráhman*) as an aid to distinguishing themselves beyond other men.[326]

In early Vedic texts, speech was often deified, usually in the form of Vāc. In ŚB 5.5.5.12, Vāc is seen as the very creatrix of the Veda[327]; in JB 2.244, the world is effectively spoken into existence by Prajāpati's releasing of speech[328]; and, as Brereton's analysis of ṚV 10.129 emphasises, ṚV 10.129.4 and 5 refer to *kavis* - poets[329] - and the thought (*manas*) which he, Gonda and Maurer suggest as the real ultimate principle identified in that hymn is etymologically related to the word *mantra*. Viśvakarman too, in ṚV 10.81.1, is portrayed not just as a creator of the universe but also a Hotṛ priest, who, in ṚV 10.81.7, is referred to as Vācaspati, 'Lord of Speech'.

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[323] Brereton 1999:255, citing as examples ṚV 10.71, 1.20.2, 9.68.5, and 5.42.4.

[324] Created, significantly, from the mouth of the dismembered primeval man in ṚV10.90. See Bodewitz 1983 and Brereton 2004, and sources cited there, for a discussion of the relationship between *brahman* and the *brahmin*. In later Vedic ritual, the *brahmin* was, perhaps paradoxically, a largely silent participant. Bodewitz argues that, by this later stage, the role of the *brahmin* was defined not by his production of powerful verbal formulations but by his knowledge of *brahman* as a 'cosmic principle' (1983:40-41 and 49).

[325] Elizarenkova 1995:111.

[326] ṚV 2.2.10: *vayám agne árvatā vā suvī́riyam bráhmaṇā vā citayemā jánām áti…*

[327] ŚB 5.5.5.12 (Mādhyaṃdina): *… vācaḥ prájātaṃ yádeṣá trayo védastátsahásreṇa …*

[328] JB 2.244: *prajāpatir vā idam agre āsīt. nānyaṃ dvītīyaṃ paśyamānas tasya vāg eva svam āsīd vāg dvitīyā sa aikṣata hantemāṃ vācaṃ visṛje. iyaṃ vāvedaṃ visṛṣṭā sarvaṃ vibhavanty aṣṭatīti.* Cf. the Gospel of John 1.1: 'In the beginning was the Word…'.

[329] Brereton 1999:257.

Of the three ṚV hymns specifically addressed to Vāc[330], ṚV 1.164 is the most significant. This is a lengthy and complex hymn, which, in its opening, makes clear that it is speculating about a form of ultimate principle, asking first in ṚV 1.164.4 'where is the life, blood, and breath of the earth?' (*bhū́myā ásur ásṛg ātmā́ kúva svit*) and then, in ṚV 1.164.6, 'What also is the One in the form of the Unborn… that has propped apart these six realms (of heaven and earth)?'.[331] The hymn contains numerous references to speech, both in its deified form as Vāc, and in the context of poetic metre, before, in ṚV 1.164.41, Vāc is identified with a buffalo-cow (*gaurī*) which, while lowing, created the 'tumultuous floods' (*salilāni*).[332] 'One-footed and two-footed, she is four-footed, having become eight-footed and nine-footed: she has a thousand syllables in the highest heaven'.[333] Out of her the seas flowed in all directions, with the result that the whole universe came into existence from the 'syllable' that flows from her.[334] The power of the *brahmins* is emphasised in ṚV 1.164.45, where speech is 'measured in four feet' that the 'Brahmins of inspired thinking know', only one of which parts is spoken by 'the sons of Manu'[335], before ṚV 1.164.46 finally identifies speech as the ultimate principle, albeit with several different names:

> 'They say it is Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, and Agni, and also it is the winged, well-feathered (bird) of heaven [=the Sun]. Though it is One, inspired poets speak of it in many ways. They say it is Agni, Yama, and Mātariśvan.'[336]

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[330] ṚV 1.164, 10.71 and 10.125.

[331] ṚV 1.164.6: *ví yás tastámbha ṣáḷ imā́ rájāṃsi ajásya rūpé kím ápi svid ékam.*

[332] ṚV 1.164.41. 'Tumultuous floods' is Brown's translation (1968b:395); Jamison and Brereton have 'oceans'; Griffith has 'water-floods'. Facetiously, we could argue that ṚV 1.164.41 sees creation as coming from a 'big moo', rather than a 'big bang'.

[333] ṚV 1.164.41: *gaurī́r mimāya salilā́ni tákṣatī ékapadī dvipádī sā́ cátuṣpadī aṣṭā́padī návapadī babhūvúṣī sahásrākṣarā paramé víoman.* The reference to 'feet' is also a pun: the word *pada* is used to refer to a metrical foot as well as to the physical foot of the buffalo-cow.

[334] ṚV 1.164.42: *tásyāḥ samudrā́ ádhi ví kṣaranti téna jīvanti pradíśaś cátasraḥ tátaḥ kṣarati akṣáraṃ tád víśvam úpa jīvati.*

[335] I.e. the 'ordinary' people. ṚV 1.164.45: *catvā́ri vák párimitā padā́ni tā́ni vidur brāhmaṇā́ yé manīṣíṇaḥ gúhā trī́ṇi níhitā néṅgayanti turī́yaṃ vācó manuṣyā̀ vadanti.* As Thompson points out (1997:15) '… in Vedic… there is a basic metalinguistic distinction between what is called 'the language of the gods' and 'the language of men''.

[336] ṚV 1.164.46: *índram mitráṃ váruṇam agním āhur átho divyáḥ sá suparṇó garútmān ékaṃ sád víprā bahudhā vadanti agním yamám mātaríśvānam āhuḥ.*

Brown describes Vāc in ṚV 1.164 as '... the final apotheosis of the power of spells, chants, incantations'[337], with the power of sacred speech (reposing in the *brahmin* priests) clearly seen as having cosmogonic creative force. ṚV 1.164.49 then introduces the deity Sarasvatī as a sustaining force, inviting her to bring her 'breast, which is ever full' (*stanaḥ śaśayaḥ*) for the world's nourishment, and introducing a dichotomy between the creating and sustaining functions of the ultimate principle which re-surfaces in the Upaniṣads, especially in the teachings of Uddālaka Āruṇi.[338] Eventually that dichotomy is resolved by the deified Vāc, around whom little mythology or speculative enquiry develops[339], blending into the more prominent Sarasvatī.[340]

Even though neither Vāc (in her deified form) nor Sarasvatī plays any direct role in the Upaniṣads,[341] the importance of speech in these early Vedic speculations is reflected in some of the Upaniṣads' early ideas of the ultimate principle. BU 1.2.1 sees the world as having originally been empty of creation, covered by death, with creation originating through death's undertaking of 'liturgical recitation' (*arc*).[342] In BU 1.5.3, speech (*vāc*), together with mind (*manas*) and breath (*prāṇa*), form the three component parts of the *ātman*.[343] In addition, as we have seen in Chapter 1, several of the Upaniṣadic speculations about the ultimate principle are either set in the context of debates between *brahmins* in which verbal dexterity is a key skill in determining which of the *brahmins* prevails, or derive from the making of etymologically based correlations between objects.[344] We see both the significance of speech and the use of this word play in CU 3.12.1: 'Whatever there is, this entire creation... is the Gāyatrī [a form of poetic metre].

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[337] Brown 1968b:393-4.
[338] See Chapter 4.
[339] Brown (1968b:393) says that she is '... so devoid of anthropomorphic qualities as to lack even a minimum of mythology'.
[340] See, e,g, ŚB 3.9.1.7-9.
[341] Save in BU 6.4.27, which quotes ṚV 1.164.49 in slightly altered form, in the context of a post-birth rite for a child, not obviously related to speculation about the ultimate principle.
[342] BU 1.2.1: *naiveha kiṃcanāgra āsīt. mṛtyunaivedam āvṛtam āsīt...so'rcann acarat tasyārcata. āpo'jāyanta arcate...*
[343] BU 1.5.3: *... etanmayo vā ayam ātmā vāṅmayaḥ manomayaḥ prāṇamayaḥ.* See Brereton 1988 for a detailed discussion of this passage, which he considers reflects similar ideas in ṚV 1.164.45 and Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka 7.22.
[344] Olivelle 1998a:25-26 discusses the making of connections by reason of phonetic similarity between words, which he describes as occurring 'with an almost annoying frequency', especially in the CU. See also Brereton's five paradigms, discussed above.

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And the Gāyatrī is speech, for speech sings (*gāyati*) and protects (*trāyate*) this entire creation.'[345] After the Upaniṣads, philosophical schools such as the Pūrva Mīmāṃsa and Advaita Vedānta continued to see verbal testimony, particularly that of the Veda, as a key *pramāṇa*, or method of acquiring knowledge: indeed, for Advaita Vedānta, scriptural authority (mediated by a teacher) was the only valid *pramāṇa* for *brahman*.[346] The school of Sphoṭavāda, associated with Bhartṛhari and others, from perhaps the sixth or seventh century CE, identified the essence of word or speech with the absolute, the *śabdabrahman*.

I believe that the prominence which the term *brahman* eventually acquired derives from its use to designate an inherently powerful speech act being called into service by the originators of those inherently powerful speech acts in the context of a search for the broader underlying power which is a key component of the ultimate principle. The early Vedic *bráhman* was a formulation specifically put together by the Vedic priests for a particular creative purpose in the context of the ritual in which it was used[347]: as Renou and Silburn put it, it was not a '*formule banale*', but rather a verbal formula with special spiritual force, or even magical power.[348] Despite Renou's reservations,[349] it does not seem to me a huge leap from the idea of a verbal formulation with inherent spiritual power used in a ritual context to a broader, more generic attribution (perhaps self-attribution) of that spiritual power to the ritual priests, so that *brahman* assumed the meaning of 'priestly power'. This, in turn, led to other derivatives, such as *brahmodya* (the 'utterance of a *bráhman*'), a term used for the often formulaic debates between *brahmins* - often about *brahman* - which appear in the Saṃhitās and, in less structured form, in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, in which, again, verbal dexterity was an

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[345] CU 3.12.1: *gāyatrī vā idaṃ sarvam bhūtam yad idaṃ kiṃ ca vāg vai gāyatrī vāg vā idaṃ sarvam bhūtam gāyati ca trāyate ca.*

[346] See Suthren Hirst 2005:49-52. As it was also for Rāmānuja: Lipner 1986:4.

[347] Brereton 2004:326, citing with approval Thieme 1952 and Mayrhofer 1996. Renou speaks of the '*puissance incommensurable*' ('immeasurable power') of the word in the ṚV (1955a:1).

[348] William Graham (1987:64-65) points out, with examples from Christianity, Islam, ancient Egypt and tribal societies of South America and Africa, that 'The sense of word as power and as overt act is especially vivid in the cosmogonic myths of diverse peoples, ancient and modern, in all parts of the globe' and that 'The generative power of the spoken word is apparently one of the most basic and widespread of religious themes'.

[349] Renou and Silburn 1949:9.

important feature and in which the *brahmins*, through the force of their words, could display their power over their rivals.[350]

The association between *brahman* as a creative principle and the *brahmins* as a priestly order is brought out clearly in BU 1.4.10-15: in BU 1.4.10 and 1.4.11, the world in the beginning 'was only *brahman*'.[351] In 1.4.11, *brahman* (referred to also as *tad ekam*[352]) created 'the ruling power'[353], and, a little later, is described as 'the womb of the ruling power'.[354] In the latter case, Olivelle translates *brahman* as 'priestly power', a translation justified by the clear references in 1.4.12, 1.4.13 and 1.4.15 to the other layers of society (*varṇas*) identified in ṚV10.90. From *brahman* as priestly power, it is a straightforward step to *brahman* in texts promulgated by the holders of that power coming to signify a wider, more generic power, akin to the 'inherent force' with which *tad ekam* breathed in ṚV 10.129.2, and, eventually, becoming a way of denoting the ultimate creative and sustaining power behind the universe: 'the connective energy that lies between apparently (and naturally) disparate elements and makes efficacious the ritual action that forges those elements into unity'.[355] This power is frequently itself equated with wholeness or completeness, as in BU 1.4.10, where *brahman*, as the original existent which knew only itself, 'became the Whole'.[356]

The different semantic possibilities of the word *brahman* are noticeable throughout the Upaniṣads. I do not suggest that *brahman* in the Upaniṣads is never used to indicate an ontological principle, but I do not believe that it should always be interpreted in that way. As Gonda notes, translating 'important Sanskrit terms by one single modern

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[350] See Thompson 1997 generally, and specifically at 1997:20.
[351] BU 1.4.10: *brahma vā idam agra āsīt.* The same words begin BU 1.4.11.
[352] Cf. ṚV 10.129 (see above).
[353] BU 1.4.11: … *tacchreyo rūpam atyasṛjata kṣatram...*
[354] BU 1.4.11: …*kṣatrasya yonir yad brahma.*
[355] Smith 1989:72.
[356] BU 1.4.10: *brahma vā idam agra āsīt tad ātmānam evāvet… tasmāt tat sarvam abhavat…* Here *ātman* is almost certainly used as a simple reflexive pronoun, rather than with any more extended meaning. Or in CU 3.14.1: *sarvam khalvidaṃ brahma.* See also BU 5.3.1, which identifies the heart with Prajāpati, *brahman* and *sarvam.* Proferes (2007:143) has argued that this idea may have origins in metaphors of kingship, where the king was identified with his whole dominion; Gonda (1955 [1975]: 504-5) argues that it may relate to notions of personal health, or 'completeness', so that *brahman* is 'that which is whole' rather than indicating that 'everything in the universe is *brahman*'. See also Bodewitz 1983:41.

European word' leads to a 'strong *a priori* probability that the conclusions at which the authors arrive are to some extent erroneous'.[357] Rather, its meaning depends on context. In places, reflecting Thieme's derivation, *brahman* appears to retain a meaning as an 'explanation of the ultimate principle', or, in Olivelle's words, a 'formulation of truth'[358], rather than explicitly designating a principle in its own right. We see this, for example, in BU 2.1.1, where Olivelle persuasively translates Bālāki's offer to Ajātaśatru - *brahma te bravāṇi* - as 'Let me tell you a formulation of truth' rather than, as contended by Radhakrishnan and Hume, 'I will tell you about *brahman*'[359], and in BU 3.4.1 and 3.5.1, where Uṣasta Cākrāyaṇa and Kahola Kauṣītakeya both ask Yājñavalkya to explain (in Olivelle's translation) 'the *brahman* that is plain and not cryptic'.[360] Similarly, the expression 'the highest *brahman*' (*param brahman*), which is the goal of the six seekers of the PU, could easily, in the context of the replies which they receive from Pippalāda, be interpreted as 'the highest [or most profound] explanation of the ultimate principle', rather than indicating a 'highest' form of ultimate principle.[361]

In some cases, therefore, the identification of some entity or other 'as *brahman*' in fact amounts to no more than an attempt to give that entity the status of ultimate principle, because it is considered to have satisfied the relevant criteria for that status, notably its power. In other words, identifying something as *brahman* is simply a way of identifying that thing as the *formulation of* the ultimate principle, commensurate with 'ultimate principle' as a concept, rather than as an entity in and of itself. This argument is supported by Ram-Prasad, who points out that the primary function of *brahman* in the

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[357] Gonda [1961] 1975:10.

[358] Which, as Olivelle acknowledges (1998a:498), is a direct translation of Thieme's '*Wahrheits-Formulierung*'.

[359] Olivelle points out (*ibid.*), following Thieme 1952:119n3 and implicitly doubting both Radhakrishnan and Hume, that *brahman* is the direct object of this sentence. Note too in this context that, in TU 1.8, *brahman* is directly equated with the syllable OṂ (*aum iti brahma*). I discuss BU 2.1.1 in more detail in Chapter 3.

[360] BU 3.4.1 and 3.5.1: *sākṣād aparokṣād brahma* (translated by Hume as 'the Brahma present and not beyond our ken' and by Radhakrishnan as 'the *Brahman* that is immediately present and directly perceived').

[361] If their quest was for the highest form of the ultimate principle, the suggestion of 'lower' forms of *brahman*, as in PU 5.2 (*param cāparaṃ ca brahma*) or MuU 1.1.2 (*parāvarām* - usually translated as 'the higher and the lower', though possibly 'the earlier and the later'), or in ŚU 1.12 (the 'threefold *brahman*' or *trividham brahmam*), makes a strict non-dualist interpretation difficult: the idea of different levels of knowledge about that ultimate principle would be at least as logical an interpretation. See also Olivelle 1998a:629 (on MuU 1.1).

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Upaniṣads is 'to *stand for* some ultimate wholeness which can integrate all existence' (my emphasis)[362] or, in Brereton's description which we have already seen, to be '…the designation given to whatever principle or power a sage believes to lie behind the world and to make the world explicable'.[363] Geib too refers to *brahman* as a 'kind of blank formula in order to express the ultimate cause of all creation'.[364] I believe that keeping open the possibility of interpreting *brahman* in this more neutral way will help cast light on how Upaniṣadic explanations of the ultimate principle develeop.

Even when *brahman* does designate a principle in its own right, there is confusion about the precise role which it plays, a confusion which goes to the root of the different interpretations offered by the different schools of Vedānta.[365] For example, do the entities which populate the manifest world emanate from *brahman* as separate entitites, are they part of *brahman*, are they pervaded by *brahman*, or are they ontologically identical to *brahman*? Not only do the Upaniṣads display tension between giving *brahman* the epistemological function of explaining why reality is as it is and the ontological function of denoting a 'principle of experience'[366], even where they clearly use the term *brahman* with that ontological function their ideas about it are often confused and unclear: in many cases they 'fell back… into the old cosmologies which this very Brahma-theory was intended to transcend'.[367]

Brahman, therefore, in the Upaniṣads is not a fixed concept. Just as Upaniṣadic ideas about what precisely *is* the ultimate principle shift, so too does the meaning of *brahman.* In those places where it clearly does denote a principle of existence, its precise functions and relationship to the manifest world are also not a given: if they were, the various, often contradictory, ideas and speculations about its role would not need to be recorded and explored in such detail.[368] I do, however, believe that the key to the development of *brahman* from its early meaning as a ritual hymn or formulation into a widely-used

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[362] Ram-Prasad 2010:724.
[363] Brereton 1990:118.
[364] Geib 1975-6:225.
[365] See Chapter 1.
[366] Ram-Prasad 2010:724-5.
[367] Hume 1921:15.
[368] As Jamison and Witzel (1992:70) point out 'If early Vedic religion had possessed a detailed, agreed upon cosmogony, speculation would not have been necessary.'

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designator of the ultimate principle lies in the notion of power inherent both in the various usages of the word, and in the perceived power of speech more widely.

The term *akṣara*, like *brahman*, also developed from a phonetic meaning, as 'syllable'[369], to be a designator of an abstract ultimate principle. Its etymological roots are thought to lie in the negative of *kṣara* ('melting away', 'perishing', or 'flowing')[370], hence its later common translation as 'imperishable', or 'the imperishable'. As van Buitenen has persuasively argued, when *akṣara* is used in the ṚV, the meaning 'syllable' is to be preferred, on the basis that 'imperishable' generally makes no logical contextual sense.[371] However, the syllable, as the smallest unit of speech, was seen as the ultimate repository of the power of sacred speech[372], and, even though there clearly carrying the meaning 'syllable', van Buitenen argues that, as early as the Vāc hymn in ṚV 1.164.41-2, it is in fact *akṣara* which 'claims the position of a supreme principle'.[373] The word *akṣara* appears frequently in the Upaniṣads, but often in a context discussing metre and/or analysing individual words or chants, in which a translation as 'syllable' seems more appropriate.[374] By no later than the JUB and the CU, *akṣara* had become associated with one specific syllable, namely the otherwise apparently meaningless OṂ[375], which in the KaU and MāU takes on qualities of the ultimate principle and which, in TU 1.8.1 is said to be *brahman* and described as 'this whole world'.[376]

When *akṣara* is used without any obvious reference to speech or sound, the more abstract translation 'imperishable' or 'indestructible' has generally been favoured. Van Buitenen, in two articles[377], has discussed this separation of meaning in depth, questioning whether it is in fact justified, or whether, when *akṣara* is used in a way which denotes the ultimate principle, it should be read as referring to the syllable OṂ, rather than either as a synonym for *brahman* or *ātman* or as a separate principle in its

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[369] See, e.g., the views of Bergaigne and Oldenberg cited at van Buitenen 1955-6:215n3.
[370] Van Buitenen 1955-6:205; Mayrhofer 1996: I Band Lieferung 1 42.
[371] Van Buitenen 1959:176.
[372] See the discussion at Jamison and Brereton 2014:352-353.
[373] Van Buitenen 1959:177. See also Elizarenkova 1995:111.
[374] E.g. BU 5.3, 5.5.1-4, 5.14.1-3, CU 1.3.6-7, 2.10.1-4.
[375] Or 'AUṂ'. JUB 1.1; CU 1.1.1: *aum ity etad akṣaram...*
[376] TU 1.8.1: *aum iti brahma aum itīdaṃ sarvam...*
[377] Van Buitenen 1955-6 and van Buitenen 1959.

own right.[378] He emphasises that speculations about *akṣara* began, as I have explained above, in milieux 'intensely preoccupied with the sacred Word which rules and supports the sacrificial order of the universe'.[379] OM undoubtedly appears in discussions of the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads, for example in TU 1.8.1 where it is referred to as *brahman* and equated with 'this whole world (*aum iti brahma aum itīdaṃ sarvam*), though the term *akṣara* is not used here. In KaU 2.15-16, OM is the 'syllable that is *brahman*'[380], while MuU 2.2.2 also refers to '*akṣaram brahma*', here often translated as 'the imperishable *brahman*', but also capable of being translated as 'the syllable [which is] *brahman*'.[381] OM is described as the *akṣara* which is the whole world in MāU 1[382], and the MāU generally provides an analysis of OM which equates it with *ātman*.[383] In BhG 8.3 too, *akṣara* is equated with *brahman*, and Modi has argued that the frequent use of the term *akṣara* in the BhG, where it appears in 14 passages, suggests that the reader should be taken to be aware that it has a particular significance.[384]

However, as with the idea of a fixed interpretation of *brahman,* necessarily equating *akṣara* in the Upaniṣads with OM is in my view at best speculative. Its principal usage as a designator of the ultimate principle in the early Upaniṣads is in BU 3.8.8-11, where there is no obvious connection to sound, speech or the syllable OM. Here, Yājñavalkya, at the culmination of his dialogue with Gārgī, puts forward *akṣara* as the ultimate principle 'at whose command the sun and the moon stand apart'[385], and beside which 'there is no one that sees, no one that hears, no one that thinks, and no one that perceives'.[386] Despite the absence of any obvious relationship to sound or speech, an argument could be made that Yājñavalkya is in fact suggesting to Gārgī that the ultimate principle is a 'syllable', presumably OM, and it is noteworthy that Śaṅkara, in BSBh

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[378] Raising the question of who, if the 'syllable' is to be the ultimate principle, articulates the syllable.

[379] Van Buitenen 1955-6:213.

[380] KaU 2.15-16: *aum ity etat. etadd hy evākṣaram brahma…*

[381] Cf. MuU 2.2.4 where OM (or *praṇava*) is described as the bow which projects the arrow of *ātman* toward the target of *brahman* (*praṇavo dhanuḥ śaro hy ātmā brahma tal lakṣyam…*).

[382] MāU 1: *aum ity etad akṣaram idaṃ sarvam…*

[383] MāU 8: *so'yam ātmādhyakṣaram…*; MāU 12: *… evam auṃkāra ātmaiva.*

[384] Modi 1932:5, though cf. BhG 3.15 (see page 101 below).

[385] BU 3.8.9: *etasya vā akṣarasya praśāsane gārgi sūryācandramasau vidhṛtau tiṣṭhataḥ.*

[386] BU 3.8.11 (see note 387 below). Van Buitenen (1955-6:204-5) argues that this is the only place in the Upaniṣads where *akṣara* is unequivocally used to designate the ultimate principle, though see below on its use in the ŚU.

1.3.10, goes out of his way to refute the suggestion that Yājñavalkya is here referring to OM. However, such a conclusion would be out of character with the other teachings attributed to Yājñavalkya. Yājñavalkya's *akṣara* is more often considered synonymous with *ātman*, on the grounds, first, that *ātman* is the most common designation of the ultimate principle associated with Yājñavalkya, and, secondly, that his description of *akṣara* in BU 3.8.11[387] is similar to his description of *ātman* in BU 3.7.23.[388] I believe that identifying Yājñavalkya's *akṣara* with OM is difficult to support, and that interpreting it somewhat neutrally as 'the imperishable' makes more sense in the context both of BU 3.8 in particular and Yājñavalkya's teachings more generally.[389]

By the time of the ŚU, *akṣara* has clearly becomes divorced from any obvious relationship to sound or the 'syllable'. Nevertheless, it is still used both to designate and to describe the ultimate principle, which here takes the form of a personified God[390], as well as to refer to a component part of that universe which, together with the *kṣara*, or 'perishable', is ruled over by that God.[391] In ŚU 1.7, *akṣara* designates one part of a triadic view of the universe in contra-distinction to the personal self and the manifest universe.[392] God is not specifically referred to in ŚU 1.7, so that the interpretation of *akṣara* as God needs to be inferred from context, but I believe that that inference is fairly clear[393], and that *akṣara* is accordingly used here, without more, to refer to the ultimate principle.[394] This view is also supported by ŚU 1.10, where *akṣara* is used as an epithet to describe *hara*, which later became a name of Śiva, as the 'one God' who rules over

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[387] BU 3.8.11: 'This is the imperishable, Gārgī, which sees but can't be seen; which hears but can't be heard; which thinks but can't be thought of; which perceives but can't be perceived. Besides this imperishable, there is no one that sees, no one that hears, no one that thinks and no one that perceives' (*tad vā etad akṣaram gārgi adṛṣṭaṃ draṣṭṛ aśrutam śrotṛ amatam mantṛ avijñātaṃ vijñātṛ nānyad ato'sti draṣṭṛ nānyad ato'sti śrotṛ nānyad ato'sti mantṛ nānyad ato'sti vijñātṛ …*).

[388] BU 3.7.23: 'He sees, but he can't be seen; he hears, but he can't be heard; he thinks, but he can't be thought of; he perceives, but he can't be perceived. Besides him, there is no one that sees, no one that hears, no one that thinks and no one that perceives' (*adṛṣṭo draṣṭā aśrutaḥ śrotā amato mantā avijñāto vijñātā nānyo'to'sti draṣṭā nānyo'to'sti śrotā nānyo'to'sti manta nānyo'to'sti vijñātā…*).

[389] I discuss the narrative of BU 3.8 in more detail in Chapter 3.

[390] See Chapter 5.

[391] ŚU 1.8: *samyuktam etat kṣaram akṣaram ca vyaktāvyaktam bharate viśvam īśaḥ.*

[392] ŚU 1.7: … *svapratiṣṭhākṣaram …*

[393] A view supported by Olivelle, citing Rau 1964:44, at 1998a:616.

[394] Cf. the view of van Buitenen referred to in note 386 above.

both the 'perishable' and the *ātman*.[395] Whether or not *hara* is actually intended here to indicate Śiva is a matter of debate[396], but it seems clear that *hara* is here intended to refer to the God which takes on the qualities of the ultimate principle in the theistic ŚU and who is decribed as *avyaya*, also meaning imperishable, in ŚU 3.12 and as *nitya* (eternal) in ŚU 6.13.

Both *brahman* and *akṣara* developed from terms with a specific relationship to sound or speech into designators of the ultimate principle. This development reflected the inherent power of sacred sound in early Vedic India and the role of the *brahmins*, as well as foreshadowing later philosophical schools, such as that of Bhartṛhari. Why these two terms should have developed in this way to the exclusion of other sound related terms, such as *vāc* or *mantra*, is a question which has been raised by Renou[397] and answered by Thieme and van Buitenen.[398] Van Buitenen relies on the derivation of *brahman* from √*bṛh* which, he argues, has, even if shown to be inaccurate by Thieme, been a common belief. As a result, the idea of 'powerfully bursting forth' helped lead to *brahman* assuming a meaning as a powerful utterance, and hence, eventually, an ultimate power or principle. He argues that the derivation of *akṣara* from *a+kṣara* (the 'imperishable') had a similar result[399], though he stops short of equating the two terms with each other, pointing out, for example, their juxtaposition in BhG 3.15, where *brahman* derives from *akṣara* (*brahmākṣarasamudbhavam*).[400] Thieme believes, as I do, that the key is creative power: the fact that each *brahman* as a sacred formulation was specifically produced or 'made' by the priests, at least until the ṚV became 'hardened' into its canonical form, in order to create a specific effect or result is essential to its meaning, and thence to its importance in the broader creative context of the ultimate principle.[401]

What neither Renou nor Thieme or van Buitenen answers is why *brahman* assumed an importance in the Upaniṣads (and beyond) denied to *akṣara.* In my view, the answer to

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[395] ŚU 1.10: …*amṛtākṣaraṃ haraḥ kṣārātmānāv īśate deva ekaḥ.*
[396] See Chapter 5.
[397] Renou 1949:7.
[398] Particularly in van Buitenen 1959.
[399] Van Buitenen 1959:187.
[400] Van Buitenen 1959:185.
[401] Thieme 1952:101-103. See also Brereton 2004:326.

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this is twofold. It lies first in the stronger connotations of power within the term *brahman* even in its early usages. We have seen that inherent cosmic power was, either allegorically or more directly, the subject of early Vedic speculation about the ultimate principle, and the progression from *brahman* as a ritually powerful utterance to a broader generic cosmic power does not seem far-fetched. Although 'imperishable', and, as the 'syllable', an important component part of the power of speech, *akṣara* did not have the generative force which *brahman* did. Secondly, it lies in the close etymological relationship between *bráhman* and *brahmán*. The *brahmins* were not only the custodians of the oral tradition of the Upaniṣads, but also the custodians of *brahman*, the powerful formulation, itself, and perhaps saw the championing of this term as conducive to increasing their status and power. Imperishability may be an important aspect of the ultimate principle, but this quality speaks neither to the necessary *power* of the ultimate principle, nor bears any semantic relationship to those who propagated the teachings about it. Perhaps, therefore, for this reason *brahman* attained a superiority denied to *akṣara.*

2.5 Body and Lifebreath: *ātman and prāṇa*

Speculation about the ultimate principle in early Vedic texts tended, in general, to focus on the cosmos as a whole, eventually perhaps extrapolating the ultimate principle of the cosmos into the realm of the individual. A similar trend continues into the early Upaniṣads, with the enquiry into the ultimate principle commonly taking place from the outside inwards, from the universal power to the particular, seeking first to understand what underpins and sustains the whole of creation and then, as a result, what underpins and sustains each individual part of that creation. However, in other places, the enquiry begins by seeking to identify the creative and animating force of the individual, and extrapolating outward in search of the animating force of the universe. When this latter trajectory is followed, the term most commonly used to denote the ultimate principle is *ātman.*

As with *brahman*, the etymology of *ātman* is complex. In its earliest usages, it was either simply a reflexive pronoun, or meant 'body' or 'torso' in a straightforward

corporeal sense, a meaning which it retains in places in the Upaniṣads.[402] It is also thought by some to have etymological connections to √*an* (to breathe)[403], and is often found in close association with *prāṇa*, a term originally denoting breath or vital air.[404] *Prāṇa* developed into a broader designator of the energetic force underpinning and animating human existence, and, as we have seen, was lauded as an important cosmic force in AV 11.4.

Whether or not etymologically related to √*an*, *ātman*, when used in the ṚV, has sometimes been translated as 'breath'. One example is ṚV 10.168.4 where Vāta, the wind deity (whose association with breath will be obvious), is described as *ātmā devānām*, translated by Jamison and Brereton and by Doniger O'Flaherty as 'breath of the gods'.[405] However, both Renou and Elizarenkova have argued that *ātman* in the ṚV signifies something other than either the physical body or the physical breath. Elizarenkova argues that, when used in the ṚV, *ātman* already indicated 'something internal' which, through assimilation with the reflexive pronoun, came to be used as a designation of the 'Self'.[406] She suggests that, in at least three ṚV passages, 1.162.20 and 10.16.3 (where Jamison and Brereton use the translation 'lifebreath') and 10.97.11 (where they prefer 'the very self'), *ātman* indicates something less specific than breath which is 'situated inside', in other words some form of broader animating principle.[407] In drawing this conclusion, she is implicitly following Renou, who draws attention to the use of *ātmanvant* in the ṚV, which he translates as 'animated'[408], and, as with *brahman*, hints at the idea of some sort of force or power being a key feature in the development of names of the ultimate principle.

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[402] As, e.g., in BU 1.1.1 where the *ātman* (i.e. physical body) of the sacrificial horse is equated with the year.

[403] E.g. Cohen 2008:39.

[404] Though, as Black notes (2007:9), the body (*ātman*) cannot exist without the breath (*prāṇa*), which may be a more satisfactory way of explaining the frequent inter-relationship of the two concepts than looking for etymological relationships.

[405] See also ṚV 10.92.13 where the same deity, Vāta, is described (in Jamison and Brereton's translation) as 'the lifebreath' (*ātmā́naṃ vásyo abhí*).

[406] Elizarenkova 2005:133.

[407] Elizarenkova 2005:123.

[408] Renou 1952:153.

Renou sees *ātman* in the ṚV as denoting 'something which is at the base of the 'animated' character of living beings'.[409] He too notes its relationship with wind in ṚV 1.34.7, 10.92.13, 7.87.2 and 10.168.4, considering it at this stage 'akin to', but not the same as, *prāṇa*[410], and points out that, in ṚV 1.73.2 and 1.162.20, it is actually opposed to the physical body.[411] He argues that, by the time of the AV, the association of *ātman* with wind or breath has begun to take a back seat, and that it is only at this point that it begins to acquire the sense of a reflexive pronoun. He suggests that it is only in the Brāhmaṇa period that it starts to denote the body, as, for example, in ŚB 10.5.1.5, where the *agnicayana* altar is identified with the *ātman* of the sacrifice, and in ŚB 6.6.4.5, where different parts of the sacrificial altar are homologised with different parts of the body.[412] Interestingly, in ŚB 2.2.2.8, we even find the statement that 'he who is mortal' (*martya*) 'is without *ātman*' (*anātmana*).

Ātman in the early Vedic texts is clearly a fluid term. As Renou notes, it is:

> '… not at all [a] unitary or simple notion. It is not the body, nor the person, nor the soul, nor the breath, but something participating in all these elements. It is something which completes a given element, as the whole completes the parts.'[413]

Similarly, in the early Upaniṣads, the different meaning possibilities of *ātman* are superimposed on each other. It can mean physical body[414], or can operate as a reflexive pronoun[415], while, in places, it clearly indicates a broader 'foundational reality underlying the conscious powers of the individual'[416], a 'Self', with the wider sustaining and animating qualities of an ultimate principle. This idea seems to arise from a desire to discover 'the central essence of the individual as distinguished from the physical

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[409] Renou 1952:151.
[410] *Ibid.*
[411] Renou 1952:152.
[412] Renou 1952:154-5. He describes the introduction of a 'cosmic aspect' to *ātman* in ŚB 10.6.3.2 as an 'unexpected exaltation' (*ibid*:156).
[413] Renou 1952:156.
[414] E.g. in BU 1.1.1 and BU 1.4.1.
[415] E.g. in BU 1.4.10.
[416] Radhakrishnan 1953:74. Though, as Olivelle points out (2009:48), even when used in this sense, there is not necessarily agreement on what actually constitutes that 'foundational reality' or, as he puts it, 'ultimate core'.

frame with which he is associated'.[417] *Ātman* can also have cosmogonic properties, as in AU 1.1 which opens with the words 'In the beginning this world was the self (*ātman*), one alone… He thought to himself: 'Let me create the worlds'[418]. Here, it makes little sense to translate *ātman* either as a reflexive pronoun or as the physical body, and perhaps only marginally more sense to read it as referring to physical breath. Rather, it seems to be a more abstract, though conscious, creative principle. As with *brahman*, it is not always apparent which meaning is to be preferred, and Olivelle rightly argues that it is anachronistic to interpret *ātman* in the Upaniṣads as always 'referring only to some 'spiritual' core of a human being'.[419] As he notes, 'the image of the physical human body is present even when the Upaniṣads are attempting to isolate that core'[420]: Upaniṣadic efforts to identify the 'Self' are often characterised by positing then rejecting different functions of the body and/or mind as being component parts of the Self, but not themselves constituting the Self.[421]

Although by the later Upaniṣads (for example the PU), *ātman* and *prāṇa* have clearly been separated[422], the association between the two remains strong. This suggests that, as with *prāṇa*, a key element within *ātman* is its power to animate, and, as with *brahman*, I believe that the prominence which *ātman* achieved also has roots in the connotations of power or energy inherent in it, whether via association with *prāṇa*, or as a more generic animating force, along the lines of Renou's 'something which is at the base of the 'animated' character of living beings'.

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[417] Hiriyanna 1993:55. Black (2012:11) goes so far as to consider it 'the primary focus of philosophical speculation in the Upaniṣads'.

[418] AU 1.1: *ātmā vā idam eka evāgra āsīt… sa aikṣata lokān nu sṛjā iti*. Like *brahman*, therefore, it can be an active principle, as also, for example, in its role as the 'inner controller' in, e.g., BU 3.7.23. Cf. also the idea of *ātman* 'shaped like a man' as the solitary original existent in BU 1.4.1 (*ātmaivedam agra āsīt puruṣavidhaḥ*) which created humanity by splitting itself into two, or *ātman* as the source of creation in TU 2.1.

[419] Olivelle 1998a:26.

[420] *Ibid.*

[421] One of the most prominent examples of this is BU 4.1, where Yājñavalkya rejects the faculties of speech, breath, sight, hearing, the mind and the heart as having absolute qualities. See also some of the 'rejected' ideas put forward in the narratives discussed in Chapter 3.

[422] E.g. in PU 3.3 where *prāṇa* is said to 'arise from' *ātman* (*ātmanā eṣa prāṇo jāyate*). Cf. also BU 1.5 where *prāṇa* is just one component of a threefold *ātman*, together with speech (*vāc*) and mind (*manas*), created by Prajāpati, and homologised with a threefold universe, as well as with other triads.

In certain places, the Upaniṣads come to the well-known conclusion that *ātman* = *brahman*. The clearest examples of this equation are probably Śāṇḍilya's teaching in CU 3.14.4: 'This self (*ātman*) of mine that lies deep within my heart… is *brahman*'[423], and in the analogy of *ātman* as 'the honey of all beings', which is 'the immortal; it is *brahman*; it is the Whole' in BU 2.5.14.[424] However, this equation is less common than some later interpreters would have us believe[425], and its prominence in later Indian thought has obscured the fact that it is by no means the universal result of the Upaniṣads' enquiries.[426] Even when the equation is made, its meaning is ambiguous. As I have already questioned, are we looking at a predication of two distinct concepts or, as the Advaitins contended, an ontological identification? Does saying that *ātman is brahman* in fact amount to nothing more than saying that *ātman is* the ultimate principle?

2.6   Correlations, Connections, and the Identity of *ātman* and *brahman*

Even though I argue that the equation '*ātman* = *brahman*' should not necessarily be considered a statement of ontological identity, the Upaniṣadic identification, in certain places, of the individual *ātman* with the universal *brahman* reflects a common trope in Vedic thought of using connections or identities between seemingly different objects as a way of explaining reality. This in itself reflects the likely original meaning of the word *upaniṣad*, discussed in Chapter 1, as referring to a 'hidden connection'. One of Brereton's five paradigms 'through which the Upanishads construct a totality out of the multiplicity of the world'[427] is that of 'correlation', in other words the displaying of

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[423] CU 3.14.4: … *eṣa ma ātmāntar hṛdaye etad brahma...*
[424] BU 2.5.14: *ayam ātmā sarveṣām bhūtānām madhu… idam amṛtam idam brahma idaṃ sarvam.*
[425] E.g. Deussen's idea that '… the fundamental thought of the entire Upanishad philosophy may be expressed by the simple equation:- Brahman = Âtman' (Deussen [1899] 1906:39).
[426] See, e.g.. Olivelle's view that: 'Even though this equation played a significant role in later developments of religion and theology in India and is the cornerstone of one of its major theological traditions, the Advaita Vedānta, it is incorrect to think that the single aim of all the Upaniṣads is to enunciate this simple truth.' (1998a:27). See also Black 2007:32-33.
[427] Brereton 1990:119. See also Olivelle 2009:46-47.

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'correspondences among things belonging to different domains' as a way of 'demonstrating unity behind apparent diversity'.[428] As he points out, this technique is not new to the Upaniṣads, but has roots in earlier Vedic ways of analysing reality. Indeed, Olivelle has argued that the 'central concern of all vedic thinkers… is to discover the connections that bind elements of' the ritual, cosmic and human spheres to each other.[429]

The finding of connections is a particularly important concern of the Brāhmaṇas. There, in general, the connection or correlation (often referred to as *bandhu*) tends to be between the ritual domain and the cosmic domain, in order to explain some esoteric meaning of a particular ritual or aspect of ritual which made that ritual effective. While many of the correlations seem to our eyes to have little, if any, obvious basis, knowing them was, by this stage in the development of Vedic thought, seen as key to the efficacy of the rite.[430] As Gonda says,

> 'The belief in the efficacy of the rites is focussed on the conviction that it must
> be possible to establish and maintain beneficial relations with the supra-
> mundane sacred order…', as '… an aspect of the universal idea that all things
> and events are connected with each other'[431]

and this focus on finding and understanding correlations in order to ensure the efficacy of the rite may well be the source of the Upaniṣads' frequent use of the correlation paradigm.[432]

Given the importance of the correlation paradigm in certain later Upaniṣadic interpretations, I will sketch here a brief outline of its use in the Upaniṣads. Yet, while the correlation paradigm is undoubtedly important in the Upaniṣads, and clearly influential in the drawing of the *ātman/brahman* equation, it is important to remember that, in certain Upaniṣadic narratives, it is itself discredited in favour of the

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[428] *Ibid.* See also Kapstein's discussion at 1988:240 ff.
[429] Olivelle 1998a:24. See also Heesterman 1993 Chapter 8.
[430] As Edgerton says, translating Oldenberg 'The knower, precisely thru the fact that he *knows* - not because thru his knowledge he *acts* skilfully and correctly… possesses power over the entity or event known' (1929:99).
[431] Gonda 1965b:5.
[432] As suggested by Kapstein (1988:240).

identification via one or more of Brereton's other paradigms of a single, unitary, abstract sub-stratum to the universe. In others, the correlation paradigm is used, but stops short of a conclusion of identity between the correlates.

Olivelle identifies three principal ways in which the Upaniṣads use correlation: the first is the common injunction to venerate *x* as *y*.[433] As he points out, when 'a text states that someone venerates X as Y, the meaning is that he recognizes the hidden connection or homology between the two'.[434] The example he gives is CU 1.2.10-14, where a number of sages 'venerated' the High Chant as the breath within the mouth, before the text reveals the 'hidden etymologies' of the names of the sages. As Olivelle concludes: '… anyone who comes to know such a hidden homology becomes himself identified with the things whose homology he has recognized'.[435] Although Olivelle does not here emphasise the point, this veneration allied to the requisite knowledge also leads to certain positive results - here, power to 'secure desires through singing'.[436]

The second method of establishing correlations is through the use of phonetic similarities between the two correlates. Here, Olivelle's example is from CU 1.3.1, where the connection between the High Chant and the sun is based on the phonetic similarity between *udgītha* (the name of the High Chant) and *udyan* ('rising').[437] While these similarities often appear strained or far-fetched, Olivelle refuses to dismiss them as 'folk etymologies', pointing out that they were propagated in the Upaniṣads by learned *brahmins*, who otherwise display a sophisticated knowledge of Sanskrit grammar.

The third method of establishing correlation is by presenting something within this world as, in effect, a map of a more cosmic correlate. The classic Upaniṣadic example

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[433] Olivelle 1998a:24-26. A fourth, highlighted by Gonda and others, is numerical correspondences (see, e.g., Gonda 1965b:6, Smith 1994:13). The verbal form *upa+√ās*, translated by Olivelle here as 'venerate', is often translated as 'meditate', reflecting the later Advaita Vedānta usage of the term (and its cognate forms, such as *upāsana*.) However, this seems anachronistic here.

[434] Olivelle 1998a:24.

[435] *Ibid.*

[436] CU 1.2.14: *āgātā ha vai kāmānām bhavati ya etad evaṃ vidvān akṣaram udgītham upāsta...*

[437] CU 1.3.1: … *ya evāsau tapati tam udgītham upāsītodyan…* Another example is CU 1.3.2 where breath and the sun are related through two meanings of the word *svara* (translated by Olivelle as 'sound' and 'shine').

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of this is in BU 1.1 where different parts of the sacrificial horse are equated with aspects of the world.[438] As Brereton says, BU 1.1 'reduces the whole world to the form of the horse, and by doing so, it makes the world a single, comprehensible object'[439]: the horse becomes the map of the territory which is the world. In the Upaniṣads overall, the human body is probably the most common of these maps. Cosmogonically, we see this in AU 1.1.3, where, in *ātman*'s creation of the worlds, speech and fire sprang from the mouth of the first human, out-breath and wind from his nostrils, sight and the sun from his eyes, and so forth, before each re-entering into the human to complete a cycle of correspondence.

When expressing ideas through the paradigm of correlation, the primary concern of the Upaniṣads shifts from the ritual/cosmic correlations beloved of the Brāhmaṇas to establishing correlations or connections between the human entity or human activity and the cosmic realm. This reflects an underlying assumption that 'the universe contains a web of relations, that things that at first sight appear to stand alone and apart are, in fact, connected to other things'.[440] In some, the perceived connection, particularly between the human body and the cosmos, is a relatively obvious one (e.g. between the eye or sight and the sun, or between breath and the wind); in others, as we have seen, the connection seems to be made for no stronger reason than that the words denoting the two concepts are etymologically similar. As already noted, the use of the correlation paradigm brings us back to the likely original meaning of the word *upaniṣad* itself as a 'hidden connection', and it is easy to see how the identification of the physical human form with aspects of the cosmos developed into an identification of the ultimate essence of the individual with the ultimate essence of the cosmos through the *ātman = brahman* equation. The progression involved in drawing the correlation paradigm to this conclusion is emphasised by Kaelber, who argues that 'By meditating on progressive identities, one is led, in a process of ongoing reduction, to the final identity of self and

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[438] E.g. the horse's head with the dawn, its sight with the sun, its body (*ātman*) with the year, its intestines with the rivers, its urination with rain etc.
[439] Brereton 1990:120.
[440] Olivelle 2009:47.

cosmos, Ātman and Brahman'.[441] In a similar vein, the development of the correlation paradigm from earlier Vedic roots is summed up thus by Brian Smith:

> 'Taken together… the *bandhus* of ancient Indian ritualistic philosophy theoretically can account for and hook together everything in the universe. Such high ambitions can indeed be witnessed within Vedic texts, culminating perhaps in the Upaniṣads with… the equation of the microcosm (*ātman*) and macrocosm (*brahman*).'[442]

However, while the idea of finding correlations as a way of explaining an intrinsic unity may help explain why certain Upaniṣadic sages and certain later interpreters looked to equate *ātman* and *brahman*, it is important to emphasise again that it is not the only paradigm which the Upaniṣads use to explore the ultimate principle. In many of the Upaniṣads' speculations about the ultimate principle, the notion of correlation plays no part. It also does not necessarily follow that, just because a correlation is made between entities, whether etymologically or through veneration or representation, a conclusion of ontological identity is the result. It may well be that the appropriate conclusion is simply one of resemblance and/or mutual dependence, and the correlation may be made for simple pedagogical reasons. Treating, therefore, the dominant quest of the Upaniṣads as one to identify the identity between *ātman* and *brahman* is, in my view, to misrepresent the variety of ways in which the Upaniṣads explore the ultimate principle.

2.7 Knowledge as Power: the Importance of the Ultimate Principle

Finally in this Chapter, we should ask why identifying and understanding the ultimate principle is such an important topic of Upaniṣadic speculation. The key to this lies in the developing importance of the soteriological power of knowledge in contradistinction to the power of mechanically performed ritual. At the beginning of the MuU, Śaunaka asks: 'What is it… by knowing which a man comes to know this whole world?'.[443] For

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[441] Kaelber 1989:95.
[442] Smith 1994:12.
[443] MuU 1.1.3: *kasmin nu bhagavo vijñate sarvam idaṃ vijñātam bhavati.*

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Aṅgiras, answering that question at length, the conclusion was that a person who knew 'the highest *brahman*' himself became 'that very *brahman*', and thereby passed beyond sorrow and evil into immortality.[444]

Even before the Upaniṣads, the Brāhmaṇas had begun a shift towards emphasising knowledge, with their focus on 'understanding' the *bandhus* which gave access to an understanding of the esoteric meaning(s) of the rite. Geen points out that:

> 'The ŚB is filled with references to ritual actions that need to be performed with the correct knowledge either of the equivalences between the sacrificial elements and the macrocosmic world… or the mythological significance of the act'[445]

perhaps, as Geen has also argued, as a way of creating for the *brahmins* who knew (or claimed to know) the *bandhus* an exalted niche as 'indispensable ritual aficionados'.[446] The words '*ya evaṃ veda*' ('he who knows that') are a common refrain in the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads as a way of introducing some sort of desirable end, with the 'that' often referring to one of the *bandhus*, or 'hidden connections'. In the Brāhmaṇas the person 'who knows that'

> '… has an insight into the correspondences between the mundane phenomena and the immutable and eternal transcendent reality and into the meaning of the ritual manipulations by which man can benefit by that knowledge'[447];

by the time of the Upaniṣads:

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[444] MuU 3.2.9. Earlier, BU 1.4.9 had raised the question: 'Since people think that they will become the Whole by knowing *brahman*, what did *brahman* know that enabled it to become the Whole?' (*yad brahmavidyāya sarvam bhaviṣyanto manuṣya manyante, kim u tad brahmāvet yasmāt tat sarvam abhavad*). As Klostermaier points out (1989:190), throughout the Upaniṣads answering Śaunaka's question presented the sages with a difficult challenge: the challenge of 'interpreting and communicating this knowledge through concepts whose validity is negated by' the very knowledge itself, in other words through the use of name and form. Again, the term *brahman* here need not designate a separate ontological principle: the answer might simply be that one needs to know the ultimate principle.
[445] Geen 2007:98.
[446] *Ibid.*
[447] Gonda 1965b:6.

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'In virtue of special insight, gained by means of asceticism or ritual acts, the teachers of the… Upaniṣads asserted to be able to discover connections which otherwise are beyond human understanding and *thanks to this knowledge they believed themselves masters of their own destiny.*'[448]

While the word 'Veda' itself is etymologically related to '*vidyā*' (knowledge)[449], and while knowledge was important even in the Vedic ritual context[450], knowledge is often presented in the Upaniṣads in contradistinction to the performance of external ritual more privileged in earlier Vedic tradition. The requisite knowledge is an understanding of metaphysical truths rather than the simple acquisition of learning.[451] While perhaps the most direct attack on Vedic ritualism occurs in the relatively late MuU, this theme was already beginning to emerge in the early Upaniṣads, notably in the teaching of the two paths of the dead which appears in broadly similar terms in BU 6.2.15-16 and CU 5.10.1-7. Here, those who 'win heavenly worlds… by offering sacrifices, by giving gifts and by performing austerities'[452] pass through a cycle from which they are eventually reborn, while those who 'know this' (i.e. the earlier teaching of the 'five fires' doctrine, or *pañcāgnividyā*), and 'venerate truth as faith'[453] pass through a cycle leading to the 'worlds of *brahman*' from which they do not return.[454] Similarly, in the *brahmodya* in BU 3, Yājñavalkya, answering Gārgī, says that

'Without knowing the imperishable,… even if a man were to make offerings, to offer sacrifices, and to perform austerities in this world for many thousands of

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[448] Gonda [1954] 1975:367 (my emphasis).
[449] Edgerton (1929:103) notes that *vidyā* can mean 'magic' as well as 'knowledge'.
[450] Consider, for example, the emphasis on 'deep thought' in ṚV 10.129.
[451] Delight in which, according to ĪU 9, leads to 'still blinder darkness'.
[452] BU 6.2.16: *ye yajñena dānena tapasā lokāñ jayanti.*
[453] BU 6.2.15: *te ya evam etad viduḥ ye cāmī araṇye śraddhāṃ satyam upāsate.*
[454] CU 5.10.1-3; BU 6.2.15-16. In both of these passages, the path founded on knowledge also presupposes the knower being 'in the wilderness' (*araṇya*) rather than in village society, suggesting that the all-important knowledge is gained through solitariness, and perhaps internal practices such as meditation. BU 1.5.16 also presents rites and rituals as the way to win 'the world of ancestors' (*pitṛloka*) but knowledge as the way to the more desirable 'world of gods' (*devaloka*).

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years, all that would come to naught'.[455]

The MuU distinguishes two levels of knowledge. The first is a lower (*apara)* knowledge, consisting of knowledge of the Saṃhitās, phonetics, ritual science, grammar, etymology, metrics and astronomy, which is contrasted with a higher (*para*) knowledge consisting of knowledge of 'that by which one grasps the imperishable'.[456] The MuU is particularly scathing about those who favour external ritual, describing them as 'fools' or 'imbeciles' (*mūdhāḥ)*[457], who will be reborn 'to this abject world' (*lokaṃ hīnataram*)[458], while the person 'of tranquil mind and calm disposition', with a teacher 'well versed in the Vedas', will acquire the knowledge of *brahman* by which he understands 'the true, the imperishable'.[459]

The Upaniṣads repeatedly emphasise that knowledge of something either leads to certain desirable ends, or (as in the case of Śākalya's burst head in BU 3.9.26) leads to the avoidance of undesirable ends. Geen points out that, in the BU alone, '… there is an almost bewildering variety of … 'units' of efficacious knowledge and things for which they are efficacious'.[460] In places, knowledge itself is seen as a desirable end: *brahma varcasa*, which Olivelle translates as 'the lustre of sacred knowledge', arises commonly in the CU, TU and KṣU as the result of certain forms of veneration, or certain partial understandings of ultimate reality. In AU 3.3, knowledge (here *prajñā*) is *brahman.* And throughout the narrative episodes of the Upaniṣads, emphasis is placed on the transmission of knowledge and the role of the teacher. Edgerton, reasonably, argues that 'the instinctive and unquestioning belief in the inherent power of knowledge' underlies 'the whole intellectual fabric of the Upaniṣads'.[461]

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[455] BU 3.8.10: *yo vā etad akṣaram… aviditvāsmiṃlloke juhoti yajate tapas tapyate bahūni varṣasahasrāṇyantavad evāsya tad bhavati.*
[456] MuU 1.1.5: *atha parā yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate.*
[457] MuU 1.2.7-10.
[458] MuU 1.2.10.
[459] MuU 1.2.13: *tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak praśānta-cittāya śamānvitāya yenākṣaram puruṣaṃ veda satyam provāca tāṃ tattvato brahmavidyām.*
[460] Geen 2007:99.
[461] Edgerton 1929:97.

While in places in the early Upaniṣads the knowledge which is praised is what we may call 'limited' knowledge - with correspondingly limited results[462] - ultimately the most important knowledge in the Upaniṣads is knowledge of some form of the ultimate principle. Although, as noted above, Upaniṣadic knowledge was sometimes presented as important for its own sake, more commonly it was presented as having a definite goal.[463] As Edgerton stresses, in Vedic literature, knowledge of a thing implies control of it, with the result that, even in the predominantly ritual context of the Brāhmaṇas, the actual results which accrued to the participant arose not as a result of performing the action itself, even closely delineated ritual action, but by reason of knowledge of the esoteric meanings of the action.[464] The logical conclusion of the idea that knowledge of something leads to its control is that knowledge of the self must lead to control of the self, and accordingly to some form of control over one's post-mortem destiny.[465] One of the most prominent examples of this idea in the early Upaniṣads appears in one of the dialogues in the BU between Yājñavalkya and Janaka, where Yājñavalkya speaks of the 'person embraced by the self consisting of knowledge' (*prajñenātman*), who becomes 'oblivious to everything within or without' and in whom 'all desires are fulfilled'.[466] That person, as a result, moves beyond duality and reaches the blissful 'world of *brahman*' (*brahmaloka*).[467]

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[462] Such as in CU 1.7.9, where one who sings the High Chant with knowledge of the correlation between 'the person down here' and 'the person up there in the sun' has 'the power to fulfil desires by singing' (... *eṣa hy eva kāmāgānasyeṣṭe ya evaṃ vidvān sāma gāyati…*)

[463] Edgerton argues that: 'Abstract truth for its own sake, as an end in itself, has never for a moment been conceived by Indian philosophers as a proper objective for their speculations. Their intellectual quests have always been associated in their minds with practical ends.' (1929:102).

[464] The negative impact of the development of this mode of thinking on the survival of complex and expensive ritual performance will be obvious: as Edgerton points out, it is 'impressive… that despite their absorbing interest in the rites, the Brāhmaṇa texts frequently do not shrink from drawing this conclusion' (1929:99). In contrast, the exegetical school of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā may have developed at least in part with the aim of helping preserve the *karmamārga.*

[465] Kaelber (1989:73) speaks of the 'increasing prestige of knowledge' eventuating in 'an imperialism which declares mystical or esoteric knowledge alone to be religiously efficacious'.

[466] BU 4.3.21: *… evam evāyam puruṣaḥ prajñenātmanā sampariṣvakto na bāhyaṃ kiṃ cana veda nāntaram. tad vā asyaitad āptakāmam ātmākāmam ākāmam…*

[467] BU 4.3.32. Note here that knowledge of *ātman* leads to *brahman*: it is not suggested that the requisite knowledge is of the identity of the two.

The precise result of knowledge of the self varies, but is generally couched in terms either of becoming *brahman* or reaching the *brahmaloka*.[468] In some places, perhaps harking back to earlier ideas, the result is couched in terms of immortality, for example in the culmination of the AU which describes the result of knowledge of *ātman* - here equated with *brahman*, Indra and Prajāpati - as the fulfilment of all desires in the heavenly world and thence immortality.[469] Later, in the ŚU, immortality (*amṛtatva*) is the result for one who knows *ātman* to be 'distinct from the impeller' (i.e. God) in ŚU 1.6, and the ŚU describes knowledge itself as 'immortal' (ŚU 5.1: *amrtaṃ tu vidyā*), but ruled over by God, the 'knower of all'.[470] In TU 2.1.1, knowledge of *brahman* leads the knower to the rather ambiguous 'supreme' (*brahmavid āpnoti param*), while, in the culmination of Yājñavalkya's dialogue with Janaka in BU 4.4.22-24, one who knows the 'immense, unborn self' (*mahān aja ātman*) as 'the one consisting of perception… among the vital functions' (*vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu*) becomes a 'sage'(*muni*), and the one who knows that self as beyond verbal description (*neti… neti…*)

> 'becomes calm, composed, cool, patient and collected. He sees the self… in just himself… and all things as the self. Evil does not pass across him, and he passes across all evil. He is not burnt by evil; he burns up all evil. He becomes a Brahmin… He is the world of *brahman*.'[471]

In places, reaching the destination of *brahman* or the *brahmaloka* explicitly leads to the release of the knower from the cycle of death and rebirth. We see this in the case of Upakosala Kāmalāyana in CU 4.15.5 for whom knowledge of the *ātman*, which here is

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[468] See also KṣU 1 for a detailed description of the journey to the world of *brahman* undertaken by the one with knowledge of *brahman.* Here *brahman* is represented as a king seated on a throne, and KṣU 1.6-7 sets out a series of questions and answers used by this personified form of *brahman* to test the seeker, one of which requires the seeker to identify himself with *brahman*, (*yas tvam asi so'ham asmi*) who is, in turn, identified both as the 'self of every being' (*bhūtasya bhūtasya tvam ātmāsi*) and with 'this whole world' (*idaṃ sarvam*) (KṣU 1.6). Proferes (2007:144) discusses this passage in the context of the metaphor of kingship.

[469] AU 3.4: … *svarge loke sarvān kāmān āptvāmṛtaḥ samabhavat...*

[470] ŚU 6.16: … *viśvavid…* The role of God in the ŚU is discussed in Chapter 5.

[471] BU 4.4 23: ... *iti tasmād evaṃvit śānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samāhito bhūtvā atmanyevātmānam paśyati sarvam ātmānam paśyati nainam pāpmā tarati sarvam pāpmānaṃ tarati nainam pāpmā tapati sarvam pāpmānaṃ tapati vipāpo virajo'vicikitso brāhmaṇo bhavati eṣa brahmalokaḥ…* Radhakrishnan translates 'This is the world of *brahman*.'.

equated with *brahman*[472], results in being led by 'a person who is not human' (*puruṣo'mānava*) to *brahman* and to not returning 'to this human condition'.[473] The idea of the possibility of release from this cycle through knowledge comes to the fore in the teachings of the two paths of the dead in BU 6.2.15-16 and CU 5.10.1-7, and this particular result of knowledge of the ultimate principle eventually assumed paramount importance in the teachings of later Indian schools of philosophy.

The later Upaniṣads develop the idea of knowledge, as well as the means of acquiring the requisite level of knowledge, further. In places, they stress that it is more than simply knowledge which leads to the desirable goal. As early as TU 3.2, Bhṛgu, son of Varuṇa, is taught by his father that the way to know *brahman* is through the practice of austerities (*tapas*).[474] Here, austerity is equated with *brahman*, as well as being the means to acquire knowledge of *brahman.* The KeU, while considering knowledge (almost certainly of the ultimate principle in the form of an abstract *brahman*) to lead to immortality[475], also considers the limited knowledge of *brahman* which comes to those who think they 'know it well', exhorting reflection on the 'unknown part' of it if the goal is to be reached.[476] The MuU encourages meditation as the way to see 'the partless one', after one has purified one's being 'through the lucidity of knowledge'.[477] The KaU also devotes space to the means of acquiring the necessary knowledge, with its references to *yoga* practice and its conclusion that Naciketas, described as 'one yearning for knowledge' (*vidyābhīpsina*) in KaU 2.4, 'became free from aging and death' through both the 'body of knowledge' imparted by Yama and 'the entire set of yogic rules'.[478] The need for something in addition to knowledge has roots back in the ritual context of CU 1.1.10, where it is emphasised that only ritual performed with knowledge (*vidyā*), faith (*śraddha*), and 'awareness of the hidden connections' (*upaniṣad*) is 'truly

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[472] CU 4.15.1: … *etad brahmeti…*
[473] CU 4.15.5: ... *imaṃ mānavam āvartaṃ nāvartanta…*
[474] TU 3.2.1 (and elsewhere): … *tapasā brahma vijijñāsava tapo brahmeti…*
[475] KeU 2.4: ... *vidyayā vindate amṛtam.*
[476] KeU 2.1: *yadi manyase suvedeti dabhram evāpi nūnaṃ tvaṃ vettha brahmaṇo rūpam yadasya tvaṃ yadasya deveṣu atha nu mīmāṃsyam eva te….*
[477] MuU 3.1.8: … *jñāna prasādena viśuddhasattvas tatas tu tam paśyate niṣkalaṃ dhyāyamānaḥ.*
[478] KaU 6.18: *mṛtyuproktāṃ naciketo'tha labdhvā vidyām etām yogavidhiṃ ca kṛtsnam brahmaprāpto virajo'bhūd vimṛtyur anyopi…*

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potent' (*vīrya*).[479] By the time of the PU, the 'highest course' (*parāyaṇa*) which leads to immortality, freedom from fear, and liberation from the cycle of rebirth, requires austerity, chastity and faith, as well as knowledge.[480] In the ĪU, both knowledge and ignorance must be 'known', if the knowledge is to lead to immortality.[481]

Even if the early steps sometimes seem a little tentative, and the movement gradual, the Upaniṣads undoubtedly represent the culmination of a shift away from the more liturgical functions of the Saṃhitās, and from the efforts of the Brāhmaṇas to explain the mystical significance of ritual, to the idea of a liberating path of knowledge.[482] The required knowledge is generally knowledge of some form of the ultimate principle, and the results of acquiring it range from the apparently mundane, to immortality in the realm of *brahman* and the overcoming of the cycle of death and rebirth. It is this inward shift of orientation, foreshadowing, and then perhaps complemented by, the practices of *yoga* and meditation, which explains the importance of the Upaniṣads' exploration of the nature of ultimate reality: however the ultimate principle may be perceived, the soteriological impact of knowledge of it is all-important. The significance, therefore, of identifying and understanding that ultimate principle will be self-evident, and, arguably, understanding its functions is more important than the name given to it.

2.8   Concluding Observations

This Chapter has covered a broad range of topics, primarily with the intention of setting context for my more detailed discussion of the Upaniṣadic search for the ultimate principle in subsequent Chapters. As Brereton's helpful hermeneutic paradigms show, there are several ways in which the Upaniṣads develop their enquiry into the ultimate

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[479] CU 1.1.10: *yad eva vidyayā karoti śraddhayopaniṣadā tad eva vīryavattaram bhavatīti.*
[480] PU 1.10: … *tapasā brahmacaryeṇa śraddhayā vidyaya...*
[481] ĪU 11: *vidyāṃ cāvidyāṃ ca yas tad vedobhayam saha avidyayā mṛtyuṃ tīrtvā vidyayāmṛyam aśnute.*
[482] Sometimes characterised as a shift from *karmamārga* to *jñānamārga* (see, e.g., Klostermaier 1989:185, Kaelber 1989 chapter 5). Thapar (1994:307) summarises the shift thus: '… from the acceptance of the Vedas as revealed and as controlled by ritual to the possibility that knowledge could derive from intuition, observation, and analysis'. Kaelber (1989:79) says that 'The significance of knowledge is dramatically enhanced by the new worldview and soteriology first articulated in the early Upaniṣads'.

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principle. Mindfulness of this, as well as of the ways in which the meanings of key terms used of the ultimate principle shift and develop over time, is an essential starting point for my analysis of specific Upaniṣadic passages in Chapters 3 to 5. In those Chapters, I will show how the Upaniṣads, particularly through their use of narrative, address the questions about the ultimate principle which I have set up in this Chapter: first, what qualities does the ultimate principle necessarily possess?; secondly, is there a single principle or power which possesses those qualities?; thirdly, is the possessor of those qualities material or abstract?; fourthly, how does the key terminology used in the Upaniṣads to refer to the ultimate principle help inform an exploration of it?; and, finally, why is the search for the ultimate principle important, and what are the results of knowing the ultimate principle?

One of my purposes in this Chapter has been to demonstrate that the idea that the Upaniṣads show progressions of thought around these questions is neither new nor unique to the Upaniṣads. The earlier Vedic texts too show a similar, though not identical, on-going sense of enquiry. While their primary focus, especially in the ṚV, was cosmogonic, they nevertheless speculated about the source of that cosmogony, with ideas moving from the material to the theistic to the abstract, and, by the time of the AV, were speculating about the power which sustained and animated worldly existence. A similar trajectory is also reflected in the rise of the term *brahman*, which progresses from reflecting the creative power of sound or speech, specifically in a ritual context, to becoming ultimately an abstract term for the ultimate principle.

I have proposed a working definition of the ultimate principle as *the single entity, power, or principle which creates, animates, supports and sustains all of existence*. In this Chapter, I have shown that perhaps the most unified aspect of this definition throughout the early Vedic texts and the development of the Upaniṣads' terminology for their enquiry into the ultimate principle is the notion of power. We have seen this in the power of Indra releasing the waters of creation, the power of the sacrifice in ṚV 10.90, the inherent power of *tad ekam* in ṚV 10.129, the power of the *brahmins'* ritual speech which underpins the term *brahman*, and the power of the animating force within the individual, sometimes called *prāṇa*, which is closely related to *ātman*. In subsequent

Chapters, we will see how the Upaniṣads investigate and analyse both the source(s) of that power and the way in which it functions in the universe.

Chapter 3

Three Narratives in Search of a Principle

'By whom impelled, by whom compelled, does the mind soar forth? By whom enjoined

does the breath march on as the first? By whom is this speech impelled, with which

people speak? And who is the god that joins the sight and hearing?' [483]

3.1   Introduction

In Chapter 2, I proposed a working definition of the ultimate principle as *the single entity, power, or principle which creates, animates, supports and sustains all of existence*. I noted that, while later philosophical schools which relied on the Upaniṣads as primary sources for their teachings often identified that principle as an abstract entity which they called *brahman*, *brahman* in fact in the Upaniṣads is a more nuanced term, which does not necessarily always indicate an abstract form of ultimate principle as a separate ontological entity. I also observed that, while the idea of finding connections is an important aspect of Upaniṣadic thought, entwined with the etymology of the word *upaniṣad* itself, the idea that a teaching of identity (however characterised) between a universal *brahman* and an individual *ātman* is a universal, or even a common, teaching of the Upaniṣads is misplaced.

In this Chapter I look at the three most prominent narrative episodes in the BU which address the question of the ultimate principle. It is immediately noteworthy that, although the terms *brahman* and *ātman* feature in these narratives, *brahman* plays a minor role and in none of them is there an unambiguous teaching that an abstract *brahman is* the ultimate principle, nor is any explicit identity made between *brahman* and *ātman.* To reach, as those later interpreters did, either of those conclusions requires giving *brahman* a meaning which the texts do not necessarily justify, coupled with either the drawing of inferences from the narratives themselves (e.g. that in presenting a

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[483] KeU 1.1: *keneṣitam patati preṣitam manaḥ kena prāṇaḥ prathamaḥ praiti yuktaḥ keneṣitam vācam imāṃ vadanti cakṣuḥ śrotraṃ ka u devo yunakti.*

teaching about *ātman* in the context of a question about *brahman*, the identity of the two must be taken as read) or the making of assumptions that certain other terms (e.g. *akṣara*) are intended to be synonymous with *brahman*.

While it could be argued that the narratives proceed on an underlying assumption that the reader/hearer understands *brahman* to have a certain meaning and/or *brahman* and *ātman* to have a certain relationship, so that the texts do not need expressly to say so, such a general underlying assumption seems hard to justify. First, we have seen in Chapter 2 both the variety of pre-Upaniṣadic ideas of the ultimate principle, which do not necessarily give *brahman* a dominant role, and the fluidity of meaning of the terms *brahman* and *ātman*. Secondly, the amount of time devoted to attempting to identify and explain the ultimate principle in the Upaniṣads militates against making any such general assumptions. What in fact reading these narratives makes clear is that the more that one analyses the narratives of the early Upaniṣads the stronger appears to be Brereton's idea that *brahman* in the early Upaniṣads (unlike in its later usages in the Vedānta schools) 'remains an open concept' and is no more nor less than '…the designation given to whatever principle or power a sage believes to lie behind the world and to make the world explicable'.[484]

The question, therefore, which I address in this Chapter is whether the arrangement of these three narratives in the BU, if not intended to put forward an abstract *brahman* as the ultimate principle or to demonstrate a particular relationship between *ātman* and *brahman*, shows any other organisational purpose, at least so far as their teachings about the ultimate principle are concerned.[485] To begin with, through the questions which they raise, and the potential answers which are put forward and then dismissed, each of the narratives makes clear that the identity and nature of the ultimate principle are topics for discussion, rather than a subject of settled dogma. However, reading the narratives together will also demonstrate that each of the three focusses on a different function of

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[484] Brereton 1990:118. In the BU taken as a whole, that principle or power is most commonly called *ātman.*

[485] There may be other editorial reasons for the arrangement of the narratives in the BU (see, e.g., the arguments of Brereton in Brereton 1997 and of Black in Black 2007 Chapter 2), but those do not necessarily override the possibility that the teachings on the ultimate principle also played a role.

the ultimate principle, as I have defined it for the purpose of this thesis. A close reading of the three will show that, while they display a typically Upaniṣadic fluidity in answering them, there is a noticeable progression in the questions which they address. The first clearly focusses on the *creative* role of the ultimate principle, and does so in a manner which effectively debunks some of the earlier Vedic speculations about the roles and functions of the Vedic deities. The second pays scant attention to creation: its concern is to understand how the created universe is *sustained*, in other words how the various elements of the created universe are established and maintained in their respective places. The third also pays little attention to creation and refers to the ultimate principle's sustaining function only peripherally: it devotes its attention to the need for the ultimate principle to *animate* and *control* creation on an ongoing basis. A useful (if imperfect) analogy is that of a puppet, which needs, first, a manufacturer; secondly, a set of strings to keep it together and to control its actions; and thirdly a puppeteer to manipulate those strings. The strings cannot control the puppet unless the puppet already exists; the puppeteer has no function until the puppet exists and the strings are in place - as well as all three functions being necessary, the order of creation, sustenance, animation is also important. A monistic ultimate principle must fulfil all three roles; alternatively, the ultimate principle must somehow differentiate itself so that different aspects of it perform different functions.

As I have argued in Chapter 1, the placing of teachings in the context of dialogue and narrative should not be considered 'accidental', with the narratives as mere 'adornment'[486] to the Upaniṣads' philosophical teachings. Rather, the narratives should be read as integral parts of the texts, and the purpose of placing certain teachings in the context of narrative and dialogue should be considered, if we are to achieve Grinshpon's 'Good-Enough Reading'.[487] In the editorial process of compiling the early Upaniṣads, particularly the BU and CU, the presentation of teachings in narrative appears to have been a conscious ploy to give those teachings prominence. It follows that the placing of narratives, even though they may have originated independently, in a particular order, and in juxtaposition with other narratives, should also be considered as a conscious

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[486] Lindquist 2011a:35.
[487] Grinshpon 2003:1.

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editorial decision. It is accordingly a legitimate enquiry to consider the development of ideas from a narrative which appears earlier in a text to one which appears later, rather than simply looking at the teachings of the individual narratives in isolation.

By reading these three narratives together, the reader is drawn to consider what are the principal functions of the ultimate principle. Indeed, it could be argued that the main thrust of the three narratives is to establish those functions, rather than to identify the ultimate principle itself. It is clearly not enough for the ultimate principle simply to create, as the first narrative suggests. The results of that creation need to be organised so that they function in the world, as the second narrative makes clear. Even that, however, is not a complete picture: that functioning in the world needs to be directed, if the world is to operate in anything other than a random way, as the third narrative explains. It is important to stress that I am not making any claims about the origins or chronology of the original versions of the three narratives. Nor am I suggesting that their relative positioning in the BU is solely a function of the ways in which they approach the ultimate principle. However, there does seem to be some significance in a relative positioning which highlights this progression in establishing the essential qualities of the ultimate principle.

3.2 Narrative 1: Bālāki and Ajātaśatru

The first narrative involving human characters to appear in the BU is the dialogue between Bālāki and Ajātaśatru in BU 2.1. This appears shortly after the cosmogonic speculation of BU 1 in which the world in the beginning was portrayed as a 'single body (*ātman*) shaped like a man'[488] which populated the universe, initially by splitting himself into two, male and female. A very similar narrative to that of BU 2.1, both in content and structure, appears in KṣU 4, though there the character of Bālāki is presented differently, and the final teachings are also somewhat different. It is impossible to state which of the two versions is the earlier; however, the KṣU as a whole is generally considered later than the BU and there are certain features of the KṣU narrative which

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[488] BU 1.4.1: *ātmaivedam agra āsīt puruṣavidhaḥ.* Radhakrishnan has 'the self in the shape of a person'.

suggests that it may be later than that of the BU.[489] They may both derive from a common third source.

3.2.1   The characters and literary motifs

In the BU, Bālāki is introduced as 'a learned Gārgya named Dṛpta Bālāki'.[490] The use of the adjective *anūcāna*, often associated with Vedic learning, suggests that he is a *brahmin*, which is confirmed later in the narrative at BU 2.1.15. The name or epithet *dṛpta* ('proud') is omitted in the KṣU, where he is simply 'Gārgya Bālāki', a learned and widely travelled (or famous) man[491], who is said to have lived in several of the important centres of Vedic India, including Kuru, Pañcāla, Kāśi and Videha. Olivelle notes that Gārgyas 'are mentioned as teachers of liturgy and grammar', suggesting that Bālāki 'comes from a distinguished family'[492], probably of ritualists. The description '*dṛpta*' in the BU, which, together with the omission of the information about his travel, presents him in a less favourable light than in the KṣU, sets him up for the purpose of the narrative as arrogant, almost to the point of buffoonery. This enables the BU to present its teachings in a manner critical of 'proud' ritualists, thereby signposting their novelty and importance.

Ajātaśatru, on the other hand, is a *kṣatriya*, the king of Kāśi.[493] A king by the name Ajātaśatru is also well known in Buddhist circles: conventional dating theories for the BU and KṣU would support the generally held view[494] that the two are not the same, though Bronkhorst, despite referring to Ajātaśatru in the BU as 'clearly legendary', has used the presumed identity of the two to support his suggested later date for the BU.[495] In both versions, Ajātaśatru is presented in a favourable light, shown as a generous king,

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[489] Such as the longer list of 'people' put forward by Bālāki, and the substitution of *śarira* for *ātman* to refer to the physical body (see further below).

[490] BU 2.1.1: *dṛptabālākir hānūcāno gārgya āsa.*

[491] KṣU 4.2.1: *atha ha vai gārgyo bālākir anūcānaḥ saṃspaṣṭa āsa.* Olivelle (1998a:594) notes that the word *saṃspaṣṭa* (or *saṃspṛṣṭa*) is 'obscure', and that his translation as 'widely travelled' is conjectural, and follows Frenz' translation '*vielgereister*' at 1968-9:121. Radhakrishnan and Hume translate it as 'famous' and 'famed' respectively.

[492] Olivelle 1998a:480.

[493] Black (2007:119) notes that Ajātaśatru 'employs several metaphors explicitly connecting his discourse to his position as a king', including martial analogies.

[494] Olivelle 1998a:478, MacDonell and Keith 1912(1):13.

[495] Bronkhorst 1993:118. See also Kosambi 1970:103.

willing to offer a thousand cows for Bālāki's teaching, also highlighting the symbiotic relationship between *brahmin* and *kṣatriya*. As discussed in Chapter 1, the notion that a *kṣatriya* teacher implies a *kṣatriya* origin for the teachings is now widely discredited: more likely, putting them into the mouth of a *kṣatriya* is a literary way of highlighting their innovative nature, and possible non-Vedic origins, and, when presented in contradistinction to the traditional, and (in the BU) arrogant, presentation of Bālāki, a dismissal of traditional *brahmin* learning. As Black has noted, Bālāki's ideas consist 'of a series of rehearsed statements all following the same formula', while Ajātaśatru dismisses that formulaic approach in an effort really to 'explain processes of the body and mind'.[496] During the narrative, Bālāki asks to become Ajātaśatru's student. Given Ajātaśatru's acknowledgment in BU 2.1.15 that it would be 'a reversal of the norm' (*pratiloma*) for him to have done so, it seems unlikely that he formally initiated Bālāki. Nevertheless, the very fact of the request being made represents a 'humbling' of Bālāki, and, once again, emphasises the narrative's critique of traditional, ritualist *brahmins*.

3.2.2   Bālāki's offer

In both versions, Bālāki approaches Ajātaśatru with the words *brahma te bravāṇi*. As we have seen in Chapter 2, these words can be translated in different ways. Olivelle, following Thieme's etymological derivation of *brahman*, translates them as 'Let me tell you a formulation of truth', on the grounds that *brahman* appears to be the direct object of the sentence, rather than, as contended by Radhakrishnan and Hume in their translations of BU 2.1.1, 'I will tell you about *brahma[n]*'.[497] It is worth noting, however, that, in their translations of KṣU 4.1, both Hume and Radhakrishnan offer the arguably more syntactically accurate 'Let me declare *brahman* to you', making *brahman* once again the direct object, though begging the question as to its meaning. Frenz also translates the phrase as '*Ich will dir das Brahman erklären*'.[498]

Whichever translation one adopts, it is strongly arguable that, in making his offer to Ajātaśatru, Bālāki is using *brahman* as a neutral denominator for the ultimate principle,

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[496] Black 2012:23.
[497] Olivelle 1998a:498.
[498] 'I wish to explain the *brahman* to you' (Frenz 1968-9:121).

rather than setting up *brahman* as an entity in its own right.[499] His offer could easily be analogous to a statement such as 'Let me tell you a secret', where the word 'secret' describes a quality of what is about to be revealed, rather than being an entity in and of itself. This argument is supported by Bālāki's suggestion of several 'people' which he considers to be [the] *brahman*, which implies that he does not see the ultimate principle as an impersonal abstract entity, in the way *brahman* was often later interpreted.[500]

3.2.3 Bālāki's ideas of the ultimate principle

Bālāki's series of 'people' (*puruṣa*) which he venerates as *brahman* (*brahmopāsa*) begins with 'the person up there in the sun', and continues through 11 (in the BU) and 15 (in the KṣU) further 'people'.[501] As noted above, each is put forward in a highly formulaic

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[499] Brereton's 'designation given to whatever principle or power a sage believes to lie behind the world and to make the world explicable' (1990:118) or Geib's 'kind of blank formula in order to express the ultimate cause of all creation' (1975-6:225).

[500] Bālāki's motive for making his offer is unstated: it is reasonable to assume that hope of reward from the king may have been at least part of it. Ajātaśatru is clearly keen to hear what Bālāki has to say, as he offers him a thousand cows for his speech and suggests (perhaps sarcastically) that, for such a speech 'People are sure to rush here, crying 'Here's a Janaka! Here's a Janaka'' (BU 2.1.1: *janakaḥ janaka iti vai janā dhāvanti.* See also KṣU 4.1.). The references to Janaka have been used to suggest that the Bālāki narrative post-dates the narratives in BU 3 and 4 which present king Janaka of Videha in a favourable light, and that Ajātaśatru is trying to emulate Janaka and/or that Bālāki is presenting himself as a 'second Yājñavalkya'. (See, e.g., Hume 1921:16, Cohen 2008:84). Hock in particular (2002:282) has argued, developing the argument in Brereton 1997, that the Bālāki narrative is one of the outermost layers of a ring composition, probably added relatively late in the day. Cohen (2008:84) suggests that Bālāki's ideas 'obviously owe much to the great Yājñavalkya' but that Bālāki has missed the point of Yājñavalkya's teachings; Ruben (1947:265), on the other hand, describes *Ajātaśatru* as a '*getreuer Anhänger*' ('faithful supporter') of Yājñavalkya, implicitly aligning Bālāki with Janaka. Janaka is also presented as a wise and generous king and a teacher in ŚB 11.6.3, and I believe that the contents of this dialogue suggest that it may be read as a relatively early attempt to characterise the ultimate principle, so that Yājñavalkya's teachings later in the BU may be read as a refinement of Ajātaśatru's ideas, a view shared by Acharya (2013:18). I read Ajātaśatru's comment not as referring to himself, but as a sarcastic reference to Bālāki. It is also possible that the references to Janaka are later interpolations. Even if this whole episode were a later interpolation into the BU, its positioning in the received version of the BU as the first significant narrative exploration of the ultimate principle involving ostensibly real life characters suggests that it is intended to be read as an early effort at enunciating the ultimate principle, and I believe that its contents support such a reading.

[501] See Table 3.1 for a list of those proposed in the BU. The KṣU omits the 'person in the quarters', and adds thunder (*stanayitnu*), separates sound (*śabda*) and echo (*pratiśrutkā*), includes the 'person who roams about in dreams' (*puruṣaḥ suptaḥ svapnayā carati*), and the persons in the right and left eyes (*dakṣiṇe'kṣi* and *savye'kṣi*). There is no suggestion that

way, perhaps reflecting (or, for the purposes of the narrative, parodying) ritual recitation[502], and is rejected by Ajātaśatru as no more than a partial *brahman*, with positive, but limited, results accruing to the person who venerates that particular *puruṣa* as [the] *brahman*. Rather than set out Bālāki's suggestions and Ajātaśatru's refutations at length, I have listed those from the BU in Table 3.1 below, which I will follow with some general observations.

Table 3.1

BU reference	'Person' venerated	Result of venerating (according to Ajātaśatru)
2.1.2	*āditye puruṣa* (person in the sun)	Become the most eminent of all beings… their head and king.
2.1.3	*candre puruṣa* (person in the moon)	Have Soma pressed for him every day, and his food will never decrease.
2.1.4	*vidyuti puruṣa* (person in lightning)	Become radiant, and have radiant children.
2.1.5	*ākāśe puruṣa* (person in space)	Be filled with children and livestock, and his children will not pass away from this world.
2.1.6	*vāyau puruṣa* (person in the wind)	Become victorious and invincible, and… triumph over his adversaries.

Bālāki's ideas are presented in a hierarchical order, nor that any of them is dependent on any other(s). Olivelle (1998a:26) notes the common usage in the Upaniṣads of the formula 'venerating *x* as *y*', which he suggests indicates a recognition of a (possibly hidden) connection between *x* and *y*. As he stresses, however, recognising a connection, however esoteric, between *x* and *y* does not necessarily imply an identity between them. See also note 433 above in relation to the usage of *upa+√ās* and its derivatives.

[502] Black (2012:23-4) notes that Bālāki's ideas appear similar to 'scripted statements' of Vedic ritual texts.

Neti, neti: the Search for the Ultimate Principle in the Vedic Upaniṣads
Graham Burns

2.1.7	*agnau puruṣa* (person in the fire)	Become irresistible, and so will his children.
2.1.8	*apsu puruṣa* (person in the waters)	Obtain only what resembles him and not what does not resemble him; and one who resembles him will be born from him.
2.1.9	*ādarśe puruṣa* (person in a mirror)	Shine, his children will shine, and will outshine everyone he meets.
2.1.10	*yantam paścat śabdonūdi* (sound drifting behind a man as he walks)	Live his full lifespan in this world, and his lifebreath will not leave him before the appointed time.
2.1.11	*dikṣu puruṣa* (person in the quarters)	Always have a companion, and will never be cut off from his entourage.
2.1.12	*chāyāmaya puruṣa* (person consisting of shadow)	Live a full life in this world, and death will not approach him before the appointed time.
2.1.13	*ātmani puruṣa* (person in the body)	Come to possess a body, and so will his children.

The idea that a 'learned' *brahmin* such as Bālāki can offer 12 (in the BU: 16 in the KṣU) 'people' whom he venerates as *brahman* is a clear indicator, at least for the purposes of the narrative, that the identity of the ultimate principle, or, at the least, how it manifests in the everyday world, was not clearly or universally understood in traditional *brahmin* circles. Although the order varies slightly between the BU and KṣU, Bālāki's initial suggestions in both cases begin with correlates of old Vedic deities: sun, moon, thunder and lightning, wind and fire. The fact that he venerates 'the person in…' each of these clearly implies an association with the personalised, deified forms of these natural

elements: in Gonda's memorable phrase the 'departmental deities' of the early Vedic tradition.[503] From water (seventh in the BU series and eighth in the KṣU) onwards, none of Bālāki's suggestions feature in either of the other narratives discussed in this Chapter.[504] Nevertheless, the compilers of the BU and the KṣU considered them worth including, either to emphasise that Bālāki was 'clutching at straws' in his efforts to identify the ultimate principle, or perhaps to refute 'old-fashioned' ideas whose currency was already low and which were not deemed necessary of consideration in the other narratives.

Bālāki's final proposition in the BU, beyond which he offers no further ideas, is *ātmani puruṣa*.[505] Olivelle and Hume both take *ātman* here as referring to the physical body, which seems correct. Radhakrishnan's 'person who is in the self' seems tendentious and less convincing, given the context. This interpretation is supported by the fact that, in the equivalent verse of the KṣU, *ātman* is replaced by *śarira*, and rejected as being equivalent 'only' to Prajāpati.[506] The idea of the 'person in the *ātman*' being rejected as *brahman* is noteworthy in the light of the later interpretations which identify *ātman* and *brahman*: the substitution of *śarira* in the KṣU may suggest that, if indeed the KṣU version is later than the BU, the rejection of *ātmani puruṣa* carried some sensitivity, even at this early stage.

3.2.4   Ajātaśatru's response

After Ajātaśatru's rejection of *ātmani puruṣa* as [the] *brahman* in the BU, and of Bālāki's final suggestions of the person in the right eye (*dakṣine'kṣini puruṣa*) and the person in the left eye (*savye'kṣini puruṣa*) in the KṣU[507], both versions of the narrative

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[503] Gonda 1965a:136. The term *puruṣa*, which later became extremely important in Sāṃkhya philosophy, literally means 'man' or 'person'. However, as early as the ṚV, it also carried a connotation of something more than simply the physical person, perhaps with a connotation of animating power: see, e.g., ṚV 10.51.8 which refers to the '*puruṣa*' of plants (*puruṣam cauṣadhīnām*), translated by Jamison and Brereton as 'the 'man' of the plants'. I discuss the idea of the ultimate principle as a 'person' further in Chapter 5.
[504] The person seen in a reflection and the person seen in the dream state are also false ideas of *brahman* put forward by Prajāpati to Indra in the narrative in CU 8.7-15.
[505] Cf. BU 1.4.1's *ātman* 'shaped like a man' (*puruṣa*).
[506] KṣU 4.16: *prajāpatir iti vā aham etam upāsa…*
[507] KṣU 4.17-18.

show him rather dismissively asking 'Is that all?' (*etāvan nu*).[508] While, in the BU, Ajātaśatru simply says that 'It isn't known with just that' (*naitāvatā viditam*), in the KṣU he is, if anything, more dismissive, accusing Bālāki of engaging him in conversation in vain. Bringing to mind Viśvakarman, the Vedic 'divine craftsman', in the KṣU he goes on to tell Bālāki that the person one should seek to know is 'the maker of the persons you have talked about… whose handiwork they are'.[509] In other words, for Ajātaśatru in the KṣU, the key to understanding the ultimate principle, or the 'formulation of truth', is to know the creator of all of the component parts of the universe, at both macrocosmic and microcosmic levels. Although this explicit reference to the 'maker' of Bālāki's persons is omitted at this stage of the dialogue in the BU, Ajātaśatru's exposition of the ultimate principle in the BU also, as I shall explain below, focusses on the creative aspect of the ultimate principle. The reference in the probably later KṣU to the 'maker' of Bālāki's persons may be a way of re-inforcing the BU's conclusion.

In both versions, Bālāki approaches Ajātaśatru and asks to become Ajātaśatru's pupil.[510] Ajātaśatru acknowledges 'the reversal of the norm' which would be involved in taking Bālāki as his student, and in neither version is he expressly said to have initiated Bālāki.[511] Nevertheless, he offers to ensure that Bālāki perceives clearly (*tvājñapayiṣyāmi*), leads Bālāki to a sleeping man, addressed as 'Soma, great king dressed in white' (*bṛhan pāṇḍaravāsaḥ soma rājan*), and asks Bālāki about the state of the person when asleep.[512] Here the two versions diverge. The BU sets out a teaching about the 'person consisting of perception' (*vijñānamaya puruṣa*) gathering the cognitive power of the body's vital functions (*prāṇa*) into his own cognitive power and resting in 'the space within the heart'[513], analogised with the state of oblivion

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[508] BU 2.1.14, KṣU 4.19.

[509] KṣU 4.19: *yo… puruṣāṇām kartā, yasya vai tat karma.* In Chapter 5, I will suggest that the idea of seeking the 'maker' of Bālāki's 'persons' is indicative of a trend to personalise the ultimate principle, arising from the Vedic 'departmental deities' and never entirely lost behind the more abstract ideas of *brahman* and *ātman*.

[510] In the KṣU he does so in the traditional formulaic way 'carrying firewood in his hands' (KṣU 4.19: *… samit pāniḥ praticakrama upāyānīti*).

[511] Though both say that he took Bālāki by the hand, which Black (2007:77) has argued in another context may signify an intention to initiate.

[512] BU 2.1.15-16, KṣU 4.19. The reference to Soma, an important component of much early Vedic ritual, may also indicate that this is an early narrative.

[513] BU 2.1.17: *… yatraiṣa etat supto'bhūt eṣa vijñānamayaḥ puruṣaḥ tad eṣām prāṇānāṃ vijñānena vijñānam ādāya ya eṣo'ntar hṛdaya ākāṣaḥ tasmiñchete…* The space within the heart

encountered in deep sleep or sexual bliss, before concluding that 'all the vital functions…, all the worlds, all the gods, and all beings spring from' the *ātman*[514], whose 'hidden name' (*upaniṣad*) is 'the real behind the real' (*satyasya satyam*).[515]

I have taken the BU version to end at this point. Although it is not completely clear, there seems no obvious reason to treat the enigmatic teachings of BU 2.2 as part of the same narrative.[516] What is clear is that, for all the rejection of *ātmani puruṣa* ('the person in the body'), in Ajātaśatru's teaching the *brahman* is that from which everything 'springs' (*vyuccaranti*), in other words the creative source of the universe. For Ajātaśatru, that source is *ātman*, possibly equated with the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*, the 'person consisting of perception'.[517] Perhaps surprisingly, given Bālāki's initial offer, Ajātaśatru does not explicitly say that this *ātman* is *brahman*, which one might have expected if the thrust of the narrative was to teach an identity between two concepts, rather than simply setting up *ātman* as the 'formulation of truth'. It could be argued that such an equation is implicit, as Ajātaśatru is responding to Bālāki's offer, but its absence, in what appears to be an early exposition of the ultimate principle, is striking.[518]

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is a relatively common 'home' for the self in the Upaniṣads: see, e.g., CU 3.12.7-9 where the 'space within the heart' is directly equated with *brahman* as 'the space outside [the] person'.

[514] Here interpreted as the metaphysical 'self', rather than the physical body.

[515] BU 2.1.20: … *evāsmād ātmanaḥ sarve prāṇāḥ sarve lokāḥ sarve devāḥ sarvāni bhūtāni vyuccaranti. tasyopaniṣat satyasya satyam iti prāṇā vai satyam teṣām eṣa satyam.* Acharya (2013:16-17) sees this stanza as an interpolation, on the basis of its focus on *ātman* rather than *puruṣa*.

[516] Acharya agrees with this. However, he sees BU 2.1 and 2.3 as forming one single discourse (Acharya 2013).

[517] Cf. the notion of thought as the ultimate principle in the interpretation by Brereton and others of ṚV 10.129 (see Chapter 1).

[518] The final teaching in the KṣU also refers to *prāṇa*, here in the singular, as the *locus* of the senses in sleep. *Prāṇa* is expressly identified with 'the self consisting of intelligence' (here *prajñātman*), which penetrates the 'bodily self' (*śarīra*) 'up to the very hairs of the body, up to the very nails'. To this *prajñātman* 'cling the other selves' (also *ātman*), 'as to a chieftain, his own people' (KṣU 4.20: *sa eṣa prāṇa eva prajñātmedaṃ śarīram ātmānam anupraviṣṭa ālomabhyā ānakhebhyaḥ tam etam ātmānam eta ātmano'nvavasyante yathā śreṣṭhinam svāś…*). Although Olivelle argues that these 'other selves' are the vital functions referred to elsewhere as *prāṇa* (Olivelle 1998a:596; cf. also the various 'selves' of TU 2), this may also be a reference to the various 'people' venerated by Bālāki. The notion of multiple 'selves' all referred to by the term *ātman* is troublesome for those seeking an unequivocally non-dualist interpretation of this teaching. Although it is difficult to be certain, it seems that the KṣU, while acknowledging some form of primacy for the *prajñātman*, also accepts a multiplicity of 'selves', with the *prajñātman*

3.2.5 Characteristics of the ultimate principle

Hume, at least implicitly, also sees this narrative episode as an early exposition of the ultimate principle. He describes Ajātaśatru's teaching as '… the first in the Upanishads where the conception of Brahma is subjected to a regressive analysis leading to a conclusion which obtains throughout the remainder of the Upanishads…', namely that the 'world-ground cannot be the substrate of only certain particular phenomena'.[519] While Hume's conclusion about the universality of the 'world-ground' speaks to an essential quality of the ultimate principle, I take issue with his suggestion that 'the conception of Brahma is subjected to a regressive analysis' in this narrative. Although Bālāki's ideas do move from the external to the internal, they are not presented as being interdependent in the way that we will see below in Yājñavalkya's attempt to explain the ultimate principle to Gārgī.

Rather, the key characteristic of the ultimate principle in this narrative is its function as the *source* or origin of the various 'people' put forward by Bālāki, of the body's vital functions, and of existence generally. In a celebrated passage which closes the BU narrative, Ajātaśatru sums up his teaching thus:

> 'As a spider sends forth its thread, and as tiny sparks spring forth from a fire, so indeed do all the vital functions…, all the worlds, all the gods, and all beings spring from this self (*ātman*)'.[520]

This is reinforced in the KṣU, where he makes clear to Bālāki that the focus of the enquiry into the *brahman* is to identify *yo… puruṣāṇām kartā yasya vai tat karma* ('the maker of the persons you have talked about… whose handiwork they are').[521] Although both versions of the narrative refer to *prāṇa*, there is no specific reference to the need for

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at the top of the hierarchy, not unlike one supreme deity reigning over a number of more minor deities. It is significant too that *ātman*, in both versions of the narrative, is said to 'consist of' intelligence: in other narratives, we shall see that various mental faculties, including *vijñāna* in BU 3.7, are rejected as having ultimate qualities, which supports my argument that the Bālāki narrative is an early attempt to explain the ultimate principle.

[519] Hume 1921:18.
[520] BU 2.1.20: *sa yathorṇanābhiśtantunoccaret yathāgneḥ kṣudrā visphuliṅgā vyuccaranti evam evāsmād ātmanaḥ sarve prāṇāḥ sarve lokāḥ sarve devāḥ sarvāni bhūtāni.*
[521] KṣU 4.19.

the ultimate principle to sustain or support existence, nor to animate existence on an ongoing basis. The positioning of this narrative, therefore, as the first in the BU to address the question of the ultimate principle, serves to highlight the most fundamental of that principle's characteristics. At the same time, it sets out the BU's stall as developing teachings not hitherto 'known' to traditional *brahmins*, and introduces the idea of a more abstract principle in the form of *ātman*. This, in turn, paves the way for the later narratives to develop this idea by addressing the other essential functions of the ultimate principle.

3.3 Narrative 2: Gārgī Vācaknavī and Yājñavalkya

The discussion between Yājñavalkya and Gārgī in BU 3.6 and 3.8 shifts the focus of the underlying question. Here, Gārgī's concern is not to identify the maker of the universe, or that from which the universe 'springs', but rather to know on what the (presumably pre-existing) universe is 'woven'. In other words, the focus of this narrative is not the creative function of the ultimate principle (which, to borrow Gārgī's weaving metaphor, we could identify with the weaver), or even the material source of the universe (the wool), but rather the quality of the ultimate principle in supporting and sustaining the universe (the threads of the woven cloth) and keeping it together.

3.3.1 The characters and literary motifs

This dialogue is part of the *brahmodya* in the court of king Janaka of the eastern kingdom of Videha, in which Janaka offers a reward of a thousand cows[522], each with ten pieces of gold tied to its horns, to whichever of the *brahmins* who had 'flocked there'(*abhisameta*) from Kuru and Pañcāla was 'the most learned in the Vedas'.[523] Yājñavalkya immediately claims the cows, before being challenged and questioned sequentially by eight *brahmins.* Gārgī Vācaknavī is significant amongst the eight, both

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[522] Cf. the Bālāki narrative discussed above.

[523] *anūcānatama* (BU 3.1.1), perhaps more literally translated as 'best at repeating by rote' (Killingley 2018b:126). Cf. the use of *anūcāna* to refer to the defeated Bālāki in BU 3.2.1 (see above). The structure and content of this debate have been widely studied, notably in Brereton 1997, Hock 2002, and Black 2007.

because she is female and because she is the only one to challenge Yājñavalkya twice in the debate.[524]

We know little, if anything, about Gārgī's background or character. As noted above, Gārgi/Gārgya appears to have been a respected family name and her authority to speak in the debate and to address the gathered *brahmins* does not appear to have been questioned.[525] As always with characters in the Upaniṣads, we need to be cautious about treating her as an actual person who lived and debated in a real *brahmodya.* Putting forward a feminine protagonist may have been a deliberate literary device employed by the compilers of the BU: like the *kṣatriya* Ajātaśatru, she is from a class theoretically excluded from ritual knowledge.[526]

Yājñavalkya is one of the most prominent characters in all of the Upaniṣads, as a result of the central role which he plays in the middle section of the BU, though he appears nowhere else in Vedic texts, apart from in the wider ŚB.[527] Unlike the *kṣatriya* teacher Ajātaśatru in the previous narrative, he is clearly a *brahmin.* He appears to have originated in the western Kuru-Pañcāla region[528], and features in the middle section of the BU as, in effect, Janaka's court theologian. In the ŚB, he is generally portrayed as an 'authority on questions of ritual'[529]; however, by the time of the BU, he has become 'a teacher of esoteric doctrines'[530], with at times a somewhat sarcastic, irascible and irreverent persona. The placing of these teachings in the mouth of a *brahmin* (even a somewhat unorthodox one, such as Yājñavalkya) may serve to show, first, that teachings about the ultimate principle have been assimilated into *brahmin* thought,

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[524] She is also the first to be threatened by Yājñavalkya and the only one to get the last word in her dialogue with him (Black 2007:150).

[525] Lindquist 2008:409. See also Black 2007:153. Cohen speculates about her origins at 2008:72-74, noting her possible relationship to Gārgya Bālāki. At 2018e:40, Cohen notes that *vācaknavī* can mean 'eloquent' (or the 'eloquent one') and suggests that 'her name evokes a prestigious lineage of scholars and great learning'.

[526] Gārgī's role, and in particular her status as a female character, has been subjected to much scholarly analysis, e.g. Findly 1985; Black 2007:150-158; Lindquist 2008, and the reader is referred to these studies for a deeper analysis of the significance of her femininity.

[527] And in a quotation from the ŚB in the Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka (MacDonell and Keith 1912(2):189-90).

[528] At least, that is the inference from BU 3.1.1.

[529] MacDonell and Keith 1912(2):189-90. Witzel (2003:106) notes that he is already presented as aged in ŚB 3.8.2.24-25.

[530] Olivelle 1998a:486.

though the debate setting shows that they are still not fully developed, and, secondly, that *brahmin* ideas of the ultimate principle are more sophisticated than those of the *kṣatriya* Ajātaśatru, in other words that the teachings of this narrative are a development from those of the earlier one.[531]

The *brahmodya* in BU 3 is much the clearest example in the Upaniṣads of the use of debate amongst *brahmins* as a literary motif for presenting teachings, and its use here is a clever way of reflecting a number of different agendas. Brereton has analysed it as a ring composition within the frame narrative of the *brahmodya* setting, in which the different challenges to Yājñavalkya recall the 'repetitive framework' of Vedic ritual[532] while at the same time building its teachings on the basis of 'pairing and repetition'[533], in which the focus shifts, within pairs of sub-narratives, from questions about life after death to questions about the ultimate principle. Black sees it as a dramatic construction aimed at promoting Yājñavalkya, within a context which emphasises the rivalry between different Vedic schools.[534] Both of these arguments have some force, though neither is necessarily inconsistent with the idea that the structure of the *brahmodya* narrative was also in part influenced by the progression of questions about the ultimate principle.

Certainly, the setting of the debate, and the range of questions put by the participants, speak to 'the interactive and competitive nature of Upanishadic philosophy'[535], and again highlight the fact that the answers to questions about the ultimate principle were neither universally known nor universally understood. At the same time, the structure of the debate in a way which gives huge prominence to Yājñavalkya helps serve the apparent purpose of the BU in promoting the more 'modern' eastern tradition.

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[531] Like Gārgī, Yājñavalkya has been widely studied, both with regard to his historicity and his interactions with characters such as Gārgī, his wife Maitreyī, and king Janaka, and, again, I refer the reader to these studies for a broader understanding of Yājñavalkya's background and character. See Lindquist 2004, 2011a, 2011b and forthcoming, Fišer 1984, Reinvang 2000, Hock 2002, and Witzel 2003b. Witzel (2003b:104), rather unfairly, argues that this extensive study derives from the fact that he is 'one of the few *lively* people in the oldest strata of Indian literature'.

[532] Brereton 1997:3.

[533] *Ibid.*:14.

[534] Black 2007 Chapter 2 *passim*, but particularly 69-88.

[535] Black 2007:100.

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Nevertheless, the fact that more or less formal debates between *brahmins* have a history back to the Vedic Saṃhitās at least sets up a framework for considering Yājñavalkya's teachings as anchored in orthodox Vedic thought, and anchored into the *brahmodya* tradition of the BU's 'home' Veda, the White YV.

3.3.2 Gārgī's question

Gārgī is the sixth of Yājñavalkya's eight challengers. Unlike Bālāki in the earlier narrative, she does not offer her own ideas of the ultimate principle. She notes what appears to be a common understanding, namely that 'the whole world is woven back and forth on water'[536], then, recognising the inevitable paradox that water too requires both a creator and something on which it is woven or sustained, asks Yājñavalkya on what water is woven.[537]

The reference to water here perhaps reflects the ṚV idea of the creation of the manifest world from the primeval waters discussed in Chapter 2, an idea also preserved in BU 5.5.1 ('in the beginning only the waters were here').[538] Water is a putative idea of the ultimate principle which features prominently in the ṚV, and is often suggested and then rejected in the early Upaniṣads (see Appendix A to this Chapter). Frauwallner has suggested that it may have been a pervasive idea for the ultimate principle in the early Upaniṣads, which 'did not turn out to be very fruitful'.[539] It certainly does not appear to be a radical or discredited idea, or at least is not treated as such by the sometimes sarcastic Yājñavalkya, so we may fairly assume that such a materialistic idea of the ultimate principle, here as that on which 'the whole world is woven', was a respectable theory in *brahmin* circles, which this narrative sets out to debunk.

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[536] BU 3.6.1: … *idaṃ sarvam apsu otaṃ ca protaṃ ca.* Cf. Frauwallner [1953] 1973:36-41.
[537] BU 3.6.1: … *kasmin nu khalvāpa otaś ca protaś ca.* We can deduce little about Gārgī's motive in asking Yājñavalkya this question. It is impossible to say whether she is intended to be read as a genuine seeker after the ultimate principle, or simply as someone who believed that by embarking on an infinitely regressive approach to questioning she would better Yājñavalkya in debate and gain the cows and gold. As with Bālāki and other characters in these narratives, however, worldly rewards are presented as an incentive for knowing the ultimate principle.
[538] BU 5.5.1: *āpa evedam agra āsuḥ.*
[539] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:36-41.

The terms *ota* and *prota* used by Gārgī are technical weaving terms. If, as is often the case, they are translated as 'warp and woof', the question which arises is on what are both 'warp and woof' woven, to which the obvious answer is the loom, which may bring with it a connotation of creativity. However, more consistent with an emphasis on the sustaining quality of the ultimate principle, Olivelle, following Rau, has argued that *ota* and *prota* refer to the 'back-and-forth movement of the shuttle in the process of weaving'. This means that 'the third item upon which the weaving takes place… is the warp', which supports or sustains the movement of the shuttle and of the woof (or weft), rather than itself being a source of creation.[540]

3.3.3   Yājñavalkya's teaching

Yājñavalkya's initial answer in BU 3.6.1 is that water is woven on air (*vāyu*). Inevitably, that provokes the question of on what is air woven. There follows a sequence of teachings by Yājñavalkya of the items on which each preceding item is 'woven'. Individual elements such as space and fire, as suggested in the Bālāki narrative, are ignored, in favour of more cosmological and even theistic ideas: the worlds of the intermediate region (*antarikṣalokāḥ*), the worlds of the Gandharvas (*gandharvalokāḥ*), the worlds of the sun (*ādityalokāḥ*), the worlds of the moon (*candralokāḥ*), the worlds of the stars (*nakṣatralokāḥ*), the worlds of the gods (*devalokāḥ*), the worlds of Indra (*indralokāḥ*), the worlds of Prajāpati (*prajāpatilokāḥ*), and finally the worlds of *brahman* (*brahmalokāḥ*).[541] Again inevitably, this provokes Gārgī to ask 'on what… are the worlds of *brahman* woven?' (*kasmin nu khalu brahmalokā otaś ca protaś ca*). This is a question which Yājñavalkya either cannot or will not answer, and it is at this point that he threatens Gārgī that, if she asks too many questions, her head will shatter, whereupon she falls silent and Uddālaka Āruṇi rises to challenge Yājñavalkya.[542]

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[540] Olivelle 1998a:508. See also Roebuck 2003:402n.

[541] Brereton (1997:11) has noted the similarities between this sequence and the stages on the way to heaven in KṣU 1.2-3.

[542] See below. I have discussed the shattered head motif and the motif of persistence briefly in Chapter 1, noting that Gārgī receives this threat as a result of her persistence, rather than as a loser in debate (unlike Vidagdha Śākalya in BU 3.9), and that, unlike other persistent Upaniṣadic questioners, such as Naciketas in the KaU and Indra in CU 8, her persistence is rewarded by a threat rather than by the teaching which she sought. Lindquist (2011a:47) has suggested that the threat to Gārgī was simply a way of bringing abstract discussions down to

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However, after Uddālaka Āruṇi has been silenced by Yājñavalkya, Gārgī rises again. She addresses the assembled *brahmins* and tells them that she proposes to ask Yājñavalkya two further questions, and that, if he can answer them, none of the *brahmins* will be able to defeat him in debate. Drawing on a (masculine) warrior metaphor, the sexual implications of which are touched on by both Lindquist and Black[543], she fires the questions as 'two deadly arrows' (*dvau bāṇavantau sapatna ativyādhinau*). In fact, she asks the same question twice, extending her enquiry beyond the manifest universe, asking:

> 'The things above the sky, the things below the earth, and the things between the earth and the sky, as well as all those things people here refer to as past, present and future - on what… are all these woven back and forth?'.[544]

Yājñavalkya's first answer, that they are all woven on space, is given a sarcastic reception by Gārgī, who repeats her question.[545] On receiving the same answer, she produces the inevitable follow-up 'on what, then, is space woven back and forth?'.[546] Yājñavalkya's answer is that space is woven on 'the imperishable' (*akṣara*).

I have discussed the etymology of the term *akṣara* and its occasional use as a designator of the ultimate principle in Chapter 2. Yājñavalkya describes it here in extremely abstract terms as:

> 'neither coarse nor fine; … neither short nor long; it has neither blood nor fat; it is without shadow or darkness; it is without air or space; it is without contact; it has no taste or smell; it is without sight or hearing; it is without speech or mind;

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earth, though, if so, it was unsuccessful, given Gārgī's return with more abstract questions in BU 3.8. Killingley suggests that *mātiprākṣīr* in BU 3.6.1 should be translated not as the more usual 'don't ask too many questions' but rather 'don't question beyond the limits of the knowable' (2018e:255, see also Cohen 2008:73).

[543] Lindquist 2008:417, Black 2007:151.

[544] BU 3.8.3: *yad ūrdhvam… divaḥ yad avāk pṛthivyāḥ yad antarā dyāvāpṛthivī ime yad bhūtaṃ ca bhavacca bhaviṣyaccetyācakṣate kasmiṃstad otaṃca protaṃca.*

[545] BU 3.8.6.

[546] BU 3.8.7: *kasmin nu khalvākāśa otaśca protaśca.*

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it is without energy, breath or mouth; it is beyond measure; it has nothing within it or outside of it; it does not eat anything; and no one eats it'[547]

before going on, in BU 3.8.9, to explain its organisational role: it is that:

> '…at whose command the sun and the moon stand apart… at whose command the earth and the sky stand apart… at whose command seconds and hours, days and nights, fortnights and months, seasons and years stand apart… at whose command rivers flow from the snowy mountains in their respective directions, some to the east and others to the west…'[548]

and, in BU 3.8.11, to describe it as that 'which sees but can't be seen, which hears but can't be heard, which thinks but can't be thought of; which perceives but can't be perceived'.[549] At this point, Gārgī again addresses the assembled *brahmins*, telling them that none of them will ever defeat Yājñavalkya in a theological debate (though this does not prevent Vidagdha Śākalya from trying, with fatal results).[550]

In common with most other commentators, including Black and Lindquist, I read Gārgī's first questioning in BU 3.6 and her second in BU 3.8 together. They are clearly presented as part of the same *brahmodya* narrative, and the absence of any definitive answer to Gārgī's questioning in BU 3.6 justifies her continued questioning in BU 3.8.[551] It could be argued that, in BU 3.6, Yājñavalkya's reference to the *brahmalokāḥ* means that he is effectively presenting an entity called *brahman* as the ultimate principle, but he does not actually say as much. Rather, he merely tells Gārgī that she

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[547] BU 3.8.8: *asthūlam anaṇu ahrasvam adīrgham alohitam asneham acchāyam atamaḥ avāyu anākāśam asaṅgam arasam agandham acakṣuṣkam aśrotram avāk amanaḥ atejaskam aprāṇam amukham amātram anantaram abāhyam na tad aśnāti kiṃ cana na tad aśnāti kaścana.*

[548] BU 3.8.9: *etasya vā akṣarasya praśāsane… sūryācandramasau vidhṛtau tiṣṭhata etasya vā akṣarasya praśāsane… dyāvāpṛthivyau vidhṛte tiṣṭhataḥ etasya vā akṣarasya praśāsane…nimeṣā muhūrtā ahorātraṇyardhamāsā māsā ṛtavaḥ saṃvatsara iti vidhṛtās tiṣṭhanti etasya vā akṣarasya praśāsane… prācyo'nyā nadyaḥ syandante śvetebhyaḥ parvatebhyaḥ pracītyo'nyāḥ yām yām cā diśām anu…*

[549] BU 3.8.11: *adṛṣṭaṃ draṣṭṛ aśrutam śrotṛ amatam mantṛ avijñātaṃ vijñātṛ.*

[550] BU 3.9.26.

[551] Cohen (2008:75-76) questions, without expressing a conclusion, whether the two are different re-tellings of the same story or a result of 'internal character development' in the person of Gārgī. I believe that it is more likely that the two were originally a single narrative which the compilers of the BU separated for editorial reasons, as I discuss below.

should not question further, and leaves open the question of whether the worlds of *brahman* are indeed woven on something which he is either unwilling or unable to disclose. The reference to the 'worlds of *brahman*' in BU 3.6 is the only mention of *brahman* in either BU 3.6 or 3.8: it is noticeable that, when she reappears in BU 3.8, Gārgī does not couch her further, definitive, questions in terms of *brahman*, nor does Yājñavalkya couch his answers in terms of *brahman*. Instead, he uses the term *akṣara* (the 'imperishable'), which, as noted in Chapter 2, is a rare, and certainly the first, use of that term in the Upaniṣads to refer to the ultimate principle.[552]

3.3.4 Characteristics of the ultimate principle

Yājñavalkya's description of *akṣara* as that 'which sees but can't be seen, which hears but can't be heard, which thinks but can't be thought of; which perceives but can't be perceived' is similar, though not identical, to his description of *ātman* to Uddālaka Āruṇi in BU 3.7.23. As I have noted in Chapter 2, this has been used as an argument to suggest that the *akṣara* of BU 3.8 is in fact the same entity as the *ātman* of BU 3.7. It is possible that this particular description of *akṣara* has been inserted into BU 3.8 to fulfil an overall editorial intention of the BU to set up *ātman* as a single entity which fulfils all of the functions of the ultimate principle. Such an intention would be consistent not only with Ajātaśatru's positing of *ātman* as the creative source of the universe, but also with other teachings attributed to Yājñavalkya, such as those in BU 2.4 (which appears between the Bālāki narrative and this narrative) and BU 3.9 (which appears immediately after this narrative) which also promote *ātman* as the ultimate principle. However, Yājñavalkya does not use the term *ātman* in BU 3.8, and I believe that the use of the different terminology in BU 3.7 and 3.8 is significant, highlighting the different qualities of the ultimate principle being considered. In the debate with Gārgī, the key concern is to find the underlying support of the cosmos - that on which it is woven - while in Yājñavalkya's answer to Uddālaka Āruṇi in BU 3.7, *ātman* is identified, as we

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[552] Brereton (1997:12) has argued that the fact that Gārgī's first line of questioning ends at the worlds of *brahman* and her second at *akṣara* suggests that the two are 'different aspects of the same reality'. Van Buitenen 1959 has noted the common origin of the two terms in the context of the power of speech, referencing its use in ṚV 1.164.41-42 and JUB 1.1, and has suggested that *akṣara*, at least in its later usage in MuU 2.1.1, may be seen as a kind of 'female principle of creation' (1959:185).

shall see below, not as the support of the universe, but as the 'inner controller' of all beings.

Unlike the Bālāki narrative, in which the whole discussion of the ultimate principle is predicated on knowing either *a brahman* or *about brahman*, in the Gārgī narratives, the term *brahman* plays a peripheral role. It appears only at the end of the dialogue in BU 3.6; it does not otherwise form part of any of Gārgī's questions, and it is entirely absent from Yājñavalkya's detailed descriptions of *akṣara* in the latter part of BU 3.8. Other than in the most peripheral way in Yājñavalkya's description of *akṣara*, nowhere is any direct relationship drawn between the sub-stratum of the individual and that of the universe. Rather, the whole line of enquiry is directed to an understanding of the supportive sub-stratum of the universe, and it is knowledge that that sub-stratum is *akṣara* which, according to Yājñavalkya, makes a man a *brahmin*.[553]

Yājñavalkya's *akṣara* has a very different function from Ajātaśatru's *ātman.* Its role as that

> 'at whose command the sun and the moon stand apart… at whose command the earth and the sky stand apart… at whose command seconds and hours, days and nights, fortnights and months, seasons and years stand apart… at whose command rivers flow from the snowy mountains in their respective directions, some to the east and others to the west….'[554]

is not cosmogonic, nor as the creative source from which the universe 'springs': there is no suggestion that it *creates* the sun and moon, or earth and sky etc. Rather, its role is an organisational one within the cosmos, arranging (or 'weaving') existing elements of the wider world into their designated places[555], and establishing their functions. This teaching, therefore, which appears in the BU shortly after that of Ajātaśatru,

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[553] BU 3.8.10: … *atha ya etad akṣaram … viditvāsmāl lokāt praiti sa brāhmaṇaḥ*. Black notes the use of the masculine pronoun *sa* here, which he argues may suggest that Gārgī, as a woman, is incapable of becoming a 'true' *brahmin.* Conversely, he also suggests that this part of the text could be read as Yājñavalkya 'indirectly bestowing the status of brahmin onto Gārgī' (2007:153).
[554] BU 3.8.9: see note 548 above.
[555] Possibly reflecting the role of the cosmogonic 'syllable' of ṚV 1.164.42 (van Buitenen 1959:177).

demonstrates and emphasises that the functions of the ultimate principle go beyond the merely creative: the ultimate principle must also establish and maintain the separation between created entities, and locate them in their respective places within the created universe. What, in this narrative, is not explained is how those entities are controlled in their ongoing functioning.

3.4 Narrative 3: Uddālaka Āruṇi and Yājñavalkya

The third dialogue is another part of Janaka's *brahmodya*, and appears in BU 3.7, between Gārgī's two sets of questions. Here, the focus of the questioning shifts again, away from the creative and supportive/organisational aspects of the ultimate principle, to bring into play its ongoing animating role as controller of the universe. Reasons for its interpolation between the two parts of the Gārgī narrative have not been widely debated[556], but one possibility is that the purpose of this part of the BU in promoting Yājñavalkya is better served by putting Yājñavalkya's own idea of the ultimate principle in BU 3.8 after a narrative in which he merely confirms Uddālaka's theories. However, if I am right about the progression of questions in the narratives - from supporting in BU 3.6 to animating in BU 3.7 - the Uddālaka dialogue could not precede the first part of Gārgī's questioning, so that it is perhaps arguable that the interpolation of the Uddālaka dialogue reflected a conscious editorial tactic to emphasise the progression of the questions, while nevertheless giving Yājñavalkya the final word in BU 3.8.

3.4.1 The characters and literary motifs

Alongside Yājñavalkya, Uddālaka Āruṇi is the most prominent teacher in the Upaniṣads, playing in particular a major role in the CU. Here, however, he appears as a challenger to Yājñavalkya's claimed pre-eminence. Uddālaka is a *brahmin* from Kuru-

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[556] Black implies (2007:84) that perhaps Uddālaka Āruṇi steps in to protect Gārgī after she has been threatened by Yājñavalkya. However, Gārgī clearly has the confidence in her own knowledge to return to the debate. Brereton (1997:3-4) 'pairs' the narrative of BU 3.7 with that of BU 3.3 in his ring structure analysis of the *brahmodya*. However, I am not convinced that his overall argument about the structure of the *brahmodya* would be materially weakened if BU 3.8 had appeared before BU 3.7.

Pañcāla[557] and, in BU 6.3.7, is presented as Yājñavalkya's own teacher.[558] While Yājñavalkya's attitude towards him in BU 3.7 is hardly that of the respectful student, Uddālaka's attitude towards Yājñavalkya is undoubtedly one of claimed superiority.[559] We will meet Uddālaka again as a teacher in Chapter 4: for now, it is simply worth noting that Yājñavalkya's apparent victory over him in debate in BU 3.7 is entirely consistent with the purpose of the BU, or, at least, its central part, in presenting Yājñavalkya and the eastern area as superior to the traditional western Kuru-Pañcāla area represented by Uddālaka and by the CU.[560]

3.4.2   Uddālaka Āruṇi's challenge

Uddālaka begins by recalling an episode in which he and Yājñavalkya had been 'living in the land of the Madras learning about the sacrifice in the house of Patañcala Kāpya'.[561] Patañcala's wife had been possessed by a Gandharva, Kabandha Ātharvaṇa, who asked those assembled: 'do you know the string on which this world and the next, as well as all beings, are strung together?' and 'do you know the inner controller of this world and the next, as well as of all beings?', explaining that 'if a man knows what that string is and who that inner controller is, he knows *brahman…*he knows the self; he knows all'.[562] Uddālaka claims to know both the string (*sūtra*) and the inner controller (*antaryāmin*), and threatens Yājñavalkya that his head will shatter if he drives away

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[557] ŚB 11.4.1.2.

[558] They also appear as fellow students in the ŚB.

[559] Black (2007:72) notes a number of other instances, particularly from the ŚB, where Uddālaka Āruṇi is apparently presented as, if not his teacher, Yājñavalkya's senior and/or superior.

[560] There is little to add about the literary motifs in this narrative, set as it is in the context of the same *brahmodya* as the Gārgī narrative. It is worth noting Uddālaka Āruṇi's threat that Yājñavalkya's head will burst if he drives away the cows without satisfactorily answering Uddālaka's questions: here the threat is used, as is more common, to predict the effect of claiming knowledge beyond that which one actually has, rather than, as with Gārgī, for asking too many questions. In addition, it is also worth noting that, rather than the teacher/student setting of the *brahmacārin*, here the teacher/student relationship is effectively reversed, with Yājñavalkya becoming the teacher of his own (former) teacher.

[561] BU 3.7.1: … *madreṣu avasāma patañcalasya kāpyasya gṛheṣu yajñam adhīyānāḥ*.

[562] BU 3.7.1: *tat sūtram yasminn ayaṃ ca lokaḥ paraś ca lokaḥ sarvāṇi ca bhūtāni saṃdṛbdhāni… tam antaryāmiṇam ya imaṃ ca lokam paraṃ ca lokam sarvāṇi ca bhūtāni yo'ntaro yamayati…yo vai tat… sūtraṃ vidyāt taṃ cāntaryāmiṇam iti sa brahmavit sa lokavit sa devavit sa vedavit sa bhūtavit sa ātmavit sa sarvavit.* We may again question whether *brahman* is here being used to denote the ultimate principle as an entity, or, as perhaps seems more likely, as again simply being commensurate with 'ultimate principle'.

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Janaka's cows without knowing them. Yājñavalkya protests that he does know them, and is challenged by Uddālaka to profess his knowledge before the assembled *brahmins*.

There are a number of significant features about Uddālaka's challenge to Yājñavalkya. The first is his motive. He is not shown as seeking teaching for his own benefit. Rather, he professes his own knowledge of the ultimate principle and wishes to test Yājñavalkya's right to the cows.[563] Unlike Bālāki, who volunteers a string of inadequate ideas, or Gārgī, who understands that water as the ultimate principle is insufficient, Uddālaka nowhere offers any idea of his own.[564] The second is the frame story of the Gandharva, which also appears in BU 3.3, where Bhujyu Lāhyāyani questions Yājñavalkya about an almost identical episode, except that the Gandharva's name and questions were different and he possessed Patañcala Kāpya's daughter, rather than wife. It is possible that setting questions about the ultimate principle in the mouth of a Gandharva is a way of attempting to confer some sort of celestial authority on the answers.[565] The final, and perhaps most important, point is that it is knowledge of *both* the 'string' *and* the 'inner controller' which is equated with knowledge of *brahman* and 'knowledge of all'.[566] This sets up consideration of two different functions of the ultimate principle, and nowhere is it stated that there is any identity between the *sūtra* and the *antaryāmin*, nor between either of them and a single absolute called *brahman*.

3.4.3 Yājñavalkya's answers

Yājñavalkya immediately identifies the *sūtra* as the wind (*vāyu*):

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[563] It is unclear whether he does this simply to test his former student or because he wants the cows for himself, or indeed whether he is bluffing about his own knowledge. In other Upaniṣadic episodes, both in the CU and in BU 6, he is clearly presented as a genuine seeker. Grinshpon, following Śaṅkara, suggests that, putting the questions into the mouth of the Gandharva might be implying that the answers are *inaccessible* to *brahmins*, making Uddālaka Āruṇi a bluffer and Yājñavalkya, by definition, a pretender to knowledge (1998:374).
[564] We will see below that, in CU 5, he is presented as not fully knowing the answer to the questions 'what is *ātman*' and 'what is *brahman*' and adopting a much more modest approach to his own level of knowledge. I will explore the connections between the various Upaniṣadic narratives involving Uddālaka Āruṇi in Chapter 4.
[565] Though in neither BU 3.3 nor BU 3.7 are we told the Gandharva's answer to his own questions.
[566] BU 3.7.1: … *sa brahmavit… sa sarvavit.*

'It is on the string of wind…that this world and the next, as well as all beings, are strung together. That is why people say of a dead man: 'His bodily parts have come unstrung', for they are strung together on the string of wind.'[567]

It is worth noting the use of the term *sūtra* here, translated by Olivelle as 'string', but perhaps more commonly translated as 'thread'[568], which immediately calls to mind both the weaving metaphor of Gārgī's questioning and Ajātaśatru's spider. The metaphor of the 'string' or 'thread' here represents a similar concern to that of Gārgī: identifying the supportive or organisational, rather than the creative, aspect of the ultimate principle.[569] It is not clear why Yājñavalkya puts forward *vāyu* as, in effect, the principle which holds the world together, rather than the *akṣara* which he gives a similar role in BU 3.8. As we have seen, *vāyu* was also his first suggestion to Gārgī in BU 3.6 as that on which water is woven, but was soon rejected. Olivelle has noted that Yājñavalkya's initial answers in the debate are regularly unsatisfactory: not only in both parts of the Gārgī narrative, but also in BU 3.4.2.[570]

Rather than challenging Yājñavalkya, Uddālaka accepts the answer without further debate. There are several possible explanations for this. In ŚB 11.5.3.11, Uddālaka himself teaches that, at death, all beings withdraw into the wind. Alternatively, he may have been uncertain in his own ideas, as we see in CU 5, or wary of becoming involved in the same infinite regression as Gārgī in BU 3.6; or perhaps he felt confident that he would better Yājñavalkya in the debate about the *antaryāmin.* However, this lack of debate about the *sūtra* may have served the editorial purposes of the compiler of the BU: the Gārgī narrative had already addressed the question of the 'thread' holding the universe together; the purpose of this narrative was to discuss the animating quality of

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[567] BU 3.7.2: *vāyur vai… tat sūtram. vāyunā vai… sūtreṇāyaṃ ca lokaḥ paraś ca lokaḥ sarvāṇi ca bhūtāni saṃdṛbdhāni bhavanti tasmād vai… puruṣam pretam āhuḥ vyasraṃsiṣatāsyāṅgānīti vāyunā hi… sūtrena saṃdṛbdhāni bhavanti.* 'Wind' here may be a synonym for 'breath' or *prāṇa.*
[568] Hume, Radhakrishnan and Roebuck all have 'thread'.
[569] Brereton (1997:11 n41) has drawn attention to the distinction between the unifying qualities of the *sūtra*, holding the world together, and Yājñavalkya's *akṣara*, which is described as the force or principle which distributes or divides the world and 'keeps things in their separate places'. However, the point is that they are both *organisational*, rather than creative or animating.
[570] Olivelle 1998a:510.

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the ultimate principle, the 'inner controller', a more continuously active aspect of the ultimate principle than we have seen in either previous narrative. It is quite possible that the original narrative contained further debate about the identity of the *sūtra*, which was excised in order to serve this editorial pupose.

Yājñavalkya quickly identifies the inner controller as the immortal (*amṛta*) *ātman* 'who is present within but different from the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, and who controls the earth from within…'.[571] He then makes the identical statement about twenty other *loci* of *ātman*, from the waters to semen.[572] The words *yaḥ pṛthivyāṃ tiṣṭhan pṛthivyā antaraḥ*, and their equivalents, are translated by Olivelle as 'present within but… different from the earth' (etc.) and by Hume as 'dwelling in… yet… other than' the earth, clearly suggesting that *ātman* has a separate ultimate identity from the element in question. Radhakrishnan's 'dwells in… yet is within…' makes little obvious sense. Yājñavalkya's conclusion is that *ātman* '…sees, but he can't be seen; he hears, but he can't be heard; he thinks, but he can't be thought of; he perceives, but he can't be perceived. Besides him, there is no one who sees, no one who hears, no one who thinks, and no one who perceives.'[573] On hearing this, we are told, Uddālaka Āruṇi fell silent.

Table 3.2

BU reference	*Ātman* present within… but different from…, whose body is… , who controls the… from within
3.7.3	*pṛthivī* (earth)
3.7.4	*ap* (waters)
3.7.5	*agni* (fire)
3.7.6	*antarikṣa* (intermediate region)
3.7.7	*vāyu* (wind)

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[571] BU 3.7.3: *yaḥ pṛthivyāṃ tiṣṭhan pṛthivyā antaraḥ yam pṛthivī na veda yasya pṛthivī śarīram yaḥ pṛthivīm antaro yamayati.*
[572] See Table 3.2. Note that *vāyu*, the *sūtra* on which everything is strung, is the fifth element in the list.
[573] BU 3.7.23: *adṛṣṭo draṣṭā aśrutaḥ śrotā amato mantā avijñāto vijñātā. nānyo'to'sti draṣṭā nānyo'to'sti śrotā nānyo'to'sti manta nānyo'to'sti vijñātā.*

3.7.8	*diva* (sky)
3.7.9	*ādityā* (sun)
3.7.10	*dikṣu* (quarters)
3.7.11	*candratārakā* (moon and stars)
3.7.12	*ākāśa* (space)
3.7.13	*tamas* (darkness)
3.7.14	*tejas* (light)
3.7.15	*sarvāṇi bhūtāni* (all beings)
3.7.16	*prāṇa* (breath)
3.7.17	*vāc* (speech)
3.7.18	*cakṣus* (sight)
3.7.19	*śrotra* (hearing)
3.7.20	*manas* (mind)
3.7.21	*tvac* (skin)
3.7.22	*vijñāna* (perception)
3.7.23	*retas* (semen)

This narrative differs from the others in two significant ways. First, the debate appears merely a test, with no new knowledge apparently being transmitted (unless Uddālaka was indeed bluffing). Secondly, unlike Bālāki with his string of false ideas about the ultimate principle, or Yājñavalkya's own tactic with Gārgī of presenting a hierarchical scheme, here Yājñavalkya uses his list of 21 items, not to reject them as ideas of the ultimate principle, but to present *ātman* as being 'present within' but 'different from' each of them, 'controlling' (*yamayati*) each of them 'from within' (*antaro*). In this way, he shows that *ātman* is both more than, and distinct from, any individual one of them, but clearly emphasises the role of *ātman* as controlling, rather than creating or sustaining, the element in question. It is again a reasonable assumption that many of these ideas represented ideas of the ultimate principle which had some contemporary currency. The choice of 'earth' as the first in the list is interesting, as it is not an idea put

forward as a putative ultimate principle in either of the other narratives we are considering. It is, however, suggested as the ultimate principle by Uddālaka in CU 5.17[574], raising the possibility that its positioning here is a deliberate ploy to better Uddālaka (or to present the BU as 'more advanced' than the CU). Although Uddālaka nowhere admits that Yājñavalkya has given the correct answer to the question about the inner controller, he does not re-challenge Yājñavalkya or put forward any contrary ideas. We are simply told that he 'fell silent'[575], with the inference that he either accepted Yājñavalkya's answer or at least had no further questions to ask.

3.4.4 Characteristics of the ultimate principle

It will be apparent that the investigation into the ultimate principle in this narrative is once again presented at a more universal level. Two distinct qualities of that principle are identified: the more passive quality of the 'thread' - perhaps even the 'warp' - on which everything is strung, and, therefore, connected and held together, and the more active character, emphasised in the narrative, of the 'inner controller' of the universe with a quality of agency. While the 'inner'-ness of the controller and its identification with *ātman* suggest a more individual orientation, the *antaryāmin* of the Gandharva's question and of Yājñavalkya's answer is more accurately characterised as whatever or whoever 'controls [this world, the next and all beings] from within'[576], in other words as a unitary concept of a single controller of all the elements of the universe.[577] Although *brahman* is not explicitly mentioned in Yājñavalkya's conclusion, the Gandharva had made clear that knowledge of both the *sūtra* and the *antaryāmin*, in other words of the functions of both *vāyu* and *ātman*, amounted to knowledge of *brahman*. This falls short of positing an identity, whether between *vāyu* and *ātman* or between either of those and an entity called *brahman*. Rather, it highlights two different functions of the ultimate principle and suggests that those functions are performed by two different, if related,

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[574] See Chapter 4.

[575] Or perhaps 'gave up': *upararāma* (BU 3.7.23).

[576] BU 3.7.1: *ya imaṃ ca lokam paraṃ ca lokam sarvāṇi ca bhutāni yo'ntaro yamayat.*

[577] Cf. the role of *ātman* in CU 6, discussed in Chapter 4.

entities.[578] This again, supports a more 'neutral' interpretation of *brahman*, rather than setting it up as a separate entity in its own right.

As Yājñavalkya's long list makes clear, *ātman* is 'present within but… different from' each of the elements of the individual and of the universe. This argues against a strictly monistic interpretation of this teaching, which would require *ātman* to be identical with, rather than 'different from' Yājñavalkya's various elements. Brereton has argued that, when a pair of questions such as those in this narrative is posed in the Upaniṣads, the answer to the first is frequently 'a perceptible or imaginable object' and the answer to the second 'an imperceptible or unimaginable object'. He suggests that the first then operates as a symbol for the second, the theory being that 'Because the first can be imagined, the second can be understood'.[579] However, although he expressly applies that theory to this dialogue, it seems to me to ignore the different qualities of the thread, which holds everything together, and the controller of that thread, like - to change metaphor - confusing the strings of the puppet with the puppeteer. The maker of the puppet, on the other hand, is not identified.

3.5   Concluding Observations

Looking at these three narratives together in this way highlights the fact that neither the identity nor the qualities of the ultimate principle are presented as a given in the BU. It also highlights the way in which the BU very clearly uses narrative to emphasise the *search* for that principle, focussing on its essential qualities and using narrative tropes (such as that of the *kṣatriya* teacher) which may indicate non-Vedic, or at least non-orthodox *brahmin*, influence, while at the same time attempting to anchor its teachings into such Vedic concepts as *brahmacarya* and the *brahmodya*.

The three narratives show clear differences in the literary way in which that search is presented, and in the way in which the ultimate principle itself is identified and characterised. In the Bālāki narrative, it is the eventual student who puts forward his

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[578] Cf. my discussion of the teachings of CU 6, in Chapter 4.
[579] Brereton 1997:10 n33.

ideas about the ultimate principle, only to have them rejected; in the other two, it is the 'teacher' who puts forward ideas only then to reject them himself as inadequate or incomplete representations of the ultimate principle. The variety of terminology used is also striking. Bālāki's clinging to his false presentations of the ultimate principle as 'people' (*puruṣa*) who he 'venerates as *brahman*' probably reflects more back to the early Vedic personal deities than it does forward to the later teachings of Sāṃkhya[580], though, even in Ajātaśatru's teaching in the same narrative, *puruṣa* has a role to play, in the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*, which he arguably equates to *ātman*. *Puruṣa* is quite absent in the other narratives, and even *ātman*, which plays such a significant role in the other narratives, is missing from Yājñavalkya's teaching to Gārgī, with its use of *akṣara* to designate the ultimate principle (even if we accept the argument that *akṣara* is ultimately intended to be read as the same entity as *ātman*). And, while the terms *ātman* and *brahman* figure in the narratives, not only are their meanings ambiguous, but the deeper analysis of what they signify is undoubtedly fluid.

These three narratives are the three most prominent narratives of the BU dealing with the ultimate principle. For all their variety in presentation and content, they do not present a completely unstructured set of teachings. Although there are clearly inconsistencies, reading them together shows a clear progression in the qualities and functions of the ultimate principle which they address. It must therefore be at least arguable that, irrespective of the order of their actual composition and whatever other literary factors may have driven the redaction of the BU into its quasi-canonical form, the compilers of the BU edited and positioned these three narratives in this order for this reason. The Bālāki narrative begins the process by identifying the ultimate principle as that from which 'all the worlds, all the gods and all beings' spring[581], in other words it addresses the ultimate principle as a *creative source*. Ajātaśatru's teaching fundamentally addresses the question of creation: for him, *ātman* is the source or creator of all beings. The two part Gārgī narrative goes on to emphasise that there is more to the ultimate principle than simply a creative function: it also has to organise the elements of creation into their respective places and establish their functions. Here, Yājñavalkya is

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[580] Where *puruṣa* becomes an important philosophical concept - see Chapter 5.
[581] BU 2.1.20

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not concerned with the ultimate principle as a creative source, but rather as a *sustaining and organising force* underpinning all beings already in existence and assigning them to their respective stations within the universe. Finally, when Yājñavalkya responds to Uddālaka Āruṇi's challenge in BU 3.7, the emphasis moves swiftly from the sustaining, or supporting, function of the 'thread', to the *animating* role of the 'inner controller': this narrative makes clear that the ultimate principle must also animate and control the various elements of the universe on an ongoing basis.[582] Eventually, if we do choose to read Yājñavalkya's *akṣara* as the same entity as *ātman*, we find that it is one and the same *ātman* which fulfils all of the ultimate principle's essential functions. However, the narrative presentation of the teachings provides a much more effective way of identifying and analysing the ultimate principle's different functions, than would a simple dogmatic statement (or set of statements) of *ātman*'s roles.

In order to emphasise the questioning nature of the narratives, in each the identification or understanding of the ultimate principle comes only after anything up to 21 different possibilities have been rejected as either inadequate or incomplete. The level of overlap between the rejected ideas in the three narratives is relatively low. In Appendix A to this Chapter I have listed each of the 'rejected' ideas for each narrative: the sun, moon, water and air are the only ones which appear in all three (though, in the Gārgī narrative, water is the starting point which Gārgī herself recognises as inadequate). In certain of the lists of rejected ideas, we can see a distinct progression towards a more abstract notion of the ultimate principle, and, considering the lists together, we can detect some patterns in the rejected ideas. In Bālāki's case, the initial emphasis is entirely on the natural elements and forces lauded in early Vedic ritual, such as the sun, lightning, wind, fire etc., with no suggestion of individual senses or mental faculties constituting the ultimate principle. His suggestions of the person in the mirror, the sound behind the person, and the shadow are not taken up in either of the other narratives and seem rather to be clutching at straws. By the time of Yājñavalkya's debate with Gārgī, with its emphasis on the sustaining qualities of the ultimate principle, the rejected ideas jump straight from water and air to the cosmological, though still including the worlds of

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[582] Although the answer to Gārgī's question only comes after the dialogue with Uddālaka Āruṇi, it is the order of the questions which is more important than the order in which the answers are given.

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prominent Vedic deities such as Indra and Prajāpati. Yājñavalkya's long list of incomplete ideas in his discussion with Uddālaka Āruṇi includes ideas from both of these other narratives, rejecting ideas from the natural world, the cosmos, and the individual sense faculties, as well as bringing in (and rejecting) ideas of the ultimate principle taking mental form as *manas* or *vijñāna*.[583] Clearly, for Ajātaśatru, who offers a more individually oriented idea of the ultimate principle, it made sense to reject ideas such as the shadow, or memory, mind or speech, while for Yājñavalkya, attempting to explain a universal idea of the ultimate principle in his dialogue with Gārgī, rejecting more cosmic ideas was a priority. We see encapsulated here the two different trajectories of exploration which characterise the early Upaniṣads' search for Brereton's 'integrative vision'[584]: on the one hand, the ultimate principle as underlying the personal, individual 'self', which can then be extrapolated outwards into the universe, and, on the other, the ultimate principle as something universal, on which all the worlds are woven, which can be extrapolated inwardly as the sub-stratum of the individual.

Finally, it is worth noting that, within these three narratives, we have seen the common theme, which is particularly prevalent in the BU, of 'putting down' traditional *brahmin* learning, with its emphasis on ritual and the 'name'. This theme is present most obviously in the Bālāki narrative, but is also a feature of Yājñavalkya's victory over the Kuru-Pañcāla *brahmins.* Ajātaśatru needed to be presented as coming from outside traditional *brahmin* circles to emphasise his rejection of Bālāki's old-fashioned ideas; and Yājñavalkya to debate extensively with fellow *brahmins* who either did not know the ultimate principle, or needed to test Yājñavalkya's own knowledge of it (surely unnecessary if its identity and nature were already a given), in order to emphasise the radicality of his conclusions and to serve the apparent agenda of the BU.

In analysing these narratives, therefore, I hope to have demonstrated the range of different concerns which came to the fore in the quest first to identify and then to understand the ultimate principle. Although it is impossible to express a definitive

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[583] It is the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Uddālaka Āruṇi in the *brahmodya* which sees most ideas put forward. This is perhaps not surprising given the challenge thrown down by Uddālaka and Yājñavalkya's wish to prevail in the debate.
[584] Brereton 1990:118.

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opinion about the relative chronology of the individual narratives in their original forms, or indeed about the editorial processes which brought the BU into its quasi-canonical form, I believe that the order in which the BU presents them may not be accidental.[585] Reading them in that order, we see a progression from Ajātaśatru teaching Bālāki about the source of the universe (the cosmogonic aspect of the ultimate principle), through Gārgī and Uddālaka Āruṇi wishing to identify on what the cosmos is woven or strung (its sustaining and organising aspect) and, in the latter's case, what is its 'controller' (its animating aspect). This progression shows that the key to reading these narratives is not to see them as demonstrating single dogmatic teachings, but rather as setting up the key questions which will enable the ultimate principle to be identified. They also help us see how narrative in the Upaniṣads assists us to contextualise and understand the teachings as they were put forward in the texts themselves, rather than as they were interpreted in later religious traditions.

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[585] The arguments of both Brereton and Black about the composition of the *brahmodya* narrative of BU 3 are persuasive. However, I do not see that either of them necessarily precludes an editorial decision also to highlight the questions about the ultimate principle, perhaps also through excising any discussion of the *sūtra* in BU 3.7.

	BU 2.1	BU 3.6 and 3.8	BU 3.7
All beings			*sarvāṇi bhūtāni*
Brahman (worlds of)		*brahmalokāḥ*	
Breath			*prāṇa*
Darkness			*tamas*
Earth			*pṛthivī*
Fire or heat	*agni*		*agni*
Gandharvas (worlds of)		*gandharvalokāḥ*	
Gods (worlds of)		*devalokāḥ*	
Hearing			*śrotra*
Indra (worlds of)		*indralokāḥ*	
Intermediate region(s)		*antarikṣalokāḥ*	*antarikṣa*
Light			*tejas*
Lightning	*vidyut*		
Mind			*manas*
Moon	*candra*	*candra*	*candra*
Perception			*vijñāna*
Physical body	*ātman*		
Prajāpati (worlds of)		*prajāpatilokāḥ*	
Quarters	*dikṣu*		*dikṣu*
Self in mirror	*ādarśepuruṣa*		
Semen			*retas*
Shadow	*chāyāmaya*		

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Sight			*cakṣus*
Skin			*tvac*
Sky			*diva*
Sound[586]	*yantam paścat śabdonūdeti*		
Space	*ākāśa*		*ākāśa*
Speech			*vāc*
Stars		*nakṣatra*	*tārakā*
Sun	*ādityā*	*ādityā*	*ādityā*
Water	*ap*	*ap*	*ap*
Wind or air	*vāyu*	*vāyu*	*vāyu*

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[586] 'The sound behind a person as he walks.'

Chapter 4
Uddālaka Āruṇi Revisited

'In the beginning… this world was simply what is existent - one only, without a second.' [587]

4.1 Introduction

In the previous Chapter, I showed how reading Upaniṣadic narratives in conjunction with each other can help the reader see how the compilers and editors of the BU used the narrative format both to emphasise and also to develop the major questions around the identification of the ultimate principle. In this Chapter, I will again show how reading narratives together helps illuminate the teachings of the Upaniṣads. I will not focus on a progressive development of questions and concerns, as in the BU narratives, but rather will investigate how reading together the narratives which feature one of the most prominent Upaniṣadic teachers, Uddālaka Āruṇi, casts light on his teachings about the ultimate principle.

Uddālaka Āruṇi is probably most widely known for the teachings which he gives to his son, Śvetaketu, in CU 6. Certain of these teachings form a cornerstone of the strictly non-dual Advaita Vedānta philosophy, but are also significant doctrinal sources for other schools of Vedānta which interpret them quite differently from the Advaitins. The question which I pose in this Chapter is whether reading the various Upaniṣadic episodes which feature Uddālaka Āruṇi as a deliberate editorial compilation casts light on his teaching in CU 6. Rather than taking the teachings in the order in which they appear in the texts, I will begin by looking in some detail at Uddālaka's teaching in CU 6.[588] I will then show how the teachings of this celebrated, and widely studied, narrative,

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[587] CU 6.2.1: *sad eva… idam agra āsīd ekam evādītīyam.*
[588] More or less detailed studies of all, or significant parts, of this narrative include those by Edgerton (1915 and 1965); Ruben (1947:156-176); Renou (1955): Hamm (1968-9): Hanefeld (1976:116-174); Chattopadhyaya (1986-7); Bodewitz (1991-2 and 2001); Bock-Raming (1996); Visigalli (2014); and Acharya (2016). Morgenroth 1970 has conducted a linguistic analysis of certain Sanskrit terms used in CU 6, and a number of commentators, most notably Brereton 1986, have discussed the *tat tvam asi* refrain (see further below). However, there has been a

which Halbfass decribes as 'one of the most seminal texts in the history of Indian thought'[589], might be interpreted in the light of the earlier Uddālaka narratives, including that from BU 3.7 discussed in Chapter 3. I will, in particular, show how the editorial positioning of the three Uddālaka narratives of the CU, signposted in the text by Uddālaka's own progression from apparent ignorance to incomplete knowledge to professed confidence, demonstrates a clear development in teachings which culminates in the teachings of CU 6.

4.2   The Characters of CU 6: Uddālaka Āruṇi and Śvetaketu

Alongside Yājñavalkya, Uddālaka Āruṇi is the most prominent teacher in the Upaniṣads. However, while Yājñavalkya's Upaniṣadic appearances are limited to the middle section of the BU, Uddālaka Āruṇi features in the BU, CU and KṣU, though most frequently and in the most favourable light in the CU.[590] In Chapter 3, we saw Uddālaka in the *brahmodya* in Janaka's court (BU 3.7) presented as authoritative and confident, challenging his erstwhile student Yājñavalkya to reveal his knowledge about 'the string on which this world and the next, as well as all beings, are strung together'[591] and about 'the inner controller of this world and the next, as well as of all beings, who controls them from within'.[592] In the CU, however, Uddālaka is presented as much less confident in his own learning: in CU 5.3-10 (as in the similar narratives in BU 6.2 and KṣU 1) he acknowledges the limitations of his own knowledge, to the point of being willing to approach king Pravāhaṇa Jaivali as a student; in CU 5.11-24 he is described

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tendency in western scholarship to study the narrative independently of its broader narrative context. Although Brereton 1997, Hock 2002, and Black 2007 have explored the Yājñavalkya stories in the BU as 'a deliberate composition, rather than simply an episodic series of stories' (Hock 2002:279), I am not aware that anyone has explored the Uddālaka Āruṇi narratives of the CU in a similar way. Bronkhorst (2016:147-155) briefly discusses all three, but only from the point of view of a specific discussion of the *upanayana* elements; he does not deal with questions of the ultimate principle.

[589] Halbfass 1992:26, where he also notes that '… it is by no means representative of Vedic thought about being, or even of the Upaniṣadic way of dealing with being'.

[590] He is also referred to in KaU 1.11 (see Chapter 5), and appears later in the MBh (see Black 2018:189).

[591] BU 3.7.1: *tat sūtram yasminn ayaṃ ca lokaḥ paraśca lokaḥ sarvāṇi ca bhūtāni saṃdṛbdhāni…*

[592] *Ibid.: tam antaryāmiṇam ya imaṃ ca lokam paraṃ ca lokam sarvāṇi ca bhūtāni yo'ntaro yamayati…*

as a student of 'this self here, the one common to all men'[593], unwilling to attempt to answer the questions of five *brahmins* about *ātman* and *brahman*, again because of concern about his own incomplete knowledge.[594] In the CU, it is only in CU 6 that he presents himself as a knowledgable and authoritative teacher about the ultimate principle, and I will argue that this progressive shift in the way in which his character is presented is a deliberate editorial device to signpost the development of his teaching.

Despite these apparent self-doubts about the extent of his knowledge, Uddālaka Āruṇi is clearly an important and respected figure in Vedic texts. As well as being presented as Yājñavalkya's teacher in BU 6.3.7, he has a similar role in Śāṅkhāyana Āranyaka 15[595], and also appears in ŚB 11.4.1.2 as a learned *brahmin* from the more traditionally oriented Kuru-Pañcāla region. In KṣU 1, he is an important enough ritualist to be chosen as the officiating priest for Citra Gāṅgyānani's sacrifice (and apparently self-important enough to send his son in his stead); in CU 5.3.6, he is received 'with respect' by king Pravāhaṇa Jaivali[596]; and, in CU 5.11, he is acknowledged by the five *brahmins* as a learned student of the self, even if he professes his inability to answer their questions fully. The placing of the teachings of CU 6 in the mouth of Uddālaka Āruṇi can be read as giving what might be considered a somewhat radical set of teachings the authority of tradition.[597] At the same time, the development of his character in the CU from one with limited knowledge to an authoritative teacher highlights the shift from a role as a prominent ritualist to a purveyor of important esoteric doctrine.

The other character in CU 6, Uddālaka's son Śvetaketu, is also a prominent character in Vedic literature. In ŚB 11.6.2.1 he, along with Yājñavalkya, is seen in discussion with Janaka about the *agnihotra*; in Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa 26.4 he is presented as an authority on the duties of the *sadasya* priest.[598] He appears in later literature as 'a wise sage and

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[593] CU 5.11.2: *ātmānaṃ vaiśvānaram adhyeti.*
[594] CU 5.11.3: *tebhyo na sarvamiva pratipatsye.*
[595] Where he is also presented as the teacher of Kauṣītaki (Macdonell and Keith 1912(1):88).
[596] CU 5.3.6: *tasmai ha prāptāyārhāṃ.*
[597] As Black notes (2007:40) '… this dialogue rejects the authority of Śvetaketu's traditional teachers, while at the same time it authorizes Uddālaka's teaching by equating it with the Vedic tradition'.
[598] Macdonell and Keith 1912(2):409. Bronkhorst (1996:598) argues that Śvetaketu's renown as a Vedic scholar in these texts strengthens the criticism of him in the Upaniṣads.

seer'[599], though, as Olivelle notes, in the Upaniṣads he is younger and 'depicted as a haughty young man contrasting sharply with the humility of his father'[600], or '…as the Vedic equivalent of a spoiled little brat'.[601] This image has lingered in some later literary traditions, and may be seen as a veiled criticism of his earlier presentation as a ritualist. In CU 6, however, he is, aside from the early reference to his arrogance (*stabdha*) in CU 6.1.2, which does not recur in the narrative, portrayed as, in Olivelle's words, a 'good student', 'able to confess his ignorance and learn from his teacher'.[602]

4.3   The Narrative Context of CU 6

CU 6.1 opens with Uddālaka despatching Śvetaketu off to become a Vedic student 'for there is no-one in our family… who has not studied and is the kind of Brahmin who is so only because of birth'.[603] This is a significant literary opening to the narrative: although the CU is generally seen as traditionally inclined, there is a clear criticism here of *brahmins* who assert their status by reason of birth rather than knowledge, a signpost that the teachings which are about to follow emphasise personal enquiry and are going to be somewhat outside the 'traditional' ritualist *brahmin* syllabus. This emphasises the Upaniṣads' general trend of favouring knowledge over blind ritual action, and aligns the teachings which follow with a more 'progressive' view of the role of the *brahmin*. Śvetaketu departs at the age of 12[604], returning at 24 'swell-headed, thinking himself to

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[599] Olivelle 1998a:484. See, e,g., his portrayals in MBh 1.48.7 and 2.7.10.
[600] Olivelle *ibid.*
[601] Olivelle 1999b:46.
[602] Olivelle 1999b:67. Olivelle's lengthy study of Śvetaketu in the context of the five fires narratives in the BU, CU and KṣU (see further below) discusses his characterisations in various narrative episodes in some detail and highlights a number of later texts in which Śvetaketu is presented as arrogant or haughty.
[603] CU 6.1.1: *na vai… asmatkulīno'nanūcya brahmabandhuriva bhavati.*
[604] Perhaps curiously not studying with his father, even though Uddālaka asserts that he has himself 'studied'. Cf. CU 5.3.4, where Uddālaka is presented as Śvetaketu's teacher. Grinshpon (2003:121) has pointed out that 12 was, if we are to take the (admittedly later) Dharmasūtras at face value, somewhat late for a *brahmin* boy to begin his studies, and questions whether any significance would be attached to this in the mind of a contemporary hearer, perhaps as an indication that Uddālaka has refused to teach his son, and/or has rejected him (2003:128). An alternative explanation might be that Uddālaka has begun Śvetaketu's education but not felt able to complete it until Śvetaketu has been away to study with others. In MBh 3.132-34, Uddālaka is said to have bestowed all his knowledge on his student Kahoḍa, to the exclusion of Śvetaketu,

be learned, and arrogant'.[605] At this point, his father brings him down to size by asking if he has learned the rule of substitution (*ādeśa*)[606] 'by which one hears what has not been heard of before, thinks of what has not been thought of before, and perceives what has not been perceived before'.[607] Śvetaketu initially appears unsure, asking for more information about how that *ādeśa* - through which by understanding the nature of clay, copper, iron etc.[608] one understands all objects made of that material - works, before finally admitting that 'those illustrious men' (*bhagavanta*) who had taught him cannot have known the *ādeśa*, for they did not teach it to him. At this point, Śvetaketu invites his father to teach him and the teachings begin.[609]

Uddālaka's teachings, which I will discuss further below, both look back to earlier Vedic views of the ultimate principle, particularly their ideas of the, sometimes deified, natural elements and forces of the world playing a role in analysing reality, and forward to later philosophical ideas, most notably those of the Sāṃkhya school with its idea of the universe unfolding from the single undifferentiated reality of *mūlaprakṛti*. What is

which may be a retrospective attempt to explain the suggestion that Śvetaketu was not originally taught by his father.

[605] CU 6.1.2: *mahāmanā anūcānamānī stabdha...*

[606] The precise meaning of the term *ādeśa* in the Upaniṣads has been the subject of debate. Deriving from *ā+√diś*, (sometimes translated as to 'indicate' or 'point out'), most early Upaniṣadic translators, such as Böhtlingk, Senart, Oldenberg, Hume and Radhakrishnan, rendered it, following Śaṅkara, simply as 'teaching' or 'doctrine'. However, Thieme 1968, relying heavily on the use of the term in Pāṇinian grammar, brings in the connotation of 'substitution', which Olivelle, as he explains at 1998a:501, follows, in his translation as 'rule of substitution', with (in the Upaniṣadic context) a connotation of secrecy. Thieme describes the use of *ādeśa*, a relatively frequently used term in the Upaniṣads, in this passage as the '...*terminologische[n] Angelpunkt eines bedeutenden geistesgeschichtichen Umschwungs'*. ('... terminological hub of a significant turning point in the history of thought')... (1968:722). See also van Buitenen 1958:299, where he describes an *ādeśa* as '... the indication in a few words of an esoteric thesis about a great cosmic connection'. Slaje (2010:23-27) criticises Olivelle's translation as 'rule of substitution', preferring instead to interpret it in the early Upaniṣads generally as indicating a 'substitute term', though acknowledging that in CU 6 it indicates a 'method of substitution' (2010:27). Cf. Acharya 2017, who argues persuasively that Thieme's interpretation places too much emphasis on Pāṇinian grammar, and that, when used in the early Upaniṣads (which in general precede Pāṇini), *ādeśa* does not necessarily have its later connotation of 'substitution', but should rather be interpreted as an 'indication', specifically '... to indicate the ultimate omnipresent reality through a particular entity' (2017:565).

[607] CU 6.1.3: *yenāśrutam śrutam bhavati amatam matam avijñātaṃ vijñātam...*

[608] Note the craft metaphors again, akin to the weaving metaphor of BU 3.6 and 3.8.

[609] Whether or not the series of teachings which follows in CU 6.2 to 6.16 forms a coherent whole is a matter of considerable debate, which I will discuss below (with particular reference to the analysis of Hanefeld at 1976:142-167, summarised also in Bock-Raming 1996).

particularly innovative is that, unlike the BU narratives discussed in Chapter 3, he does not simply posit (and reject) individual natural phenomena, such as wind or water, as the ultimate principle, and look to replace them by a wholly abstract concept, but rather analyses reality through empirical observation of the phenomena of nature. This is an important shift in approach from other early Upaniṣadic teachings, which, in the quest for the ultimate principle, tend to reject the material world often favoured in earlier Vedic thought. The narrative of CU 6, particularly the practical examples which appear in CU 6.9 to 16, shows a '… shift from acceptance of the Vedas as revealed and as controlled by ritual to the possibility that knowledge could derive from intuition, observation and analysis'[610], resulting in a more materialist approach to ascertaining the ultimate principle, grounded more in ontology than epistemology.

Indeed, the narrative context of CU 6 demonstrates well the tension between the 'new' teachings of the Upaniṣads and the older Vedic tradition in a number of ways. Not only are '*brahmins* by birth' criticised, so too is the traditional knowledge imparted to a *brahmacārin*, even by 'illustrious' teachers, which apparently is insufficient or inadequate to explain the real nature of things. However, unlike in narratives where radical teachings have been put into the mouths of *kṣatriyas*, or other unorthodox teachers, here the CU places the teachings firmly into the mouth of a respected and apparently authoritative *brahmin*.[611]

Chattopadhyaya has highlighted 'the strenuous effort of the Indian orthodoxy to read a single or monolithic view out of the entire corpus of the Upaniṣadic literature' (even though there are competing ideas between different 'orthodox' schools about what that single view is). He sees this effort reflected in a reluctance to find inconsistency in texts considered to be 'revealed', and argues that this has influenced the traditional interpretations of Uddālaka's teachings, so that the shift towards a more 'scientific' analysis of the ultimate principle has been marginalised.[612] He speaks of the 'tenacious

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[610] Thapar 1994:307.
[611] Even though, as I suggest below, a reading of the Uddālaka Āruṇi narratives together, rather than as individual episodes, suggests that they may, at least in part, be presented as having *kṣatriya* origins. As discussed in Chapter 1, this is more likely a literary device than a reflection of actuality.
[612] Chattopadhyaya 1986-7:40.

attempt to force [Uddālaka's] teachings into the general mould of the Brahman-ātman metaphysics alleged to be the exclusive philosophy of the Upaniṣads'.[613] I agree with this argument. As I stress throughout this thesis, the 'Brahman-ātman metaphysics' is by no means the sole teaching of the Upaniṣads, nor is it the only way in which Uddālaka's teachings have been interpreted by later schools. However, it is undoubtedly the case that CU 6 has been harnessed as an important teaching to support that metaphysic by certain Upaniṣadic exegetes, with the result that Uddālaka's teachings have been forced into a box into which, as I show in this Chapter, they do not easily fit.

Bronkhorst also acknowledges the shift to a more scientific analysis of reality. However, he rejects out of hand the idea that CU 6 attempts any sort of reconciliation between traditional knowledge and radical teachings. In his view, it is a 'foreign intrusion into the Vedic tradition'[614], even though some years earlier he argued that all of the Śvetaketu narratives use Śvetaketu as a tool to 'ridicule… the claims of traditional learning'.[615] Frauwallner too, who describes Uddālaka's teachings as 'almost scientific'[616], argues that Uddālaka's doctrine is 'an entirely original doctrine' not otherwise found in the Upaniṣads.[617] I do not agree with either of these views: although Uddālaka's final teachings are somewhat novel in Upaniṣadic terms, reading CU 6 in the light of the other narratives in which Uddālaka features will reveal that the roots of certain of those teachings can be found in those other narratives, and that Uddālaka's teachings in fact represent a further development in the progression of ideas about the ultimate principle.

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[613] Chattopadhyaya 1986-7:41.
[614] Bronkhorst 2007a:120.
[615] Bronkhorst 1996:597.
[616] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:70.
[617] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:69, where he argues that '… had not this one text remained preserved for us, nobody would have assumed or even conjectured a similar thought-process in this period' ([1953] 1973:68), even though many years earlier (1926:1) he had considered it to be a complex product of different teachings ('… *ein ziemlich kompliziertes Produkt veschiedener Lehren….*').

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4.4 Uddālaka's Empirical Cosmogony

Uddālaka opens his teaching in CU 6.2 with the simple statement that 'In the beginning… this world was simply what is existent [*sat*] - one only, without a second.'[618] He dismisses out of hand any idea that the world was created *ex nihilo*, from the empirically implausible 'what is non-existent' (*asat*), even though this appears to have been a relatively common idea in earlier Vedic times: see, for example, ṚV 10.72.2-3 and AV 17.1.19, as well as BU 1.2.1, CU 3.19.1, and TU 2.7.[619] However, while this, superficially at least, appears to be a simple and unequivocal statement of the ultimate principle, it is incomplete, as it fails to address both the mechanics of creation and the sustaining and animating qualities of the ultimate principle which we have seen concerned Uddālaka in BU 3.7.

Uddālaka's *sat* appears to be a single undifferentiated cosmogonic principle which, at least to begin with, was not necessarily immanent in all things. The question of who or what created *sat*, or from what *sat* itself arose, is not addressed, so that *sat* is, in effect, 'the self-created creator'.[620] *Sat* on its own is not a particularly common concept in the Upaniṣads. Where *sat* does feature, it generally does so in conjunction with either *tyam* or *tyat* in a typically Upaniṣadic wordplay, as one part of a bipartite reality described using the term *satyam*. This bipartite presentation of reality is significant: it is implicit in

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[618] CU 6.2.1: *sad eva… idam agra āsīd ekam evādītīyam.*

[619] CU 6.2.2: *kutastu khalu… evaṃ syat… katham asataḥ sajjāyeteti sat tveva… idam agra āsīd ekam evādītīyam.* Cf. BhG 13.12. *Sat* and *asat* also frequently occur as a pair, as, for example, in ṚV 10.129.4, where the 'poets found the connection between' *sat* and *asat* (*sató bándhum ásati nír avindan hṛdí pratīṣyā kaváyo manīṣā́*) or in AV 10.7.10. Later, in ŚU 4.18, the 'Benign One' *(śiva)* is said to have existed alone when there was neither *sat* nor *asat* (*yadā… na sanna cāsacchiva eva kevalaḥ*). Olivelle suggests (1998a:547) that *asat* in these cosmologies '… in all likelihood, refers to a state of affairs where the distinct parts of the universe, especially the separation of earth, atmosphere, and sky, had not yet emerged and where the totality was in a state of chaotic confusion'. We have seen in Chapter 2 that early Vedic 'cosmogonies' were frequently not cosmogonies in the strict sense of explaining the creation of the universe: rather they often assumed the existence of the material components of that universe and focussed more on explaining the organisation of those components. Acharya (2016:861) describes *asat* as 'a state beyond perceptible phenomenal existence', in the course of his argument that Uddālaka's cosmogony in fact originally derived from *asat*, and that the derivation from *sat* was a later emendation (*ibid.*:847ff.)

[620] Van Buitenen 1957b:105.

it that there is more to the ultimate principle than is encompassed by *sat* alone.[621] In BU 2.3.1, *sat* is the fixed, mortal and stationary form of *brahman*, juxtaposed with *tyam* as the non-fixed, immortal and mobile form.[622] These two together form *satyam*, which, just to confuse matters, in BU 5.5.1 was created by the primeval waters and in turn created *brahman*, in the form of Prajāpati.[623] *Sat* in BU 2.3 is identified on the cosmic level with 'everything other than the air and the intermediate region'[624] and, at the human level, with the mortal, corporeal body[625], while *tyam* is identified with 'air and the intermediate region'[626] and with the immortal, here said to consist of breath (*prāṇa*) and space (*ākāśa*).[627] BU 2.3.6, which concludes the teaching on *sat* and *tyam*, also introduces a 'rule of substitution' (*ādeśa*), here '*neti… neti…*', for 'there is nothing beyond this 'not'' before concluding that 'he' (probably the ultimate principle) is 'the real (*satyam*) behind the vital functions'.[628]

In TU 2.6, creation emanates from the desire of an unidentified 'he' to multiply himself.[629] In order to achieve this, he 'enters' (*anupraviśya*) the world[630] and becomes 'in turn *sat* and *tyat,* the distinct and the indistinct, the resting and the never resting, the perceived and the non-perceived, the real and the unreal'.[631] In becoming 'the real' (*satyam*), 'he' became 'everything that is here', which is why 'people call all this *sat*.'[632]

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[621] Van Buitenen (1958:300) suggests that when *sat* and *tyat* appear in juxtaposition *tyat* should be understood as referring to *asat*.

[622] BU 2.3.1: *dve vāva brahmaṇo rupe… sacca tyacca.*

[623] BU 5.5.1: *āpa evedam agra āsuḥ tā āpaḥ satyam asṛjanta satyam brahma brahma prajāpatim prajāpatirdevān.*

[624] BU 2.3.2: *… yad anyad vāyoścāntarikṣācca…*

[625] BU 2.3.4: *… etan martyam etat sthitam etat sat…*

[626] BU 2.3.3: *… vāyuścāntarikṣaṃ ca…*

[627] BU 2.3.5: *… etad amṛtam etad yate tat tyam…*

[628] BU 2.3.6: *… athāta ādeśaḥ neti neti na hyetasmād iti na ityanyat param asti atha nāmadheyaṃ satyasya satyam iti prāṇā vai satyam teṣām eṣa satyam.*

[629] Cf. the desire of *sat* in CU 6.2.3. It is arguable from surrounding context that 'he' might be intended to be read as *ātman* (though cf. TU 2.7, discussed below). Radhakrishnan, without using the word *ātman*, glosses 'he' as 'the supreme soul' (1953:548).

[630] As, in Uddālaka's own teaching, *sat* 'enters' (also *anupraviśya*) heat, water and food 'with' *ātman* (CU 6.3.2) - see further below.

[631] TU 2.6.1: *… so'kāmayata bahu syām prajāyeyeti… idaṃ sarvam asṛjata… tat sṛṣṭvā tad evānuprāviśat tad anupraviśya sac ca tyac ca abhavat niruktaṃ cāniruktaṃ ca nilayanaṃ cānilayanaṃ ca vijñānaṃ cāvijñānaṃ ca satyam cānṛtaṃ ca…*

[632] TU 2.6.1: *… satyam abhavat yad idaṃ kiṃ ca tat satyam ity ācakṣate.* Note Olivelle's translation of '*tat satyam ity ācakṣate*' as 'people call all this *sat*' rather than '*satyam*'. Hume and Radhakrishnan both have 'That is what they call the real.'; Roebuck 'folk call it 'reality''.

TU 2.7 goes on to explain that *ātman* was 'made by' *sat*, though here *sat* arose from *asat*.[633] KṣU 1.6 too differentiates *sat* and *tyam*, where *sat* is 'whatever is other than the gods and the lifebreaths', again together forming *satyam* as 'the full extent of this whole world', here identified with a personalised *brahman*.[634]

I will show below that a bipartite approach to the functions of the ultimate principle, as perhaps reflected in the distinctions drawn between *sat* and *tyam*, is an important part of Uddālaka's own doctrine in the CU, as it was in his debate with Yājñavalkya in BU 3.7. In all of the extracts mentioned above, *sat* is (initially at least) the fixed or tangible aspect of reality, while *tyam* (or *tyat*) represents that which is not fixed, which, at least in the BU and the KṣU, is directly associated with the animating force of *prāṇa*. This differentiation between the fixed unitary reality of *sat* and the animating aspect of the ultimate principle (in Uddālaka's teaching provided by *ātman*) is, I will suggest, central to an understanding of Uddālaka's teachings in CU 6.[635]

Sat apparently had consciousness, for it thought to itself 'Let me become many'[636], whereupon it emitted heat, which in turn emitted water, which in turn emitted food. That this idea of creation derived from empirical observation is apparent from CU 6.2.3-4, where the justification for water deriving from heat is given as the production of sweat when it is hot, and the justification for the production of food from water is given as the abundance of food when it rains.[637] Again, it is empirical observation which leads to the

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[633] TU 2.7.1: *asad vā idam agra āsīt tato vai sad ajāyata tad ātmānaṃ svayam akuruta…*Cf. Uddālaka's *ātman*, which is also a product of *sat* (CU 6.3.2).

[634] KṣU 1.6: … *yad anyad devebhyaśca prāṇebhyaśca tat sad atha yad devāśca prāṇāśca tat tyam tad etayā vācābhivyāhriyate satyam iti etāvad idaṃ sarvam…*

[635] I acknowledge that nowhere in CU 6 does Uddālaka present his *sat* as part of a bipartite entity with a counterpart called *tyam* or *tyat*: in fact he expressly says that it is 'one only, without a second.' However, *satyam* does appear frequently in CU 6 as a synonym for *ātman*, which, as we shall see below, is, in Uddālaka's cosmogomy, a product of *sat* and the animating force of creation.

[636] CU 6.2.3: *tad aikṣata bahu syām prajāyeyeti.* Lipner (1986:82) describes this as one of Rāmānuja's *de facto mahāvākyas.* Acharya (2016:844-5) uses the apparent consciousness of *sat* to suggest that *sat* is a 'divine being capable of self-reflection, resolve, action, and penetration', which is consistent with the references elsewhere in CU 6 to *sat* as a *devatā.*

[637] CU 6.2.3-4: … *tasmādyatra kva ca śocati svedate vā puruṣaḥ tejasa eva tad adhyāpo jāyante…tasmād yatra kva ca varṣati tad eva bhūyiṣṭham annam bhavati adbhya eva tad adhyannādyaṃ jāyate.* Brereton (1990:123) notes the progression from 'Being, which is imperceptible,… to heat, which can be felt… to water, which can be felt and seen, and finally… to food, which can be felt, seen and tasted' with food connoting 'full materiality'.

identification of three sources of life in CU 6.3: eggs, living beings, and sprouts, which have been correlated respectively with heat, water and food.[638] Van Buitenen describes CU 6.2 as '… the first attempt of an Indian theologian to use logic in reforming a doctrine'[639], and Uddālaka has been seen as a materialist, or near-materialist, by such scholars as Jacobi, Barua and Ruben.[640]

It is at this point that *sat* 'enters' each of heat, water and food with the living *ātman* (*jīvenātmanā*)[641] in order to establish 'the distinctions of name and appearance'. In doing so, it makes each of them in turn threefold[642], each divided into red, white and black appearances.[643] Significantly, *ātman* only appears after *sat* has emitted heat, water and food, which suggests that *ātman* does not here have ultimate qualities, and is not ontologically identical to *sat*. Uddālaka again provides examples from the manifest world: the red appearance of each of fire, the sun, the moon, and lightning is in each case the appearance of heat; the white appearance of fire, the sun, the moon and lightning is the appearance of water; and their black appearance is the appearance of food.[644] As a result of this analysis

> 'So vanishes from the fire the character of fire - the transformation is a verbal handle, a name - while the reality [even of things sometimes elsewhere argued to be the ultimate principle] is just, "It's the three appearances".'[645]

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[638] Edgerton 1965:171n3; Olivelle 1998a:558.
[639] Van Buitenen 1958:300, though there is also a degree of empirical enquiry in Yājñavalkya's analysis of *ātman* in BU 4.3.
[640] Chattopadhyaya 1986-7:47; Thieme 1968:722-3.
[641] Described by Hanefeld (1976:148) as '… *ein neuer, nicht erklärter Begriff…*' ('a new, unexplained concept').
[642] CU 6.3.2-3: *seyaṃ devataikṣata hantāham imāstisro devatā anena jīvenātmanā anupraviśya nāmarūpe vyākaravāṇīti. tāsāṃ trivṛtam trivṛtam ekaikām karavāṇīti…*
[643] Cf. ŚU 4.5. See also van Buitenen 1957b:89-93.
[644] CU 6.4.1: *yad agne rohitaṃ rūpam tejasastad rūpam yacchuklaṃ tad apām yat kṛṣṇaṃ tad annasya…* (and similarly for the sun, moon and lightning in CU 6.4.2-4).
[645] CU 6.4.1: *… apāgād agneragnitvam vācārambhaṇam vikāro nāmadheyam trīṇi rūpāṇītyeva satyam* (and similarly for the sun, moon and lightning in CU 6.4.2-4).

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In summary, everything red is considered to be an indication of the quality of heat, white of water, and black of food, and everything indistinct a combination of the three.[646]

The phrase *vācārambhaṇam vikāro nāmadheyam* in CU 6.4.1, and in its earlier appearances in CU 6.1.4-6, has been much debated. Van Buitenen, in particular, has devoted two essays to it[647], in the later of which he attempts to show some form of cosmological relationship to *vāc* (speech). I agree, however, with Olivelle[648] that this interpretation seems forced and that it makes sense to translate *vācārambhaṇam* as Olivelle, following Edgerton, translates it, as a 'verbal handle': in other words, a name with which conventionally to identify the fire (etc.), but not going to the ultimate reality of the fire itself. As Olivelle neatly summarises the teaching of CU 6.4, '… one gets at the reality of fire not by saying, 'It's a fire', but by saying, 'It's the three appearances'.'[649] However, as van Buitenen (with whom, on this point, Olivelle agrees) stresses, nowhere is it suggested that fire (sun, moon, lightning) in these examples is not real, simply because its form as a transformation of the red, white and black appearances of the three *rūpas* of heat, water and food is described as a 'verbal handle': it is nevertheless a real product of heat, water and food, which, in turn, are the product of *sat*.[650] Similarly, as Acharya stresses, it is not a complete transformation, for heat clearly remains even after water is produced and water remains after food is produced, and so on for each 'secondary' production.[651]

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[646] CU 6.4.6-7: *yadu rohitam ivābhūditi tejasas tad rūpam iti tad vidāṃ cakruḥ yadu śuklam ivābhūditi apāṃ rūpam iti tad vidāṃ cakruḥ yadu kṛṣṇam ivābhūditi annasya rūpam iti tad vidāṃ cakruḥ. yad avijñātam ivābhūditi etāsām eva devatānāṃ samāsaḥ iti tad vidāṃ cakruḥ…* This idea seems to foreshadow later Sāṃkhya ideas of the three *guṇas*: see van Buitenen 1957b for a detailed discussion of the relationship between the three *rūpas* of CU 6 and the development of the *guṇas*, where he suggests that the application of the three colours to Uddālaka's doctrine may be a later interpolation. See also Senart 1925:285-7, who argues that the 'formula' created the doctrine, rather than the other way round *('...c'est moins la doctrine qui a créé la formule que la formule qui a peu à peu suscité la doctrine').*
[647] Van Buitenen 1955 and 1958.
[648] Olivelle 1998a:558.
[649] Olivelle 1998a:559.
[650] Van Buitenen 1958:297; Olivelle 1998a:559. Olivelle disputes van Buitenen's translation, but agrees with him on this point, implicitly accepting van Buitenen's argument that *apāgāt* has the meaning of 'issues, goes forth, arises' (van Buitenen *ibid.*).
[651] Acharya 2016:841.

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In CU 6.5 and 6.6, Uddālaka goes on to relate this teaching to the human existence. Consumed food is seen as breaking down into three parts (faeces, flesh and mind)[652], as is consumed water (urine, blood and breath)[653], and 'consumed' heat (bones, marrow and speech).[654] In each case, the *aṇiman* (the 'finest part') 'rises to the top' (*ūrdhvaḥ samudīṣati*): mind (*manas*), in the case of food, breath (*prāṇa*) in the case of water, and speech (*vāc*) in the case of heat. Uddālaka analogises this process to that of butter rising to the top when curd is churned[655], so that, as the butter is a separate entity from the curd (even though owing its origin to the curd), the *aṇiman* is a separate entity produced from the element in question. Again, in CU 6.7, Uddālaka uses an empirical example: he asks Śvetaketu not to eat for fifteen days, pointing out that, so long as he drinks water, he will remain alive, as breath/*prāṇa* are, in Uddālaka's scheme of things, the direct product of consumed water. After the fifteen days, Śvetaketu returns to his father and is asked to recite the Vedas, which we know that he has learned in his time as a *brahmacārin*, but he is unable to remember them. After he has taken food, he is able to answer 'everything that his father asked'[656], thus proving the relationship between food and mind.[657] In CU 6.8.4, food is described as the 'root' (*mūla*) of the body, water as the root of food, heat as the root of water, and *sat* as the root of heat, before concluding that 'The existent… is the root of all these creatures - the existent is their resting place, the existent is their foundation.'.[658]

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[652] CU 6.5.1: *annam aśitam tredhā vidhīyate…*

[653] CU 6.5.2: *āpaḥ pītās tredhā vidhīyante…*

[654] CU 6.5.3: *tejo'śitaṃ tredhā vidhīyate…* 'Consumed' heat may indicate the eating of cooked food: see the note at Olivelle 1998a:559.

[655] CU 6.6.1: *dadhanaḥ… mathyamānasya yo'ṇimā sa ūrdhvaḥ samudīṣati tat sarpir bhavati.* CU 6.6.2: *evam eva khalu… annasyāśyamānasya yo'ṇimā sa ūrdhvaḥ samudīṣati tan mano bhavati.* (And similarly for water/breath and heat/speech.) Cf. the similar triad which emerges from *asat* in JB 3.360-361 (see Acharya 2016:858).

[656] CU 6.7.4: *…taṃ ha yat kiṃca papraccha sarvaṃ ha pratipede.*

[657] See Geib 1975-6 for a discussion of the symbolism of food in the Upaniṣads generally. Geib notes, amongst other things, the identification of *brahman* with food in TU 3.1.2 (denied in BU 5.12.1 where food is presented in a symbiotic relationship with *prāṇa*) and of Prajāpati as food in PU 1.14. At 1975-6:233, he describes Uddālaka's approach to food in CU 6 as 'a realistic materialism'.

[658] CU 6.8.6: *… san mūlāḥ… imāḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ sadāyatanāḥ satpratiṣṭhāḥ.* Gonda (1950:47) notes the importance for the possibly semi-nomadic people of the time of the CU to have a 'firm ground to rest upon', remembering too that the Veda itself is characterised as a 'support' in ŚB 6.1.1.8.

This is also consistent with the final element of this section of Uddālaka's teaching in CU 6.8, namely the involution which comes with sleep and, particularly, death. In sleep, one is 'united with *sat*' (implying that one had previously been separated from it)[659]; at death, speech (a product of heat) merges back into mind (a product of food); mind into breath (a product of water); breath back into heat, and heat into 'the highest deity', assumed to be a reference back to *sat*, which is referred to as a 'deity' (*devatā*) in CU 6.3.2.[660] This process too, reminiscent of all beings withdrawing into the wind at death in Uddālaka's own teaching in ŚB 11.5.3.11[661], seems informed by empirical observation for, as Edgerton has pointed out, a dying person generally first loses the power of speech, but remains conscious; then loses consciousness, but remains breathing; then stops breathing, but remains warm for some time.[662]

CU 6.8 closes with the refrain *sa ya eṣo'ṇimā etadātmyam idaṃ sarvam tat satyam sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo*, a refrain which then appears at the end of each succeeding section of the narrative, which Olivelle translates as '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'.[663] I will discuss this famous and controversial refrain in more detail below: for now I simply note that its relationship with the emergence and resolution paradigm of what has gone before in CU 6.8 seems tenuous, for nowhere else in CU 6.8 does Uddālaka speak of a unitary animating force, an *aṇiman* or an *ātman*. If he were really making an important ontological point here, he would surely have drawn a more direct relationship between either or both of these terms and the *sat* which is otherwise the subject of CU 6.8.

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[659] CU 6.8.1: … *satā… sampanno bhavati…*
[660] CU 6.8.6: … *asya… puruṣasa prayato vāṅ manasi sampadyate manaḥ prāṇe prāṇas tejasi tejaḥ parasyām devatāyām.*
[661] Note also the idea of wind as the 'string' on which all beings are strung together in BU 3.7.2 (see Chapter 3 and below).
[662] Edgerton 1965:175n1.
[663] See the observations of Brereton at 1986:98-99 with regard to the *sandhi* of *eṣo'ṇimaitadātmyam* in this refrain.

In this empirical way, Uddālaka explains the whole of creation. Although the argument that *sat* is synonymous with *brahman* underpins certain later interpretations of CU 6[664], it seems clear that, for Uddālaka in CU 6, the ultimate principle, at least so far as relates to its role as the 'foundation' of all beings, is an undifferentiated material 'existent' rather than any abstract concept or principle, such as *brahman.* Nowhere does he relate *sat* to *brahman*, nor even use the term *brahman* either to designate his view of the ultimate principle or to describe what he is expounding, as in the 'formulation of truth' translation.[665] Uddālaka rejects out of hand the idea of a 'non-existent', and Barua argues of Uddālaka's *sat* theory that '… nothing is more certain than that it is on the whole a physical conception'[666], which, Ruben notes, is a similar idea to that of *mūlaprakṛti* in later Sāṃkhya philosophy.[667] The cosmogonic *sat*, while initially a single entity, 'becomes many', and there is no suggestion that the results of that division are not ontologically real and distinct from *sat*, even if they 'unite with' *sat* during sleep and merge back into it at death.[668] The very ideas of *x* 'uniting with' or 'merging with' *y* suggest the coming together of two distinct entities: otherwise, one might have expected to have seen a statement of realisation of identity, rather than the more active language of union or merger.

Although Uddālaka's teaching in CU 6 is often considered to be radical in its 'scientific' and rational approach and its dismissal of more abstract speculative ideas of the ultimate principle[669], his emphasis on the three basic building blocks of heat, water and food

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[664] Both Radhakrishnan and Deussen seem to take this as read, as, for example when Radhakrishnan (1953:448) says that 'The logical priority of *Brahman* to the world is brought out by the statement that Being alone was this in the beginning.' See also Deussen [1899] 1906:148.

[665] As Chattopadhyaya (1986-7:46) notes, if Uddālaka had intended *sat* to be equated with *brahman*, and *brahman* was so important, why did he neither use the term *brahman* nor make a direct equation between the two?

[666] Barua 1921:132.

[667] Ruben 1947:157: '*Die Grundlage der Ontologie des Uddālaka und des Sāmkhya (sic) ist die Vorstellung, daß es einen realen Urstoff gibt. Uddālaka nannte ihn das Seiende.*' ('The basis of the ontology of Uddālaka and of Sāṃkhya is the idea that there is one real primal substance. Uddālaka calls it 'being'.') See my further discussion of the relationship between the Upaniṣads and Sāṃkhya in Chapter 5.

[668] See Olivelle 1998a:559.

[669] Chattopadhaya, in an interesting article in which he argues that Uddālaka, rather than Thales, was the world's first real 'natural scientist', suggests that the omission of any reference to *brahman* anywhere in the CU 6 narrative was a deliberate way of emphasising Uddālaka's scientific approach, and of avoiding any metaphysical associations of the term '*brahman*',

harks back to some of the early ideas of the ultimate principle itself as a natural element, which we have seen considered and dismissed as inadequate in the narratives discussed in Chapter 3. As I shall show later in this Chapter, this idea also has precursors in an earlier CU narrative involving Uddālaka. The difference here is that Uddālaka appears to understand that no one of them can itself be the ultimate principle: they must each derive from something more generic. He is nevertheless much closer to retaining a link between the ultimate principle and the realm of nature than some of the teachers of more abstract ideas of the indescribable.

Uddālaka's ideas also reflect forwards into later Indian thought, not only in the apparent similarity between *sat* and *mūlaprakṛti* but also in the triadic division of reality which comes to the fore in Sāṃkhya as the three *gūṇas*, purity (*sattva*), energy (*rajas*) and darkness (*tamas*). Like Uddālaka's heat, water and food, in Sāṃkhya the three *gūṇas* originate in a primeval undifferentiated material mass and are distributed in varying proportions in the various constituents of the universe. Also like Uddālaka's heat, water and food, the *gūṇas* are ascribed colours (*rajas* as red, *sattva* as white and *tamas* as black).[670] In Sāṃkhya too, each constituent of the universe, as a product of *prakṛti*, is ontologically distinct, and, at dissolution, merges back into the undifferentiated *prakṛti*, much as the constituents of Uddālaka's universe merge back into *sat*.[671]

4.5   *Aṇiman* and *ātman*

Once the cosmogonic ultimate principle *sat* has decided to 'establish the distinctions of name and appearance' of the beings in the world, and after it has produced heat, water and food, it 'enters' heat, water and food (the 'three deities' - *tisro devatā*) 'with the

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despite that term being '…greatly in vogue in the general intellectual climate to which he belonged' (1986-7:56; see also *ibid.*:41). Barua (1921:124) says that 'With Uddālaka Āruṇi Indian wisdom seems to have taken a turn which may, for want of a better expression, be called systematic.'

[670]Van Buitenen (1957b:104) sees Uddālaka's *sat* as influential in the etymological development of the word *sattva.*

[671] In Chapter 5, I will discuss how ideas which find reflection in classical Sāṃkhya come increasingly to the fore in the later Upaniṣads

living self' (*jīvenātmanā*).[672] The question arises, therefore, of how to interpret the instrumental form '*jīvenātmanā*' in relation to *sat.*

The first thing to note is that CU 6.3.2 does not simply say that *sat* entered the three deities, or even that *sat* as, or in the form of, *ātman* entered the three deities, as one might expect if Uddālaka were putting forward an unqualifiedly monistic worldview. Rather, in introducing *ātman* through the use of the instrumental *jīvenātmanā* - 'with' or 'by means of' the living *ātman* - Uddālaka appears to be saying that *ātman* is something other than the undifferentiated *sat*, though presumably a product of, or perhaps even a part of, *sat*, if *sat* is the ultimate source of all reality. Van Buitenen describes *sat* here as 'an original creator with an *ātman* to it'[673], also suggesting that *ātman* is a part or function of *sat*; Renou describes the relationship of *sat* with individual beings described here as one of 'penetration'[674], again implying that some part or product of *sat* performed the penetrative function. Frauwallner too emphasises the *entry* of *ātman* into the products of creation[675], in a way which reflects the way in which Yājñavalkya describes *ātman* as being 'present within but… different from' his long list of entities in his dialogue with Uddālaka in BU 3.7.[676]

In the refrain *sa ya eṣo'nimā etadātmyam idaṃ sarvam tat satyam sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo*, which appears at the end of each of CU 6.8 to CU 6.16, it seems clear that *ātman* is identified with an *aṇiman*, translated by Olivelle and Hume as 'finest essence', and by Edgerton and Radhakrishnan as 'subtle essence', which operates in the whole world (*idaṃ sarvam*).[677] A similar relationship appears in TU 2.7.1, where *ātman* is even more clearly *produced* by *sat*, and is also referred to as an 'essence' (here *rasa*, which, as Olivelle notes, may have connotations of 'semen').[678] We have seen that, in CU 6.6, the

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[672] CU 6.3.2: … *jīvenātmanā anupraviśya.*
[673] Van Buitenen 1957b:104.
[674] Renou 1957a:131.
[675] Frauwallner 1926:14.
[676] BU 3.7.3-23.
[677] See the observations of Brereton at 1986:99, and also Bodewitz 2001:295n1 on the adjectival form *ātmya* (discussed further below). Cf. also CU 4.17.1 where Prajāpati, after 'incubating the worlds' (*lokān abhyatapat*) extracted their 'essences' (*rasa*) - here, fire, wind and sun - before (in CU 4.17.2) extracting their 'essences' in turn, in order to create the 'triple Veda'.
[678] Olivelle 1998a:576. TU 2.7.1: *asad vā idam agra āsīt tato vai sad ajāyata tad ātmānaṃ svayam akuruta tasmāt tat sukṛtam ucyate. yad vai tat sukṛtam raso vai saḥ.* Note that here *sat* is

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aṇiman (the 'finest' or 'most subtle' part) of food, water and heat (in the forms respectively of *manas, prāṇa* and *vāc*) is said to 'rise to the top', like butter from churned curd. The *aṇiman* which is equated with *ātman* could therefore be considered as the 'finest part' of *sat*, but, just as butter is distinct from curd, so the mind is not food but, rather, is nourished by food; breath is not water, but is sustained by water (as Uddālaka has already explained in CU 6.7); and *ātman* is not *sat*, but is a product of *sat*.[679]

In CU 6.11 to 6.13[680], Uddālaka explains how this essence operates, and does so in a way which is instructive about the relationship between *sat* and *ātman*. True to form, he uses observation of natural phenomena to explain to Śvetaketu how the world (and, therefore, Śvetaketu) operates as a result of this essence. In CU 6.11, Uddālaka uses the analogy of the life-giving sap in a tree, which he refers to as the *jīvātman* of the tree. This sap brings life to the individual branches of the tree which, in turn, wither away when the essence which is the sap departs. The sap is not the tree, nor is it the origin of the tree. Rather, it is that which permeates the tree and gives it life. As Uddālaka points out to Śvetaketu, if one were to hack away at any part of the tree, the sap would flow; the tree dies when it loses its *jīva*, even though that *jīva/ātman* does not itself die.[681] In the same way, it seems to follow, the *ātman* is not Śvetaketu, but (as Uddālaka has established in BU 3.7) is the animating force which gives him life.

In CU 6.12, in response to Śvetaketu's request for further instruction, Uddālaka explains that the life-giving essence need not be as tangible as the sap in the tree: he uses the

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a product of *asat*, in the manner specifically denied by Uddālaka in CU 6.2.2. Olivelle translates *ātman* here as 'body'; Hume and Radhakrishnan both have 'soul'.

[679] Whether *ātman* should here, and in CU 6.3.2, be given an 'abstract' interpretation, as a metaphysical 'Self', or take on a more materialistic form, has not been much debated, though Morgenroth (1970:38) notes with approval Ruben's observation that a purely abstract *ātman*, as contended for by Śaṅkara, does not fit easily in the overall materialistic context of Uddālaka's teaching.

[680] Because of their importance in this Chapter, I have set out CU 6.11 - 6.13 in full as Appendix A.

[681] CU 6.11.1-2: … *asya… mahato vṛkṣasya yo mūle'bhyāhanyāt jīvan sravet…* (and similarly for the middle and top of the tree); … *sa eṣa jīvenātmanānuprabhūtaḥ pepīyamāno modamānas tiṣṭhati. asya yad ekāṃ śākhāṃ jīvo jahāti atha sā śuṣyati…* Note that the presence of the 'sap' is implicit in '*jīvan sravet*' (literally 'its life would flow'), translated by both Hume and Radhakrishnan as 'it would bleed'.

analogy of the invisible essence within a banyan seed which brings life not just to the seed itself, but sustains life in the huge tree which originates from the seed. Śvetaketu is asked to dissect a banyan fruit to extract the seed, and then to dissect the seed, noting the absence of anything within, other than an invisible essence (*aṇiman*) on account of which 'this huge banyan tree stands here'.[682] Again, the invisible essence is not equated with the seed, or the fruit, or the tree, but is described as the source of the tree's ability to exist. Finally, in CU 6.13, again in response to Śvetaketu's request for further instruction, Uddālaka emphasises the all-pervasiveness of the essence by reference to the all-pervasiveness of salt in salt water: imperceptible, but nevertheless present in all parts of the water. He demonstrates this by asking Śvetaketu to put salt in water, then, next day, to taste the water and to bring him the salt, which of course Śvetaketu is unable to do, even though its presence (or, perhaps, its essence) is evident in the salty taste. Once again, there is no suggestion that the salt and the water are ontologically identical: Śvetaketu is instructed to come back later, when he finds that 'the salt was always there'[683], usually taken to imply that the water has evaporated to reveal the salt again.[684]

These three examples clearly show that the *aṇiman* which is the *ātman* is, in Uddālaka's teaching, a sustaining and animating force within the universe. Like butter from curds, it is to be understood as a product of *sat*, but not the undifferentiated *sat* itself, supporting my interpretation of *jīvenātmanā* in CU 6.3.2.[685] They clearly show that, in Uddālaka's thinking, the sustaining and animating functions of the ultimate principle are performed

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[682] CU 6.12.2: … *etam aṇimānam na nibhālayase etasya vai…eṣo'ṇimna evan mahān nyagrodhas tiṣṭhati…*

[683] CU 6.13.2: … *tacchaśvat saṃvartate.*

[684] Bodewitz (1991-2), Edgerton (1965), and Olivelle (1998a) all argue for this interpretation. The salt in water analogy also appears in Yājñavalkya's teaching in BU 2.4.12, as a way of demonstrating the ubiquity of the 'Immense Being' (*mahad bhūta*), here probably also the *ātman*. Yājñavalkya, however, does not develop the analogy in the same practical way as Uddālaka.

[685] It is worth noting that, in some versions of CU 6.13.2, we find the word *sat* or *tat* immediately preceding the *tat tvam asi* refrain, in the phrase '… *atra vāva kila sat… na nibhālayase'traiva kila*'. Olivelle, who has *tat* rather than *sat*, sees this as a simple pronominal reference back to Śvetaketu's inability to perceive the salt; Hume and Radhakrishnan both give *sat* the technical meaning which it has in other places in CU 6 as 'Being' and 'Pure Being' respectively. Both interpretations are correct, for Śvetaketu did fail to perceive both the salt and the 'existent' of which the salt was a product.

by a different entity than the creative function of the ultimate principle. At the end of each of these three sections of CU 6 (as at the end of CU 6.8 to 6.10 and 6.13 to 6.16), we find *sa ya eṣo'ṇimā etadātmyam idaṃ sarvam tat satyam sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo*, and the question which now arises is how to interpret that refrain.

4.6   The *tat tvam asi* controversy

The refrain mentioned above is one of the best known statements in the Upaniṣads. Its repetition at the end of each of CU 6.8 to 6.16 clearly gives it an enhanced rhetorical force which has contributed to its importance in later hermeneutics.[686] In particular, the statement *tat tvam asi śvetaketo* in the refrain, historically commonly translated as 'that art thou, Śvetaketu'[687], has been the subject of detailed interpretation and explanation in the later philosophical schools of Vedānta: as Gupta and Wilcox say: '… the interpretation given to this statement to a large extent determines the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the various schools of Vedānta'.[688] Both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, for example, adopt highly sophisticated and complex hermeneutic strategies in order to interpret the statement. For Śaṅkara's Advaitins, this leads to an understanding of '*asi*' as an assertion of absolute ontological identity between the *ātman*, or essential self, of Śvetaketu and *tat*, interpreted as synonymous with *brahman*, an interpretation described by Gupta and Wilcox as 'the edifice on which their entire philosophy is based'.[689]

In Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita, on the other hand, *tat tvam asi* is not a statement of ontological identity, but one of co-ordinate predication. The '*tat*' and the '*tvam*' signify an underlying unity, but one in which the two elements are qualitatively different; '*asi*' demonstrates both difference and non-difference, in which *brahman* is the only ultimate

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[686] A point stressed at Brereton 1986:106 and Black 2012:14.

[687] This is the rendering adopted by all of Deussen, Hume, Edgerton and Radhakrishnan. Edgerton goes so far as to render it in capital letters wherever it appears.

[688] Gupta and Wilcox 1984:88. I do not propose to discuss in any depth the philosophical questions around what it means to state an identity between two things: Gupta and Wilcox 1984 explores this in detail, with particular reference to the *tat tvam asi* statement. See also Deutsch 1973:49-50.

[689] Gupta and Wilcox 1984:88. See, e g., Suthren Hirst 2005 *passim*, but especially at 141-143, for further discussion about the interpretation of the phrase in Advaita Vedānta.

reality and the *ātman* of Śvetaketu is different from, but wholly dependent on, *brahman*, as the body is dependent on the soul, or sparks are on a fire (or, in the context of CU 6, butter is on curd). For Rāmānuja, a statement of absolute identity would be a clear contradiction of *sat*'s express desire to 'become many' in CU 6.2.3.

Irrespective of their precise interpretation of *tat tvam asi*, both Advaitins and Viśiṣṭādvaitins take the '*tat*' of the refrain to refer to *brahman*, despite the marked absence of that term from CU 6.[690] However, in recent years, western scholars have re-visited the refrain, and the interpretations given to CU 6 by the later schools have been subjected to critical questioning, perhaps most especially in the detailed analysis by Hanefeld of the structural integrity of CU 6[691], while the 'traditional' translation as 'that art thou' was thrown into question by Brereton's 1986 article '*Tat Tvam Asi* in Context'. As Grinshpon rightly notes, these three words, although 'the gem of Indian wisdom', have become 'detached from their immediate textual environment'[692]: he sees their extrication and isolation from the context of the underlying narrative as a classic example of 'under-reading' and of 'the most aggressive textual essentialism imaginable'.[693] If we look more closely both at the contexts in which this phrase appears in CU 6, and the information provided by the other narratives which feature Uddālaka, we may find some pointers to a clearer understanding of their meaning in the overall context of Uddālaka's teachings about the ultimate principle.

Each of CU 6.8 to CU 6.16 contains a metaphorical teaching relating to ultimate reality. To that extent, therefore, as well as in their concluding refrain, they share a similarity. However, the metaphors do not contain one uniform subject of teaching. Rather, they move from teachings about the nature of sleep and death in CU 6.8 and 6.15, to an explanation of the importance of a teacher in CU 6.14, and trial by ordeal in CU 6.16,

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[690] Van Buitenen (1955:9n3) calls this a 'disputable equation'.
[691] Hanefeld 1976, especially at 142-167. See also Bock-Raming 1996 and Bodewitz 2001. Hanefeld deconstructs the narrative of CU 6 in an effort to find the several individual original component parts of the narrative; Brereton (1986:104) argues, with some justification, that he 'underestimates the thematic unity' of CU 6. Acharya (2016:835) too argues that he deconstructs the narrative too much, and that at least CU 6.1-6.7 form a coherent single narrative.
[692] Grinshpon 2003:119.
[693] Grinshpon 2003:115.

and they demonstrate subtly different approaches to the relationship between individual reality and the universal *sat*.

We have already seen that CU 6.8 discusses sleep and death. In sleep, the person is 'united with' *sat*[694]; at death, by a process of involution, the person 'merges into' *sat*.[695] Hanefeld, in my view rightly, reads CU 6.9 and 6.10 as developing these ideas: in CU 6.9 the merging of all creatures (not just humans) back into *sat* is analogised with the merging of the nectars of different trees into the homogeneous honey; in CU 6.10 with the merging of individual rivers into the ocean. These appear to be clear and straightforward examples by Uddālaka to Śvetaketu supporting his theory of *sat* as the origin and resolution of all individual beings, a theory which applies to Śvetaketu as it does to all other living creatures: they do not equate the nectar or the rivers with the honey or the ocean - rather they suggest the coming together of previously separate entities - nor do they address the question of what force or principle animates or controls life. Other than in the refrain, the *aṇiman*, the 'fine essence' of Olivelle's translation, is not referred to in any of CU 6.8, 6.9 or 6.10; the refrain could only conceivably make sense here if the *aṇiman* to which it refers were synonymous with the *sat* into which everything merges, but such an equation is not made, even on the first occasion on which the refrain appears, and nowhere is *sat* itself described as an 'essence'. Rather, as we have seen, the *aṇiman* is presented as a product of *sat* in the immediately preceding sections of CU 6. I agree with Hanefeld that it seems a conceptual jump to equate *sat* with *aṇiman* in these passages, and that the refrain in these sections looks like a later interpolation.[696]

I have already outlined the contents of CU 6.11, 6.12 and 6.13, which are clearly somewhat different to CU 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10. Hanefeld describes them as putting forward a '*Theorie der Lebenskraft*' (a 'Theory of Vital Force'), and considers them both structurally and contextually unconnected to what has gone before in CU 6.[697] Unlike

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[694] CU 6.8.1: *… sampanno bhavati.*
[695] CU 6.8.6: *… puruṣasya prayato vāṅ manasi sampadyate manaḥ prāṇe prāṇas tejasi tejaḥ parasyām devatāyām.*
[696] Brereton (1986:104) agrees with Hanefeld on this: '… 6.8-10 is not the context in which to interpret the refrain'.
[697] Hanefeld 1976:161.

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CU 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10, these sections do, as we have seen, speak to an idea of a 'fine essence': likened first, in CU 6.11, to the visible living essence (*jīvātman*) which, in the form of sap, pervades a tree and gives it life; then, in CU 6.12, to the invisible essence which causes the seed of a great tree to grow; and, finally, in CU 6.13, to the presence of salt flavouring water, which does not cease to exist, simply because it has dissolved and can no longer be seen. Here, the refrain works: the *aṇiman* which operates in these ways within both the world and the individual is the invisible but nevertheless present *ātman*. Depending on the interpretation of *tat tvam asi*, Śvetaketu either is ontologically that essence, or he functions as a result of that essence, pervaded, and influenced qualitatively, by the invisible *aṇiman* which is the *ātman*. The latter clearly seems the better interpretation, for the whole thrust of CU 6.13 seems to be to demonstrate that the salt pervades, and flavours, the water, yet continues to exist as a separate entity from the water: the salt does not become the water nor the water the salt.

In Hanefeld's analysis, CU 6.14, 6.15 and 6.16 each puts forward a separate teaching. CU 6.14 stresses the importance of a teacher in finding one's way: the *tat tvam asi* refrain in CU 6.14.3 seems completely unrelated to CU 6.14.1-2. In CU 6.15, we find a re-iteration of Uddālaka's theory of death, namely the involution of voice/speech into mind, mind into breath, breath into heat, and heat into 'the highest deity'. Here the refrain could more easily be interpreted as equating the *aṇiman* with that 'highest deity' (*sat*), though CU 6.15 works perfectly well without the refrain, and a *sat/aṇiman* identification is not explicitly made. In CU 6.16, the *aṇiman* is identified with whatever prevents an innocent man being burned by a heated axe in a trial by ordeal, but is not further elaborated on.[698]

The above brief analysis supports the view taken by Hanefeld, Brereton and Bodewitz that the refrain about the *aṇiman* only fits neatly to CU 6.11 to 13[699], so that in

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[698] Note that here there is no reference to *aṇiman*: it is simply 'what… prevents him from being burnt' (*sa yathā tatra na dāhyeta*) which is equated with the *ātman*. Brereton (1986:104) argues that CU 6.16 is probably a later addition to the remainder of CU 6, though believes (1986:107) that CU 6.14 and 6.15 should be read together, as if the refrain were omitted at the end of CU 6.14. As Radhakrishnan (1953:467) notes, Madhva resolves the *sandhi* of CU 6.16.3 as '… *sa ātmā atat tvam asi…*'.

[699] Brereton 1986:104; Hanefeld 1976:162-163 ('*Der Schlußsatz… gehört eindeutig nur zu diese Lehrer vom Lebens-Ātman, also den Abschnitten 11, 12 und 13.*' - 'The conclusion…

interpreting it particular attention should be given to their contents. As Brereton and Hanefeld have both noted[700], the refrain is in fact only essential to the sense of CU 6.12; although it is not inappropriate in either, both CU 6.11 and 6.13 could stand comfortably without it. As a result, Brereton argues persuasively that the refrain originally began life at the end of CU 6.12 and over time was added to CU 6.8 to 6.11 and 6.13 to 6.16, either in an attempt to emphasise an underlying theme in Uddālaka's teachings and/or as a simple marker of the end of each section of those teachings.[701]

This structural argument plays an important role in Brereton's re-analysis of the traditional 'that art thou' translation of *tat tvam asi*. As far back as the BSBh[702], Śaṅkara asserted that the word *tat* referred back to the single reality of *sat* (and, therefore, in his view, to *brahman*), rather than to the *aṇiman*, so that *tat tvam asi* is a statement of Śvetaketu's identity with *sat*. As we have seen, although interpreting the nature of the identity differently, Rāmānuja also gave *tat* this meaning. Brereton, however, argues that, even if that interpretation might be justifiable philosophically, it cannot be sustained syntactically, on the basis that a demonstrative pronoun should agree with its predicative nominative, subject nominative or appositive. Accordingly, the neuter pronoun *tat* cannot stand in apposition to the masculine *tvam*, even if the pronoun's antecedent is the neuter term, *sat*. As Olivelle summarises Brereton's conclusion: '… if the author had wanted to assert the identity between 'that' and 'you', he would have used the masculine of 'that'; the phrase would then read *sa tvam asi*.'[703]

Clearly, if the refrain did originate in CU 6.12, then *aṇiman* must refer to 'the finest essence' on account of which the banyan tree exists[704], not to *sat*, which plays no direct role in CU 6.12. However, even if Uddālaka had wanted to posit an identity between

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unambiguously only belongs to this teacher of the life-self, therefore to sections 11, 12 and 13.'), citing Morgenroth and Hillebrandt for support. Bodewitz (2001:289) questions whether it even fits to CU 6.11.

[700] Brereton *ibid*.; Hanefeld *ibid*.

[701] Brereton *ibid*. Hanefeld (1976:142) too sees the refrain's extension to other parts of CU 6 as an attempt to bring unity to the disparate teachings of CU 6.8-6.16. Cf. also Brereton's analysis of ṚV 10.129 in Brereton 1999, where he highlights the central stanza of that hymn as the 'climax' of the hymn's meaning. See also Bodewitz 2001:289.

[702] BSBh 1.1.4.

[703] Olivelle 1998a:560.

[704] CU 6.12.2: … *yaṃ vai… etam aṇimānam na nibhālayase etasya vai… eṣo'ṇimna evam mahān nyagrodhas tiṣṭhati…*

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Śvetaketu and the *aṇiman*, he would, following Brereton's analysis, still have needed to use the masculine form *sa tvam asi.* Instead, Brereton concludes, the analogical nature of CU 6.12 (and 6.11 and 6.13) supports the interpretation that Śvetaketu '… like the tree and the whole world, is pervaded by this essence'[705] and that *tat* should accordingly be read adverbially, meaning 'in that way'. The refrain, therefore, in CU 6.12, should be interpreted as a statement that Śvetaketu, like the great banyan tree, is animated by an invisible essence, which is *ātman*. What it cannot, however, do as a matter of Vedic syntax is to identify Śvetaketu with that essence, or with *ātman*, or with the cosmogonic ultimate principle, *sat.*[706] Brereton's argument is strongly supported by Olivelle, who, emphasising the animating function of the *aṇiman*, concludes that

> 'The phrase, therefore, does not establish the identity between the individual and the ultimate being (*sat*), but rather shows that Śvetaketu lives in the same manner as all other creatures, that is, by means of an invisible and subtle essence.'[707]

Brereton's analysis has not found universal acceptance elsewhere, provoking a debate about the extent to which it is acceptable hermeneutic practice to use later philosophical interpretations of texts, especially those with such weight of tradition and focus on scriptural authority as the Advaitin and Viśiṣṭādvaitin interpretations of *tat tvam asi*, to help clarify the text's meaning. Richard Cohen, for example, cites Nietzsche's observation 'Shouldn't philosophers be permitted to rise above faith in grammar?'.[708] Ganeri too argues that philosophical interpretations can justifiably be called on to override syntactical rules.[709] And, in a spirited, if partial, article, Brereton's own colleague, Stephen Phillips, also argues against Olivelle's translation - 'that's how you

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[705] Brereton 1986:109.

[706] Brereton points out that the word *tad*, which appears immediately before the refrain in CU 6.9.3 and 6.10.2, probably does refer to *sat*, with which I agree, but that this does not help the refrain, which should still use the masculine form of demonstrative pronoun. As already noted, the relevance of the refrain to CU 6.9 and 6.10 is, at best, marginal, though perhaps greater if *tat* is read adverbially, as Brereton suggests.

[707] Olivelle 1998a:560-1.

[708] Cohen 2006:28.

[709] Ganeri 2012:32n16.

are, Śvetaketu'. Phillips accepts that 'the classical authors are sometimes oversystematic, finding coherence among views across Upaniṣads that seems superimposed'[710], but believes that 'an effort to determine an old meaning should not come at the cost of closing off a text's profundity as judged by a whole tradition of Sanskrit "hearings" and understandings'.[711] There is something of an element of Phillips trying to have his cake and eat it in this conclusion. It is unfortunate that he bases his critique on Olivelle's translation and brief note, rather than on Brereton's detailed analysis, which curiously does not feature in his bibliography and only merits a passing mention in a footnote, as some of his reasons for disagreeing with Olivelle are in fact directly addressed in Brereton's original article.

On a close reading of CU 6, I find Brereton's argument convincing. Given the undeveloped state of systematic philosophy in the early Upaniṣads, I strongly sympathise with his view that 'At least for the Vedic period, it is never wise to use philosophy to explain syntax…'.[712] Additionally, we have seen in Chapter 2 the importance of 'the word' in Vedic times: the strict grammatical rules of Vedic Sanskrit tended to be followed closely, and Brereton supports his interpretation both by reference to this particular rule of apposition being almost always followed in the CU, including elsewhere in CU 6 itself[713], and by a number of other examples from the CU and the BU where the *ta-* pronoun is used adverbially, notably in the commonly found sentence *tad eṣa ślokobhavanti.*[714] I have also argued throughout this thesis that interpretation of the texts must begin with what the texts themselves actually say, rather than how they have been interpreted in later schools, however authoritative those later schools may have become.

In addition, just as the *tat tvam asi* refrain itself is emphasised by repetition, so too in the refrain is the use of pronouns. The refrain begins with the pronoun *sa: sa ya eṣo'ṇimā…* (brought out more clearly in Hume's translation as 'That which is the finest essence…'

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[710] Phillips 2008:171.
[711] *Ibid.*
[712] Brereton 1986:102n14.
[713] Brereton 1986:100.
[714] Roebuck (2003:423), on the other hand, argues that rules of syntax are sufficiently frequently broken in the Upaniṣads that this does not really hold water.

than in Olivelle's 'The finest essence here…'); each succeeding statement within the refrain begins with a pronoun: *etadātmyam idaṃ sarvam… tat satyam… sa ātmā…* (with *etad* and *tat* taking neuter form from their referents *idaṃ sarvam* and *satyam* respectively and *sa* taking masculine form from its referents *aṇiman* and *ātman*) before the concluding *tat tvam asi śvetaketo*. Given this almost metrical emphasis on the pronouns in the refrain, and the conscious shifting between neuter and masculine referents, it seems highly unlikely that the composer or editor of CU 6 would not have appreciated the need for Śvetaketu to have been referred to using a masculine pronoun if some form of identity, whether with *ātman, aṇiman* or *sat*, had been intended. There must, therefore, be an alternative explanation for *tat*, and that offered by Brereton makes compelling sense. The use of the adjectival form *ātmyam* in relation to *idaṃ sarvam* also suggests a similarity of mode of operation, rather than an identity, as suggested in Bodewitz' preferred translation of the first part of the refrain (borrowed from Geldner): '*Was dieses feine Ding ist, derartig ist die ganze Welt.*', which he translates as 'As this fine thing is, so is the whole world'.[715]

The refrain should therefore be interpreted not as a statement of ontological identity between Śvetaketu and either *sat* or *aṇiman*. Rather, it should be seen as a teaching about how Śvetaketu, and all other beings, operate in the world, through the animating power of an invisible and all-pervasive essence, which essence is equated with the *ātman*. While Śvetaketu is himself a product of *sat*, via the three *rūpas* of heat, water and food, the essence/*ātman* which animates him is not *sat*, but it too is a product or function of *sat*. As I will now show, this conclusion, which differentiates the creative and animating functions of the ultimate principle, can be supported by the other Upaniṣadic narratives in which Uddālaka Āruṇi appears.

4.7   Other Narratives

Although Uddālaka's teachings in CU 6 are in certain respects, especially in his emphasis on empirical observation, quite radical, I disagree with Bronkhorst's view of

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[715] Bodewitz 2001:295n1.

them as a 'foreign intrusion into the Vedic tradition'.[716] I also disagree with Edgerton's opinion that CU 6 'stands quite by itself in the Upaniṣad, without any connection with the preceding or following parts thereof'.[717] I prefer instead to believe that the structure of the CU, which places three narratives in which Uddālaka plays a prominent role consecutively without any intervening material[718], is as it is for a reason. Whatever the chronology of their actual origins or the reality of the events and characters, in using the name of Uddālaka Āruṇi in three consecutive narratives which show a progression from lack of knowledge to incomplete knowledge to confidence in his own knowledge, the compilers of the CU must have intended the three narratives to be read together. I suggest that reading CU 6 in the light of those other two narratives, and the dialogue between Uddālaka and Yājñavalkya in BU 3.7, can help inform an understanding of the teachings of CU 6.

4.7.1   CU 5.3 to 5.10

The narrative of CU 5.3 to 5.10 appears in very similar form in BU 6.2, and, in rather different form, in KṣU 1. Olivelle has analysed the three versions in considerable detail in Olivelle 1999b, particularly from linguistic and philological standpoints.[719] Although there are subtle differences between the narrative which begins at CU 5.3 and that in BU 6.2, and larger differences between these two and that of KṣU 1, those differences, while instructive in colouring our approach to reading the different versions of the narrative, are of less importance for the purposes of a discussion of Uddālaka's approach to the ultimate principle. In this Chapter, I will focus primarily on the CU

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[716] Bronkhorst 2007a:120.

[717] Edgerton 1965:170. Olivelle (1999:66) has also argued that CU 4-5 and CU 6-7 form separate sections of the Upaniṣad.

[718] The 'five fires' narrative of CU 5.3-5.10; the visit to Aśvapati Kaikeya in CU 5.11-5.24; and the teaching of Śvetaketu in CU 6.

[719] As noted above (see note 197), Renou (1955:100) argues that neither is the original, but that both probably derive from a common third source, and Söhnen has suggested that the similar, though shorter, story, which appears with a different king at KṣU 1, may be earlier than the version in either BU or CU (Söhnen 1981, doubted at Olivelle 1999b:48; see also Killingley 1997:4). Bronkhorst, who also argues for a common earlier source, suggests that the CU version may be earlier than that in the BU, primarily because (unlike the BU version) it actually answers the questions put to Śvetaketu (1996:594). As Killingley also notes (1997:9-12), the teachings given by the king in the BU and CU versions reflect similar teachings in the ŚB and JB.

version of the narrative, which sets up both the 'emergence and resolution'[720] approach to creation and existence which is key to Uddālaka's cosmogony in CU 6 and the three-stage development of heat, water and food which we see in his explanation of the propagation of *sat* in CU 6.2.3-4.

4.7.1.1   The characters and literary motifs

Aside from Uddālaka Āruṇi and Śvetaketu, the only character in the narrative is Pravāhaṇa Jaivali, who appears to be king of Pañcāla.[721] In all three versions of the narrative, Uddālaka admits himself unable to answer a set of questions put by the king to Śvetaketu, so takes himself to the court to seek teaching from the king. The BU and KṣU versions of the narrative both place the king's teachings in the context of adult *brahmacarya*, and, in both versions, he only receives teaching after requesting it using the required formula 'I come to you, my Lord, as a pupil' (*upaimyaham bhavantam*).[722] The CU version omits any mention of Uddālaka formally approaching the king for

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[720] See the five paradigms in Brereton 1990.

[721] CU 5.3.1. In the BU, he is referred to as Jaivali Pravāhaṇa; the king in the KṣU version is named as Citra Gāṅgyānani (see note 197 above). Macdonell and Keith (1912 (2):40-41) suggest that he may be the same character as Jaivali in JUB 1.38.4. Again as noted above (see note 198), Pravāhaṇa Jaivali also appears as a teacher in CU 1.8, where he takes part in a discussion about the High Chant; the reference in CU 1.8.2 to his interlocutors as 'the two *brahmins*' is usually taken as implying that Jaivali is a non-*brahmin*, and therefore possibly the same character as in CU 5.3 (see, e.g., Radhakrishnan 1953:350).

[722] BU 6.2.7. As if to emphasise the motif, BU 6.2.7 says, 'With just these words did the people of old place themselves as pupils under a teacher.' (*iti vācā ha smaiva pūrva upayanti*). Olivelle (1999b:61) suggests that this statement may have been included in the BU to explain a procedure which may otherwise have appeared 'odd'. While this may be so, it might also be possible that it was included not so much to *explain* the fact of a learned *brahmin* placing himself under the tutelage of a *kṣatriya* as to *emphasise* that point. Olivelle also notes Bronkhorst's suggestion that this statement may have been included *precisely because* it is omitted in the CU (1999b:61n49). In the KṣU, Uddālaka appears voluntarily to have approached the king as a formal student: he approaches Citra 'carrying firewood in his hand' (*samitpāṇi*); in the BU he is portrayed as requesting teaching without any of the traditional formalities, until the king calls on him to request it in the correct manner (*tīrthenecchāsā*). More recently, Bronkhorst (2016:149) has suggested that the reference to *brahmacarya* in the BU (and, presumably, KṣU) versions of the narrative are later additions to the original story. He rightly points out the incongruity of Uddālaka in the BU approaching the king 'as a student', when the king had already offered Uddālaka 'a wish' (BU 6.2.4: *… varam bhagavate gautamāya dadma…* ; cf. CU 5.3.6: *… mānuṣasya... vittasya varaṃ vṛnīthā…*).

instruction - rather he simply asks the king to tell him what the king had earlier told Śvetaketu.[723]

All three versions highlight once again the motif of *kṣatriyas* teaching *brahmins*, most prominently in the CU version, where Pravāhaṇa Jaivali tells Uddālaka Āruṇi that the doctrine which he is about to expound has up to that point 'never reached the *brahmins*'.[724] Exclusive knowledge of the doctrine by *kṣatriyas* is the justification for government being the preserve of *kṣatriyas*.[725] Whether or not this statement is intended to be taken literally, it clearly serves to emphasise that the teaching about to be given is both significant and of some novelty.

4.7.1.2 Pravāhaṇa Jaivali's questions

The narrative begins with Śvetaketu coming into Jaivali's court. The reason for this is unclear: in the KṣU version, Uddālaka has sent Śvetaketu to substitute for him as officiating priest at a royal sacrifice[726], but this is not explicitly stated in the CU. In response to Jaivali's question, Śvetaketu claims to have been taught by his father, but is then unable to answer a series of questions put to him by the king about the fate of a person after death, which highlight the idea of two paths taken by the dead, one to the gods and the other to the 'fathers', or ancestors.[727] 'Deeply hurt' (*āyasta*), Śvetaketu returns to Uddālaka, chiding his father for not having taught him properly.[728] Uddālaka confesses himself also unable to answer any of Jaivali's questions, so takes himself to Jaivali's court, where he is received with due reverence (suggesting that he is to be read as a man of some status). Refusing the king's offer of 'a gift of human riches' (*mānuṣasya… vittasya vara*), Uddālaka asks to be told what Jaivali had told Śvetaketu.[729]

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[723] CU 5.3.6: … *yām eva kumārasyānte vācam abhāṣathāḥ tām eva me brūhī ti* …

[724] CU 5.3.7: … *yatheyaṃ na prāk tvattaḥ purā vidyā brāhmaṇān gacchati*…. See also BU 6.2.8.

[725] CU 5.3.7: … *tasmād u sarveṣu lokeṣu kṣatrasyaiva praśāsanam abhūd iti* …

[726] KṣU 1.1.

[727] CU 5.3.2-3.

[728] CU 5.3.4: … *ananuśiṣya vāva kila mā…abravīt anu tvāśiṣam*...

[729] In fact, at this stage in the narrative, there is no suggestion that the king has actually taught Śvetaketu anything, as opposed to simply asking him questions which Śvetaketu could not answer. It may be that a more formal approach by Uddālaka to the king has been excised.

Śvetaketu's assertion in CU 5.3.1 that he has been taught by his father may imply that the events portrayed take place later than the teachings of CU 6. However, both the contents of this narrative and its placement within the redacted version of CU 6 strongly suggest that it is intended by the compilers of CU 6 to be read as if having taken place earlier. As noted above, the apparent late age at which Śvetaketu is despatched off to other teachers by his father in CU 6 may suggest that Uddālaka had begun Śvetaketu's education, but felt unable to complete it satisfactorily, perhaps because of Uddālaka's own uncertainty about the extent of his own knowledge.

4.7.1.3 Pravāhaṇa Jaivali's teaching

The questions which Jaivali puts to Śvetaketu, and which neither he nor Uddālaka can answer, do not directly address the ultimate principle. However, the teaching which Jaivali gives to Uddālaka, often known as the doctrine of the five fires, or *pañcāgnividyā*, analyses the world through a cyclical paradigm.

In CU 5.4 to 5.8, Jaivali presents, first, the 'region up there' (*asau…lokaḥ*) as a fire (*agni*), into which the gods offer faith (*śraddha*), from which is produced King Soma (*somorājā*).[730] The gods then offer King Soma into the second fire, the rain-cloud (*parjanya*), from which is produced rain (*varṣā*).[731] The rain is offered into the fire of the earth (*pṛthivī*), from which is produced food (*anna*);[732] food into the fire of man (*puruṣa*), producing semen (*retas*);[733] and semen into the fifth and final fire of woman (*yoṣā*), producing the foetus (*garbha*).[734] While there is no identification here of any form of 'existent' as a cosmogonic principle, creation is nevertheless presented as a cycle of transformation through which the fire (heat) into which Soma is offered in Vedic ritual transforms Soma into water (in the form of rain) and the fire into which the rain is offered transforms the rain into food which, in turn, allows new life to be created

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[730] CU 5.4.2: *tasminn etasminn agnau devāḥ śraddhāṃ juhvati tasyā āhuteḥ somo rājā sambhavati.*
[731] CU 5.5.2: *tasminn etasminn agnau devāḥ somaṃ rājānaṃ juhvati tasyā āhutervarṣaṃ sambhavati.*
[732] CU 5.6.2: *tasminn etasminn agnau devāḥ varṣaṃ juhvati tasyā āhuterannaṃ sambhavati.*
[733] CU 5.7.2: *tasminn etasminn agnau devā annaṃ juhvati tasyā āhute retaḥ sambhavati.*
[734] CU 5.8.2: *tasminn etasminn agnau devā reto juhvati tasyā āhutergarbhaḥ sambhavati.*

- exactly the same order as that in which *sat* propagates itself in CU 6.2.3.[735] In CU 5.9, a dead person is taken 'to the very fire from which he came' (*… agnaya eva haranti yata eveto yataḥ sambhūto bhavati*), completing the cycle, in much the same way as the dead person merges back into *sat* in CU 6.8.6.

Jaivali goes on to explain that 'the people who know this' (*tad ya itthaṃ viduḥ*), and who 'venerate austerity as faith' (*śraddhā tapa iti upāsate*), on death follow a path, described as the 'path leading to the gods' (*devayānaḥ panthā*) at the end of which a 'person who is not human' (*puruṣo'mānavaḥ*) leads them to *brahman*.[736] This is contrasted with 'those in the villages' (*ime grāma*) who make 'offerings to gods and priests' (*iṣṭāpūrte dattam iti upāsate*) (i.e. ritualists) who take a path ultimately leading to the moon, before eventually returning to earth in a re-birth the form of which is determined by the quality of their behaviour in the previous life.[737]

4.7.1.4 Relation to CU 6

Although put into the mouth of the *kṣatriya* Jaivali and critical of ritualism, this teaching purports to ground itself in Vedic ritual symbolism[738], yet at the same time draws heavily on empirical observation of the cycle of the seasons. The ritual offerings of Soma into the heat of the sacrificial fire are considered to produce rain, which helps produce food, which nourishes man, who is then able to have sexual intercourse, and thereby propagate the human species; evidence for this cycle may also have been found in the fact that the heat which precedes the north Indian monsoon season sets off the cycle of rain, with similar effects.[739] There is no suggestion that the various 'products' of the offerings are intended to be considered as ontologically identical to what is being offered: rather, they appear to be very real transformations of that which is offered and serve both to sustain and to uphold life.

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[735] Cf. also food as the 'root' of the individual in CU 6.8.4.

[736] CU 5.10.1-2. See also CU 4.15.5.

[737] CU 5.10.3-7. This is one of the earliest references to the doctrine of conditioned re-birth, and is much more clearly spelled out in the CU version of the narrative than in the BU version.

[738] As Killingley (1997:6) points out in relation to this narrative 'The motif of analysing a phenomenon by identifying parts of it with parts of the ritual is a common one…', citing CU 2.13 and BU 6.4.3 as other examples.

[739] Van Buitenen 1957b:91-92.

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This teaching emphasises the relationship between heat, water and food, presenting them in the same order as Uddālaka does in CU 6. Like the teachings which Uddālaka gives in CU 6, the teaching of the five fires appears both to be grounded in empirical observation, and to see the development of life as cyclical. The idea of life (and time) as a cycle, albeit one which can ultimately be broken, eventually takes a central position in Indian thought, and CU 5.10.7 gives us one of the earliest statements of the idea of karmically conditioned rebirth. For present purposes, however, the essential point is that the ideas of heat or fire giving rise to water, and water giving rise to food, are clearly reflected in the teachings of CU 6, albeit there from the starting point of the existent *sat*, rather than the ritual of offering Soma.[740] The presentation of Uddālaka as ignorant of the answers to Jaivali's initial questions highlights this narrative as the starting point of Uddālaka's own exploration, which culminates, for the purposes of the CU, in the more refined and less ritually oriented version of the teaching which he ultimately gives Śvetaketu in CU 6. The reference to the teaching having never before been given to *brahmins*, which is absent in the versions of the narrative in the BU and KṣU, may also have been inserted to explain why Śvetaketu's 'traditional' teachers in CU 6 were unable to teach him about the 'rule of substitution'.[741]

4.7.2   CU 5.11 to 5.24

Jaivali's teaching mentions neither *ātman* nor *brahman*. However, CU 5.11, which follows immediately after the Jaivali narrative, tells the story of five 'extremely wealthy' (*mahāśāla*) and 'immensely learned' (*mahāśrotriya*) householders who had been conducting a 'deep examination' (*mīmāṃsā*) of the questions 'What is *ātman*? What is *brahman*?'.[742] The five determine to seek out Uddālaka Āruṇi, who was said to

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[740] Jaivali's idea of the ultimate principle - if he had one - is not clear. Frauwallner suggests that the ultimate principle here is water ([1953] 1973:36), supported by Bodewitz in Bodewitz 1973, and tentatively supported by Olivelle in Olivelle 1999b, though this view is criticised at Killingley (1997:7), where he correctly points out that it ignores the fact that the first offering is not water but faith.

[741] CU 6.1.3.

[742] CU 5.11.1: … *te he ete mahāśālā mahāśrotriyāḥ sametya mīmāṃsāṃ cakruḥ ko na ātmā kim brahmeti.*

be 'studying this self here, the one common to all men' (*ātman vaiśvānara*).[743] Uddālaka apparently felt concern at his ability 'to answer their questions in a complete way'[744] so went with the five to Aśvapati Kaikeya, who was also apparently studying the *ātman vaiśvānara*. (The fact that both were said to be 'studying' the self may again indicate that the identity and/or nature of that self were not at this stage a fixed doctrine.)

Aśvapati welcomed the six *brahmins* 'with due honour', and offered them gifts equal to what he was intending to pay the officiating priests at a sacrifice which he was about to perform. The *brahmins* persuade him to speak about the *ātman vaiśvānara*, and approach him the next day 'carrying firewood in their hands'. 'Without even initiating them as students', Aśvapati begins to question them.[745]

4.7.2.1   The characters and literary motifs

Of the five *brahmins* who accompany Uddālaka Āruṇi we know relatively little. Their names are given as Prācīnaśāla Aupamanyava, Satyayajña Pauluṣi, Indradyumna Bhāllaveya, Jana Śārkarākṣya and Buḍila Āśvatarāśvi. Four of them appear in a similar narrative at ŚB 10.6.1-11, which features Aruṇa Aupaveṣi, possibly Uddālaka Āruṇi's father, rather than Uddālaka Āruṇi, and where Mahāśāla Jābāla appears instead of Prācīnaśāla Aupamanyava.[746] The narrative in ŚB 10.6.1-11 contains teachings about *agni vaiśvānara* rather than *ātman vaiśvānara*: in the ṚV, *vaiśvānara* is an epithet of the deified Agni who, in ṚV 6.7.7, '… extends himself around all creatures' (*pári yó víśvā bhúvanāni paprathé*).[747] The PU is also located in a similar frame story, though with

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[743] CU 5.11.2: *ātmānaṃ vaiśvānaram adhyeti.*
[744] CU 5.11.3: *tebhyo na sarvam iva pratipatsye.*
[745] CU 5.11.7: … *te ha samitpāṇayaḥ pūrvāhṇe praticakramire tān hānupanīyaivaitad uvāca.* It is possible that the notion of a *kṣatriya* initiating a group of *brahmins* was too much for the compilers of the CU, though it is curious in that case that the CU emphasises both the formulaic approach and the failure to initiate. There does not seem to be any suggestion that it would have been unthinkable for Aśvapati to have initiated the group. Perhaps emphasising his not doing so is another literary way of suggesting that the teachings which he was to deliver were innovative and potentially arose from outside the 'traditional' brahmanic fold.
[746] Buḍila Āśvatarāśvi also appears in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, and Satyayajña Pauluṣi in the JUB.
[747] The differences between the ŚB and CU narratives are summarised at Black 2007:113-114. Findly 1982 discusses the etymology of the word *vaiśvānara* and surveys its usage in the ṚV, which devotes 13 hymns to it, in places identifying it with the sun (ṚV 3.2.14), as well as in other places in the ŚB, where it is equated with the year (i.e. the annual solar cycle - ŚB

different characters, sometimes thought to be modelled on this one. Olivelle's translation of *mahāśāla* (literally 'great householder') as 'extremely wealthy' assumes that 'greatness' here implies wealth, which does not seem unreasonable.

Other than a thirst for knowledge, the motive of the five for seeking out Uddālaka is unstated, though their identification as, at least in Olivelle's translation, 'extremely wealthy' perhaps designates them as objective seekers after the truth, rather than susceptible to worldly rewards, and delivers an implied criticism of Yājñavalkya's concern with cows and other rewards in the BU. Nevertheless, Aśvapati offers them *dhana*: in effect, he offers to pay for the privilege of teaching them, seen by Black as an offer to pay simply for the perceived benefit of the presence of learned *brahmins* in his court.[748]

Aśvapati Kaikeya is, according to Olivelle[749], known only from this narrative and its counterpart in ŚB 10.6.1. As is generally the case with kings in the Upaniṣads, he is presented favourably. He is apparently king of the Kaikeyas, a north-western people, and presents himself in CU 5.11.5 as a virtuous king, in whose kingdom there are 'no thieves, no misers, no one who drinks, no one without learning or a sacrificial fire, no lecher, much less a whore'[750] and, as with other kings in the Upaniṣads[751], is shown as generous to visiting *brahmins*. The narrative again serves to highlight the *brahmin/kṣatriya* relationship, as well as, perhaps, suggesting that Aśvapati's teachings are somewhat radical. Nevertheless, in CU 5.18.2, Aśvapati identifies aspects of the *vaiśvānara* self with aspects of the sacrifice, including the sacrificial enclosure (*vedi*), the sacred grass (*barhi*), and three of the sacrificial fires, and it seems clear that this, as well as the use of the term *vaiśvānara*, represents, as with the previous narrative, an effort to anchor Aśvapati's teaching in the Vedic sacrificial tradition.

1.5.1.16). In BU 1.1.1, *agni vaiśvānara* is equated with the 'gaping mouth' (*vyātta*) of the sacrificial horse.
[748] Black 2007:113.
[749] Olivelle 1998a:478.
[750] CU 5.11.5:*na me steno janapade na kadaryo na madyapaḥ nānāhitāgnir nāvidvān na svairī svairiṇī kutaḥ.*
[751] E.g. Janaka, Ajātaśatru, Pravāhaṇa Jaivali.

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We also see in this episode a suggestion of a *brahmodya*, in that the five *brahmins* are said to have been debating their questions among themselves. We are not told that this was in any formal context but, as with the BU 3 *brahmodya*, we do have a clear inference that different ideas about the ultimate principle were being discussed and that none had been universally accepted. We also see a clear setting of Aśvapati's teaching in the context of *brahmacārya*. While Aśvapati did not initiate the six *brahmins*, the fact that they approached him carrying firewood suggests that the *brahmins* themselves saw no reason why they should not offer themselves to a *kṣatriya* as adult students, or, at least, that to present them as having done so served the purposes of the redactor of the CU.[752]

4.7.2.2 The *brahmins'* enquiry

The five *brahmins'* original debate among themselves was 'What is *ātman*? What is *brahman*?'. This is then focussed down to an enquiry about 'this self here, the one common to all men' (*ātman vaiśvānara*), the specific subject of study of both Uddālaka Āruṇi and Aśvapati Kaikeya. *Brahman* plays no further part in the narrative. Olivelle argues that 'the parallel between the self and the *vaiśvānara* fire, especially in its reference to the sun, runs through this entire section'[753], though without explaining why he considers this significant. Findly derives *vaiśvānara* from *viśvānara*, which she translates as 'possessing all the (cosmic) vital strength', again hinting at the underlying power which is a necessary feature of the ultimate principle.[754]

The juxtaposition of the two questions 'What is *ātman*? What is *brahman*?' in CU 5.11.1 could either be read as implying that *ātman* and *brahman* are two distinct subjects of enquiry, or simply as indicating that *ātman* is the ultimate principle, with *brahman* again assuming its 'placeholder' role. It could also suggest some sort of identity, or relationship, between the two, but there is no suggestion of any such identity or relationship in the narrative itself, which is focussed purely on *ātman*. If the original version of the narrative contained any discussion of *brahman*, that discussion has been excised. As we know from CU 6.3 and BU 3.7, *ātman* features much more prominently

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[752] In the ŚB counterpart of the narrative, he does formally accept the enquirers as students.
[753] Olivelle 1998a:556.
[754] Findly 1982:6.

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in Uddālaka Āruṇi's formulations of the ultimate principle than *brahman*, with a role as the 'inner controller' or animating force of the universe. The emphasis on *ātman* in this narrative suggests that, having established the cyclical emergence and resolution paradigm of creation in the Jaivali narrative, the focus of Uddālaka Āruṇi's enquiry now shifts to the other principal function of the ultimate principle.

4.7.2.3 Aśvapati Kaikeya's response

Aśvapati begins by asking each of the six in turn what he 'venerate[s] as the self' (*ātman*).[755] Their replies, in turn, are the sky (*diva*), the sun (*ādityā*), the wind (*vāyu*), space (*ākāśa*), the waters (*ap*), and (from Uddālaka Āruṇi) the earth (*pṛthivī*). Each of their ideas is acknowledged by Aśvapati as part of the *vaiśvānara* self - that which is 'brightly shining', is 'dazzling', 'follows diverse paths', is 'ample', is 'wealth' and is 'the firm basis' - and knowing the self in this way is said to lead to desirable ends (e.g. veneration of space as the self leads to 'ample children and wealth'[756]). Each of them, however, is rejected by Aśvapati as only a partial understanding of the self: as the head, eye, breath, trunk, bladder and feet of the self respectively, and each of the *brahmins* receives an admonishment related to his presentation of the self, that, had he not come to Aśvapati, his head would have shattered, or he would have gone blind, or his breath would have left him, his trunk crumbled to pieces, his bladder burst or his feet withered away.[757] This is probably a way of emphasising that, as Yājñavalkya has explained in BU 3.7, *ātman* is a monistic principle, greater than any single bodily part or function.

In CU 5.18, Aśvapati draws a distinction between those who know the *ātman vaiśvānara* as 'somehow distinct', in other words in the partial sense put forward by the *brahmins*, who are said to 'eat food'[758], and the one who 'venerates this self here, the one common

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[755] CU 5.12.1: *kaṃ tvam ātmānam upāssa.*
[756] CU 5.15.1: *tasmāt tvam bahulo'si prajayā ca dhanena ca.*
[757] CU 5.12-17.
[758] A relatively common metaphor for having power over others, in contrast to being food for others. See Geib 1976. In BU 5.9.1 the 'fire common to all men' (*agni vaiśvānara*) is 'the one within a person, the one through which the food he eats is digested (*yo'yam antaḥ puruṣe yenedam annam pacyate yad idam adyate*) '. Ability to hear the 'crackling' of that fire is given as an indicator of life.

to all men, as measuring the size of a span and as beyond all measure'[759] who 'eats food within all the worlds, all the beings, and all the selves'.[760] Reflecting some of the ideas put forward by the *brahmins*, he goes on to identify certain aspects of the fire sacrifice as bodily parts of the *ātman vaiśvānara* in CU 5.18.2. It is noteworthy that Aśvapati does not in terms say that *ātman* is the ultimate principle - this conclusion has to be inferred from the subject(s) of the five *brahmins'* initial debate among themselves.

In CU 5.19 to 5.24, Aśvapati branches out into a teaching about the offering of food to the five *prāṇas - prāṇa, vyāna, apāna, samāna* and *udāna* - emphasising the importance of 'satisfying' (*tṛpyati*) each of them as a way of satisfying both individual sense faculties (sight, hearing, speech, mind, wind) and cosmic elements (sun and sky, moon and quarters, fire and earth, rain and lightning, wind and space). It is knowledge of these 'cosmic connections' which allows a person to make 'an offering in that self of his which is common to all men'[761], whereas offering the daily *agnihotra* sacrifice without the knowledge of the roles of the *prāṇas* would be '… as if he had removed the burning embers and made his offering on the ashes'.[762] This teaching does not immediately appear related either to the *brahmins'* questions or to the teaching about the *ātman vaiśvānara*, save only in its conclusion about making an offering in the *ātman vaiśvānara*, and it may be an addition to the original narrative for reasons which I will suggest below.

Although this narrative implies that *ātman* is the ultimate principle, with the same quality of all-pervasiveness as the inner controller *ātman* of BU 3.7, nowhere in his teaching does Aśvapati directly emphasise any single quality of the ultimate principle as creator, sustainer or controller of the universe. However, CU 5.19-24, which form a significant proportion of the narrative, contain one of the earliest discussions of the five

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[759] A teaching which Ruben (1947:141) refers to as Aśvapati's '*Weltbild des Riesen und Zweges*' ('worldview of the giant and the dwarf'), and a good example of the Upaniṣads' use of paradox to describe what is ultimately indescribable.
[760] CU 5.18.1: *yas tvetam evaṃ prādeśamātram abhivimānam ātmānaṃ vaiśvānaram upāste sa sarveṣu lokeṣu sarveṣu bhūteṣu sarveṣvātmāsvannam.*
[761] CU 5.24.4: *tasmād u haivaṃvid yadyapi caṇḍālāyocchiṣṭam prayacchet ātmani haivāsya tad vaiśvānare hutaṃ syāditi.* This 'internal' form of ritual offering, usually referred to as the *prāṇāgnihotra*, is discussed in detail in Bodewitz 1973.
[762] CU 5.24.1: *sa ya idam avidvān agnihotraṃ juhoti yathāṅgārān apohya bhasmani juhuyāt tādṛk tat syāt.*

prāṇas. The primary function of the *prāṇas* is animation, and the inclusion in the narrative of this description of the offerings to the five *prāṇas*, coming immediately after Aśvapati's description of the *ātman vaiśvānara*, suggests a clear connection between the *prāṇas* and *ātman.*[763] While there is no suggestion that *prāṇa* itself here has any absolute quality, it seems likely that, by including CU 5.19-24 as part of the narrative, the compiler wished to emphasise the sustaining and animating qualities of *ātman* as the next step in Uddālaka Āruṇi's personal enquiry into the ultimate principle, following the enquiry into its creative qualities in the previous narrative.

4.7.2.4   Relation to CU 6

Especially if we accept the view of Brereton and others about the origin of the *tat tvam asi* refrain in CU 6.12[764], so that Uddālaka's fundamental conception of the role of *ātman* is as an invisible life-giving, or animating, 'essence', the emphasis in this narrative on the five *prāṇas* in the context of a discussion of *ātman* is significant.[765] Questions of creation have been addressed in the Jaivali narrative, but that narrative did not address the question of the animation or control of created existence: the purpose of this narrative is to address that other significant characteristic of the ultimate principle. When, therefore, we come to CU 6, we can see the influence, first, of the Jaivali narrative in Uddālaka's empirical cosmogony, and, secondly, of this narrative in the life-giving role of the invisible 'essence' which is *ātman.*

The conclusion of this narrative, in which the person who offers the *agnihotra* with knowledge of the roles of the five *prāṇas* is said to make an offering 'within all the worlds, all the beings, and all the selves'[766], also connects the teaching back to the five fires doctrine. The five *prāṇas* play a significant symbolic role within the *agnihotra* ritual[767], and the specific use of *vaiśvānara* as a designator of the *ātman* being

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[763] Cf. the later PU, the frame story of which is sometimes thought to be modelled on this narrative, where *prāṇa* is a direct product of *ātman* - PU 3.3: *ātmanā eṣa prāṇo jāyate…*

[764] See above.

[765] The reference to the five *prāṇas* does not feature in the similar narrative in the ŚB.

[766] CU 5.24.2: *atha ya etad evaṃ vidvān agnihotraṃ juhoti tasya sarveṣu lokeṣu sarveṣu bhūteṣu sarveṣu ātmasu hutam bhavati.*

[767] See JUB 1.1-2 and Bodewitz 1973, especially at 243. See also ŚB 8.1, in which each of the five *prāṇas* is identified with a different layer of bricks in the building of the *agnicayana* altar and directly associated with a specific bodily function.

investigated by Uddālaka, with its clear connection both to the ṚV and to the *agni vaiśvānara* of the ŚB precursor of this narrative, could also be read as a reference back to the fires which played such a prominent role in Jaivali's teachings. In this way, a link is created between the cyclical existence put forward by Jaivali and the *ātman* of the Aśvapati narrative, and between the cyclical cosmogony and the animating function of *ātman* which we have seen presented in CU 6. It is also worth noting in passing that Uddālaka's suggestion for *ātman vaiśvānara*, when quizzed by Aśvapati, is the earth (*pṛthivī*)[768], a suggestion consistent with an empirical approach to determining reality in general or an appreciation of the importance of food in particular, even if not on all fours with Jaivali's teaching and rejected by Aśvapati as 'only the feet of the self'.[769]

4.7.3 BU 3.7

I do not propose to repeat here my discussion of the narrative of BU 3.7 in Chapter 3. It is impossible to know whether that narrative is of earlier or later origin than that of CU 6: the absence of any reference to empirical observation in BU 3.7 may suggest that it is earlier; the presentation of Uddālaka as confident in his own knowledge (which, of course, he would have to be in competition with Yājñavalkya) may suggest that it is later. Either way, however, the discussion about *ātman* between Yājñavalkya and Uddālaka either foreshadows or confirms Uddālaka's own ideas of *ātman* in CU 6, as something within each individual which animates and controls that individual, but which is not necessarily the ultimate ground of that individual's existence. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Yājñavalkya describes *ātman* in this narrative, in its role as the inner controller, as being 'present within' (*tiṣṭhan*) but 'different from' (*antara*) no fewer than 21 putative forms of the ultimate principle, in each case controlling that entity from within (*antaro yamayati*).[770] As I have argued in Chapter 3, this clearly implies that

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[768] CU 5.17.1.

[769] CU 5.17.2: … *pādau…ātmanaḥ.* Chattopadhyaya (1986-7:40) has suggested that Uddālaka's identification of earth as, in effect, the ultimate principle in CU 5.17.1 might have been a way of showing his indifference to the idea of a more 'mystical' ultimate principle.

[770] It is worth recalling the two different possible translations of *antara* here. Where it first appears in each of BU 3.7.3-23, Olivelle, Hume and Roebuck favour 'different from' or 'other than', while all translating *antaro yamayati* as 'controls from within'. Contextually, this makes sense. Radhakrishnan's translation of the first *antara* as 'within' (as in, e.g., 'dwells in the water,

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ātman is greater than any one of those individual entities: what it also makes clear is that those entities are not *ātman*, but are 'different from', i.e. ontologically separate from, *ātman*, even though penetrated and controlled by it in a very similar way to that in which Uddālaka's *ātman* 'enters into' individual entities in CU 6.

They, and *ātman*, are also 'different from' that which holds the universe together. The BU 3.7 narrative also reflects Uddālaka's concern with the different functions of the ultimate principle. Although Uddālaka, unlike in the CU, does use the term *brahman* in this narrative, knowledge of *brahman* is available only to one who knows both the string (*sūtra*) on which this world, the next, and all beings are strung *and* the inner controller (*antaryāmin*).[771] Uddālaka claims to know both, and does not demur when Yājñavalkya identifies the string as the wind (*vāyu*), and the inner controller as *ātman*.[772] As I have stressed in Chapter 3, nowhere is an identity drawn between the string and the inner controller. Rather, both must be known if *brahman* - here again perhaps a placeholder term for, rather than a name of, the ultimate principle - is to be known. As in the questions of the five *brahmins* in CU 5.11, the possibility remains open, therefore, of there being in Uddālaka's worldview two distinct aspects to the ultimate principle, determined by function: that which holds the world(s) together and that which controls, or animates, the beings within the world.

The Uddālaka Āruṇi of BU 3.7 is not presented as either ignorant or unsure of his knowledge, even though he nowhere puts forward his own ideas about the ultimate principle, raising the possibility that he is bluffing (a possibility which the BU has an interest in suggesting) in the competitive public context of the *brahmodya*. Uddālaka's purpose in this narrative is not to teach nor to present himself as a learner, but to put Yājñavalkya on the spot, and the message of the BU is served by presenting Uddālaka's own student, Yājñavalkya, as at least Uddālaka's equal in esoteric knowledge. Whether this narrative should be interpreted as confirming Uddālaka's pre-existing knowledge or putting forward new teachings in the mouth of Yājñavalkya is for present purposes less

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yet is within the water'), which he employs in each of BU 3.7.3-22, seems tautologous: curiously, in BU 3.7.23, he departs from this and translates the first *antara* as 'other than'.
[771] BU 3.7.1.
[772] In BU 3.7.2 and 3.7.3-23 respectively.

important: the significant point is that the role which Yājñavalkya gives to *ātman* as the inner controller is entirely consistent with that of the 'invisible essence' of CU 6.

4.8   Reading the narratives together

What, then, do these other narratives tell us about the ideas of the ultimate principle which the compilers of the CU and BU put into the mouth of Uddālaka Āruṇi? Reading the narratives together, rather than as isolated and unrelated episodes, tells us the following:

- first, that he is more concerned with identifying, and describing, the ultimate principle through empirical observation of the cycles of nature and of natural events than he is with giving it a mystical or theological identity - the corollary of this is that he is more likely to conceive of his ultimate principle in material terms;

- secondly, that he is shown, at least in the CU narratives, as a thinker and enquirer[773], not necessarily confident in his own knowledge, or in that transmitted by traditional *brahmins*, but rather open to new ideas ostensibly originating from outside the traditional *brahmin* fold;

- thirdly, that he accepts the notion of a single animating or guiding force within the universe, which he is happy to call *ātman* and which may have some relationship to the five *prāṇas*;

- fourthly, that, while that animating force may be universal, it is not necessarily equated with the ultimate sub-stratum of the universe as a whole.

The progression in Uddālaka's state of knowledge - from ignorance, to studentship with incomplete knowledge, to confidence in his own knowledge - serves as a set of signposts to the teachings of CU 6. These signposts indicate that the teachings of CU 6 should be read in conjunction with the earlier narratives, by which they can clearly be

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[773] Ruben (1947:176) describes him as an 'optimistic research scientist' ('*ein optimistische Forscher*').

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seen to have been influenced. At the same time, Uddālaka's ignorance in CU 5.3, and his concern about the extent of his knowledge in CU 5.11, serve as literary devices to emphasise the novelty of the teachings which he is about to receive, as does their placing in the mouths of *kṣatriyas.* The juxtaposition of the three narratives in CU 5 and 6, coupled with the apparent ignorance of Śvetaketu's other teachers, also suggests that the esoteric knowledge which Uddālaka shares with Śvetaketu in CU 6 is intended to be read as connected to the teachings which he has received from the two *kṣatriyas*, Jaivali and Aśvapati.[774]

4.9   Concluding Observations

It is an interesting exercise to read CU 6 without the *sa ya eṣo'ṇimā etadātmyam idaṃ sarvam tat satyam sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo* refrain at the end of CU 6.8 to 6.10 and 6.14 to 6.16. Doing so not only gives support to Hanefeld and Brereton's arguments, but also emphasises the importance in Uddālaka's teaching of the 'emergence and resolution' paradigm identified elsewhere by Brereton[775], in which everything is presented as a product of *sat*, and ultimately returns to *sat*, as the nectar from different trees merges into the homogeneous honey, or the individual rivers (a product of the generic rain) merge into the ocean. While that may indeed be 'how Śvetaketu is', it does not necessarily follow that the *sat* into which all merges is ontologically identical with Śvetaketu or with *ātman*, which in CU 6.3 appears itself to have emerged from *sat*.

A more justifiable interpretation of Uddālaka's teaching is that he addresses the two most important functions of the ultimate principle separately. The first part of CU 6 - up to CU 6.10, and re-iterated in CU 6.15 - emphasises the ultimate principle's creative function by identifying a universal existent from which all emerges at birth and into

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[774] In making this suggestion, I am conscious that the characterisation of Śvetaketu in CU 5.3 as having been taught by his father might imply that this narrative is to be read as a later occurrence than that of CU 6, though, as I have suggested in note 604 above, there is a possible argument that Uddālaka began Śvetaketu's education but failed to complete it. The two narratives' contents, and the characterisation of Uddālaka in them, suggest that CU 6 is the later, and more developed. As I have stressed throughout, I am not arguing that the narratives reflect actual events, but rather that the compilers of the CU deliberately put the narratives together in this way, despite this possible chronological inconsistency.
[775] Brereton 1990:122-124.

which all re-merges at death. In contrast, CU 6.11 to 6.13, and to some extent CU 6.16, emphasise a universal essence, or *aṇiman*, equated with *ātman* as 'the self of this whole world', which enters into, supports, animates and sustains each individual being during life, as the sap in the tree or the invisible essence of the seed, and which is always present, even if not separately discernible, as the salt in the water. While this *ātman* is a product of *sat*, it is not the undifferentiated reality which is *sat.*

This idea of separately analysing the creative and animating qualities of the ultimate principle finds support not only in CU 6, but also in the other narratives involving Uddālaka Āruṇi. The cyclical emergence and resolution paradigm of creation is clearly supported by Jaivali's teaching of the five fires and the cycles of life in CU 5.3 to 5.10. Although it does not directly identify a universal 'existent' or animating force, this narrative, with its cycles of transformation of heat/fire, water/rain and food, gives us the basis for Uddālaka's teachings in the early part of CU 6, and clearly suggests that what animates us emerges from, or is a product of, something else. The narrative of CU 5.11 to 5.24 also suggests a separation between *brahman* and *ātman*[776], while highlighting the role of the five *prāṇas* in maintaining human existence, relating these back symbolically to the five fires of Jaivali's teaching. This narrative posits the existence of a universal *vaiśvānara* 'self… common to all men', the knower of which 'eats food within all the worlds, all the beings, and all the selves'[777], a suggestion that *ātman*, as at some level a source of food, has a universal animating quality in line with the *ātman* of CU 6.11-13.[778]

In the *brahmodya* of BU 3, Uddālaka Āruṇi specifically asks Yājñavalkya to identify both 'the string on which this world and the next, as well as all beings, are strung together' and 'the inner controller of this world and the next, as well as of all beings,

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[776] The PU, whose frame story is sometimes thought to reflect this narrative, also appears to differentiate between the creative and sustaining roles of the ultimate principle.
[777] CU 5.18.1: …*sarveṣu lokeṣu sarveṣu bhūteṣu sarveṣvātmāsvannam atti.*
[778] Geib (1975-6:224) suggests a distinction in early Vedic thought between those who saw food as the foundation of existence, a camp in which he puts Uddālaka Āruṇi in CU 6, and those who see the 'eater' of food as 'the ultimate source of life'. However, I am not certain that that distinction is as clear cut here.

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who controls them from within'.[779] Again, this clearly implies that the essential substratum of the universe (even if not its actual creator) and the force which controls the beings within the universe are not necessarily identical. Yājñavalkya evidently understands that the 'inner controller' is *ātman*, which he presents as being different from the object controlled, while identifying the 'string' on which the world is strung as the wind. To take the puppet analogy from Chapter 3 a stage further, the *sūtra* represents the strings of the puppet, *ātman* is the puppeteer, and each of Yājñavalkya's 21 rejected ideas is an individual puppet, albeit controlled by one and the same puppeteer.

In conclusion, therefore, I argue that CU 6 should be read not as an isolated set of teachings unrelated to the remainder of the CU, but rather as the culmination of Uddālaka Āruṇi's personal search for the ultimate principle. The stages of this search have been seen in the earlier narratives, a fact which serves to emphasise the importance of the teachings of CU 6. Looked at from a literary point of view, Uddālaka's search could also be seen as reflecting the broader search of the whole CU, and indeed of the Upaniṣads as a genre, to identify the ultimate principle via a focus on its different qualities, as we saw in the BU narratives analysed in Chapter 3. Uddālaka's enquiries take that search in a new direction by using observation of natural forces to help elucidate the ultimate principle, rather than simply rejecting them out of hand as inadequate ideas of that principle. Taking into account Hanefeld's views on the structure of CU 6, and adopting Brereton's conclusions about, and Olivelle's translation of, the *tat tvam asi* refrain, I suggest that Uddālaka's search ends with the positing as the creative ultimate principle of a universal, invisible 'existent' (*sat*) which 'becomes many', in other words from which all beings arise and into which all re-merge. However, the function of animating those beings is performed by a universal, invisible 'essence' (*aṇiman* or *ātman*) which is also a product of *sat*, coming into existence after the differentiation of *sat* into individual beings. While both of these ideas apply to Śvetaketu, as they do to every other creature, Śvetaketu is neither *sat* nor *ātman*: rather, he is a product of *sat* whose existence is supported and directed by *ātman* and he will re-

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[779] BU 3.7.1: *tat sūtram yasminn ayaṃ ca lokaḥ paraśca lokaḥ sarvāṇi ca bhūtāni saṃdṛbdhāni… tamantaryāmiṇam ya imaṃ ca lokam paraṃ ca lokam sarvāṇi ca bhūtāni yo'ntaro yamayati…yo vai tat… sūtraṃ vidyāttaṃ cāntaryāmiṇamiti sa brahmavitsa lokavitsa devavitsa vedavitsa bhūtavitsa ātmavitsa sarvavit.*

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merge with *sat* at death. If ultimate reality is to be understood, then, like the string and the inner controller, both *sat* and *ātman*, and the relationship between them, need to be understood.

Chapter 5
God and 'the Person'

'Then Vidagdha Śākālya began to question him: tell me, Yājñavalkya, how many gods are there?' [780]

5.1 Introduction

We have seen in previous Chapters the challenges faced by Upaniṣadic teachers in identifying a universal principle which satisfied all the criteria which I have suggested as necessary functions of the ultimate principle: as a creative, sustaining, and animating force. In many religious traditions, as in some later schools of Indian philosophy (including those of Ramānuja and Madhva which rely on the Upaniṣads to support their doctrines), the problem of locating all of the multi-faceted qualities of the ultimate principle in a single entity is solved by giving the role to a deity, a mythical personified '… Supreme Being…' which is '… the Creator, the ruler and sustainer of the Universe, … primal and eternal, … invisible, omniscient' and, importantly, 'unique'. [781]

The role of God, and gods, in the Upaniṣads, however, is somewhat ambiguous. We have seen in Chapter 2 that, in early Vedic literature, several deities - including Indra, Viśvakarman and Tvaṣṭṛ - were given roles in cosmogony, while others - such as Agni, Vāyu and Sūrya - were more concerned with the maintenance and sustaining of the order of the natural world. As a result, no one personified god uniquely took on all the functions of the ultimate principle. [782] By the time of the Brāhmaṇas and early Upaniṣads, Prajāpati (the 'lord of creatures') had begun to assume greater prominence, primarily as a creator, but there was still no unequivocal single supreme deity, nor did Prajāpati uniquely enjoy all the qualities of an ultimate principle. In the Brahmaṇas, as

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[780] BU 3.9.1: *atha hainaṃ vidagdha śākalyaḥ papraccha kati devāḥ yājñavalkya iti.*
[781] Gonda [1968a] 1975:1.
[782] As Gonda points out (1965a:136.), while the ṚV manifests an aim of discovering the 'common power' behind the Vedic deities, the 'One' is 'only vaguely conceived'.

Smith has noted, he has little control over the results of his creation[783]; in the early Upaniṣads, he is still just one of a number of deities, named alongside Indra and Varuṇa in the invocation in CU 1.12.5, and appearing alongside Soma, Vāyu, Indra, Bṛhaspati and Varuṇa in the analysis of the ways of chanting the *sāman* in CU 2.22, in each case with no obvious hierarchy. In other places in those same early Upaniṣads, he is explicitly subordinated to a more abstract ultimate principle, usually in the form of *brahman*, as, for example, in the Yājñavalkya/Gārgī narrative in BU 3.6 analysed in Chapter 3, or in the hierarchy of TU 2.8. Proferes has suggested that his prominence may have come about through the desire of the early Vedic peoples to find a cosmic justification for their increasing unification, as the old factional 'clan' system broke up, with Prajāpati coming to represent a 'royal' figure, as the cosmic 'lord' (or 'father') of the entire Vedic 'creatures' (or 'peoples').[784]

The general trend in the early Upaniṣads was to seek to find a non-personified form of ultimate principle through analysis of that principle's functions. As noted in earlier Chapters, this analysis and enquiry led to the positing of impersonal concepts such as *brahman*, *ātman* and *sat* as assuming some or all of the ultimate principle's functions, with individual deities often suggested but rejected as part of the process of enquiry.[785] However, by the time of the ŚU, a fully theistic notion of the ultimate principle emerges into Upaniṣadic discourse. It does so in a cosmogonic and cosmological framework which differs from the 'architectural, generative and sacrificial'[786] cosmogonies of early Vedic speculations, and from the earlier notions of the three 'worlds' of earth, sky (or space) and intermediate region, directed by the 'departmental deities'[787] of sun, moon, wind, fire etc. Instead, in a similar way to CU 6, it develops a more analytical cosmological scheme, while at the same time reflecting the broader contemporary religious environment which also produced the overtly theistic BhG.

It has been argued that the theistic conception of the ultimate principle which develops in the ŚU is a radical innovation in Upaniṣadic thought - the ŚU has been described as

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[783] Smith 1975:318.
[784] Dr. Theodore Proferes personal communication 14 November 2017.
[785] As, for example, by Yājñavalkya in BU 3.6 and 3.9.
[786] Hume 1921:10 (see Chapter 2).
[787] I have taken this term from Gonda 1965a:136.

'something of an *enfant terrible* among the Upaniṣads'.[788] However, in this Chapter, I will again argue that, by reading the Upaniṣads together, rather than in isolation from each other, we can see trends and developments in the ideas which they present. Although the earlier Vedic texts fall short of giving all of the qualities of an ultimate principle to one single deity, the legacy of the early Vedic deities, the relative prominence of Prajāpati, and the roles given to Indra and other deities in the early Upaniṣads, and, later, to Yama and Viṣṇu in the KaU, are indicative of a theistic way of thinking about the universe which was not completely overcome by the abstraction of ideas such as *brahman* and *ātman*.

As a result, we shall see that, although the ŚU is unique among the Upaniṣads in clearly identifying its divine ultimate principle by name, the idea that the ultimate principle may take the form of a personified deity is not in fact such a radical innovation. Rather, it builds on ideas which occur throughout the Upaniṣads, and perhaps also operates as a response to the difficulties which we have seen in finding any other single, expressible, concept which can satisfy all the requirements of the ultimate principle. For, even though the early Upaniṣads generally appear to prefer an abstract idea of the ultimate principle which 'sits above' the gods, perhaps even as the origin of the gods themselves[789], in other places those same Upaniṣads appear to deify both *brahman*[790] and *ātman*.[791] Abstract notions of the ultimate principle are also sometimes given roles which look very like those often attributed to a creator god, perhaps most obviously in *ātman*'s creative role in AU 1.1. Additionally, the idea of there bring a single, or dominant, god - rather than the various 'departmental deities' - appears in the BU[792], the

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[788] Cohen 1998:150.

[789] E.g. BU 2.1.20, where all the gods 'spring from' (*vyuccaranti*) *ātman*, or CU 8.12.6 where *ātman* is 'venerated by' (*upāsate*) the gods. As Pflueger puts it (2010:764), they '… tended to de-emphasize any focus or development of a supreme theistic divinity in favour of realizing ones (*sic*) impersonal spiritual essence'.

[790] This is implicit in BU 1.4.10, which refers to 'other deities' than *brahman.* In BU 5.5.1, *brahman* is explicitly identified with Prajāpati (*brahma prajāpatim*), at least in the Mādhyaṃdina recension (see the note at Olivelle 1998a:523).

[791] E.g. in BU 4.4.15. AU 3.3 explictly equates the 'one' which is *ātman* with *brahman*, Indra, Prajāpati and 'all these gods' (*eṣa brahmaiṣa indra eṣa prajāpatir ete sarve devā imāni…*).

[792] BU 3.9.9: *katama eko deva…*

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CU[793], the TU[794], and the KeU[795], even if there identified with other forms of the ultimate principle, such as *brahman* or *sat*. And, when we come to consider the later Upaniṣads, the ĪU, KaU, MuU and PU all contain suggestions of a theistic approach to analysing reality, even if not as unambiguously expressed as that of the ŚU.

As I shall identify below, there are also a number of places in the Upaniṣads where, even if not explicitly divine, the ultimate principle is suggested to be a 'person'. By the very fact of having the qualities of the ultimate principle, that person could be considered to be divine, even if un-named. There are numerous examples where the ultimate principle is given personal qualities, such as 'lordship', and several places where the ultimate principle is identified by the term *puruṣa* ('person'). This is an important term, both in the Vedic tradition and in later Indian systematic philosophy. It appears famously in ṚV 10.90, where creation results from the sacrifice of the primeval *puruṣa*, 'the primitive anthropomorphic notion that the world-ground is an enormous human person'[796], and eventually played a very important role in the Sāṃkhya view of the world. I will also in this Chapter look at the use of the term *puruṣa* in the context of the ultimate principle and its relationship with the development of a theistic approach to identifying that principle. I will suggest, however, that, in the same way that we need to be cautious about always giving *ātman* and *brahman* the technical meanings which they acquired in later systematic schools of Indian philosophy, we should also be wary of interpreting *puruṣa* in the Upaniṣads in the same way that it is interpreted in classical Sāṃkhya. I will argue that *puruṣa* in the Upaniṣads may generally be better understood as referring to a monistic ultimate principle in personal form, with the result that the identification of the ultimate principle as a *puruṣa* also means that the idea of the ultimate principle as a *personified* god in the ŚU is not as radical as it is sometimes presented.

The cosmological structures referred to in some of the later Upaniṣads appear in many respects similar to those of classical Sāṃkhya. Although it is beyond the scope of this

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[793] CU 6.8.6; 6.15.1-2, both of which refer to a *parasyā devatā* (see Chapter 4).
[794] TU 1.4.1-3, an invocation to a seemingly individual God.
[795] KeU 1.1: … *cakṣuḥ śrotraṃ ka u devo yunakti.*
[796] Hume 1921:23.

thesis to analyse the development of Sāṃkhya philosophy and its relationship to the Upaniṣads in any detail, I will touch briefly on the apparent similarities between some parts of the Upaniṣads and the doctrines of classical Sāṃkhya later in this Chapter. Suffice it to say for present purposes that I will again argue that a close reading of the Upaniṣads suggests that these cosmological structures are not a radical innovation in the later Upaniṣads.

In their presentation of the ultimate principle as personified and/or divine, the Upaniṣads often attempt, not always successfully, to reconcile those ideas with their broader espousal of impersonal forms of the ultimate principle. What becomes apparent is that the relationship in the Upaniṣads between abstract ideas such as *brahman* or *ātman* and personified ideas of the ultimate principle, whether or not overtly theistic, is frequently less than clear.[797] These ambiguities and, at times, apparent contradictions are yet another indication of a continuing sense of enquiry about the ultimate principle and an ongoing development of ideas, rather than either an aberration or the presentation of radically new dogma.

5.2 God and 'the Person' in the Early Upaniṣads

As already noted, the most prominent individual deity in the early Upaniṣads is probably Prajāpati.[798] Accepting that his role in ṚV 10.121.10 was most likely an interpolation[799], it was in the Brahmaṇa period that Prajāpati began to assume particular prominence, as, for example, the 'most excellent of the gods' (*prajāpatiśreṣṭsthā vai devāḥ*) in JB 2.371, undergoing '… a process of gradual development and priestly elaboration, reinterpretation and systematization'.[800] In JB 2.244, the world existed as Prajāpati 'at the beginning' (*agre*) and creation was manifested by the release of

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[797] Gonda 1970:18 notes that, in the later Upaniṣads, these relations are '… more complicated and problematic than they were considered to be in the preceding period'.
[798] Although also appearing frequently, Indra generally has a less prominent role, and, while, as noted earlier, sometimes appearing alongside Prajāpati with no apparent hierarchy, he is also often subordinated to Prajāpati, e.g. in BU 3.6, CU 8.7 and TU 2.8.
[799] See Chapter 2.
[800] Gonda 1986:5.

Prajāpati's speech: in the beginning, there literally was the word.[801] In places a sustaining function is also implied, as, e.g., in ŚB 6.3.1.9 where he is identified with *prāṇa* (though in partnership with Vāc), or in JB 2.183 where he is seen as a provider of food. However, in general, his primary role was that of creating living creatures[802], and he is frequently either only one deity among many or subordinated to other putative ideas of the ultimate principle. In AV 19.53.8, for example, time is the 'father' of Prajāpati; in ŚB 6.1.1.1 the universe arose from non-being (*asat*) through the functioning of seven *prāṇas*, which in turn created seven *puruṣas*, which, after merging into a single *puruṣa*, became Prajāpati; in ŚB 11.1.6.1 Prajāpati comes from a golden egg produced by 'the waters'.[803]

This uncertainty over Prajāpati's precise place and role in the cosmos continues into the Upaniṣads. In BU 3.9.2, he is one of the 33 gods which Yājñavalkya reduces to one in his dialogue with Vidagdha Śākalya; in CU 1.12.5 and 2.22.1 he is mentioned alongside other gods, so fails the test of uniqueness. On the other hand, he is the 'incubator' of the worlds in CU 2.23.2 and CU 4.17.1[804] and the creator of creatures, through the intermediary of 'substance' (*rayi*) and 'lifebreath' (*prāṇa*), in the later PU 1.4; he is equated with 'the year' (a common metaphor for totality) in BU 1.5.14; and has a clear creative role in BU 6.4, even though it is not clear there whether he is creating creatures to populate an already existing world. He is the creator of the vital functions in BU 1.5.21 and their 'father' (*pitṛ*) in CU 5.1.7, and the creator of *prāṇa* in PU 1.4, suggesting a role in the animation of the world. His relationship with *brahman* is also ambiguous: he is clearly subsidiary to *brahman* in Yājñavalkya's teachings in BU 3.6 and 3.9, and in TU 2.8; a mere 'doorkeeper' of *brahman* in KṣU 1.5; and a product of *brahman* in BU 6.5. Yet in BU 5.3.1, he is equated with *brahman* and 'the whole'

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[801] JB 2.244: *prajāpatir vā idam agre āsīt nānyaṃ dvitīyaṃ paśyamānas tasya vāg eva svam āsīd vāg dvitiyā sa aikṣata hantemāṃ vācaṃ visṛje iyaṃ vāvedam visṛṣṭā sarvaṃ vibhavanty eṣyatīti.* Cf. the role of Vāc in the ṚV, discussed in Chapter 2.

[802] Gonda notes that, in the several creation myths involving Prajāpati, the verb generally used to indicate his creation of beings is √*sṛj*, to 'let go' or 'discharge', implying that the products of his creation are separate ontological entities (1982:47, and the textual sources cited there).

[803] Gonda 1986 contains a painstaking and detailed study of the role of Prajāpati in the Vedic period.

[804] CU 2.23.2 and 4.17.1: *prajāpatir lokān abhyatapat...*

(*sarvam*), in BU 5.4.1 is equated with *brahman* as a product of 'the real' (*satyam*) created by the waters, and in AU 3.3 is equated with *brahman*, *ātman* and Indra.

So, although Prajāpati is prominent in the early Upaniṣads, and in different places appears to manifest certain of the qualities of the ultimate principle, in others he is clearly subordinated to the more abstract *brahman*. In places, some of his common functions are assumed by *brahman* (which appears as a creator in several places) and/or by *ātman*, the creator in AU 1. Nowhere in the Upaniṣads, except perhaps somewhat obliquely in BU 1.5.14[805], is he put forward as a clear candidate for the role of a personified ultimate principle. Crucially, he is specifically rejected as such, both in the version of the Bālāki/Ajātaśatru narrative at KṣU 4.16 and by Yājñavalkya, in debate with Gārgī in BU 3.6[806] and in debate with Vidagdha Śākalya in BU 3.9.[807] As a result, even though he is the most prominent deity of the early Upaniṣads, we cannot say that he is at any stage unequivocally identified as the ultimate principle.

Yet, the early Upaniṣads clearly see personified gods as playing important roles in the cosmos. As well as individual gods such as Prajāpati, 'the gods' as a group feature frequently, even if generally subordinated to an over-arching abstract ultimate principle. For example, in the Bālāki/Ajātaśatru narrative of BU 2.1, the gods 'spring from' the *ātman*[808], and, in the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī in BU 2.4.6, the gods are considered to 'reside in' the *ātman*.[809] Sometimes their role is not subordinated: 'all the gods' are equated with *ātman* and *brahman* in AU 3.3.[810] In the CU, elements of the ritual chant are associated with deities in CU 1.11 and 2.20, and the gods overcome the demons[811] through the power of the High Chant in CU 1.2, and in its nearly identical counterpart in BU 1.3.

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[805] Where, on the night of the new moon, he 'enters… all beings that sustain life' (… *sarvam idaṃ prāṇabhṛd anupraviśya…*).
[806] See Chapter 3.
[807] See further below.
[808] BU 2.1.20: *sa yathorṇanābhiś tantunoccaret yathāgneḥ kṣudrā visphuliṅgā vyuccaranti evam evāsmād ātmanaḥ sarve prāṇāḥ sarve lokāḥ sarve devāḥ…*
[809] BU 2.4.6: *devas tam parādur yo'nyatrātmano devān veda…*
[810] AU 3.1: *ko'yam ātmeti vayam upāsmahe…* 3.3: *eṣa brahmaiṣa indra eṣa prajāpatir ete sarve devā…*
[811] Both described as 'children of Prajāpati' - *prajāpatyāḥ* - as they are also in BU 5.2.1 and 5.5.1 and CU 2.9.4.

In Janaka's *brahmodya* in BU 3, Yājñavalkya's final interlocutor, Vidagdha Śākalya, asks 'how many gods are there?'.[812] Yājñavalkya initially answers, following a ritual formula, that there are 'three and three hundred, and three and three thousand' (*trayaś ca trī ca śatā trayaś ca trī ca sahasra*), before gradually, under the pressure of further questioning, reducing the number to 33, six, three, two, one and a half, and finally one. Prajāpati is one of the 33, but plays no further part, and, as the number reduces, personified gods give way to the component parts of the early Upaniṣadic cosmology - fire, earth, wind, the intermediate region, sun and sky[813]; then to the 'three worlds'[814]; to food and breath[815]; the 'purifying wind'[816]; and, finally, the one god *prāṇa*, equated with, or described as, *brahman*.[817] As the conversation continues, Śākalya suggests that the ultimate god is in fact Prajāpati, only for that idea to be sarcastically dismissed by Yājñavalkya.[818]

Although this narrative dismisses Prajāpati's claim to the role of ultimate principle, it does not deny the suggestion that that principle - here *prāṇa/brahman* - is a 'god'. This tendency to deify the ultimate principle appears in a number of other places in the early Upaniṣads. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Uddālaka Āruṇi's *sat* is referred to as a *devatā* in CU 6.3.2 and as 'the highest deity' (*parasyā devatā*) in CU 6.8.6 and 6.15.1-2, and Acharya has argued that the cosmogony of CU 6 sets the ground for later theistic ideas of the ultimate principle.[819] In BU 1.4.10, the world originates from *brahman*, and the BU is critical of those who venerate 'other deities', implying that it considers *brahman* a deity.[820] BU 4.4.15 explains that 'When a man clearly sees this self (*ātman*) as god, the lord of what was and of what will be, He will not seek to hide from him'[821], describing this deified *ātman* in personal terms as 'controller of all, lord of all, ruler of all' (*sarvasya vaśī sarvasyeśānaḥ sarvasyādhipatiḥ*) lying in the 'space within the heart'

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[812] BU 3.9.1: *kati devāḥ*.
[813] BU 3.9.7:… *agniśca pṛthivīca vāyuścāntarikṣaṃ cādityaśca dyauśca…*
[814] BU 3.9.8: … *trayo lokāḥ…*
[815] BU 3.9.8: …*annaṃ caiva prāṇaśca…*
[816] BU 3.9.8: … *yo yam pavata…*
[817] BU 3.9.9: … *prāṇa iti sa brahma…*
[818] BU 3.9.18: *śakalya… tvāṃ svid ime brāhmaṇā aṅgārāvakṣayaṇam akratā u iti.*
[819] Acharya 2016:862.
[820] BU 1.4.10: … *yo anyāṃ devatām upāste anyo'say anto'ham asmīti na sa veda...*
[821] BU 4.4.15: *yadaitam anupaśyati ātmānaṃ devam añjasā īśānam bhūta bhavyasya na tato vijugupsate.*

(*antarhṛdaya*).[822] BU 5.4.1 refers to *brahman* as 'this immense and first-born divine being' (*mahad yakṣam prathamajam*). And AU 3.3 answers the question 'who is the *ātman*?' (*ko'yam ātmeti*) by identifying the *ātman* with all created beings, but initially specifically with *brahman,* Indra and Prajāpati (*eṣa brahmaiṣa indra eṣa prajāpatir…*).

KeU 1.1, also seeking to identify the ultimate principle, explicitly refers to it as a 'god' (*deva*) before identifying that *deva* as *brahman*.[823] While the presentation of *brahman* in the remainder of KeU 1 and KeU 2 seem more consistent with an abstract principle - it is 'the hearing behind hearing, the thinking behind thinking, the speech behind speech, the sight behind sight… the breathing behind breathing'[824], 'far different from what's known and… farther than the unknown'[825] - in KeU 3, which may be of different origin to KeU 1 and 2[826], *brahman*, although presented as being more powerful than the gods, appears in visible, though not explicitly personified, form to Indra, Jātavedas and Mātariśvan.[827]

So although abstract notions of the ultimate principle do take centre stage in the early Upaniṣads, those Upaniṣads often continue to reflect earlier theistic ideas. 'The gods' retain a role in the analysis of the ultimate principle, and the tendency to consider the ultimate principle as having 'divine' qualities is common. We also in places see a personification of the ultimate principle, falling short of identifying it as a specific, named deity. Even Yājñavalkya describes *ātman* as a person (*puruṣa*) in his dialogue with Janaka in BU 4.3.7[828], and, in his dialogue with Maitreyī in BU 2.4 and 4.5, he refers to *ātman* as an 'immense being' (*mahat bhūta*), which, in BU 4.5.11, 'exhaled' all creation.[829] KṣU 3.8 uses similar personal terminology, describing *ātman* as '… ruler of the world,… sovereign of the world, … lord of the world' (*lokapāla… lokādhipatiḥ…*

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[822] BU 4.4.22. Cf. also BU 5.12.1 where *brahman* is presented as a combination of the two 'deities' food and *prāṇa* (*annam brahma ity eka āhuḥ tan na tathā pūyati vā annaṃ ṛte prāṇāt. prāṇo brahma ity eka āhuḥ tan na tathā śuṣyati vai prāṇa ṛte'nnāt ete ha tu eva devate ekadhābhūyam bhūtvā paramatāṃ gacchataḥ…*).
[823] KeU 1.1: … *cakṣuḥ śrotraṃ ka u devo yunakti.*
[824] KeU 1.2: *śrotasya śrotram manaso mano yad vāco ha vācaṃ sa u prāṇasya prāṇaḥ cakṣuṣaś cakṣur…*
[825] KeU 1.3: *anyad eva tad viditād atho aviditād adhi…*
[826] See note 81 above.
[827] KeU 3.2: *tebhyo ha prādur babhūva…*
[828] BU 4.3.7: *katama ātmeti yo'yam vijñānamayaḥ prāṇeṣu hṛdyantarjyotiḥ puruṣaḥ…*
[829] BU 4.5.11: … *asyaivaitāni sarvāṇi niḥśvasitāni.*

lokeśaḥ).[830] In KṣU 1.5-7, *brahman* is presented as a mythological figure, presiding over a 'world', seated on a throne, and conversing with the deceased person who has managed to reach 'the path leading to the gods' (*devayāna*).[831] In BU 2.5.1, both *ātman* and *brahman* are identified with 'the radiant and immortal person in the earth' (*pṛthivyāṃ tejomayo'mṛtamayaḥ puruṣaḥ*) and 'the radiant and immortal person residing in the physical body' *(śārīras tejomayo'mṛtamayaḥ puruṣaḥ*). This passage goes on to equate with *ātman* and *brahman* a list of other 'radiant and immortal persons'[832], each as 'the honey of all beings' (*sarveṣām bhūtānām madhu*), before concluding that *ātman* 'is the honey of all beings and all beings are the honey of' *ātman*.[833] *Ātman* is then itself described in personal terms as 'the lord and king of all beings'[834] and, in a slightly oblique word play, identified with the person (*puruṣa*) who is the 'fort-dweller' (*puriśaya*) in 'all the forts' (understood as all bodies). There is nothing that is not 'sheltered by' nor 'secured by' this person, who is both *ātman* and *brahman*.[835]

The early Upaniṣads also speak of a cosmic 'person' not identified directly with *ātman* or *brahman*. In BU 5.6, the *puruṣa* 'made of mind' is described as 'the lord of all, the ruler of all'.[836] CU 1.6.6-8 speaks of a 'golden person' (*hiraṇmaya puruṣa*) within the sun who 'rules over the worlds beyond the sun and over the desires of gods'[837], while CU 1.7.5-8 speaks of an identical 'person down here'[838] who rules over the worlds below the sun and over the desires of men. TU 1.6.1-2 also speaks of an 'immortal and golden person' (*puruṣaḥ… amṛto hiraṇmayaḥ*) dwelling in the 'space within the heart' (*antarhṛdaya ākāśaḥ*), a common dwelling-place of both *ātman* and *puruṣa*, who 'becomes [the] *brahman*'.[839] In both BU and CU, a 'person' leads those of the dead who

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[830] KṣU 3.8. Proferes 2007 contains a detailed study of metaphors of kingship in Vedic texts.
[831] KṣU 1.3.
[832] In the waters… , fire…., wind…, sun…, the quarters…, the moon… , lightning…, thunder…, space…, *dharma…,* truth… , and humanity… (BU 2.5.2-13)
[833] BU 2.5.14: *ayam ātmā sarveṣām bhūtānām madhu asyātmanaḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni madhu…*
[834] BU 2.5.15: *sa vā ayam ātmā sarveṣām bhūtānām adhipatiḥ sarveṣām bhūtānām rājā…*
[835] BU 2.5.18: *… sa vā ayam puruṣaḥ sarvāsu pūrsu puriśayaḥ nainena kiṃ ca nānāvṛtam nainena kiṃ ca nāsaṃvṛtam.* See Olivelle 1998a:505.
[836] BU 5.6.1: *manomayo'yaṃ puruṣaḥ… sa eṣa sarvasyeśānaḥ sarvasya adhipatiḥ sarvam idaṃ praśāsti yad idāṃ kiṃ*
[837] CU 1.6.8: *… sa eṣa ye cāmuṣmāt parāñco lokās teṣāṃ ceṣṭe deva kāmānaṃ cety adhidaivatam.*
[838] CU 1.7.5: *… tasyaitasya tad eva rūpam yad amuṣya rūpam…*
[839] TU 1.6.2: *… etat tato bhavati ākāśa śarīram brahma…*

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are on the 'path of the gods' to *brahman*.[840] In CU 4.15.5 and 5.10.2, this 'person' is described as 'not human' (*puruṣo'mānavaḥ*), and therefore impliedly divine or quasi-divine.[841]

Finally, we should not forget the various 'people' suggested by Bālāki as the ultimate principle in the narratives of BU 2.1.2-19 and KṣU 4.3-19. Although I have suggested in Chapter 3 that these are rejected by Ajātaśatru as 'old-fashioned' ideas of the ultimate principle being personified rather than abstract, it is significant that, in the BU version of the narrative, Ajātaśatru's idea of the ultimate principle places emphasis on the 'person consisting of perception' (*vijñānamaya puruṣa*) and, in the KṣU version, it is the very personal 'maker of the persons you have talked about' (*yo... eteṣām puruṣām kartā*) whom Bālāki is encouraged to know.

We can see, therefore, that, perhaps reflecting and developing the idea of the old 'departmental deities' gradually reducing in number, the early Upaniṣads in several places give the ultimate principle both personality and divinity. While, taking the early Upaniṣads overall, the personified and/or deified forms undoubtedly play a subordinate role to the more abstract, there is ample evidence from the passages highlighted above that the early Upaniṣads do not entirely reject the notion of the ultimate principle as some form of personified deity. I argue, therefore, that the more clearly theistic approaches revealed in the later Upaniṣads at least in part reflect this residual theistic tendency.

5.3   God and 'the Person' in the Later Upaniṣads

The later Upaniṣads - KaU, ĪU, ŚU, MuU, MāU and PU - grew up in a broader north Indian religious environment in which both theistic ideas and devotion to the divine were becoming more prominent. We know that the relative chronology of texts does not present a complete picture of the relative chronology of their theological concerns and approaches and, as Malinar stresses, the '... origin(s) and exact circumstances of the rise

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[840] In the teachings of the five fires in BU 6.2 and CU 5.3-10.
[841] In the very similar passage in BU 6.2.15, he is 'a person consisting of mind' (*puruṣo'mānasa*).

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in this theology are uncertain'.[842] However, what is clear is that the period of the later Upaniṣads is one in which a smaller number of deities begins to take centre stage[843], each assuming, for its worshippers, the qualities of a unique supreme god. The clearly theistic BhG is a product of this broad time period, and certain of the later Upaniṣads, notably those of the Black YV, the KaU and ŚU, share stanzas and ideas with the BhG, though scholars differ in their view on which text was the 'borrower' or whether Upaniṣad and BhG both drew from a third common source.[844]

As I have explained elsewhere, I am not directly concerned with the 'archaeology' of the Upaniṣads. However, in looking at the later Upaniṣads, we should bear in mind both the likelihood of non-Vedic influence, as highlighted in Chapter 1, and the rise of a more overtly theistic general religious environment in which individual deities assumed greater prominence. It might therefore be argued that the theistic trends which the later Upaniṣads display reflect a completely new approach to the ultimate principle divorced from those of the earlier Upaniṣads. In the light, however, of the various references to personified and/or deified qualities and forms of the ultimate principle which we find in the early Upaniṣads, I argue that the theistic trends of the later Upaniṣads represent more of a change of gear in the Upaniṣads' ongoing speculative enquiry into the ultimate principle than a complete change of direction. This change of gear is influenced too by the increasing tendency to give the ultimate principle personal qualities, the shifting

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[842] Malinar 2007:270.

[843] See, e.g., Gonda 1970:21.

[844] Although the Upaniṣads as a genre are undoubtedly older than the BhG, some of their contents may be later. For example, Oberlies considers the ŚU to have borrowed from the BhG (1988:35), Malinar (2007:67n23), following Hillebrandt, considers the KaU to have borrowed from the BhG. Washburn Hopkins argues that the BhG probably borrowed from the KaU (noted at Cohen 2008:200), while Cohen herself (2008:198-200) argues for borrowing in both directions, with the KaU, ŚU, MuU and BhG belonging to 'the same metatextual complex' (2008:201). Brodbeck 2018:207 contains a useful tabulation of the 'close verbal parallels' between the BhG and the metrical Upaniṣads: see also his more general observations at 2018:208, where he notes that 'In some cases the parallel may bear witness to a wider discursive repertoire of phrases, images, verses, or sequences of verses that were, so to say, common property' and that we should accordingly be 'cautious about suggesting that the parallels… are evidence of borrowing or direct influence from one particular text to another'. Malinar also notes (2007:26) that certain scholars, e.g. S.C. Roy, have argued that the BhG was itself originally an Upaniṣad; see also Brodbeck 2018:201-2. Patton (2008:xxxiv n.3) notes 'more than fifty recent articles' on the date of the BhG alone, before suggesting a rough scholarly consensus of about 150 BCE (*ibid*: xxv).

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social and cultural environment, and the development of a more systematically analytical approach to the taxonomy of the material world.

I will address the ŚU separately below, focussing in this section on the other later Upaniṣads, primarily the KaU and MuU. Both KaU and MuU develop a more personified idea of the ultimate principle via the use of the term *puruṣa*, and, in fact, all of the later Upaniṣads either mention some form of divinity or contain suggestions that the ultimate principle may be either divine and/or a 'person'. Even the very short MāU speaks of '… the Lord of all' (*sarveśvara*) who is '… the knower of all;… the inner controller; … the womb of all; … the origin and dissolution of beings', though as only one quarter of its quadripartite presentation of *brahman/ ātman*.[845] In the PU, 'deities' as a group - here possibly identified with the sensory faculties of the body - feature in Bhārgava Vairabhi's question to Pippalāda in PU 2: '… how many deities are there who support a creature?... which is the most excellent of them?'[846] Pippalāda's answer, like that of Yājñavalkya in answering Śākalya in BU 3.9, is *prāṇa*, which he identifies with Indra, Rudra[847], and Prajāpati[848] (who has already, in PU 1.4, been identified as the source of all creatures, and, paradoxically, as the source of *prāṇa* itself).[849] PU 5.5 repeats the play on words 'fort-dwelling person' (*puriśaya puruṣa*) of BU 2.5.18, here appearing even more clearly to identify that person as *brahman*, who is beheld by one who 'meditates on that highest person by means of' the syllable OṂ.[850] PU 4.9, on the other hand, makes a distinction between the 'intelligent self' (*vijñānātman*), which it specifically calls '*puruṣa*', and a higher 'imperishable self' (*pare'kṣara ātman*).[851]

Alongside the PU, which is set in the framework of six *brahmins'* visit to Pippalāda as students[852], it is the KaU which, among these later Upaniṣads, is set in the most

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[845] MāU 6: *eṣa sarveśvaraḥ eṣa sarvajñaḥ eṣo'ntāryami eṣa yoniḥ sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām.*
[846] PU 2.1: *… katy eva devāḥ prajāṃ vidhārayante… kaḥ punar eṣāṃ variṣṭha…*
[847] PU 2.9: *indras tvam prāṇa… rudro'si...*
[848] PU 2.7: *prajāpatiś carasi garbhe tvam eva pratijāyase..*
[849] PU 1.4: *… prajākāmo vai prajāpatiḥ sa tapo'tapyata sa tapas taptvā sa mithunam uptādayate rayiṃ ca prāṇam ca ity etau me bahudhā prajāḥ kariṣyata…* Cf. BU 1.5.21 where Prajāpati is the creator of the 'vital functions' (*prāṇāḥ*), and CU 5.1.7 where he is their 'father' (*pitṛ*).
[850] PU 5.5: *yaḥ punar etaṃ trimātreṇa aum ity etenaivākṣareṇa param puruṣam abhidhyāyīta…*
[851] PU 4.9.
[852] Reminiscent of the narrative in CU 5.11 to 24.

developed narrative format. None of the ĪU, ŚU or MāU has any narrative element, and, although the MuU is set in the framework of Śaunaka's question to Aṅgiras: 'What is it… by knowing which a man comes to know this whole world?'[853], the remainder of the MuU is simply presented as Aṅgiras' answers to that question. The frame narrative of the KaU, in which at least some of the text's teachings are placed in the mouth of Yama, god of death[854], suggests both that the compiler of the KaU considered personified deities important (although it is not suggested that Yama takes on the qualities of the ultimate principle), and, as with other narrative episodes put in the mouths of 'unorthodox' teachers, signposts us to teachings which contain innovative elements.

In the frame story of the KaU[855], Uśan, son of Vājaśravas, has given away all his possessions, including some dry and barren cows, as sacrificial offerings, and is asked by his son, Naciketas, three times, 'to whom will you give me?'.[856] Uśan's response, possibly in anger[857], is to give his son to death. Naciketas, accordingly, repairs to the realm of death, where he spends three nights without food before Yama offers him three wishes in recompense for his lack of welcome.[858] The three boons which Naciketas seeks are, first, to return to his father; secondly, to learn about the 'fire-altar that leads to heaven'[859]; and, thirdly, to learn whether, after death, a person exists or not.[860] Yama

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[853] MuU 1.1.3: … *kasmin… vijñāte sarvam idaṃ vijñātam…*
[854] The connection of chapters 3 to 6 to the frame narrative, which arguably ends at KaU 2.18 (Olivelle 1998a:606, citing also the views of Rau), is undoubtedly loose.
[855] Which appears in similar form in TB 3.11.8.1-6.
[856] KaU 1.4: … *kasmai māṃ dāsyasi.*
[857] Though see Helfer 1968:352-3 and Gonda 1977:60 for alternative interpretations of *parīta* in KaU 1.4 and *vītamanyu* in KaU 1.10.
[858] Ganeri (2012:16) notes that the version of this story in the TB, though not that in the KaU, suggests that Naciketas deliberately arrived while Yama was away, in order to 'manufacture' the obligation on Yama to grant Naciketas' wishes.
[859] KaU 1.13: … *agniṃ svargyam adhyeṣi… .*
[860] KaU 1.20: *yeyam prete vicikitsā manuṣye'stīty eke nāyam astīti caike etat vidyām anuśiṣṭas tvayāham…* Arvind Sharma questions this interpretation of Naciketas' third request. He points out that KaU 1.6 and 1.7 both assume that the notion of re-birth is already understood, and that the KaU generally assumes some form of post-mortem survival. Naciketas' second request also assumes the idea of heaven, so that interpreting the third question as relating to the death of an 'ordinary mortal' makes little sense. Sharma argues that *prete* in KaU 1.1.20 should be interpreted as *mukte* (liberated) rather than *mṛte*, so that Naciketas' question becomes one about whether a *liberated* being lives or not. In his opinion, this interpretation (which is supported by Rāmānuja and Madhva) also makes more sense of Yama's teachings about *ātman* later in the text. (Sharma 1984)

grants the three boons, though (as noted in Chapter 1) the third only with great reluctance.

The characters of the KaU are amongst the most colourful in the Upaniṣads. Naciketas' name is thought to derive from *na + ciketas*, 'one who does not know'.[861] He is a *brahmin*, or at least is addressed as such by Yama in KaU 1.9. It is unclear whether his challenge to his father derives from impetuosity or filial loyalty: his first boon, however, may suggest the former and show an appreciation of, and wish to undo, it. A Vājaśravasa appears at ŚB 10.5.5.1 and 10.6.5.9 as a sage who teaches about the fire sacrifices, and Radhakrishnan argues that the names of father and son are intended to distinguish between a 'protagonist of an external ceremonialism' (Uśan) and a 'seeker of spiritual wisdom' (Naciketas).[862] In KaU 1.11, Naciketas is referred to as 'Auddālaka Āruṇi', suggesting that his father may in fact be Uddalaka Āruṇi. However, 'Auddālaka Āruṇi' could also indicate a *descendant*, rather than son, of Uddalaka Āruṇi, indicating a more remote familial connection, and, as Olivelle notes, some translators have taken the reference to Auddālaka Āruṇi in KaU 1.11 as a reference to Naciketas' father, rather than to Naciketas himself.[863] The father is presented as an irascible *brahmin*, usually read as more concerned with the act than the meaning of sacrifice, having offered starving, dry and barren cows. The KaU's presentation of him as a 'parsimonious and hypocritical Brahman'[864] is very different from that of Uddalaka Āruṇi which we have seen in the CU, and I am reluctant to draw any direct relationship between the teachings of the KaU and those ascribed to Uddalaka Āruṇi in the CU.[865]

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[861] Helfer 1968:352; Radhakrishnan 1953:595.
[862] Radhakrishnan 1953:595.
[863] Olivelle 1998a:601.
[864] Helfer 1968:351.
[865] The name 'Gautama', applied to the father in KaU 1.10, and to Naciketas himself in KaU 5.6, is also a name used of Uddalaka Āruṇi in both the BU and the CU, and the (probably later) MBh also presents Naciketas as the son of Uddalaka Āruṇi. MacDonell and Keith (1912(1):89) doubt that Uśan Vājaśravasa is intended to be the same person as Uddalaka Āruṇi, on the reasonable basis that the 'unreal' nature of the Naciketas story 'cannot be regarded as of historical value in proving relationship'. They also believe that Naciketas' 'historical reality is extremely doubtful' (*ibid.*:432). I am not arguing that either of these characters ever lived, and, unless there is some *śākhā* agenda in an Upaniṣad of the YV seeking to present Uddalaka Āruṇi unfavourably, as we have seen to some extent in the BU, I am somewhat reluctant to identify Naciketas' father, even as a literary construct, with the Uddalaka Āruṇi of the CU, despite their relationship in the MBh.

The third character, Yama, has been god of death in Indian thought 'from the most ancient period of vedic mythology until contemporary times'.[866] He appears several times in the ṚV, particularly in the late Book 10, though his character does not really develop until after the Upaniṣads, in the Purāṇas. Black has argued that we should understand him here as a *kṣatriya*, largely because his offering of water to Naciketas is similar to other offerings made by *kṣatriyas* to *brahmins* in the Upaniṣads[867], but, even if that is correct, it is nowhere emphasised in the text, making it difficult to argue that the KaU presents an example of the *kṣatriya* teaching motif. He is clearly, however, a classic example of the 'unorthodox teacher' motif, and, as with other examples of that motif, the KaU's narrative structure may serve to highlight that the teachings which it presents contain an element of novelty.

When Yama finally agrees to grant Naciketas' third wish, he presents a teaching which equates OṂ and *brahman,* the 'supreme'.[868] Knowledge of OṂ leads not only to wish fulfilment, but knowledge of OṂ as 'the support supreme' (*ālambana śreṣṭha*) leads one to '*brahman*'s world'.[869] The dialogue between Naciketas and Yama appears to end shortly after this at KaU 2.18, which encapsulates the answer to Naciketas' third question as follows:

> 'The wise one - he is not born, he does not die; he has not come from anywhere;
> he has not become anyone. He is unborn and eternal, primeval and everlasting.
> And he is not killed, when the body is killed.'[870]

The 'wise one' (*vipaścin*) here clearly has personal qualities and is widely assumed to be a reference to the individual self, and, accordingly, to indicate *ātman*, though the

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[866] Olivelle 1998a:486.
[867] And also because Yama is listed in BU 1.4.11 as one of the 'ruling' gods (Black 2007:48).
[868] KaU 2.16: *etaddhyevakṣaram brahma etaddhyevakṣaram param...* It is worth noting, in the context of my discussion of the word *akṣara* in the BU and the MuU, its use here, almost certainly carrying its meaning of 'syllable', though its use is, as Hume remarks (1921:349n2), 'pregnant with the meaning 'imperishable''. Similarly, *brahma(n)* may 'contain some of its liturgical meaning' (*ibid.*n3).
[869] KaU 2.17: *etad ālambanaṃ śreṣṭham etad ālambanam param etad ālambanaṃ jñātvā brahmaloke mahīyate.*
[870] KaU 2.18: *na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścin nāyaṃ kutaścinna babhūva kaścit ajo nityaḥ śaśvato'yam purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre.* These words appear almost verbatim in BhG 2.20.

term is not used and there are no direct references to the functions of the ultimate principle.[871] However, what follows in KaU 3 to 6 gives a prominent role to *puruṣa*, so the putative equation of *vipaścin* and *ātman* may not in fact be correct.

It is unclear whether the teachings of KaU 3 to 6 are intended to be put into the mouth of Yama. KaU 3.3-9 gives us the well-known metaphor of the chariot, in which the control (*yukta*) of the senses (*indriyāni*) is likened to the control of the chariot horses, with the self (*ātman*) equated with the rider in the chariot, the body (*śarīra*) with the chariot itself, the intellect (*buddhi*) with the charioteer, the mind (*manas*) with the reins, and the sense objects (*viṣayāḥ*) with the paths followed by the chariot. When a person has understanding (*vijñāna*), is mindful (*manaska*) and is always pure (*sadā śuci*), he reaches 'the end of the road, that highest step of Viṣṇu'[872], and moves beyond the cycle of death and rebirth.[873] This 'parable' is immediately followed by a hierarchical ranking in which the sense objects (*artha*) are said to be 'higher than' the senses, the mind higher than the sense objects, the intellect higher than the mind, the 'immense self' (*ātmā mahān*) higher than the intellect, the 'unmanifest' (*avyakta*) higher than the immense self, and the 'person' (*puruṣa*) higher than the unmanifest. Higher than the *puruṣa*, we are told, 'there's nothing at all' (*puruṣān na paraṃ kiñcit*).[874]

Although the specific qualities of the ultimate principle are not directly addressed here, and it is unclear whether we are to understand that there is a single, universal, *puruṣa* or a multiplicity of individual *puruṣas,* the clear inference is that, in this part of the KaU at least, the 'highest' - potentially meaning the ultimate principle - is a 'person'. Although the 'person' is not named, the reference to the 'highest step of Viṣṇu' as the 'end of the road' shortly before could be read as suggesting that Viṣṇu is the 'person' here being referred to. Although of early Vedic origins, and later one of the principal deities of Hinduism, Viṣṇu is not a common deity in the Upaniṣads: aside from this reference, he is only referred to, together with other gods, in verse invocations at BU 6.4.21, TU 1.1.1 and TU 1.12.1, all of which are quotations from the ṚV. However, in the form of his

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[871] Olivelle 1998a:606; Hume 1921:349.
[872] KaU 3.9: … *so'dhvanaḥ paramāpnoti tadviṣṇoḥ paramam padam.* For an explanation of the 'three steps of Viṣṇu' see Olivelle 1998a:607 and Jamison and Brereton 2014:52-53.
[873] KaU 3.8: … *sa tu tatpadamāpnoti yasmātbhūyo na jāyate.*
[874] KaU 3.10-11.

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avatāra Kṛṣṇa, he plays a major role in the BhG, with which the KaU shares a number of verses.[875]

Puruṣa also features as a possible designator of the ultimate principle in KaU 4.12 and KaU 6.8. In KaU 4.12, *puruṣa* is 'the lord of what was and will be' (*īśāno bhūtabhavyasya*); in KaU 6.8 'pervading all and without any marks' (*vyāpako'liṅga*), *puruṣa* is placed at the top of a very similar hierarchy to that of KaU 3.10-11, here encompassing senses (*indriyāni*), mind (*manas*), essence (*sattva*), immense self (*mahānātman*) and the 'unmanifest' (*avyakta*), before being described in KaU 6.9 as beyond the range of sight (*na saṃdṛśe*). In KaU 5.8, the *puruṣa* who 'creating every desire… lies awake within those who sleep' (*ya eṣa supteṣu jāgarti kāmaṃ kāmaṃ puruṣonirmimānaḥ*) is referred to as *brahman*, and I would argue again that this could be read simply as a way of identifying this form of *puruṣa* as the ultimate principle.[876]

However, as well as sometimes being placed 'above' the *mahānātman, puruṣa* in the KaU frequently also appears in conjunction with *ātman* - e.g. in KaU 4.12, where a *puruṣa*, the size of a thumb, is said to reside within the *ātman*.[877] I agree with Olivelle that, where the two terms appear in this sort of juxtaposition, translating *ātman* as 'body' makes most logical sense, and does not as a result detract from the idea of *puruṣa* as the ultimate principle.[878] In KaU 2.20, however, it is *ātman* which is said to be 'finer than the finest, larger than the largest' (*aṇoraṇīyān mahatomahīyān*), and to lie 'hidden in the heart of a living being'.[879] This is the location also said to be the residence of the '*puruṣa* the size of a thumb' in KaU 6.17, suggesting a correspondence between *puruṣa*

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[875] See Cohen 2008:198-200 for a brief discussion of her view of the relationship between the KaU and the BhG.

[876] Olivelle seems to agree with this, translating *hanta ta idaṃ pravakṣyāmi guhyaṃ brahma sanātanam* in KaU 5.6, which introduces the teaching in 5.8, as 'Come, I'll tell you this secret and eternal formulation of truth…' (cf. Radhakrishnan '… I shall explain to you the mystery of *Brahman*, the eternal…'; Hume '… I will declare this to you: the hidden, eternal Brahma…').

[877] KaU 4.12: *aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣo madhya ātmani tiṣṭhati…* See also KaU 6.17, locating this *puruṣa* specifically within the heart (*aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣo'ntarātmā sadā janānāṃ hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ*) and indicating that he should be known as 'immortal and bright' (*taṃ vidyācchukramamṛtam*). The heart has been seen as a locus for the self since at least the ŚB (ŚB 3.8.3.8: *ātmā vai mano hṛdayam*). See also BU 5.6.1, CU 3.14.2-4, and see Olivelle 2006 more generally on the heart in the Upaniṣads.

[878] Cf. the distinction drawn between *ātman* and *śarīra* in KaU 3.3-9.

[879] KaU 2.20: … *ātmāsya jantornihito guhāyām…*

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and an *ātman* which is clearly something other than the physical body. Yet, KaU 6.8 emphasises that it is knowledge of *puruṣa* which leads to immortality.[880] The gaining of immortality through knowledge of *puruṣa* can be contrasted with the goal of 'attaining *brahman*', which can be achieved, according to KaU 6.14, in this world by banishing 'those desires lurking in one's heart'[881], and which is Naciketas' final reward in KaU 6.18, after he 'received this body of knowledge and the entire set of yogic rules taught by Death'[882], through what appears to be a form of divine grace.[883]

As well as *puruṣa*, the KaU employs a range of further terminology with personal characteristics to refer to the ultimate principle. In KaU 2.12 'the primeval one' (*purāṇa*) is to be regarded as [a] 'god' (*deva*); in KaU 4.1 the 'self-existent one' (*svayambhūḥ*), appears to be identified with *ātman*[884]; and the 'one controller, the self within every being' (*ekovaśī sarvabhūtāntarātman*), reminiscent of the *antaryāmin* of BU 3.7, 'makes manifold his single appearance' in KaU 5.12.[885] It seems clear that the KaU's ideas of the ultimate principle are grounded in a view of that principle as having personality, and, rather than reading *puruṣa* as a proto-Sāṃkhya term of art, that it would in fact be easier in many places to read it as signifying a personified deity, possibly Viṣṇu. Although it is far from unambiguous, it is certainly arguable that the KaU is not only putting forward a personified view of the ultimate principle, but also one based in theism.

Like the KaU, the MuU incorporates much of the terminology for the ultimate principle which we have encountered elsewhere. For example, in MuU 2.1.1, we find the

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[880] KaU 6.8: … *yam jñātvā mucyate janturamṛtatvaṃca gacchati.*
[881] KaU 6.14: *yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śritāḥ atha martyo'mṛto bhavtyatra brahma samaśnute.*
[882] KaU 6.18: *mṛtyuproktāṃ naciketo'tha labdhvā vidyāmetām yogavidhiṃ ca kṛtsnam brahmaprāpto virajo'bhudvimṛtyur anyopyevam yo vidadhyātmameva.* The KaU is generally seen as the earliest Sanskrit text unequivocally to use the word '*yoga*' to denote a system of practice of sensory control as a means of obtaining the requisite knowledge of the ultimate principle (see, e.g., Mallinson and Singleton 2017:xv), and Larson (1979:99) is keen to see in the KaU 'a kind of undifferentiated *sāṃkhyayoga*'.
[883] Cf. BhG 18.62.
[884] KaU 4.1: *parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūs tasmāt parāṅ paśyati nāntarātman kaściddhīraḥ pratyagāymānam aikṣad āvṛttacakṣur amṛtatvam icchan.*
[885] KaU 5.12: *eko vaśī sarvabhūtāntarātmā ekam bījam bahudhā yaḥ karoti tamātmastham ye'nupaśyanti dhīrās teṣāṃ sukhaṃ śāsvataṃ netareṣām.*

'imperishable' (*akṣara*) as the source and destination of 'diverse things'.[886] However, rather than an abstract concept like Yājñavalkya's *akṣara* in BU 3.8, MuU 2.1.2 suggests that *akṣara* is encompassed by a 'divine Person' with no visible form (*divyo amūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ*), who is 'both within and without, unborn, without breath or mind;… radiant, and farther than the farthest imperishable'.[887] That 'divine Person' is the source of the human form, of 'the earth that bears everything'[888], and of the gods themselves.[889] The whole universe 'is simply that Person'[890], who is 'the creator, the Lord,… the womb of *brahman*',[891] worshipped by the wise.[892] In MuU 1.2.11, the 'immortal Person' (*amṛta puruṣa*) is identified with the 'immutable *ātman*' (*avyaya ātmā*) as a post-mortem destination for those who live a life of penance and faith in the wilderness.[893] Knowledge of *brahman* here leads to understanding of 'that Person, the true, the imperishable'[894], and, in MuU 3.2.8, the 'knower' reaches 'the heavenly Person, beyond the very highest'.[895] Although MuU 3.2.9 then speaks of this heavenly Person as the 'highest *brahman*', this could again easily be interpreted as simply telling us that the *puruṣa divya* is the ultimate principle.[896]

Much of the MuU, therefore, appears to identify a personified and deified ultimate principle, though nowhere is he named.[897] Yet, as we have seen elsewhere, the relationship between this divine *puruṣa* and concepts such as *ātman* and *brahman* is not entirely clear. In places, the MuU appears to identify the ultimate principle as *brahman*,

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[886] MuU 2.1.1: … *tathākṣarād vividhāḥ… bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpi yanti.*
[887] MuU 2.1.2: *divyo hy amūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ sa bāhyābhyantaro hy ajaḥ aprāṇo hy amanāḥ śubhro akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ.*
[888] MuU 2.1.3: *etasmājjāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca kham vāyur jyotir āpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhāriṇī.*
[889] MuU 2.1.7: *tasmācca devā bahudhā…*
[890] MuU 2.1.10: *puruṣa evedam viśvam…*
[891] MuU 3.1.3: … *kartāram īśam puruṣam brahmayonim …*
[892] MuU 3.2.1: *upāsate puruṣam… dhīrāḥ.*
[893] MuU 1.2.11: *tapaḥ śraddhe ye hy upavasanty araṇye śāntā vidvāṃso bhaikṣācaryām carantaḥ sūrya dvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti yatrāmṛtaḥ sa puruṣo hy avyayātmā.*
[894] MuU 1.2.13: *tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak praśānta cittāya śamānvitāya yenākṣaram puruṣam veda satyam provāca tām tattvato brahmavidyām.*
[895] MuU 3.2.8: … *vidvān… parāt param puruṣam upaiti divyam.*
[896] MuU 3.2.9: *sa yo ha vai tat paramam brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati…*
[897] Johnston (1937:52) has argued that the description of the divine *puruṣa* as 'without breath or mind' (*aprāṇa* and *amanas*) in MuU 2.1.2 denies him a role as an animating principle, even though he is clearly a creator.

as in the bow and arrow metaphor of MuU 2.2.4, where *ātman* is the arrow sent by the bow (OṂ) to the target of *brahman*[898], while MuU 2.2.5, recalling the metaphor of Gārgī's challenge to Yājñavalkya in BU 3.6, suggests that 'the earth, intermediate region, and sky, the mind, together with all breaths' are 'woven' on *ātman*.[899] However, the juxtaposition throughout the MuU of *brahman* with *puruṣa* reflects, as Cohen notes, the similar juxtaposition of the two in the ŚU, save only that the ŚU even more clearly deifies its *puruṣa*, to the point of giving it a name.[900]

Finally in this section, we should consider the short ĪU, which is also sometimes interpreted theistically.[901] It is unique among the Upaniṣads, as the only one found within one of the Vedic Saṃhitās, being the final chapter (chapter 40) of the Vajāsaneyi Saṃhitā of the White YV[902], and shares a number of its eighteen verses with its fellow Upaniṣad of the White YV, the BU.[903] In the opening of the ĪU, the ultimate principle is given the designation '*īś*', usually translated as 'the lord' (though Radhakrishnan unequivocally translates it as 'God'), by which the whole world is said to be 'dwelt in',

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[898] MuU 2.2.4: *praṇavo dhanuḥ śaro hy ātmā brahma tal lakṣyam ucyate…* See Cohen 2008:183-191 on the question of the heterogeneity of the MuU.

[899] MuU 2.2.5: *yasmin dyauḥ pṛthivī cāntarikṣam otam manaḥ saha prāṇaiśca sarvaiḥ tam evaikaṃ jānatha ātmānam…*

[900] Cohen 2008:181. See further below.

[901] See, e.g., Radhakrishnan 1953:567-578.

[902] However, mindful of the 'fuzziness' of boundaries between classes of Vedic composition, this does not necessarily tell us much about its age in relation to the other Upaniṣads. Its metrical form and some of the ideas which it expresses strongly suggest that it should be dated in the middle of the Upaniṣadic period, perhaps roughly contemporary with the KaU and ŚU. Thieme (1965:97) argues that the ĪU is 'heading for' the ideas of the KaU, but implies that it has not reached them and so is likely to be of earlier origin. Roebuck (2003:390), noting also some correspondences with the ŚU, prefers 'the earlier date', though it is not clear whether by this she means roughly contemporaneous with the BU or simply earlier than the ŚU. Cohen (2008:287) puts it as the earliest of the verse Upaniṣads, pre-dating the KeU as well as the KaU and ŚU. See also Olivelle 1998a:405.

[903] The many cross-references between this short text and other texts are noteworthy. ĪU 9 and 3 appear as BU 4.4.10 and 11, where they feature in a section preceded by the words *tadete ślokā bhavanti* - implying at first sight that the BU may be quoting the ĪU, where the verses appear to fit more cohesively into the text. However, it seems more likely either that the BU and ĪU both derive these verses from a common third source, or that the BU does quote the ĪU, but that the verses in question are a late interpolation into the BU. (Cohen 2008:162). The final four verses of the ĪU, 15-18, also appear in the BU (at BU 5.15.1-4). Not structurally cohesive with the remainder of the ĪU, they also seem somewhat isolated in the BU. ĪU 17 also appears as ŚB 14.8.3.1 and ĪU 18 as ṚV1.189.1, and it again seems likely that these verses in this particular combination may come from one or more third sources. ĪU 5 and 6 have direct correlations in the BhG, and ĪU10 appears almost verbatim as the final part of KeU1.3.

'enveloped', 'pervaded', or perhaps even 'perfumed'.[904] As Gonda has explored extensively, *īś*, and cognate terms such as *īśvara* and *īśāna,* feature prominently in Vedic texts, especially in the Upaniṣads, as well as in the BhG, often with connotations of temporal power or 'lordship'.[905] However, although the use of *īś* gives us a clearly personified view of the ultimate principle, there is little in the ĪU, aside possibly from the prayers in ĪU 15-18 (which are not consistent in style with the remainder of the text) to suggest that *īś* should be treated as a deity, despite Radhakrishnan's strong assertion that it is a reference to 'the cosmic Lord'.[906] Surprisingly too, despite the apparently clear identification of a personal ultimate principle in ĪU 1, the term *īś* does not feature again in the ĪU.

In ĪU 4, the ultimate principle is referred to more neutrally as 'the one' (*tad ekam*), a usage noted already in ṚV 10.129.2.[907] The ĪU then invokes some of the Upaniṣads' most intriguing use of paradox to emphasise the ultimate indescribability of '*tad ekam*', which is said to be 'not moving' yet 'swifter than the mind', 'standing', yet outpacing 'others who run', 'far away' yet 'near at hand', and 'within this whole world' yet 'also

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[904] ĪU 1: *īśāvāsyam idaṃ sarvam…*

[905] Gonda 1965a *passim.* This relationship between the socio-political and religious worlds in the Vedic period is the principal theme of Proferes 2007: as he sums up his arguments (2007:152) '… it is reasonable to conclude that certain themes characteristic of the speculative mysticism of the early Upaniṣads were developed directly from motifs central to the ideal of kingship in the earlier Vedic period.'

[906] Radhakrishnan 1953:567. See also Deussen 1897[1980]:547. ĪU 1 contains a linguistic curiosity in the use of the future passive participle form '*āvasyam*' - which, taken literally, means that the whole world *is to be*, or perhaps *should be*, pervaded by *īśa*, suggesting a rather less dogmatic slant than a statement of present, or even eternal, pervasion. Translators have differed in their approach to this, some interpreting it as if in the present tense (e.g. Radhakrishnan's '… all this… is enveloped by God'), some retaining the future sense (e.g. Olivelle's 'This whole world is to be dwelt in by the Lord'), and others looking for a more subtle gloss (e.g. Hume's 'By the Lord enveloped must this all be.'). Those, such as Olivelle and Roebuck, who maintain the future sense do not appear to attribute any great significance to it, even though one might have expected the text to make a more assertive statement of existing pervasion, especially if one accepts a relatively late date for the ĪU and/or a theistic understanding of *īśa*. While the use of the future tense may simply serve a metrical purpose, it may also carry a hint of uncertainty or an element of speculation. See also Roebuck's observations at 2003:390 and her 'rather desperate compromise' of 'must be pervaded'.

[907] See Chapter 2.

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outside this whole world'.[908] As Brereton sums up this use of paradox, which he describes as a 'central strategy' of the ĪU[909]:

> 'In some way, the One is beyond time and space, and yet is also within the world as the source of everything. Timelessness and time, perfection and movement - these only appear to be opposites, for in actuality, the One is all of them.'[910]

This description of the One is much more redolent of an abstract form of ultimate principle than of a personified deity. Its quality of all-pervasiveness might suggest an equation with *brahman* as it is presented in other Upaniṣads[911], though Thieme is equally assertive[912] that it equates to what van Buitenen refers to as the 'large' or 'macrocosmic' *ātman*'[913], which is nevertheless described in BU 2.5.15 in personal terms as 'the lord [*adhipati*] and king of all beings'.[914] Thieme's assertion is supported by ĪU 6, which asserts that 'when a man sees all beings within his very self (*ātman*), and his self within all beings, it will not seek to hide from him'[915], the reasonable and logical assumption being that 'it' must refer here to the *ātman* seen within all beings. *Brahman*, on the other hand, is not mentioned at all in the ĪU.

The prayers of ĪU 15-18, particularly the invocation of Pūṣan in ĪU15 to uncover the 'face of truth' (*satyasya… mukham… apāvṛṇu*) bring us back into the realm of theism.[916] However, there is no real suggestion that the Pūṣan of ĪU 15-18 is the *īś* of ĪU 1, nor that Pūṣan, a relatively minor Vedic deity, is to be considered as any form of ultimate principle (he is referred to in ĪU 16 as 'son of Prajāpati' (*prājāpatya vyūha*)).

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[908] ĪU 4: *anejadekam manaso javīyo nainaddeva āpnuvanpūrvamarṣat taddhāvato'nyānatyeti tiṣṭhat tasminnapo mātariśvā dadhāti*; ĪU 5: *tadejati tannaijati taddare tadvadantike tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsya bāhyataḥ*.
[909] Brereton 1990:130.
[910] Brereton 1990:131.
[911] Cf., e.g., BU 1.4.10: 'In the beginning this world was only *brahman*.' (*brahma vā idam agra āsīt…*). In relation to the ĪU, Cohen (2008:160) states unequivocally that 'The term *īś*, in this text refers to *brahman*…', though without providing any evidence to support her statement, and her discussion of *brahman* in the text proceeds on this questionable basis.
[912] Thieme 1965:89.
[913] Van Buitenen 1964.
[914] BU 2.5.15: *sa vā ayam ātmā sarveṣām bhūtānām adhipatiḥ sarveṣām bhūtānām rājā…*
[915] ĪU 6: *yastu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmanyevānupaśyati sarvabhūteṣu cātmānaṃ tato na vijugupsate.* Cf. BhG 6.30.
[916] This may also be a reference to the *pravargya* ritual, prayers for use in which are contained in the chapters of the Vajāsaneyi Saṃhitā immediately preceding the ĪU.

Accordingly, even though the use of the word *īś* clearly suggests a personified form of ultimate principle, and lends itself easily to interpretation as a personified deity, I agree with Thieme that the remainder of the text, and the text's close relationship with the BU, together suggest that the *īś* which dwells in the whole world is in fact better thought of, as in BU 2.5.15, as the 'macrocosmic' *ātman*.

5.4 'Thinking Class Theism'[917] - God in the ŚU

Having seen that all of the other later Upaniṣads to some degree personify and/or deify the ultimate principle, I move now to the most overtly theistic of them, the ŚU. Deussen considered the ŚU 'brimful of contradictions'[918], and Belvalkar and Ranade saw it as containing '… a conglomeration of various original and borrowed ideas'.[919] More recent commentators, such as Olivelle and Cohen, describe it as '… somewhat chaotic… because it seeks to integrate numerous and divergent cosmologies and theologies into its religious doctrine'[920] and, more succinctly, '… a highly complex text, full of contradictions'.[921] As Cohen rightly notes, there has historically been a tendency to emphasise the heterogeneity of the ŚU, then to attempt to read it homogeneously.[922] It contains many quotations from earlier Vedic texts, no doubt in an effort to give authority to its teachings, and also perhaps, as Hauschild suggests, to emphasise the personal nature of the highest God which it describes. However, those quotations are frequently given original interpretations.[923] The name 'Śvetāśvatara', meaning 'he with the white mule', appears to identify the text's author, or at least an individual who was

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[917] I have borrowed this title from Morton Smith's 1975 article on the ŚU.
[918] Deussen [1899] 1906:178.
[919] Belvalkar and Ranade 1927(2):119.
[920] Olivelle 1998a:413.
[921] Cohen 1998:150. Oberlies (1988:59), however, argues that it is 'by and large, a uniform text'.
[922] Cohen 1998:151.
[923] Hauschild 1927:86. See also Olivelle 1998a:413 and Salomon 1986:170-1. Gonda (1970:19) argues that 'It is the author's main endeavour to establish the existence of this Highest Being' through selective re-interpretation of earlier Vedic passages. Oberlies, who considers the BhG to have pre-dated the ŚU, has identified over 25% of the ŚU as quotations from earlier texts (1988:35).

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the source of its teachings ('through the grace of God'[924]), but nothing further is known about him, and the ŚU is not set in a narrative framework.[925]

Perhaps because of its complexity and/or the apparent radicalism of its main premise about the ultimate principle, the ŚU has been one of the more closely studied of the later Upaniṣads. It has been analysed in some detail in Hauschild 1927, Johnston 1930, Kunst 1968, Smith 1975, Salomon 1986, Cohen 1998, and Cohen 2008, as well as by Oberlies in a series of works from 1988 onwards, leading to a so-called 'critical edition' in instalments from 1995 to 1998.[926] Its perceived radicalism lies in its clear putting forward of a personified deity as the ultimate principle: its promotion of '… an emphatically theistic philosophy'.[927] In the received version of the ŚU, that deity is Rudra/Śiva. While Cohen has argued that the identification of Rudra as the 'one God' of the ŚU is only made in stanzas which appear, linguistically and metrically, to be later interpolations, she readily acknowledges that that does not detract from the fact that the ŚU is 'a theistic text throughout'.[928] As Hauschild emphasises, however, the ŚU's clear and emphatic positing of a personified God as ultimate principle does not prevent the functions of that God sometimes becoming confused with those of a more abstract *brahman*.[929]

The ŚU, at least arguably, opens with a question similar to that beyond which Gārgī was warned by Yājñavalkya in BU 3.6 not to ask, namely 'What is the cause of *brahman*?'.[930] It then puts forward, and immediately rejects, time (*kāla*), inherent nature (*svabhāva*), necessity (*niyati*), chance (*yadṛcchā*), the elements (*bhūtāni*), the source of

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[924] ŚU 6.21: *tapaḥ prabhāvāddevaprasādācca brahma ha śvetāśvataro'tha vidvān…* ŚU 6.23 also contains one of the earliest recorded uses of the word *bhakti* (Gonda 1970:21).

[925] Cohen (2018c:18) notes both Witzel's reference to a Śvetāśvatara *śākhā* in the *Caraṇavyūha*, suggesting that Śvetāśvatara may have been the name of a branch of Vedic transmission rather than of an individual, and Hauer's dismissal of that suggestion as a 'late Indian fiction'.

[926] See Olivelle's comments on Oberlies' sources at 1998a:xv n.2, and his general observations on so-called 'critical editions' of Upaniṣads in 1998b *passim*.

[927] Salomon 1986:165.

[928] Cohen 2008:213. Cohen (1998:174) argues that the original deity of the ŚU was in fact *ātman*.

[929] E.g. in ŚU 1.7. See Hauschild 1927:85.

[930] ŚU 1.1. *kim kāraṇam brahma* has been translated in this way by Olivelle, but, as he and others have noted, is susceptible of other translations. Hume and Radhakrishnan both choose: 'What is the cause? Brahma(n)?', though Hume notes other possibilities, including 'Is Brahma the cause?', 'What sort of cause is Brahma?' 'What is the cause? What is Brahma?'.

birth (or womb) (*yoni*), and the 'person' (*puruṣa*), or any combination thereof, as all being subordinate to *ātman*. It then apparently rejects *ātman* too as being itself subject to pleasure and pain.[931] In ŚU 6.1, the text answers its own question:

> 'Some wise men say it is inherent nature, while others say it is time - all totally deluded. It is rather the greatness of God present in the world by means of which this wheel of *brahman* goes around'.[932]

God is the 'one alone' who 'governs all those causes, from time to self', and who 'rules over both the perishable and the… *ātman*'.[933] Like *brahman,* therefore, *ātman* is specifically denied as the ultimate principle, and, impliedly at least, God is considered imperishable (*akṣara*), a term which we have seen used of the ultimate principle elsewhere in the Upaniṣads and which is specifically used of 'the Benign One' (*śiva*) in ŚU 4.18. In ŚU 6.18, it is God 'who at first created the *brahman* and delivered to him the Vedas; who manifests by his own intelligence' in whom one should seek refuge.[934]

Each of the key functions of the ultimate principle is ascribed to this one God. His creative power is acknowledged as 'the maker of all' (*viśvakarman*) in ŚU 4.17; he is 'the source and origin of the gods' (*devānāṃ prabhavaścodbhavaśca*) in ŚU 3.4, and 'the creator of all' (*viśvakṛt*) in ŚU 6.16, where he is also described as 'his own source of birth' (*ātmayoniḥ*).[935] His sustaining power is emphasised in, e.g., ŚU 3.2, where he 'stands as the protector' of all beings[936]; his animating power is made clear in ŚU 4.10, where the 'great Lord' (*maheśvara*), identified as God in ŚU 4.11, is described as the

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[931] ŚU 1.2: *kālaḥ svabhāvo niyatiryadṛcchā bhūtāni yoniḥ puruṣeti cintyam samyoga eṣam na tvātmabhāvādātmāpyanīśaḥ sukhaduḥkhahetoḥ.* It would make sense here to interpret *ātman* as the physical body, which is clearly subject to pleasure and pain, though doing so gives the physical body an unusually high place in the search for the ultimate principle.

[932] ŚU 6.1: *svabhāvam eke kavayo vadanti kālaṃ tathānye parimuhyamānāḥ devasyaiṣa mahimā tu loke yenedam bhrāmyate brahmacakram.*

[933] ŚU 1.10: *… kṣarātmānāviśate deva ekaḥ….*

[934] ŚU 6.18: *yo brahmāṇaṃ vidadhāti pūrvam yo vai vedāṃśca prahiṇoti tasmai taṃ ha devam ātmabuddhiprakāśam mumukṣur vai śaraṇam aham prapadye.*

[935] See also ŚU 5.14, where *śiva* (translated by Olivelle as the 'Benign One') is said to have produced 'both the creation and its constituent parts' (*kalā sarga karam* - see the note at Radhakrishnan 1953:742). See below for a discussion of whether '*śiva*' in the ŚU should be taken as a proper name.

[936] ŚU 3.2: *eko hi rudro na dvitīyāya tasthur ya imān lokān īśata īśānībhiḥ pratyaṅ janān tiṣṭhati sañcukocānta kale saṃsṛjya viśvā bhuvanāni gopāḥ.*

'illusionist' (*māyi*), who controls the manifest world (referred to here as both *māyā* and *prakṛti*).[937] In addition, his salvific power is made clear in several places, as, for example, in ŚU 6.16, where he is 'the cause of liberation from… bondage to the rebirth cycle' (*saṃsāra mokṣa stithi bandha hetuḥ*). ŚU 3.2, 6.10 and 6.11 all emphasise his uniqueness, as the 'one God' (*eka devaḥ*) who, in ŚU 4.18, existed before both the existent (*sat*) and the non-existent (*asat*).[938] He therefore meets the essential qualities of the ultimate principle which I have set out in Chapter 2. That this was important for the compilers of the ŚU appears from the text's opening stanza, which questions creation, sustenance and governance: 'By what do we live? On what are we established? Governed by whom… do we live in pleasure and in pain…?'.[939] It is by the grace of this one God that Śvetāśvatara came to know *brahman*.[940]

The God of the ŚU is clearly intended to be seen as a personified deity: 'He was born the first, yet he remains within the womb. He it is, who was born; he, who will be born. His face everywhere, he stands turning west towards men.'[941] In ŚU 3.8 to 3.15, he is described as 'that immense Person, having the colour of the sun and beyond darkness'[942], by whom 'This whole world is filled'[943], 'who resides deep in the heart of all beings, and who pervades everything'[944], yet paradoxically is 'the size of a thumb' (*anguṣṭhamātra*), a description also used of *puruṣa* in the KaU.[945] And, although *puruṣa* is denied as the ultimate principle in ŚU 1.2, the word *puruṣa* goes on to feature prominently in the ŚU's many descriptions of God. This re-inforces the personified

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[937] ŚU 4.10: *māyāṃ tu prakṛtiṃ viddhimāyinaṃ tu maheśvaram tasyāvayavabhūtaistu vyāptaṃ sarvamidaṃ jagat.*

[938] ŚU 4.18: *yadā'tamas tan na diva na rātrir na san na cāsacchiva eva kevalaḥ.*

[939] ŚU 1.1: … *jīvāma kena kva ca sampratiṣṭhaḥ adhiṣṭitāḥ kena sukhetareṣu vartāmahe… vyavasthām.*

[940] Here again perhaps meaning the 'formulation' of the ultimate principle. Cf. KaU 2.23, where the 'immense, all pervading self' (*mahāntaṃ vibhumātmānam*) 'cannot be grasped by teachings or by intelligence, or even by great learning': only the person chosen by the self 'as his own' can grasp him (*nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śrutena yamevaiṣa vṛnute tena labhyas tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛnute tanūṃ svām*), suggesting here too that true knowledge of the self is the result of some form of grace.

[941] ŚU 2.16: *eṣa ha devaḥ pradiśo'nu sarvāḥ pūrvo ha jātaḥ sa u garbhe antaḥ sa eva jātaḥ sa janiṣyamāṇaḥ pratyaṅ janāṃstiṣṭhati sarvatomukhaḥ.*

[942] ŚU 3.8: … *etam puruṣam mahāntam ādityavarṇam tamasaḥ parastāt…*

[943] ŚU 3.9: … *tene'dam pūrṇaṃ puruṣena sarvam.*

[944] ŚU 3.11: … *sarvabhūtaguhāśayaḥ sarvavyāpī…*

[945] ŚU 3.13: … *janānāṃ hṛdaye sanniviṣṭaḥ.* Cf. KaU 6.17. See also PU 3.6.

nature of the ŚU's God, as well as lending force to the suggestion that the *puruṣa* of the probably broadly contemporaneous KaU and MuU[946] might indeed have been intended to refer to a personified deity.

In ŚU 3.2 and 3.4, the one God is identified as Rudra, the 'great seer' (*maharṣi*), who is 'source and origin of the gods and the ruler over them all'.[947] Rudra was equated with *puruṣa*, possibly the 'cosmic' *puruṣa* of ṚV 10.90, in Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 10.16.1 and 10.17.1[948], but is generally a 'dangerous and marginal figure in earlier Vedic texts'.[949] In the ŚU, however, he is 'higher than *brahman*' and 'the immense one hidden in all beings… who alone encompasses the whole universe'. It is knowledge of him as the Lord which leads to immortality.[950] The ŚU also uses the word *śiva* in a number of places (e.g. 3.11, 4.14, 4.16, 4.18, 5.14), which, given the later associations between Śiva and Rudra, has led to debate about whether this should be taken as a proper name or simply as descriptive (meaning the 'kindly' (Hume), 'auspicious' (Radhakrishnan), or 'benign' (Olivelle) one). Olivelle's view is that 'the term *śiva* at this time is probably just an epithet rather than another name for Rudra'[951]; Salomon, on the other hand, argues persuasively that it is justified to interpret these references as a proper name, on the basis both of the general theistic tone of the ŚU and the text's use of other terms which also later became specific names of the deity Śiva, such as *hara* and *īśāna*. He notes in particular the use of the word *śiva* in the phrase '*śiva eva kevalaḥ*' in ŚU 4.18, where he suggests that the absence of any accompanying noun makes an adjectival interpretation less likely. [952]

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[946] See note 95 in relation to controversies over the dating of the ŚU.
[947] ŚU 3.2: *eko hi rudro…*; ŚU 3.4: *yo devānāṃ prabhavaś codbhavaś ca viśvādhipo rudro maharṣiḥ….*
[948] Gonda 1970:20.
[949] Cohen 2008:224.
[950] ŚU 3.7: *tataḥ param brahmaparam bṛhantam yathānikāyaṃ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍham viśvasyaikam pariveṣṭitāramīśam taṃ jñātvāmṛtā bhavanti*. Radhakrishnan and Hume both translate the opening words of this stanza 'Higher than this is *brahma[n]*, the supreme…', but that seems inconsistent with the notion of God as the 'one alone' who governs all causes in ŚU 1.3 and of 'the greatness of God' as the means by which the 'wheel of *brahman*' turns in ŚU 6.1.
[951] Olivelle 1998a:621, a view supported by Hume, Deussen and Radhakrishnan.
[952] Salomon 1986:174, a view supported (with reservations) by Hauschild. Whether *hara* in the ŚU should be interpreted as a name of Rudra/Śiva has also been a matter of debate. Rau and Oberlies both prefer to read it as a neuter noun - *haras* - which Rau translates as '*Glut*' ('glow'). See Cohen 1998:172 and 2008:245 and Olivelle 1998a:617.

Both Deussen and Gonda have questioned whether the rise of Rudra in the ŚU, and the ŚU's theism generally, can be traced to what Deussen calls 'ancient Vedic polytheism'.[953] Their doubts rest largely on the ground that the most commonly used word for a deity in early Vedic texts was *deva*, whereas, in later texts such as the ŚU, *deva* was frequently supplanted by *īśvara*, or other nominal derivatives of the root √*īś*.[954] Gonda, however, has clearly demonstrated that, not only is the God of the ŚU referred to as '*deva ekaḥ*' in ŚU 1.10, as both '*deva*' and '*īśāna*' in ŚU 4.11, and as '*tam īśvarāṇām paramam maheśvaram tam devatānām paramaṃ ca daivatam*' in ŚU 6.7, but that derivatives of √*īś*, notably *īṣāna*, also appear frequently in the early Vedic texts and are applied there to individual deities, including Rudra, as well as to Indra and Prajāpati. *Deva* is also used to refer to 'the primeval one' (*purāṇa*) in KaU 2.12. Both *deva* and the derivatives of √*īś* accordingly appear throughout the timespan of Vedic texts.[955]

Gonda prefers, therefore, to see the theistic approach to the ultimate principle of the ŚU as deriving from a trend towards discovering the 'principle immanent' in all the 'departmental deities' coming into conjunction with the rise of the idea of the immanent *brahman* as the ultimate principle.[956] In his view, the ŚU represents 'an important attempt at harmonizing in a great synthesis the main themes and theories connected with the divine essence underlying the phenomenal world - Puruṣa, Brahman, Prajāpati etc.' through the identification of a 'personal god who is the creator, preserver and destroyer of all phenomenal existence'.[957] I believe that this argument is broadly correct: that, as I have shown in this Chapter, the Upaniṣads never lost a hint of 'old Vedic' theism and maintained the idea of a personified form of ultimate principle, and that the ŚU is the Upaniṣadic high point, even if not wholly successful, of the attempt to synthesise that theistic worldview with the more abstract forms of the ultimate principle which had developed in the early Upaniṣads.[958]

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[953] Deussen [1899] 1906:173.
[954] As noted in Chapter 4 and above, the word *devatā* is used as a synonym for *sat* in CU 6. See also the discussion above with regard to the *īś* of the ĪU.
[955] See Gonda 1965a:140ff. for a detailed discussion of this.
[956] Gonda 1965a:137.
[957] Gonda 1970:20.
[958] Though Pflueger's statement (2010:764) that, in the ŚU, 'personal and abstract conceptions of divinity coalesce into… a single, supreme, gracious, personal, god' rather overplays the

Although the precise identity of the '*deva ekaḥ*' of the ŚU is of less relevance to my study - it is the fact of there being 'one God', with personality, as an ultimate principle which is the real source of interest - it is worth exploring briefly why this theistic ultimate principle should be identified as Rudra. As we have seen, Rudra is a '…marginal figure in earlier Vedic texts'[959], a malevolent and destructive deity with only five hymns of the ṚV specifically dedicated to him[960], though described in ṚV 2.33.9 as 'lord of the universe' (*īśānādasya bhuvanasya*).[961] He features a little more prominently in the early YV literature, especially in the *pravargya* section of the *agnicayana* ritual in which the sacrifice is implicitly identified with Rudra, and in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, where he is identified with the universe (3.11) and with *puruṣa* (6.11).[962] In ŚB 12.7.3.20, he is lord of animals, dwelling in the 'dangerous' north, isolated and aloof.[963] He makes two marginal appearances in the BU and one in the PU[964], in each case together with other deities and in none with the attributes of the ultimate principle. Gonda describes him as '… essentially… the divine representative of the power of the uncultivated and unconquered, dangerous, unreliable, unpredictable, hence much to be feared', and sees him as the antagonist of the creative Prajāpati.[965]

The reasons for his appearance as the 'one God' of the ŚU are somewhat mysterious. Cohen points out that he in fact appears only thirteen times, often in quotations from earlier texts or in corrupt metre,[966] and her suggestion that the identification of Rudra as the 'one God' of the ŚU is possibly a later interpretation based on interpolated stanzas and a later interpretation of words such as '*śiva*', '*hara*' and '*maheśvara*' is persuasive.[967] However, she also argues, as I do, that 'the presence of Rudra in the ŚU… is not a revolutionary new idea introduced in this Upaniṣad, but rather a development of

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success of this attempted synthesis. Smith (1975:318) speaks of a 'demand for some satisfactory *emotional* theism' in the final centuries BCE.

[959] Cohen 2008:224.

[960] ṚV 1.43, 1.114, 2.33 and 7.46 to him alone and ṚV 6.74 to 'Soma-Rudra'.

[961] He is given the description '*śiva*' in ṚV 10.29.9.

[962] Cohen 2008:223-5.

[963] Gonda 1970:4.

[964] BU 1.4.11 and 2.2.2; PU 2.9.

[965] Gonda 1986:73.

[966] Cohen 2008:225.

[967] Cohen 1998:166, 175; 2008:244. Smith (1975:318) argues that the reason for the appearance of Rudra/Śiva rather than any other deity may have been geographical.

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pre-existing ideas prevalent in the milieu in which the ŚU was composed'.[968] Salomon goes further, believing that the ŚU, at least in the form in which we now have it, sought to legitimate an originally non-Vedic cult of Śiva as a popular deity within Vedic tradition.[969] Oberlies, on the other hand, sees Rudra as an amalgamation of the 'old' Vedic Rudra and Agni, on the basis that most of the Vedic quotations in the ŚU derive from the *agnicayana* ritual.[970] One, perhaps rather speculative, possibility is that Rudra became the supreme deity of the ŚU as a Śaivite counter-weight to the Vaiṣṇavite BhG.

One of Rudra's best-known appearances in the ṚV, albeit not in a hymn dedicated to him, is in ṚV 10.136, where he drinks 'poison' with the enigmatic long-haired proto-ascetic, the *keśin*.[971] It is perhaps significant, given the later associations of Śiva with the world of *yoga*[972], that Rudra makes his primary Upaniṣadic appearance in an Upaniṣad which specifically promotes the practice of *yoga*[973], so it is possible, although conjectural, that Rudra became the 'one God' of the ŚU because of his connection with the world of asceticism. ŚU 2.1 to 2.5, quoting the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, laud Savitṛ, rather than Rudra, but Hauschild has pointed out that all of the relevant stanzas begin with forms of the verbal root √*yuj* which, he argues, suggests that the idea of *yoga* is more important than the identity of Savitṛ, who makes only one other appearance in the ŚU.[974]

For all its theism, the ŚU has plenty to say about *brahman* and *ātman*, though its ideas about *brahman* and *ātman* sometimes appear contradictory to its overarching theistic viewpoint. This again clearly suggests that we are still in a transitional phase of Upaniṣadic enquiry, in which these relationships have not been fully worked out, and supports my argument that the theism of the ŚU represents a development of earlier speculations rather than radical new dogma. In the ŚU, *brahman* is not one undivided and indivisible entity, but is a triad, 'oneself, the foundation and the imperishable'

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[968] Cohen 2008:231.
[969] Salomon 1986:170-1. Salomon uses the apparent correlations between ŚU 4.18 and ṚV 10.129 (see Chapter 2) to support this theory.
[970] Oberlies 1988:59. Parpola 2016 analyses the possible etymologies of his name.
[971] ṚV 10.136.7: *keśī́ viṣásya pā́treṇa yád rudréṇā́pibat sahá.* ' *Viṣa*', literally 'poison', here is often interpreted as referring to some form of hallucinogenic drug: see, e.g., Doniger O'Flaherty 1981:138; Jamison and Brereton (2014:1621) argue that it might be a reference to *soma*.
[972] As witnessed by many of the textual extracts in Mallinson and Singleton 2017.
[973] ŚU 2.8-15.
[974] Hauschild 1927:84.

(*svapratiṣṭhākṣara*)[975], which Olivelle, following Rau, identifies as 'the *ātman*, *prakṛti* and God'[976], Hume as 'the world, the individual soul and the cosmic soul'[977], and Radhakrishnan as 'the individual soul, the world and the cosmic lord'.[978] Knowledge of the distinction between these three components of *brahman* is what leads to freedom from rebirth[979], though it is unclear how the God who, in ŚU 6.1, controls *brahman* can also be only one part of *brahman*. *Ātman* in the ŚU is also complex. It is to be perceived as 'distinct from the impeller' (*preritṛ*)[980], i.e. God, but is also used in compound forms as another name for God - as the 'immense Self' (*māhātman*) it is 'the God, the maker of all' (*devo viśvakarman*) in ŚU 4.17 and the creative and destructive sovereign of the whole world in ŚU 5.3[981], and, as the 'inner self of all beings' (*sarvabhūtāntarātman*), is 'The one God… pervading the universe… the overseer of the work… the witness, the spectator, alone, devoid of qualities' in ŚU 6.11.[982]

Despite the triadic nature of *brahman*, the ŚU repeatedly emphasises that its god, whether or not originally Rudra/Śiva, is 'one' (*eka*). He is the sole creator, sustainer and controller of the universe, as well as the source of salvation, and meets both Gonda's defining criterion of uniqueness and my working definition of the ultimate principle. However, this does not mean that the ŚU is as out on a limb as sometimes presented, particularly by those, such as Deussen, who try to find a single, consistent philosophy in the Upaniṣads as a whole. Rather, as Gonda has suggested, in attempting to identify the single entity, power, or principle which creates, animates, supports and sustains all of existence, the ŚU draws both on the 'old Vedic' theistic ideas and on the notion of a personified ultimate principle. Although often somewhat in the background, both of these ideas have remained present throughout Upaniṣadic thought: the ŚU develops them in the more overtly theistic environment of its age, while at the same time

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[975] ŚU 1.7.
[976] Olivelle 1998a:616.
[977] Hume 1921:395.
[978] Radhakrishnan 1953:714.
[979] ŚU 1.7: *… atrāntaram brahmavido'viditvā līnā brahmaṇi tatparā yonimuktāḥ.*
[980] ŚU 1.6.
[981] Cohen (2008:220) has rightly noted the similarities in basic idea between the notion of *ātman* as creator of the world in ŚU 5.3 and the world-creating *ātman* of BU 1.4.1 and AU 1.1.
[982] ŚU 6.11: *eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ sarvavyāpī sarvabhūtāntarātmā karmādhyakṣaḥ sarvabhūtādhivāsaḥ sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca.*

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demonstrating a clear awareness of the more abstract ideas of the ultimate principle, such as *ātman* and *brahman*, which are the hallmark of the Upaniṣadic quest more broadly. As commentators such as Olivelle and Cohen have noted[983], this synthesis is less than entirely successful, and, despite its clear overarching theism, the ŚU retains enough ambiguity to suggest that it is still part of the Upaniṣadic *search* for the ultimate principle.

5.5   The Upaniṣads and Sāṃkhya

Finally in this Chapter, I turn back briefly to the relationship between the later Upaniṣads and Sāṃkhya. The later Upaniṣads, especially the KaU and ŚU, frame their exploration of the ultimate principle in a quasi-scientific cosmology, more broadly in line with that of the classical form of Sāṃkhya philosophy, as reflected in Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Sāṃkhyakārikā, which dates from perhaps 300 to 500 CE[984], than that which generally prevailed in the early Upaniṣads. For example, much of the terminology used in the KaU's analysis of reality is highly redolent of classical Sāṃkhya: the hierarchical presentation of elements in KaU 3.10-11 shows a degree of correspondence with the *tattvas* of classical Sāṃkhya, with *puruṣa* appearing as the ultimate principle above the *ātmā mahān*.[985] This has led some to argue that the later Upaniṣads in fact reflect a view of the world close to that of Sāṃkhya; indeed, Johnston goes so far as to argue that the categories of Sāṃkhya are assumed in KaU 3-6.[986] Others are, in my view rightly, more circumspect: Cohen simply notes the emergence in the KaU of 'some individual proto-Sāṃkhya terms and concepts',[987] and Olivelle that 'The ideas and terminology of this

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[983] See notes 920 and 921 above.
[984] Larson 1979:252.
[985] Although *ātman* is not a classical Sāṃkhya term of art, Larson (1979:97-98) has argued that the *ātmā mahān* here potentially incorporates the Sāṃkhya notion of *ahaṃkāra*, a term which has been conspicuous by its absence in the early Upaniṣads, and he sees KaU 3.10-11 as containing 'clear reference to Sāṃkhya terminology'.
[986] Johnston 1937:3.
[987] Cohen 2008:194.

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section of the KaU bear some resemblance to Sāṃkhya…'[988], without drawing any
further conclusions.[989]

The term Sāṃkhya itself is frequently translated as 'enumeration'. Classical Sāṃkhya is
renowned, amongst other things, for its analysis of the material world as a
developmental progression from undifferentiated materiality, *mūlaprakṛti*, through a
series of 'evolutes', or *tattvas*, constantly modified and directed by the three *guṇas*,
sattva (light, goodness), *rajas* (motion, passion), and *tamas* (heaviness, darkness).
Classical Sāṃkhya also insists on the absolute separation of the material realm of *prakṛti*
from the inactive individual *puruṣa*, or pure consciousness, and recognises no single
ultimate principle: while, at the material level, it recognises *mūlaprakṛti* as an uncreated,
primordial materiality, the multiplicity of individual 'selves', *puruṣāḥ*, are 'neither
created nor creative'[990], and are ontologically distinct from *prakṛti*, whether in its
manifest (*vyakta*) or unmanifest (*avyakta*) form. *Puruṣa*

> '… does or adds nothing to the *mūlaprakṛti* and its manifestations. It is simply
> present in the world and sees or witnesses the modifications of the world… it is
> not determined by the world. It is isolated or completely free…'.[991]

Neither *mūlaprakṛti* nor *puruṣa* satisfies our criteria for being an 'ultimate principle'.
Mūlaprakṛti fails simply because of the recognition of *puruṣa* as a distinct ontological
principle, while *puruṣa* has no creative or sustaining function, and nor is it unique: at
least by the time of classical Sāṃkhya, the idea that there exists a plurality of *puruṣas*,
rather than any single cosmic consciousness or spiritual principle, is well established.

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[988] Olivelle 1998a:607.
[989] Given the relationship with Sāṃkhya which we see later in the Yoga Sūtra, dated by Maas
(2013:61) to between 300 and 500 CE, it is perhaps also not a coincidence that it is in the KaU
and ŚU that we see early expositions of a form of mental and sensory control, specifically called
yoga, put forward as a way either of obtaining knowledge of the ultimate principle or simply of
attaining *brahman*. BhG 8.8 also refers to *paramaṃ puruṣaṃ divyam* ('the highest *puruṣa*, the
divine') as being attainable through *yoga*. Cohen (2008:51) notes that '… it seems that specific
Sāṃkhya terms, a Yoga-type theism, and meditation techniques associated with the later
developed Yoga system are attested in the same texts, and appear to have arisen in unison', in
order to support her attempt to argue for a specifically Black YV origin for Sāṃkhya and *yoga*.
[990] Sāṃkhyakārikā 3: *na prakṛtirna vikṛtiḥ puruṣaḥ.*
[991] Larson 1969:169.

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We cannot resort to God, for classical Sāṃkhya acknowledges no single personified god.[992] As a result, finding a worldview akin to classical Sāṃkhya in the later Upaniṣads would represent a massive shift in orientation away from the search for a single ultimate principle, which I argue is a consistent theme throughout the Upaniṣads as a whole.

However, Sāṃkhya philosophy is accepted to be significantly older than the classical form expounded in the Sāṃkhyakārikā, and numerous efforts have been made by scholars to analyse its possible roots.[993] While these scholars inevitably disagree in certain areas, there is broad agreement among most of them (a) that a number of ideas and motifs which later assumed importance in Sāṃkhya can be found in Vedic texts, including the early Upaniṣads[994]; (b) that these ideas appear to become more systematised in the later Upaniṣads; but (c) that there is, in the later Upaniṣads, still no authoritative presentation of a single Sāṃkhya system.[995] These conclusions are borne out by an analysis of the way in which the Upaniṣads develop their view of the world and of the ultimate principle which underpins that world.

We have seen already that several of the early Upaniṣadic speculations around the ultimate principle took the form of a list, sometimes hierarchical, of elements. These elements often appear similar to the *tattvas* of classical Sāṃkhya, drawn from both the natural world and the cosmic realm, but were one by one rejected as having the necessary ultimate qualities.[996] Examples include the ideas put forward by Bālāki in BU 2.1 and the hierarchy presented by Sanatkumāra to Nārada in CU 7.1-15. Even earlier,

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[992] Though see further below.

[993] Larson (1969:15-70) summarises several of these attempts - those of Garbe, Dahlmann, Oltramare, Oldenberg, Keith, Edgerton, Dasgupta, Johnston, Frauwallner, van Buitenen, Hauer, Eliade, Chattopadhyaya and Bhattacharya. Johnston (1937:2) notes that Chinese sources suggest that there may have been as many as eighteen different schools of early Sāṃkhya.

[994] Johnston 1937 in particular analyses many of these ideas; see also van Buitenen 1957a and 1957b. Although Johnston says (1937:v) that he is not forming a theory and attempting to read it into the texts, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he is not entirely successful in this aim.

[995] Johnston (1930:855) takes a somewhat different view, arguing for a pre-existing Sāṃkhya scheme which was partially adopted and modified in the Upaniṣads, rather than seeing the Upaniṣads as putting forward unsystematised proto-Sāṃkhya ideas, though he acknowledges that there is no evidence to support this theory. See also Hume 1921:9. Conversely, Hiriyanna (1993:267) is very cautious about finding the roots of Sāṃkhya in the Upaniṣads.

[996] In seeking to find an early Sāṃkhya system in the Upaniṣads, Johnston (1937:20) points out that, of the evolutes of *prakṛti* in classical Sāṃkhya, 17 appear in the later part of the BU.

ŚB 10.1.3.4 had put forward a notion of the individual as made up of ten parts, five mortal and five immortal. In the later Upaniṣads, ŚU 1.4-5 presents a view of the world:

'as a wheel that is one-rimmed and threefold, with sixteen tips, fifty spokes, twenty counter-spokes, and six sets of eight, whose single rope is of many forms; that divides itself into three different paths… [;]

as a river whose waters are the five sense organs; whose fierce crocodiles are the five sources of birth; whose waves are the five breaths; whose primal source is the five types of perception; which has five whirlpools; whose rapid current is the five types of sorrow; which divides itself in fifty ways; and which has five sections'[997]

within which wheel ('of *brahman*') 'a goose keeps moving around. When he perceives himself (*ātman*) as distinct from the impeller, delighted by that knowledge he goes from there to immortality.'[998] The 'impeller' of the 'wheel of *brahman*', we are told in ŚU 6.1, is not an individual *puruṣa*, but, rather, God.[999] This presentation of the world, though in content substantially different from the classical Sāṃkhya presentation of the *tattvas* and of an inactive *puruṣa*, as opposed to an active ('impeller') God, has been interpreted as a form of proto-Sāṃkhya, particularly in a detailed analysis in Johnston 1930.

We have also seen in Chapter 4 a Sāṃkhya-like evolutionary approach to the manifestation of the universe in CU 6.2-4. Here, *sat* emits heat, which emits water, which emits food, and CU 6.4 contains a possible reference to an idea similar to that of the *guṇas*, in the red, white and black appearances of fire, the sun, the moon and lightning, though both Johnston and van Buitenen have rightly counselled caution in

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[997] ŚU 1.4: *tamekanemiṃ tṛvṛtaṃ ṣoḍaśāntaṃ śatārdhāraṃ viṃśatipratyarābhiḥ aṣṭakaiḥ ṣaḍbhiḥviśvarupaikapāśaṃ trimārgabhedaṃ dvinimittaikamoham*. ŚU 1.5: *pañcasroto'mbuṃ pañcayonyugravakrāṃ pañcaprāṇormiṃ pañcabuddhyādimūlāṃ pañcāravartāṃ pañcaduḥkhaughavegāṃ pañcaṣadbhedāṃ pañcaparvāmadhīmaḥ*.

[998] ŚU 1.6: *sarvājīve sarvasaṃsthe bṛhante asminhaṃso bhrāmyate brahmacakre pṛthagātmānam preritāraṃ ca matvā juṣṭastatastenāmṛtatvameti*. Olivelle (1998a:616) suggest that the 'goose' here 'is a symbol of the individual soul' moving through the cycles of death and rebirth. According to Proferes (2007:111), the goose was a common symbol for the sun in the early Vedic period. Either interpretation would potentially make sense here.

[999] ŚU 6.1: *… devasya eṣa mahimā tu loke yena idam bhrāmyate brahmacakram*.

reading into this the 'traditional' three colours of the *guṇas*.[1000] A similar evolutionary approach to creation occurs in AU 1.1, where the solitary *ātman*, having decided to create the worlds, sets in train an evolution of 'the flood, the glittering specks, the mortal and the waters'[1001], before 'drawing out' man from the waters. From that man came (a) a mouth, which in turn produced speech, which produced fire; (b) nostrils, which in turn produced out-breath, which produced wind; (c) eyes, which in turn produced sight, which produced the sun; (d) ears, which in turn produced hearing, which produced the quarters; (e) skin, which in turn produced body hairs, which produced plants and trees; (f) a heart, which in turn produced the mind, which produced the moon; (g) a navel, which in turn produced the in-breath, which produced death; and (h) a penis, which in turn produced semen, which (completing a paradoxical cycle) produced the waters, from which the man had apparently been created in the first place.

The ŚU's continual emphasis on its one god, and the KaU's identification of a single active personal form of *puruṣa*, possibly Viṣṇu, present a very different philosophical picture from the apparent atheism and multiple inactive *puruṣas* of classical Sāṃkhya. Not only does the ŚU repeatedly identify its ultimate principle as God, it frequently uses the term *puruṣa* to describe that God.[1002] ŚU 3.8, quoting the Vajāsaneyi Saṃhitā, talks of 'the immense *puruṣa*', 'having the colour of the sun and beyond darkness'[1003], which fills the whole world, and 'beyond whom there is nothing; beneath whom there is nothing; smaller than whom there is nothing; larger than whom there is nothing'.[1004] It is clear from ŚU 3.12 that this *puruṣa,* like the *puruṣa* of the KaU, is not one of the

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[1000] Johnston 1937:16; van Buitenen 1957b:93. Although doubtful whether the traditional colours of the *guṇas* derive from CU 6, van Buitenen does not rule out a connection with the general idea of the *guṇas*, a view shared by Chakravarti (1951:11). See also ŚU 4.5, where the same colours appear in the context of an unborn male goat - often interpreted as signifying *puruṣa* - 'covering' an unborn female goat, often interpreted as *prakṛti*. Van Buitenen (1957b:89) has argued that this is a Sāṃkhya 'corrective' to CU6, introducing a female principle operating in conjunction with the male principle, rather than relying on the single *sat*.

[1001] AU 1.1.2: *sa imāṃllokānasṛjata ambho marīcīrmaramapaḥ adho'mbhaḥ pareṇa divam…*

[1002] See, e.g., ŚU 3.8, 3.9, 3.12-15, and 3.19.

[1003] ŚU 3.8: *… etaṃ puruṣaṃ mahāntamādityavarṇaṃ tamasaḥ parastāt…*

[1004] ŚU 3.9: *yasmātparam nāparamasti kiñcityasmānnāṇīyo na jyāyo'sti kiñcit…*

multiplicity of individual *puruṣas* of later Sāṃkhya, but is the 'immense Lord' (*mahān prabhu*), the creator, and the ruler over immortality[1005] - the one God of the ŚU.[1006]

It is important to note here that Bronkhorst and others have argued that Sāṃkhya was not always atheistic. Bronkhorst argues that Sāṃkhya accepted (or, at least, did not deny) the existence of a personified God, or *īśvara*, until as late as the end of the first millennium CE, and only then became atheistic. As he points out, the fact that the Sāṃkhyakārikā does not mention God does not amount to a denial of His existence.[1007] Bronkhorst interprets passages in the Yuktidīpikā and other texts which appear to deny the existence of God as in fact recognising God as a form of 'pure awareness', though he accepts that *īśvara* played a relatively minor role and was not a creator deity, at least in some of the earlier formulations, with the result that he did not enjoy all the qualities of an ultimate principle.[1008] In his critical edition of, and commentary on, the ŚU, Hauschild also argues for an early theistic Sāṃkhya[1009], and arguments for some degree of theism in early Sāṃkhya have also been advanced by Johnston, who believes that Sāṃkhya went through a theistic phase[1010], and by van Buitenen and Edgerton, both of whom argue for an early theistic form of Sāṃkhya.[1011] If these commentators are correct, it would be wrong to deny a relationship between the later Upaniṣads and Sāṃkhya simply on the grounds that the later Upaniṣads posit a single, and possibly theistic, view of the ultimate principle.

Nevertheless, although 'many doctrines of the later classical systems are mentioned either explicitly or implicitly'[1012] in the ŚU and KaU, in my view there remains

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[1005] ŚU 3.15: *puruṣa evedaṃ sarvam yadbhūtam yacca bhavyam utāmṛtatvasyeśāno…*

[1006] As Johnston (1937:53) acknowledges, *puruṣa* in the ŚU 'is used in the cosmic sense of the supreme deity', except perhaps in ŚU 3.13 which he considers an interpolation.

[1007] Bronkhorst 1983:161.

[1008] 'No Sāṃkhya texts of the first millennium deny God's existence'… 'more often than not, they give us the impression that they accept God's existence as a matter of course, but do not accept His causal agency with respect to the world.' (Bronkhorst 1983:155) Cf. Yoga Sūtra 1.24 where 'the Lord' (*īśvara*) is described as 'a special person' (*purūṣaviśeṣa*).

[1009] Hauschild 1927:84.

[1010] Johnston 1937:80-88.

[1011] Van Buitenen 1957a:19; Edgerton 1965:291.

[1012] Larson 1979:102. Van Buitenen believes the ŚU to contain 'the most modern upaniṣadic affinities with the doctrine of classical Sāṃkhya' (1957a:22). Cohen lists a number of terms and ideas which appear in the ŚU and have technical meanings in later Sāṃkhya at 2008:215. Olivelle (1998a:413) argues that the ŚU was 'composed under the influence of both the

sufficient discordance between Sāṃkhya and the basic philosophical thrust of the later Upaniṣads to call into question Johnston's conclusions that his exegesis of the ŚU '… demonstrates that the author of the Upaniṣad was fully acquainted with the Sāṃkhya conceptions of *prakṛti*, its evolutes and the subordinate categories'[1013], and that the ŚU proves that, by the time of its composition, Sāṃkhya '… had been regularly formulated and put on a more philosophical basis by a school'.[1014] Chakravarti hits the nail on the head when he stresses that the ŚU is an enquiry into *brahman*[1015], in other words an enquiry into the ultimate principle. *Brahman*, however interpreted, is not a classical Sāṃkhya term, and the answer(s) of the ŚU, and of the KaU, to that enquiry look very different from a classical Sāṃkhya worldview.

What I believe that we are in fact witnessing in the later Upaniṣads is the continuation of the Upaniṣads' ongoing speculative development of ideas about the nature of reality and not the introduction of a new system of thought. This ongoing development takes place in a shifting environment which supported both a more scientific approach to the universe and a more theistic way of looking at ultimate reality. The shift from the earlier Vedic cosmological scheme to the more 'scientific' way of analysing the universe

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Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition and the emerging theistic tendencies'. Certainly, ŚU 6.13 uses the term *sāṃkhyayoga* as the means to comprehend 'the cause' as God (*tatkāraṇaṃ sāṃkhyayogādhigamyaṃ jñātvā devaṃ…*), though Olivelle (1998a:628) refuses to express an opinion on whether it is used with 'the technical meaning of a system of thought', or should rather be translated simply as 'the application of analysis', and Larson (1979:101) neutrally translates it as 'discrimination and discipline'. The ŚU also contains an intriguing reference at ŚU 5.2 to *kapila ṛṣi*, which can easily, if tendentiously, be read as referring to the legendary historical founder of the Sāṃkhya system, or, as Hiriyanna (1993:267) and Radhakrishnan (1953:738) prefer, simply be translated as 'the red seer', and gives us the first use of the important Sāṃkhya term *ahaṃkāra*, at ŚU 5.8, translated by Olivelle as 'self-consciousness'. See van Buitenen 1957a for a detailed study of this term.

[1013] Johnston 1930:875.

[1014] Johnston 1937:82. Chakravarti, in a rather confused argument, suggests that the ŚU attempts to synthesize Sāṃkhya and Vedānta, while Sāṃkhya 'at the time of the Kaṭha… immerged from the womb and at the age of the Śevt. Up. (*sic*)… was much more developed and most probably… enjoyed a very wide popularity' (1951:33-34.) Certainly, the use of the term *māyā* in ŚU 4.10, where it is directly equated with *prakṛti*, has been used by some to argue that the ŚU does indeed attempt to synthesise Sāṃkhya and Advaita Vedānta, even though the latter too did not exist as a developed system at this stage. (As well as by Chakravarti, this view is also taken by Radhakrishnan at 1953:734). However, as with terms such as *puruṣa* and *ātman*, we need to be cautious about seeing *māyā* as a term of art with the meaning which it had in later systematic philosophy.

[1015] ŚU 1.1

which manifests in the later Upaniṣads and finds its fuller expression in Sāṃkhya was not an entirely radical departure, but rather was foreshadowed in places in the early Upaniṣads. The later Upaniṣads' more systematic way of analysing reality, like their shift towards personifying and/or deifying the ultimate principle, were accordingly not complete innovations. The idea that the world (and thence ultimate reality) could be analysed through systematic 'enumeration' is neither particularly revolutionary, nor unique to Sāṃkhya: as Larson points out, a 'movement towards definitive or normative systematization' appears to have been a common trend in Indian philosophical thought at the time of the later Upaniṣads, manifesting, with different results, in the early forms of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools, as well as in Sāṃkhya and the Buddhist Abhidharma.[1016] In a later article, Johnston backtracks on his earlier dogmatic ideas about Sāṃkhya in the later Upaniṣads, and argues only that the early Upaniṣads 'provide the circle of ideas out of which the Sāṃkhya system evolved'.[1017] Similarly, Chakravarti argues that 'Sāṃkhya picked up its conceptions from the storehouse of the Upaniṣadic speculations'[1018], and these rather more circumspect conclusions seem broadly correct. I am unconvinced by Johnston's earlier argument for a pre-existing Sāṃkhya system which was adopted and modified in the Upaniṣads.[1019]

In summary, while we do meet in the later Upaniṣads several terms, and the germs of a number of ideas, which come to prominence in classical Sāṃkhya, we should not attempt to read into the KaU and ŚU an overall view of reality which corresponds in any meaningful way to that of Sāṃkhya, at least in its classical form. Rather, we see a further step in the ongoing development of Upaniṣadic enquiry into the nature of reality, which has taken a turn, following the examples of Uddālaka Āruṇi in CU 6 and Sanatkumāra in CU 7, towards a more scientific analysis of the constituent parts of the manifest world and of human consciousness. This enumerative and evolutionary approach may well have been an influence on early Sāṃkhya thinkers, and may have ultimately led to the idea of a material primal source, which came to be known as *prakṛti*

[1016] Larson 1979:95.
[1017] Johnston 1937:3.
[1018] Chakravarti 1951:34.
[1019] Although he clearly expresses this view at 1930:855, he is less dogmatic about it in Johnston 1937, where he does, however, argue for the dominance of the Sāṃkhya system in post-Vedic, pre-systematic Indian thought (1937:1).

or *pradhāna*, akin to the *sat* of Uddālaka's teachings. However, in the ŚU, that material primal source still operates under the influence of a cosmic controller, the illusionist God, and, so far as the ultimate principle is concerned, the later Upaniṣads in general retain a monistic focus, so that their use of the term *puruṣa* does not sit easily with the multiplicity of *puruṣas* of classical Sāṃkhya. The 'immense' *puruṣa* of the ŚU is clearly the one God, and, although Sāṃkhya may not always have been the atheistic school which it later became, I believe that it is stretching a point to see a systematic proto-Sāṃkhya in these texts. Rather, I argue that the *puruṣa* of the later Upaniṣads should be read as reflecting the broader rise of theism and as indicating a personified, and in places deified, form of the ultimate principle which, at this stage in the development of ideas of the ultimate principle, still sits somewhat uneasily with the more abstract notions of *brahman* and *ātman*.

5.6   Concluding Observations

Although in the later Upaniṣads there is a general consensus that the ultimate principle is monistic and all-pervading, in many cases, they present the ultimate principle as having a wide range of characteristics and a variety of names. It is often far from clear whether, even in the same Upaniṣad, those names are intended to be synonymous. What the later Upaniṣads do however continue to demonstrate is the ongoing and continuing development of Upaniṣadic enquiry into the ultimate principle. Their teachings are not always on all fours with those of the early Upaniṣads, but they nevertheless remain concerned with the same key questions about the nature of reality and the means of understanding that reality. In their ongoing speculation, they develop a number of ideas with roots in the earlier Upaniṣads in new ways, while at the same time introducing ideas which, while not fully formed, influence later philosophical and religious ways of looking at, and/or accessing knowledge of, the ultimate principle.

One of the most significant of these trends is the move towards identifying the ultimate principle as a single, personified, deity. That this move happened at a time of greater influence into the Upaniṣads from outside the Vedic tradition, in the broader religious environment which also produced the BhG, and in a cosmological framework which

favoured a more analytical view of the world, has led some to see it as a radical turning point in the development of ideas of the ultimate principle. Others have attempted to shoehorn it into their monolithic view of Upaniṣadic philosophy. I suggest that both of these approaches are wrong. While Upaniṣadic theism reaches its highest expression in the ŚU, the only Upaniṣad which unequivocally posits a personified deity as the ultimate principle, and which occupies, as Salomon says, a special position 'for its unique promulgation of an emphatically theistic philosophy'[1020], I do not agree that the theism of the ŚU makes it an '*enfant terrible*', out on a limb from the general trend of Upaniṣadic enquiry into the ultimate principle. Rather, as I have shown in this Chapter, the idea of both personifying and deifying the ultimate principle was present in the background in the early Upaniṣads, possibly as a legacy of the role both of the earlier 'departmental deities' and of the cosmic *puruṣa* of ṚV 10.90. Those early Upaniṣads refer frequently to individual deities, and often describe the ultimate principle using the language of gods and 'the person', even if more abstract ideas generally win through. While the frame story of the KaU, which places some of its teachings in the mouth of Yama, signposts a change of gear in the advancement of a personified and possibly theistic view of the ultimate principle, with the 'highest step of Viṣṇu' described as 'the end of the road' in KaU 3.9[1021] and 'the primeval one' (*purāṇa*) deified in KaU 2.12, the KaU does not introduce a completely new set of ideas, retaining, as it does, a significant role for *ātman*. This change of gear also finds expression in the MuU's 'true and imperishable' person, though the MuU too retains a significant place for *ātman* and *brahman*, while the *īś* of the ĪU, with its clearly personal qualities, is better identified with the 'large', or macrocosmic, *ātman.*

The personification of the ultimate principle also finds expression in the frequent use of *puruṣa* to designate the ultimate principle. Again, while this usage is undoubtedly more prominent in the later Upaniṣads, it is not unique to them, and the context in which it is generally used, especially in the KaU, MuU and ŚU, strongly suggests that it should not be read as a proto-Sāṃkhya term of art, even if those Upaniṣads undoubtedly contain traces of ideas which later find fuller expression in Sāṃkhya. Rather, developing from

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[1020] Salomon 1986:165.
[1021] KaU 3.9: …*so'dhvanaḥ paramāpnoti tadviṣṇoḥ paramam padam.*

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its literal meaning of 'person' with overtones of the sacrificed primeval *puruṣa* of ṚV 10.90, *puruṣa* in the Upaniṣads gradually takes on a more sophisticated metaphysical meaning, in which 'the attributes and epithets of a divine being called *puruṣa* used in older texts are now ascribed to the 'highest gods''.[1022] Equally, the more structured analysis of the world which we see in the KaU and ŚU, while again foreshadowing the enumerative approach of classical Sāṃkhya, is not a complete novelty in these later Upaniṣads. We have seen that similar trends appear in the early Upaniṣads, for example in the creation story of the AU and in Uddālaka's analysis of the nature of things in CU 6, and this quasi-scientific way of analysing materiality may itself have been conducive to the development of a theistic notion of the ultimate principle. Once again, the later Upaniṣads reflect a development of these ideas, perhaps with some outside influence, rather than a completely new approach.

This developmental approach is borne out by the fact that the later Upaniṣads, just like their earlier counterparts, often appear contradictory in their presentations of the ultimate principle, indicating ideas in flux rather than attempts to impose new dogma. In several places, there remains a lack of clarity about the relationship between the personal forms of the ultimate principle, whether or not as God, and the impersonal notions of *brahman* and *ātman.* As Gonda concludes in relation to the ŚU:

> 'The transference of the qualities and attributes of the impersonal Supreme to the god whom the author proclaims his chosen Lord or *īśvara* leads him to the ambiguous conception of the personal Lord as the 'composite *brahman…*'[1023]

yet the ŚU:

> '… made an important attempt at harmonizing in a great synthesis… popular belief…, reminiscences of older texts, rites and mythical thought, the main themes and theories connected with the divine essence underlying the phenomenal world: *ātman, brahman, puruṣa,* Prajāpati. Teaching a personal god, creator, judge and preserver of the universe, it attributed to him, not only such

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[1022] Malinar 2007:140.
[1023] Gonda 1965a:162.

'mythological' names borrowed from popular worship as Hara, Rudra, Śiva…
but also designations like *deva-* … *īśa-*… *maheśvara…*'.[1024]

ĪU 15 requests Pūṣan to 'open the face of truth', suggesting that the precise identity and/or nature of the ultimate principle are still clouded by uncertainty. Certainly, the later Upaniṣads are generous both in the breadth of their descriptions of the ultimate principle and the range of names which they give it, and the 'numerous and divergent cosmologies and theologies'[1025] which they put forward often succeed in clouding any consistent identification of the identity and nature of the ultimate principle. What we in fact see throughout the later Upaniṣads is a taking forward and re-characterisation of notions and concepts from the early Upaniṣads, with a view to continuing to try to explain the unexplainable. While the later Upaniṣads in general retain a monistic view of reality - that there *is* an ultimate principle (Brereton's 'integrative vision of things'[1026]) - knowledge of which can lead to 'a final release of all temporal and spatial limitation'[1027], by the end of the Upaniṣadic period there is still not consistency about precisely what that ultimate principle should be called, what characteristics it has, how it relates to the material world, and how one goes about obtaining knowledge of it. Rather, we see the ongoing development of ideas which will eventually inform later schools of philosophy and religious thought as markedly opposed to each other in their conceptions of reality as Sāṃkhya and Advaita Vedānta, as well as roots of theistic understandings of ultimate reality and later schools of practice.

[1024] Gonda 1965a:156-7.
[1025] Olivelle 1998a:413.
[1026] Brereton 1990:133.
[1027] Brereton 1990:134.

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Conclusion: A Hare's Horn?

'The 'philosophy of the Upaniṣads' is, in Indian terminology, a hare's horn.'[1028]

The notion of a 'hare's horn' is a frequently used example in Indian philosophy of an 'empty term', something which, although conceptually imaginable, does not exist in reality, and, as a result, can never be the object of apprehension. The idea that there is a single 'philosophy of the Upaniṣads' falls into this category. As I have emphasised throughout this thesis, the Upaniṣads are broad in the range of topics - philosophical and otherwise - which they discuss, the ways in which they both approach and define the ultimate principle, and the terminology which they use for it. Despite the efforts of certain later commentators, it is impossible to shoehorn their philosophical teachings into one consistent overarching doctrine.

What I hope to have shown in this thesis is that the defining quality of the Upaniṣads, at least so far as concerns the enquiry into the ultimate principle, is their exploratory nature. Any reading of the Upaniṣads is better served by focussing on the questions which they ask, rather than the answers which they give, and by seeing them as staging posts in the development of later systematic schools of philosophy. As Halbfass notes, 'Indian thought about being, just as Indian philosophy in general, develops gradually out of mythical and anonymous sources.'[1029] At the time of the Upaniṣads, that gradual development was still taking place.

In 1922, Dasgupta, perhaps rather ahead of his time, argued that:

> '… it is necessary that a modern interpreter of the Upaniṣads should turn a deaf ear to the absolute claims of these exponents [Śaṅkara *et al.*], and look upon the Upaniṣads not as a systematic treatise but as a repository of diverse currents of thought - the melting pot in which all later philosophical ideas were still in a state of fusion… It will be better that the modern interpreter should not agree to the claims of the ancients that all the Upaniṣads represent a connected system,

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[1028] Rau 1964:26: '*Die «Philosophie der Upaniṣads» ist, indisch geredet, ein Hasenhorn.*'
[1029] Halbfass 1992:25.

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but take the texts independently and separately and determine their meanings, through keeping an eye on the context in which they appear.'[1030]

This is broadly the approach which I have attempted to adopt in this thesis - looking at 'diverse currents of thought', while at the same time noting the directions in which those currents were flowing. However, I suggest that Dasgupta goes too far: taking individual Upaniṣads 'independently and separately', as has often been done in modern exegesis, can also cloud interpretation. In fact, an understanding of the philosophical 'melting pot' of the Upaniṣads is enhanced by looking at the 'diverse currents of thought' in the Upaniṣads as a textual genre, not just in individual Upaniṣads. Although we can undoubtedly detect currents within individual Upaniṣads - as I have shown in Chapters 3 and 4 - we can also benefit our understanding by reading inter-textually, as I have shown in relation to the BU and KṣU in Chapter 3, the CU and BU in Chapter 4, and the Upaniṣads more widely in Chapter 5. We should also at the same time be mindful that those currents often had their sources in earlier Vedic texts, as I have shown throughout this thesis. Indeed, the literary connections to the earlier Vedic texts can emphasise the role of the compilers and editors of the Upaniṣads in adapting earlier teachings or narratives, often in creative ways, as, for example, in the way in which the teaching about the *agni vaiśvānara* in ŚB 10.6.1 becomes transformed, within a very similar literary framework, into an enquiry into the *ātman vaiśvānara* in CU 5.11-24.[1031]

Reading the Upaniṣads together as a textual corpus emphasises the diversity of these currents, the role of questioning, and the ways in which the meanings of key terms such as *brahman* and *ātman* shift. It is clear from such a reading that the currents do not merge into a single river (at least not in the Upaniṣads themselves), despite the efforts of Indian philosophers and some western exegetes to convince us otherwise.[1032] However, through the various Upaniṣadic extracts which I have analysed in this thesis, I have shown that is also wrong to see them as flowing completely randomly, to see the Upaniṣads' teachings on the ultimate principle as no more than Brereton's 'loosely

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[1030] Dasgupta [1922] 1988 Vol 1:42.
[1031] See Chapter 4.
[1032] See the observations at Brereton 1997:3 n7.

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structured collection of assertions, observations and aphorisms about the nature of things'.[1033]

Through reading both intra-textually and inter-textually, I have shown that, rather than either a uniform set of teachings or a completely unstructured collection, it is better to characterise the Upaniṣads' teachings on the ultimate principle as a *search* to identify that principle, a search which revolves to a large extent around the questions which they pose. In order to illustrate this, I have shown, first, how reading together the three narratives from the BU which I have highlighted in Chapter 3 demonstrates a clear progression in the questions and concerns which underpinned the identification and exploration of the principal characteristics of the ultimate principle. That exploration begins with the ultimate principle as a creator or source of the cosmos, before moving on to identify its necessary sustaining and organising role, and finally its function as the animating force behind creation - a current of enquiry which would not be apparent if either the narratives were ignored in reading the BU, or if the three narratives were considered independently of each other. I stress again that I am not putting forward any theories about the origins of the individual narratives, nor suggesting that they depict actual events. Rather, I am arguing that reading these three narratives together emphasises this progression of questioning, giving it at least as much prominence as the actual identification of the ultimate principle in the narratives.

At the same time, the three episodes employ narrative tropes which indicate the novelty, and perhaps importance, of their teachings in a way which serves the overall tenor of the 'progressive' BU and its championing of Yājñavalkya. While that championing of Yājñavalkya may indeed have been an important factor in the compilation of the BU into its quasi-canonical form[1034], I suggest that it is at least arguable that those who compiled the BU into its received form also took these narratives, no doubt adapting them to suit their purposes[1035], and placed them in the redacted text in a way which highlighted the questions which they raised about the ultimate principle. In many ways,

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[1033] *Ibid.*

[1034] As suggested by Black (2007 Chapter 2): see Chapter 3.

[1035] As, for example, in the possible excision of any detailed discussion of the *sūtra* identified in BU 3.7. See also Acharya's discussion of the composition of CU 6.1-7 in Acharya 2016.

the identity of the ultimate principle is of secondary importance in these narratives: establishing its required characteristics is the primary concern. This helps explain both the ambiguity of Ajātaśatru's conclusion about the precise identity of the ultimate principle, even though he is clear about its function (especially when the parallel narrative in KṣU 4 is employed to assist in the interpretation of BU 2.1), and the uncertain relationship between *akṣara* and *ātman* in Yājñavalkya's teachings in BU 3.7 and 3.8.

In a similar way, the name of the respected teacher Uddālaka Āruṇi links a series of three narratives in the CU, without any intervening material. Here, the current is signposted by the presentation of Uddālaka as moving from ignorance, to incomplete knowledge, to professed knowledge of a novel esoteric doctrine. Whatever their origins, this suggests a conscious juxtaposition of the three episodes, which allows the reader to consider not only how Uddālaka's doctrine developed, but also helps contextualise the final narrative, that in CU 6. The narrative of CU 6, in which Uddālaka expounds his final doctrine, is one of the most famous of all the Upaniṣadic narratives, and has been relied on by a number of later schools to support their particular ideas of the teachings of the Upaniṣads as a whole about the ultimate principle. Yet, the teachings of CU 6 have often been studied outside of their narrative context, and, even when the narrative context has been taken into account, CU 6 has almost always been studied as an isolated episode without reference to the other two narratives which immediately precede it.

As I have shown in Chapter 4, it is not only possible to read intra-textually within the CU and use the earlier two narratives to help elucidate the final teachings which Uddālaka gives to his son, Śvetaketu, in CU 6, but also to read inter-textually and call on the narrative in which Uddālaka Āruṇi appears in BU 3.7 to give support to my interpretation. Again, I am not putting forward any theories about the origins of the individual narratives, and I do not pretend that there are not potential inconsistencies in reading the CU narratives as a chronological sequence. However, I do believe that their positioning together in the redacted text serves the purpose of presenting clear developmental stages in Uddālaka's doctrine, using narrative tropes which attempt to anchor that doctrine within Vedic tradition in a way which fits the perceived agenda of the more 'conservative' CU.

Reading the later Upaniṣads 'independently and separately', as Dasgupta would have us do, can again lead to conclusions which ignore the way in which, taken together with each other and with both the earlier Upaniṣads and the Vedic texts which preceded the Upaniṣads, they develop the questions about, and ideas of, the ultimate principle. As I have shown in Chapter 5, this is perhaps most noticeable in the common presentation of the theistic ideas of the undoubtedly complex ŚU as a radical and novel intrusion into Upaniṣadic thought. In fact, reading the ŚU together with the other Upaniṣads highlights the challenge throughout the Upaniṣads of finding an abstract principle which possesses all the necessary functions of an ultimate principle. At the same time, such an inter-textual reading reveals that theistic trends, as well as suggestions that the ultimate principle is in some way personified, can be seen throughout the Upaniṣads, with those trends perhaps growing in importance in the later Upaniṣads. As a result, I argue, therefore, that the ŚU represents more of a change of gear in Upaniṣadic thought than a radical change of direction.

As Dasgupta suggested, interpreting the Upaniṣads should also involve 'keeping an eye on the context in which they appear'. Just as the ŚU, like the BhG, was a product of its increasingly theistically oriented time, so too the broader social and political background in which the Upaniṣads developed (which I have discussed briefly in Chapter 1) points more to a genre of texts in which enquiry was seen as more important than dogma. This was a rapidly changing social and political background in which there was undoubtedly interaction with other religious traditions as the centre of Vedic thought moved eastward; in which the power of kings and nobility was on the rise; and in which the role of the *brahmins* was in many cases shifting from village based ritual performance to a more symbiotic relationship with the kings and nobility and a more inward looking way of thinking. Systematic philosophical enquiry, however, was still in its infancy, even by the end of the Upaniṣadic period. Damming the currents into one reservoir was not necessarily the purpose of the compilers of the Upaniṣads. Rather, reading the Upaniṣads in the way in which I have approached them reveals ways in which they adapted to these social, political and religious changes while nevertheless presenting themselves, often through the use of narrative tropes, as a continuation of the Vedic tradition.

Although this has not been a study of narrative *per se*, I have argued throughout this thesis that the use of narrative and the role of the compilers and editors of the Upaniṣads have been instrumental in the way in which the Upaniṣads present their search for the ultimate principle. It has not been my purpose to delve into the 'archaeology' of individual narrative episodes, nor to express any concluded opinions on the methods of compilation of the texts, but I do believe that the use of narrative, at least in the earlier Upaniṣads, is important in giving us certain frameworks in which to explore their teachings on the ultimate principle. In Dasgupta's time, the narrative episodes of the Upaniṣads were largely ignored, or at least marginalised, in Upaniṣadic study. However, drawing on the work of scholars such as Olivelle, Grinshpon, Black and Lindquist, I argue that the narratives serve two important purposes. First, the various prominent narrative motifs which I have summarised in Chapter 1 help contextualise the search for the ultimate principle which they present; secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the positioning of narratives within individual Upaniṣads, and the inter-textual reading of certain narratives featuring the same characters[1036] and/or broadly similar stories[1037], illuminates the development of certain teachings and/or the connections of certain teachings to each other. Rather than being 'literary ornamentation'[1038], the use of narrative in the Upaniṣads seems at least as likely to be a way of emphasising some of their more important teachings.

In summary, the Upaniṣads evidence a *search* for the single entity, power, or principle which creates, animates, supports and sustains all of existence. This is a search which does not reach a single conclusion, but one which is not without structure or coherence. Rather, it is a search which focusses on certain key questions about the functions of that ultimate principle, on both the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels. It is one which develops within the changing social and political environment in which the Upaniṣads were being compiled, and one in which the compilers and editors of the Upaniṣads played a role in the way in which that search was presented in the texts themselves. As Suthren Hirst notes '… in the compilations which we now have, the format of the texts forces the hearer or reader to confront a search for something contested and highly

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[1036] Such as Uddālaka Āruṇi.
[1037] Such as BU 2.1 and KṣU 4.
[1038] Black 2007:169.

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elusive.'[1039] By the end of the Upaniṣadic period, although perhaps there was broad agreement that there *was* an ultimate principle, there was still no real consensus whether it was called *ātman*, *brahman*, Rudra, or by some other name. Indeed, as I have shown, it might often be preferable to see *brahman* as a place-holder term rather than an ontological principle in its own right. Perhaps ultimately the name did not matter: the key was knowledge that some form of ultimate principle fulfilled the various functions I have outlined. 'He who knows that', whatever *that* may precisely be and however that knowledge may be acquired, is the real narrative hero of the Upaniṣads: *ya evaṃ veda* 'has an insight into the correspondences between the mundane phenomena and the immutable and eternal transcendent reality'[1040] and, perhaps, through that insight, reaches a world from which he or she does not 'return to this human condition'.[1041]

[1039] Suthren Hirst 2018:109.
[1040] Gonda 1965b:6.
[1041] CU 4.15.5: … *eṣa devapatho brahmapathaḥ etena pratipadyamānā imaṃ mānavam āvartaṃ nāvartanta…*

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Appendix A

CU 6.11 to 6.13

6.11.1   *asya saumya mahato vṛkṣasya yo mūle'bhyāhanyāt jīvan sravet yo*
         madhye'bhyāhanyāt jīvan sravet yo'gre'bhyāhanyāt jīvan sravet sa eṣa
         jīvenātmānuorabhūtaḥ pepīyamāno modamābas tiṣṭhati

         'Now, take this huge tree here, son. If someone were to hack it at the
         bottom, its living sap would flow. Likewise, if someone were to hack it
         in the middle, its living sap would flow; and if someone were to hack it
         at the top, its living sap would flow. Pervaded by the living essence, this
         tree stands here ceaselessly drinking water and flourishing.'

6.11.2   *asya yad ekāṃ śākhāṃ jīvo jahāti atha sā śuṣyati dvitīyāṃ jahāti atha sā*
         śuṣyati tṛtīyāṃ jahāti atha sā śuṣyati sarvaṃ jahāti sarvaḥ śuṣyati evam
         eva khalu saumya viddhi iti hovāca

         'When, however, life leaves one of its branches, that branch withers
         away. When it leaves a second branch, that likewise withers away, and
         when it leaves a third branch, that also withers away. When it leaves the
         entire tree, the whole tree withers away.'

6.11.3   *jīvāpetam vāva kiledaṃ mriyate na jīvo mriyata iti sa ya eṣo'ṇimā aitad*
         ātmyam idaṃ sarvam tat satyam sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo iti bhūya
         eva mā bhagavān vijñāpayatu iti tathā saumya iti hovāca

         'In exactly the same way', he continued, 'know that this, of course, dies
         when it is bereft of life; but life itself does not die. The finest essence
         here - that constitutes the self of this whole world; that is the truth; that is
         the self. And that's how you are, Śvetaketu.' 'Sir, teach me more.' 'Very
         well, son.'

6.12.1   *nyagrodhaphalam ata āharet idam bhagavaḥ iti bhinddhīti bhinnam*
         bhagavaḥ iti kim atra paśyasīti aṇvya ivemā dhānāḥ bhagavaḥ iti āsām
         aṅgaikām bhinndhīti bhinnā bhagavaḥ iti kim atra paśyasīti na kiṃ cana
         bhagavaḥ iti

         '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.'

6.12.2   *taṃ hovāca yaṃ vai saumya etam aṇimānam na nibhālayase etasya vai*
          saumya eṣo'ṇimna evan mahān nyagrodhas tiṣṭhati śrddhatsva saumya

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:

6.12.3   *sa ya eṣo'ṇimā aitad ātmyam idaṃ sarvam tat satyam sa ātmā tat tvam asi*
          śvetaketo iti bhūya eva mā bhagavān vijñāpayatu iti tathā saumya iti
          hovāca

The finest essence here - that constitutes the self of this whole world; that
is the truth; that is the self. And that's how you are, Śvetaketu.' 'Sir,
teach me more.' 'Very well, son.'

6.13.1   *lavaṇam etad udake'vadhāya atha mā prātar upasīdathā iti sa ha tathā*
          cakāra taṃ hovāca yad doṣā lavaṇam udake'vādhāḥ aṅga āhareti tadd
          hāvamṛśya na viveda yathā vilīnam evam

'Put this chunk of salt in a container of water and come back tomorrow.'
The son did as he was told, and the father said to him: 'The chunk of salt
you put in the water last evening - bring it here.' He groped for it but
could not find it…

6.13.2   *aṅgāsyāntād ācāmeti katham iti lavaṇam iti madhyād ācāmeti katham iti*
          lavaṇam iti antād ācāmeti katham iti lavaṇam iti abhiprāśyaitad atha
          mopāsīdathā iti tadd ha tathā cakāra tacchaśvat saṃvartate taṃ hovāca
          atra vāva kila sat saumya na nibhālayase atraiva kila

… as it had disappeared completely. 'Now, take a sip from this corner,'
said the father. 'How does it taste?'
'Salty.'
'Take a sip from the centre. - How does it taste?'
'Salty.'
'Take a sip from that corner. - How does it taste?'
'Salty.'
'Throw it out and come back later.' He did as he was told and found that

the salt was always there. The father told him: 'You, of course, did not see it there, son; yet it was always right there.'

6.13.3   *sa ya eṣo'ṇimā aitad ātmyam idaṃ sarvam tat satyam sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo iti bhūya eva mā bhagavān vijñāpayatu iti tathā saumya iti hovāca*

The finest essence here - that constitutes the self of this whole world; that is the truth; that is the self. And that's how you are, Śvetaketu.' 'Sir, teach me more.' 'Very well, son.'

Appendix B
Literature Review

As noted in the Introduction, the Vedic Upaniṣads have been studied widely in the west for many years, as well as forming one of the textual cornerstones of a number of Indian philosophical traditions reaching back many centuries. These studies have approached the Upaniṣads from a number of angles - religious, philosophical, sociological, philological and more - sometimes as a genre, and at other times through individual Upaniṣads or parts of Upaniṣads. The challenge in constructing a review of the extensive literature relevant to this thesis is to identify the key contributions to Upaniṣadic scholarship which are of particular significance. In this Literature Review, I attempt to do that thematically.

1.   Translations and Interpretations

The Upaniṣads have spawned many translations and commentaries. Some are rooted in individual Indian religious and philosophical schools, the objectivity of which is inevitably compromised by the doctrinal preconceptions of their authors.[1042] Others take considerable liberties with the original language in an effort to produce either a more poetic rendering, or one more in tune with the likely preconceptions of the target readership. As I have already highlighted, any translation, even without commentary, will of necessity contain an element of interpretation, but I have relied in this study chiefly on translations and commentaries driven predominantly by a concern for accuracy and an absence of theological purpose.[1043]

The earliest known translation of a Vedic Upaniṣad into a Western language is probably the translation into English of the ĪU by William Jones in 1799.[1044] This was quickly

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[1042] As Malinar says of 'modern Hindu interpretations' in her study of the BhG: 'each author establishes his own hermeneutics on the basis of the religious or philosophical tradition he adheres to.' (2007:17). See also the observations of Olivelle at 1998b:173.

[1043] Where commentaries too important to omit clearly do have an underlying philosophical and/or religious slant, I have tried to note that in the text.

[1044] Renard 1995, which has been the source for much of the information in this section.

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followed, in 1801-2, by the frequently cited *Oupnek'hat* of Abraham Anquetil Duperron, a translation of fifty Upaniṣads[1045] into Latin, not from the original Sanskrit but from a Persian translation. Duperron's Latin translation of the CU was itself the source of probably the first translation into German, of part of that Upaniṣad, by Thaddäus Rixner in 1808. A few years earlier, in 1805, Henry Colebrooke had translated the Aitareya Āraṇyaka (which contains the AU) from Sanskrit into English. The Indian reformer Ram Mohan Roy produced a series of English translations of some of the shorter Upaniṣads (KeU, ĪU, MuU and KaU) in the period 1816-19, which, in turn, were the source for a translation of the same Upaniṣads into Dutch by Roorda van Eysinga in 1840. Guillaume Pauthier's French translations of the KeU and ĪU in 1830 were probably the earliest into that language.

The remainder of the nineteenth century saw numerous efforts at translating individual Upaniṣads, small groups of Upaniṣads, or extracts from Upaniṣads, into English, French and German. One of the earliest translations of the PU was that into German by Albrecht Weber in 1850; he also translated the MāU in 1853, the same year in which Edward Röer produced a translation of nine Upaniṣads (all those covered in this study, with the exception of the BU, CU and KṣU) into English. The length and complexity of the BU and CU had probably thus far inhibited any complete translation of either from Sanskrit into a modern Western language. However, in 1856, Röer published an English translation of the BU, together with a small portion of Śaṅkara's commentary, and in 1862 Rajendralala Mitra produced probably the first complete translation of the CU, also into English and also accompanied by extracts from Śaṅkara's commentary. Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East* series then included English translations of all of the Upaniṣads dealt with in this study, apart from the MāU, some in Volume 1 (1879) and the others in Volume 15 (1884).[1046]

[1045] See Chapter 1 for the application of the term 'Upaniṣad' to texts both within the Vedic corpus and outside it.

[1046] Frits Staal recounts the story of the outcry provoked in *brahmin* circles by Müller's proposal to translate *śruti* texts, especially the ṚV. Following publication, it is said, Müller's translation was scrutinised in depth by a group of *brahmins*, who were apparently sufficiently impressed with the accuracy of the translation that they 'rewarded' him by sending him a sacred thread. (Staal 1979:122)

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The final years of the nineteenth century were a fruitful period for translations, especially by Germans. Otto Böhtlingk translated the BU and CU into German in 1889-97, and Paul Deussen produced his *Sechzig Upaniṣad's des Veda* (*sic*) in 1897, translating all of the Vedic Upaniṣads and many of the minor Upaniṣads. As we move into the twentieth century, we find translations of individual Upaniṣads by scholars such as Arthur Berriedale Keith (the KṣU into English in 1908 and the AU in 1909); Mysore Hiriyanna (the ĪU, KeU, KaU and BU into English over the period 1911 to 1919); Richard Hauschild (the ŚU into German, with a metrical analysis and short commentary, in 1927); and Émile Senart (the CU into French in 1930, and the BU a full 37 years later in 1967). In 1921, Robert Hume produced one of the most influential collections of translations, at least until Radhakrishnan's collection in 1953 and, arguably, until Patrick Olivelle's work in the 1990s.[1047] The 1940s and 1950s also saw a series of further translations into French, co-ordinated by Louis Renou, though the BU and CU were again conspicuous by their absence.

The mid- to late 20th century was noteworthy for some influential translations and often very detailed philological studies of individual Upaniṣads, particularly the later ones, or of small groups of Upaniṣads. These include those by Rau on the ŚU, MuU and KaU in 1964, 1965 and 1971 respectively, Morton Smith on the ŚU and MuU in 1975 and 1976, Salomon's linguistic analysis of the MuU in 1981 and his similar exercise in relation to the PU in 1991, and selections published by Franklin Edgerton in 1965, and Paul Thieme and R.C. Zaehner, both in 1966. 1976 saw Erhardt Hanefeld's *Philosophische Hauptexte der Älteren Upaniṣaden,* containing German translations of, and commentary on, three important Upaniṣadic episodes.[1048] Other useful aids to the study and interpretation of individual Upaniṣads, or in some cases sections as small as individual verses, appeared in this period in the shape of works such as Thieme 1965, Jones 1981 and Sharma and Young 1990 on the ĪU; Brereton 1986 on the expression '*tat tvam asi'* in CU 6; Helfer 1968 on the KaU; and Kunst 1968, Oberlies 1988 to 1998 and Cohen 1998 on the ŚU. At around the same time, and moving into the 21st century, greater

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[1047] Discussed further below.

[1048] As well as some general observations on reading the Upaniṣads. The three episodes are (a) the story of Yājñavalkya and Janaka in BU 4.3-4; (b) the teaching of Maitreyī in BU 2.4 and 4.5; and (c) the teaching of Śvetaketu in CU 6.

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interest began to be shown in the literary presentation of Upaniṣadic teachings and in individual Upaniṣadic narratives and/or characters: I will discuss this strand of literature separately below.

Of the three most important twentieth century translation collections, Hume's *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*[1049] of 1921 made a major contribution to western reading of the texts. As late as 1990, Joel Brereton described it as 'the best translation', noting its literal accuracy (though also observing that that very accuracy at times made it difficult to read).[1050] Hume accompanied his translation by a reasonably extensive 'Outline of the Philosophy of the Upanishads' in which he surveyed the historical place of the Upaniṣads in the Vedic corpus, attempts at 'the conception of a unitary world-ground'[1051], the development of theories of *brahman* and *ātman*, realist and non-realist descriptions of ultimate reality, and questions of *karma* and rebirth, knowledge, and renunciation and *yoga*. He portrays the philosophical teachings of the Upaniṣads as a progression from 'realistic materialism' to 'speculative idealism', considering that 'In a few passages the Upanishads are sublime in their conception of the Infinite…, but more often they are puerile and grovelling in trivialities and superstitions'[1052], a view which perhaps in places colours his translation. Importantly, however, Hume stresses the variety of philosophical doctrines contained in the Upaniṣads, which he considered made it 'difficult, indeed impossible, to set forth in systematic exposition a single system of philosophy'.[1053] Here he was perhaps somewhat ahead of the pack, and differs from his close predecessor, Paul Deussen, who, despite an extensive survey of Upaniṣadic philosophy in Deussen [1899] 1906, holds fast to the Advaitin ideal that 'the fundamental thought of the entire Upanishad philosophy may be expressed by the single equation:- Brahman = Âtman.'[1054]

Radhakrishnan's *The Principal Upaniṣads* of 1953 (usefully for the western eye containing a transliteration of the Sanskrit into western script as well as a translation and

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[1049] All of those covered in this study, plus the Maitrī.
[1050] Brereton 1990:135.
[1051] Hume 1921:9.
[1052] Hume 1921:70.
[1053] *Ibid.*
[1054] Deussen [1899] 1906:39.

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commentary), while not uninfluential, did not enjoy the ongoing status of Hume's translation. Perhaps Radhakrishnan fell into his own trap: in his preface he states that

> 'Anyone who reads the Upaniṣads… will be caught up and carried away by the elevation, the poetry, the compelling fascination of the many utterances through which they lay bare the secret and sacred relations of the human soul and the Ultimate Reality'.[1055]

His translation, although in places reproducing Hume's translation *verbatim*, tends to be more 'flowery' than Hume's, and his commentarial notes in many places emphasise a theistic interpretation, which is often not justified by the texts themselves. He too includes a lengthy introduction, which also in several places seems to draw on Hume's own introductory section. However, unlike Hume's acknowledgment of the eclecticism of the Upaniṣads' teaching, Radhakrishnan's introduction is strongly influenced by Advaitin interpretations of the texts (though he summarises the competing interpretations of Rāmānuja, Madhva and Baladeva in one paragraph each). He argues that the views of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja are not inconsistent, but simply emphasise different aspects of Upaniṣadic teaching,[1056] sees this emphasis on different aspects of Upaniṣadic teaching as 'unfortunate', and argues that the 'true doctrine' of the Upaniṣads is

> 'that the Real, the thing-in-itself, is empty of content and all positive views are deviations from it caused by the inability of man to remain at the high level of abstract thought, postulated by the distinction between the thing-in-itself and the appearance and the natural tendency to apply empirical categories to the thing-in-itself'.[1057]

It was Patrick Olivelle's translation, first published by Oxford World's Classics in 1996 as *Upaniṣads* and subsequently published, including the Sanskrit and some additional notes, in 1998 as *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*, which largely

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[1055] Radhakrishnan 1953:5.
[1056] Radhakrishnan 1953:137.
[1057] *Ibid.* Patton describes Radhakrishnan's translation as 'a good representative of mid-20th century Indian approaches' in her section on the Upaniṣads on Oxford Bibliographies Online.

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supplanted Hume as the most significant English translation currently in wide use in academic circles. Olivelle's stated aim was to produce a translation which is 'accurate without being literal', accessible to 'ordinary readers' with little or no knowledge of Sanskrit, using 'idiomatic and informal' English, while respecting the, to some readers, sacred nature of the texts.[1058] He acknowledges the multiplicity of Upaniṣadic interpretations through the centuries, and the extensive commentarial literature, while noting the tendency of any translator with a 'theological purpose' to favour one interpretation over another. Yet he is not naive enough to expect to present a translation completely uncoloured by interpretation. He understands that any translation of necessity contains an element of interpretation, whatever the hermeneutic intentions of the translator. Nevertheless, he seeks to 'distinguish the interpretive history of the documents… from their original context', arguing that, while study of the interpretation of texts is 'an important and legitimate part of historical scholarship', it is not the primary function of a translator. He intends his translation not as 'a vehicle for propagating religious truths… but for illuminating the distant past of India'.[1059] As explained in the Introduction to this thesis, it is for this reason, at least as much as the accessibility and acknowledged accuracy of his translation, that I have chosen Olivelle's work as the main source for the translations used.

Perhaps partly for the reasons set out in the preceding paragraph, Olivelle's introduction to the texts is relatively brief. It does, however, contain useful summaries of the social and literary background to the Upaniṣads, their place within the wider Vedic corpus, their temporal and geographical positioning (where he draws heavily on the work of Witzel), Vedic ritual and cosmology, the Upaniṣads' approach to human physiology and psychology, and 'cosmic connections', where he emphasises the use of the word *upaniṣad* itself as meaning a 'connection' or 'equivalence', later taking on the quality of secrecy. Although the brevity of the introduction means that he only acknowledges it in passing, this section clearly reflects some of the work of Olivelle's colleague, Joel Brereton, which I discuss further below. Olivelle strongly refutes the 'unitary interpretation' idea of the Upaniṣads, noting that, while the *ātman/brahman* equation is

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[1058] Olivelle 1998a:xxi.
[1059] *Ibid.*

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undoubtedly significant, 'it is incorrect to think that the single aim of all the Upaniṣads is to enunciate this simple truth'. As he rightly notes, 'a close reader of these documents will note the diversity of goals that their authors pursue', criticising those scholars who ignore the passages which reflect that diversity 'in their search for the 'philosophy' or 'the fundamental conception' of the Upaniṣads'.[1060] As he says of these passages, 'If the compilers of the Upaniṣads thought them significant enough to be included… who are we to reject them?'.[1061]

I should also mention one other relatively recent English translation, that by Valerie Roebuck, which first appeared as *The Upaniṣads* in Penguin Classics in 2000, then in a revised edition in 2003. Like Olivelle, Roebuck has attempted to 'represent accurately what is in the original text'[1062], while seeking to retain 'some of their quality as literature'[1063] and a 'conversational quality'.[1064] She too notes the tendency of early translators either to 'take considerable liberties' with the texts by incorporating tendentious commentarial material within the translation itself or to try to 'smooth out what is irregular or startling in the original'[1065], tendencies which she tries to avoid. She has a short introductory section, covering much of the same ground as Olivelle's introduction but with rather less incisiveness. It is in many ways a shame that Roebuck's translation has been overshadowed by Olivelle's work, and it represents a useful resource for comparative purposes.

So far as other primary sources referred to in this thesis are concerned, I have noted in footnotes the translations which I have used. There are remarkably few reasonably contemporary translations of any of the Saṃhitās or Brāhmaṇas: the 'golden period' of translation for those genres of text was as long ago as the late 19th century. We are, however, fortunate to have the recent three volume translation of the ṚV in Jamison and Brereton 2014, which has been my primary source for translations of that text, though I have also consulted Griffith 1896, and Doniger O'Flaherty 1981 for the extracts which

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[1060] Olivelle 1998a:27.
[1061] *Ibid.*
[1062] Roebuck 2000:l.
[1063] Roebuck 2000:xlix.
[1064] Roebuck 2000:li.
[1065] Roebuck 2000:l.

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she includes. For the AV, I have relied on Griffith 1895; for the ŚB Eggeling's translation from 1897, and for the JUB on Oertel 1896. For the JB, we are also fortunate to have a more recent contribution, in Bodewitz 1973 on JB 1:1-65 and its companion volume from 1990 on JB 1:66-364. Finally of the most significant other primary sources referred to in this thesis, for a translation of the BhG I have generally relied on Patton 2008.

Lastly in this section, I should mention briefly the several articles by J.A.B. van Buitenen and those by Jan Gonda in which individual words or phrases in Vedic texts are subjected to detailed analysis. Prominent among them for my purposes are van Buitenen 1955-6 and 1959 (on *akṣara*), van Buitenen 1955 and 1958 (on *vācārambhaṇam*), and his 'Studies in Sāṃkhya' series, especially Parts II and III (van Buitenen 1957a and 1957b), Gonda 1954 (*pratiṣṭha*), Gonda 1955 (*sarva*), and Gonda 1969 (*āyatana*). More recently, Acharya 2017 has focussed on the word *ādeśa*, critiquing some of the views expressed elsewhere by Thieme and Olivelle.

2.   Approaching the Upaniṣads

One of the challenges in reading the Upaniṣads is to find a way of attempting to analyse the various doctrines which they present in any systematic way. Here, Joel Brereton has performed a very useful service in his chapter in *Approaches to the Asian Classics* in 1990.[1066] Brereton highlights the formal and stylistic diversity of the texts, as well as their historical location in a period of transition, the varied identity of their composers, the relatively broad timescales and geographical areas in which they were composed, and their ongoing religious importance. He makes the important point that, as a result of this diversity, and unlike many western scriptures, 'they are not catechisms of direct answers to religious questions, which obviate the need for further reflection. Rather, they stimulate thought and challenge interpretation.'[1067]

Brereton argues that, for all their diversity, the Upaniṣads in general teach what he calls an 'integrative vision, a view of the whole which draws together the separate elements

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[1066] Brereton 1990.
[1067] Brereton 1990:117.

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of the world and of human experience and compresses them into a single form'.[1068] However, he stresses, the texts differ widely among themselves 'in the shape they give to that vision of totality and the means by which they create it'.[1069] As a means of both clarifying the 'vision' of the texts and of demonstrating their diversity, Brereton puts forward five 'paradigms' through the lens of which, he argues, the range of Upaniṣadic teachings can be studied - correlation; emergence and resolution; hierarchy; paradox; and cycles - presenting, through a small number of textual examples, a helpful organisational tool which I discuss further in Chapter 2. He accepts that the paradigms do not 'exhaust the variety of Upanishadic teachings', but 'collectively… suggest their range', with which I respectfully agree.

It is also worth noting here the work of Signe Cohen in her *Text and Authority in the Older Upaniṣads*.[1070] This is a somewhat confused work. It combines detailed textual analysis with brief commentary, in which each of the 12 main Vedic Upaniṣads, together with the Maitrī and the minor Mahānārāyaṇa, Kaivalya and Bāṣkalamantra Upaniṣads, are treated individually, with notes on their teachings on *ātman* and *brahman*, other themes, and a metrical and linguistic analysis. She then uses this work to construct a relative chronology, to present a brief and rather superficial summary of the teachings on '*Ātman, Brahman*, God and Primeval Matter', and to touch on questions of canon formation, textual criticism and textual authority.

Leaving aside her metrical and linguistic studies as being of marginal relevance to my own thesis, some of Cohen's discussions of individual Upaniṣads are more helpful than others. For example, she covers some of the major narratives of the BU quite thoughtfully, and introduces a useful summary of the role of Rudra in the ŚU, based on her earlier work at Cohen 1998. On the other hand, her analysis of the contents (as opposed to the linguistic construction) of texts such as the ĪU and KeU is very limited, and her generic chapters, such as her 'Philosophical and Religious Themes in the Upaniṣads' and her 'Conclusion' tend to cover too many themes in insufficient detail to be of great value. She remains convinced to the end that 'It is well known that the

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[1068] Brereton 1990:118.
[1069] Brereton 1990:118-9.
[1070] Cohen 2008.

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central theme of the Upaniṣads is the identity between *ātman* and *brahman*'[1071], even though she observes in the very next sentence that 'the two concepts and the relationship between them undergo complex modifications over time'.[1072] She fails to explain how the relationship which she describes as 'identity' nevertheless succeeds in undergoing 'complex modifications'.[1073]

Cohen's edited volume *The Upaniṣads: A Complete Guide* appeared in print only when this thesis was in final draft form. This is a series of short essays, many by Cohen herself, though with contributions from other contemporary scholars. I have referred to some of the essays in places, though most of them are of necessity too brief to be of great value for my purposes.

On a more general level, the question of how best to approach Indian texts, and the Upaniṣads in particular, is addressed briefly but succinctly in the *Note on the Translation* which precedes Olivelle's introduction in Olivelle 1998a[1074], as well as in Smith 1982, Graham 1987, Grinshpon 1993, Kapstein 2016, Lindquist 2017, and in the essays in Timm's 1992 edited volume *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermenutics in South Asia*, particularly (for the purposes of this thesis) those by Timm himself, Rambachan, Clooney and Mumme.

3.   The Upaniṣads in Social, Geographical and Historical Context

The general place of the Upaniṣads within the Vedic corpus has been well documented by many scholars. The Vedic period in general is summarised concisely in Proferes 2012, and one of the most useful brief overviews of the place of the Upaniṣads is that contained in the Introduction to Olivelle 1998a, which in many ways is more helpful for this purpose than the summary in Olivelle 2009. Deussen [1899] 1906 also contains a useful early summary, in which, amongst other things, he highlights what I call in

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[1071] Cohen 2008:289; a view she re-iterates at 2018a:2 and elsewhere in her 2018 edited volume mentioned below.
[1072] *Ibid.*
[1073] Proferes 2009b contains a more detailed critique of Cohen 2008.
[1074] Olivelle 1998a:xx-xxii.

Chapter 1 the 'vertical boundaries', i.e. the association of each Upaniṣad (or, at least, each of the earlier Upaniṣads[1075]) with one or other of the individual Vedas. Cohen 2008 also highlights the texts' *śākhā* affiliations. She argues at 2008:6-7 that 'some very interesting patterns begin to emerge if we study each of the older Upaniṣads in the context of its Vedic *śākhā*', an idea with which I in principle agree, but which Cohen sadly fails to develop as fully as she might, probably ultimately through a lack of relevant information.[1076] The Vedic *śākhās* generally are discussed by, amongst others, Renou 1947 and Witzel 1997.

Deussen also acknowledges the 'fuzziness' of the 'horizontal boundaries' between classes of Vedic texts[1077], i.e. the boundaries between the common fourfold division of Vedic texts into Saṃhitā, Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka and Upaniṣad. He points out that '… in all three classes' [Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka and Upaniṣad] 'there are found occasionally digressions of a ritual as well as allegorical or philosophical nature' and that 'the broad distinctions between Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka and Upaniṣad are by no means always correctly observed', a fact which he attributes to the 'entire teaching material' of any individual *śākhā* having originally been a unified whole, with the 'horizontal boundaries' having been imposed later.[1078] The importance of seeing the Upaniṣads as an integral part of the Vedic textual corpus, rather than the product of a clearly defined 'horizontal boundary' is also stressed by others, from Keith in 1925, through Renou (1953 and 1957b) and Edgerton (1965), up to Olivelle (1998a and 2010), Cohen (2008), and Proferes (2009a). Winternitz 1927 also notes that philosophical speculation was not necessarily new to the Upaniṣads, but had had sparks as early as the ṚV.[1079]

Michael Witzel too stresses the continuity of the Upaniṣads with Vedic tradition, though points out that their thinking 'If not radically new, … still involves a thorough rethinking of the existing correlative premises, in part influenced by late Vedic social

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[1075] The looser association of certain Upaniṣads with the AV is discussed in Chapter 1.
[1076] See Proferes 2009b:149.
[1077] The word 'fuzzy' to describe these boundaries comes from Black 2011a:119.
[1078] Deussen [1899] 1906:4. He suggests that the Brāhmaṇas were aimed primarily at householders, the Āraṇyakas at forest dwelling ascetics and the Upaniṣads at renunciates within the relevant *śākhā*, though, in doing so, he perhaps anticipates the later development of the classical *āśrama* system.
[1079] Winternitz 1927:226. See also Rhys Davids 1899:73.

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conditions of the eastern territories of North India'.[1080] Jamison and Witzel, in their overview of 'Vedic Hinduism', argue that the philosophical speculations of the Upaniṣads may be viewed 'as the almost inevitable outcome' of a rethinking of the theological and social significance of Vedic ritual, associated particularly with the YV, the ŚB, and the eastern part of north India. At the same time, they note that the 'vertical boundaries' too are not necessarily cut and dried, having regard to the 'intellectual exchange' which was going on between Vedic schools as well as within them.[1081]

Although little has been written directly concerning the geographical origins of individual Upaniṣads[1082], Witzel has written extensively on the geographical origins of the Vedic schools as well as the political context of their development.[1083] It is his work which has primarily influenced ideas about the geographical origins of the Upaniṣads, for example as set out in the Introduction to Olivelle 1998a.[1084] Proferes also makes some important observations about societal, political and geographical movement in the early Vedic period, especially at 2007:13-18. A useful source for a general overview of changes in Vedic society is Erdosy 1988; Thapar 1980 and Gombrich 1988 also have some helpful material.

While the progressively eastward movement of the 'heartland' of Vedic thought and practice is well documented[1085], a more radical theory which addresses both time and place of Upaniṣadic composition is advanced in Bronkhorst 2007a. Bronkhorst places great emphasis on the indigenous culture of the north-eastern region which he calls 'Greater Maghada', a culture which he argues developed separately from the brahmanical culture of further west. This in itself is hardly radical, as even the ŚB refers to the 'demonic people of the east'.[1086] However, Bronkhorst discusses extensively his

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[1080] Witzel 2003a:83, also citing Renou 1953.
[1081] Jamison and Witzel 1992:74-75.
[1082] As noted in Chapter 2, although Sharma 1985 presents a lot of information on geographical references in the Upaniṣads, he is light on any real theories about their geographical origins. Tamaskar 1989 also lists geographical references in the Upaniṣads, but, again, draws no real conclusions about their geographical homes. See also Kosambi 1970.
[1083] See particularly Witzel 1987b, 1995, 1997 and, to a lesser extent, 2009.
[1084] Olivelle 1998a:13-16.
[1085] See, e.g., the Witzel material mentioned in note 1083, Olivelle 1998a:13-14 and 1999b:65-67, Proferes 2009a:34-35.
[1086] ŚB13.8.1.5, cited at Bronkhorst 2007a:4.

theories of the interaction between the indigenous eastern culture and the 'incoming' brahmanical culture, particularly by reference to the ideas of *karma* and rebirth. He uses this discussion to present a theory which opposes the commonly held view that references to karmically-conditioned rebirth in early Buddhist texts indicate a familiarity with early Upaniṣadic ideas, thereby placing the early Upaniṣads before the relatively well accepted dates for the life of the historical Buddha.[1087] Bronkhorst argues that ideas of karmically conditioned rebirth have origins outside both Buddhist and Vedic traditions, in the indigenous culture of Greater Maghada. As a result, he places the earliest Upaniṣads around the date of the Buddha, somewhat later than the more generally accepted dates advanced by such as Winternitz 1927, Radhakrishnan 1953, Frauwallner [1953] 1973, Olivelle 1998a and others. While Bronkhorst's theories are thought-provoking, absolute dating of the Upaniṣads, even if such an exercise were possible bearing in mind the composite nature of many of them, is of less relevance for my study than the progressive chronology of the ideas which they contain: a relative chronology of the texts, in the forms in which we now have them, such as those advanced at Deussen [1899] 1906:22-25, Olivelle 1998a:12-13, Cohen 2008:287, or Cohen 2018b:16-17 is more useful.

4.   Early Commentaries on the Philosophy/ies of the Upaniṣads

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century exegesis, the teachings of the Upaniṣads were frequently considered in the broader framework of Vedic teachings more generally. As already noted, much of this exegesis focussed on attempting to find a systematic set of philosophical teachings, often from a preconceived theological or philosophical standpoint. Garbe 1897, for example, demonstrates a strongly anti-*brahmin* bias.

Several broader studies of what was generally called 'Indian' or 'Vedic' philosophy and its underlying texts, including the Upaniṣads, appeared in the 1920s: B.M. Barua's *A History of Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy* was published in 1921; the first volume of

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[1087] E.g. in Bechert 1982 and 1991. See Black 2012 for a wider discussion of possible cross-fertilisation between Buddhism and Brahmanism in the specific context of the self/no-self debate.

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Surendranath Dasgupta's *A History of Indian Philosophy* appeared in 1922, with subsequent volumes at intervals until 1955; A.B. Keith's *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads* was published in 1925; and Belvalkar and Ranade's *History of Indian Philosophy - The Creative Period* in 1927, the year in which Moritz Winternitz' 1907 *Geschichte der indischen Literatur* was first translated into English.

In this broad period, a number of works also appeared specifically dealing with the philosophical teachings of the Upaniṣads. These include Gough 1903, analysing individual Upaniṣads[1088], and Ranade 1926, discussing Upaniṣadic cosmogony, psychology and metaphysics, but probably the most influential was Deussen's *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, published in German in 1899 and translated into English by A.S. Geden in 1906. Like most of this early commentarial material, however, Deussen largely ignored the narratives of the Upaniṣads and instead made a stalwart effort to interpret them in a way which supported his view of them as presenting consistent teachings of *ātman/brahman* identity. Although much of this early commentarial literature contains material of interest, and is instructive in seeing how the Upaniṣads were generally approached in the early twentieth century, its somewhat blinkered approach to the texts makes much of it of limited direct relevance to this thesis. An honourable exception in this era, to some degree at least, should be made for the introductory section to Hume's 1921 translation.

Finally in this section, I should mention Erich Frauwallner, both for his detailed (and complex) 1926 article *Untersuchungen zu den älteren Upaniṣaden* and for his 1953 *History of Indian Philosophy*, translated (not entirely happily) into English by V.M. Bedekar in 1973, both of which contain some innovative ideas about the trajectory of philosophical enquiry in the early Upaniṣads.

5.   Pre-Upaniṣadic Ideas of the Ultimate Principle

According to Matthew Kapstein, 'The self, as an object of philosophico-religious speculation, is conspicuous in the most ancient literature of India only by its

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[1088] Gough considered the Upaniṣads 'a very early attempt, on the part of thinkers of a rude age and race, to form a cosmological theory'. (1903:v)

absence.'[1089] While this statement is broadly accurate, it does not necessarily follow that the early Vedic texts were devoid of speculation about the nature of the absolute. While it is unquestionably the case that philosophical speculation developed markedly in the Upaniṣadic period, earlier Vedic texts, particularly later parts of the ṚV and sections of the AV, also demonstrated, in places, a concern to discover either a 'self-contained impersonal entity' and/or 'an all-enveloping mechanism or shell'[1090] which represented ultimate reality.

A gradual shift from personalised deities with a limited role within the cosmos to a more abstract form of ultimate principle is reflected particularly in certain hymns of Book 10 of the ṚV. Norman Brown's 1965 article *Theories of Creation in the Rig Veda* contains a helpful overview of the ṚV's cosmogonic theories, looking in particular at some of the later hymns which speculate about the ultimate source of the universe in theistic terms, as sound, and as a single impersonal principle. The important hymn at ṚV 10.129 has been helpfully studied in depth in Maurer 1975 and Brereton 1999, and the speculative aspect of the cosmogonic theories of the early Vedic texts is emphasised by Jamison and Witzel, who rightly point out that 'If early Vedic religion had possessed a detailed, agreed upon cosmogony, speculation would not have been necessary…'.[1091]

Others to have looked in particular at early Vedic cosmogonic theories include Brown 1968b (specifically on the role of Vāc), Brockington 1981 (Chapter 3), Connolly 1992 (focussing in particular on the place of *prāṇa*, but making some more general observations at p.10ff), and Falk 1994 (focussing especially on ṚV 10.72). Proferes 2007, especially at p.77ff, makes some interesting observations about the political and social symbolism of water in Vedic thought. Doniger O'Flaherty's arrangement of the ṚV extracts which she translates brings together a number of cosmogonic hymns at 1981:24-40.

[1089] Kapstein 1988:239.
[1090] Brown 1965:23.
[1091] Jamison and Witzel 1992:70.

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6. Early Upaniṣadic Ideas of the Ultimate Principle

In the early Upaniṣads, much cosmogonic speculation revolved around natural elements or forces, with water playing a particularly prominent role. Hume 1921 summarises some of the early theories around water and space, and notes how they progressed from the purely cosmogonic to the more philosophical[1092]; Ranade 1926 covers much of the same ground[1093], as well as noting a reference from the KaU which he considers posits fire as the 'origin of all things'.[1094] Noting the development of the meaning of the term '*brahman*'[1095], Jan Gonda in 1950 listed a number of Upaniṣadic references where *brahman* is directly equated with natural phenomena such as wind, lightning and the sun.[1096] Nakamura 1955, writing from a Buddhist perspective, also cites a number of Upaniṣadic references where the ultimate principle is identified as, or equated with, water, wind or space. Edgerton, who emphasises the continuity of philosophical speculation from the Saṃhitās into the early Upaniṣads, argues that water, fire, air and space are all suggested as possible first principles in early Vedic texts, and that wind and space continue as such into the early Upaniṣads, criticising both Oldenberg's view that 'none of the powers which tend towards the All-being belongs to the relm of fysical nature' and Deussen's suggestion that material presentations of ultimate reality are 'symbolic'.[1097]

In Frauwallner's analysis, the Upaniṣads developed theories about the 'Carrier or Vehicle of Life' via the elements of water, wind (as breath), and fire. His individual theories are analysed in Hanefeld 1976 (the '*Feuer-Lehre*', or fire doctrine); Schneider 1961 (the '*Wasser-Kreislauf-Lehre*', or cycle of water doctrine); and Bakker 1982 (the '*Atem-Lehre*', or wind/*prāṇa* doctrine). In addition, ultimate reality is in several places in the Upaniṣads analysed not *as* a natural phenomenon, but through metaphors invoking natural phenomena (as, e.g., in the analogies of salt in water in BU 2.4.12 and CU 6.13, discussed in detail in Slaje 2001). And, although no individual element is there

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[1092] Hume 1921:9-13.
[1093] Ranade 1926:76-83.
[1094] KaU 5.9 in Olivelle's translation, though cited as KaU 2.5 by Ranade.
[1095] See below.
[1096] Gonda 1950:10.
[1097] Edgerton 1916:203-4. See also Ruben 1947, especially at 115ff.

identified in itself as the ultimate principle, Uddālaka Āruṇi's teaching in CU 6.2 of creation as progressing from heat to water to food also falls into this more materialistic category.[1098] Van Buitenen 1957b asks whether the three stages of creation in Uddālaka's theory reflect 'the annual miracle of creation', in which the 'elemental force' of the hot north Indian summer gives way to the monsoon rains which, in turn, allow crops to prosper and produce food[1099], and Uddālaka's doctrine has been analysed in numerous places, as noted in Chapter 4.

Finally in this section, Geib 1975-6, drawing quite extensively on Frauwallner, discusses the role of food and the food-eater in the Upaniṣads, noting the relationship of food to the naturalistic presentations of the ultimate principle, especially as water. He posits a three way distinction between, first, those Upaniṣadic sages who see food as the 'basic substance of existence', secondly, those who see the eaters of food (fire and wind/*prāṇa*) as the 'ultimate principle of existence' and, thirdly, those who argue that both food and food-eater are necessary (a fundamental duality which, he argues, finds its eventual home in classical Sāṃkhya).[1100]

7.   *Brahman, Ātman, Prāṇa* and *Akṣara*

Even though I argue that the teaching of their identity is overplayed, Franklin Edgerton's view that 'no one would have thought of giving this all-surpassing prominence to the *brahman* and the *ātman* - as individual expressions - in the older Upaniṣads, at any rate, were it not for the fact that later Hindu philosophy… makes so much of them' goes perhaps a little far.[1101] 'Pivotal in the development of later Indian philosophies and theologies' and 'subject to intense scrutiny by modern scholarship'[1102], these two terms are hugely important in a study such as this.

[1098] Ranade, at 1926:79, equates the *tejas* of CU 6, which Olivelle translates as 'heat', with fire. Hanefeld (1976:119) uses the German word '*Glut*' (also meaning 'heat' or 'glow'). See Chapter 4.
[1099] Van Buitenen 1957b:91.
[1100] Geib 1975-6:233.
[1101] Edgerton 1916:202. Cf. his later view (Edgerton 1965:23) that 'Among all the varied formulations of the First and Supreme Principle, none recurs more constantly throughout the late Vedic texts than the *brahman*.'
[1102] Olivelle 1998a:26.

Brahman, in particular, has been extensively analysed, with several authors discussing both its etymology and its multiple meanings. Renou and Silburn 1949 trace these meanings from a hymn or formula in the ṚV, through to a '*principe universel*' by the time of the Brāhmaṇas. They note too its use as referring to priestly power, arising from the idea that *brahman* (*bráhman*) as a hymn/formula is not just a '*formule banale*', but has divine origins and a special spiritual force.[1103] They also point out its etymological associations with the term *brahmodya*, the debate between *brahmins*, which they see as underpinning the whole literary structure of the older Upaniṣads.

Gonda 1950 also discusses the etymology of the word extensively. He notes that, even by the time of the relatively late ŚU, ideas of what *brahman* actually was were still diffuse. At 1950:10ff, Gonda lists a number of Upaniṣadic passages which identify *brahman* with such diverse entities as lightning, the heart, food, and the sun, as well as identifying passages which present the world as *emanating from brahman*, being *pervaded by brahman* or simply *being brahman* (my emphasis), before concluding that 'the supreme source of creation and the essence of reality can never be completely defined or comprehended by the human mind',[1104] but that people nevertheless continued to attempt to do so, e.g. by deifying it.[1105] At 1950:43, he finally makes his own attempt, presenting *brahman* as 'a sustaining principle… a basis, support or firm and ultimate ground of existence'.

Thieme 1952 is a third significant article in the space of four years, after Renou and Silburn 1949 and Gonda 1950, to analyse the term *brahman*, which he does to a large extent by discussing and in places challenging the views of Renou and Silburn and Gonda, amongst others, particularly around the derivation of the word.[1106] However, unlike Gonda, who devotes a reasonable amount of space to the Upaniṣads, the bulk of Thieme's analysis is focussed on the Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas.

A substantial part of Deussen [1899] 1906 is devoted to a discussion of *brahman*. He begins with a discussion of some of the early Upaniṣadic attempts to explain *brahman*,

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[1103] See also Edgerton 1965:23.
[1104] Gonda 1950:13.
[1105] Even though, in KeU 3.2, even the gods do not understand *brahman*!
[1106] See Chapter 2.

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such as those of Dṛpta Bālāki in BU 2.1 and Vidagdha Śākalya in BU 3.9; moves on to what he describes as 'symbolical representations' of *brahman*, e.g. as *prāṇa*; *brahman* as being, non-being, consciousness, bliss, and essentially unknowable; *brahman* as creator god, preserver, and destroyer of the universe. Although Deussen's survey of the role of *brahman* in the Upaniṣads is comprehensive, it is throughout coloured by the Advaitin agenda which permeates his writing, as for example in his often unstated but widespread assumptions that efforts to explain *ātman* should also be understood as efforts to explain *brahman*.

In his much briefer discussion, Hume too alights on the story of Bālāki and Ajātaśatru in BU 2.1, in which Bālāki's numerous attempts to explain or define *brahman* are one by one rejected by Ajātaśatru, who, according to Hume, presents *brahman* as 'that into which one goes to sleep and from which one wakes again'.[1107] Hume sees this as the most important Upaniṣadic attempt to define *brahman*, being 'the first… where the conception of Brahma (*sic*) is subjected to a regressive analysis leading to a conclusion which obtains throughout the remainder of the Upanishads'[1108], in particular in rejecting a single 'phenomenal object or substance' as the ground of being. For Hume, the 'merging of all objective phenomena into a unitary world-ground'[1109], which he refers to as Brahma, is the first stage in the Upaniṣads' development of what he describes as 'the pantheistic conception of the world'[1110], a stage followed by the development of the concept of *ātman* and its relationship with *brahman*.

The challenge of defining *brahman*, let alone explaining how it operates as an ultimate principle, has been highlighted by more recent scholars, including Olivelle (1998a:26 and 2010:48) and Brereton, who, with his customary succinctness, concludes that '… for the Upanishads, the *brahman* remains an open concept. It is simply the designation given to whatever principle or power a sage believes to lie behind the world and to make the world explicable'.[1111] Writing from the comparative perspective of Buddhist

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[1107] Hume 1921:18, though, in fact, the term *brahman* does not appear in Ajātaśatru's final teaching (see Chapter 3).
[1108] *Ibid.*
[1109] Hume 1921:22-23.
[1110] Hume 1921:23.
[1111] Brereton 1990:118.

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studies, Steven Collins argues that 'it is perhaps fruitless to seek for a single basic meaning', though he draws attention to the shift of the notion of *brahman* from a 'static support of things'[1112] to a 'potent, usable force' via its use, in its meaning as hymn or formula, in Vedic ritual.[1113]

An interesting metaphor for *brahman* is identified by Proferes, namely that of kingship or sovereignty. At 2007:143, Proferes argues that 'The identity of the king with his dominion and, ultimately, with the cosmos can be shown to have directly informed the early *Upaniṣadic* discourse on the nature of the absolute…', noting in particular the royal representation of *brahman* in KṣU 1, as well as citing passages from the BU and CU. The development through the Upaniṣads of homologies between the macrocosm and the microcosm finds particular resonance, he argues, in the position of the king as the ideal of political and spiritual power located

> 'at the center of the cosmos, however peripheral his position may have been in reality… As the figure of the king was projected upon the cosmos and identified with it, the political freedom and power of the king came to symbolize spiritual freedom and spiritual power'.[1114]

Finally, for Ram-Prasad, who, at 2010:725, sets out a useful list of different presentations of *brahman* in the Upaniṣads, and, at 2010:736-9, summarises later interpretations of the role of *brahman* by the various schools of Vedānta, the primary aim of *brahman* in the Upaniṣads 'seems to be to stand for some ultimate wholeness, which can integrate all existence'.[1115]

Like *brahman*, the term *ātman* too is capable of various meanings, which have developed over time. Chapple 2010:689 lists some of these: 'breath of life, core essential self, life source, soul, living being, or highest self'. Unlike *brahman*, however, the etymology of *ātman*, and its role in the Upaniṣads, have been subject to less detailed academic scrutiny, honourable exceptions being Renou 1952 and, to a more limited extent, Elizarenkova 2005 and Chapple 2010. Renou 1952 notes the relationship

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[1112] Cf. Gonda's attempt at description: see above.
[1113] Collins 1982:60.
[1114] Proferes 2007:152.
[1115] Ram-Prasad 2010:724.

between *ātman* and breath in the ṚV, which he sees as having been divorced by the time of the AV. He observes the homologies between *ātman* and the fire-altar in the ŚB, and the teaching of Śāṇḍilya in ŚB 10.6.3.2[1116], as well as highlighting the creative role of *ātman* in some of the early Upaniṣadic cosmogonies.

Hume discusses *ātman* at 1921:23-32. He sees the origin of *ātman* as a form of 'soul' having its origins in the Vedic correspondences between parts of the human body and aspects of the macrocosm, e.g. the eye and the sun, the breath and the wind[1117], which gave rise to the notion of a universal world-soul 'of which the individual self or soul is a miniature'.[1118] This, in turn, led on to correlations of *ātman* as, e.g., 'the person in fire and in speech;… in the sun and in the eye; in lightning and in heat.'[1119] He argues that theories of *ātman* and *brahman* developed simultaneously, but separately, drawing attention to Upaniṣadic creation stories in which, in different myths, both *brahman* and *ātman* are presented as the creative force. He also highlights the enquiry of the householders who came to Aśvapati Kaikeya in CU 5.11[1120], wishing to know the nature of *ātman and* (my emphasis) the nature of *brahman*, as indicative of this separate development, but also of what he considers a gradual understanding of the identity of the two concepts.

For Belvalkar and Ranade, the recognition of *ātman* as the 'highest cosmological principle' is the 'culminating point of Upanishadic philosophy'.[1121] They note various possible etymological derivations of the term, including possible derivations from the Sanskrit √*an* (to breathe), a common suggestion among German commentators who note the etymological similarity with the German *atmen* (to breathe).[1122] At 1927:360-365, they contribute a useful review of 'Upaniṣadic statements about the *ātman*', as they also do about *brahman* at 1927:355-357.

[1116] An exhortation to meditate on *ātman*, described as 'made up of intelligence, and endowed with a body of spirit', equated with a 'golden Purusha in the heart'; and described as 'that self of the spirit' (*prāṇa*) (translations from Eggeling 1897).

[1117] As, e.g., in ṚV 10.16.3.

[1118] Hume 1921:25.

[1119] BU 2.5, following Hume's translation at 1921:28.

[1120] See Chapters 4 and 5.

[1121] Belvalkar and Ranade 1927:357.

[1122] See also Renou 1952, discussed above.

H.G. Narahari's 1944 work *Ātman in Pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic Literature*, despite its title, explores concepts of both *ātman* and *brahman* in the Upaniṣads in Chapter 3. He describes the use of the two terms in the Upaniṣads to denote the 'First Principle' as 'promiscuous'.[1123] Van Buitenen 1964 discusses the expression '*mahān ātmā*' (which he translates as the 'great *ātman*' or the 'large *ātman*'), originally appearing in the Upaniṣads as a macrocosmic entity which found its way into a microcosmic form as the 'personal' *ātman*, and also into classical Sāṃkhya philosophy, 'which made innocuous a term that in its original development of conception reflected a fundamental position opposed to the dualism of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, that of a supreme being, creating itself in the universe'.[1124]

Van Buitenen 1955-6 and 1959 survey the development of the term *akṣara*, another term which originally had a phonetic meaning (as 'syllable', later associated specifically with OṂ), before later becoming a designation for the ultimate principle in the JUB and in certain places in the Upaniṣads.[1125] Renou also touches on *akṣara* in Renou 1949, and Modi devotes a whole monograph to it (Modi 1932), though only Chapter 3 directly addresses its use in the Upaniṣads.

Breath, or *prāṇa*, also plays a role in Upaniṣadic enquiry into the ultimate principle, though, as Frauwallner notes, breath as an ultimate principle has difficulty explaining 'all the phenomena of life', such as knowledge and consciousness, so that 'the doctrine of Breath must… reckon with a multiplicity of life-forces' in a way which allows breath some form of primacy amongst them.[1126] He explores this by reference to the stories which appear in various places in the Upaniṣads where the senses and/or bodily functions compete with each other for supremacy, competitions which are in each case won by breath or *prāṇa*.[1127] He does not, however, go on directly to discuss *prāṇa* in its more extended sense of 'life breath' or 'vital force', other than in a rather parenthetical paragraph at [1953] 1973:45. He does highlight Raikva's teaching in CU 4.1.3, where a homology is presented between the role of the wind in the wider universe and the role of

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[1123] Narahari 1944:22. Narahari's work is extensively criticised by Connolly at 1992:24-32.
[1124] Van Buitenen 1964:114.
[1125] E.g. BU 3.8.8-11; MāU 1. See Chapter 2.
[1126] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:41.
[1127] E.g. BU 6.1.7-14; CU 5.1.6-15; KṣU 2.14.

breath in the individual, which he suggests is a 'fruitful beginning' of the extension of the 'Breath-doctrine',[1128] before concluding a little lamely that 'Evidently the Breath proved to be not suitable to unite with itself further-reaching ideas.'[1129], a conclusion challenged in Bakker 1982, who saw the *Atem-Lehre* as developing, particularly through the KṣU, into a form of proto-Sāṃkhya.

Although he does not explicity refer to Frauwallner, those ideas are also challenged by Peter Connolly in Connolly 1992 and Connolly 1997. In Connolly 1992, he says:

> 'An examination of all references to *prāṇa* in the *Upaniṣads* reveals that the prominent view is quite similar to [that of pre-Upaniṣadic texts]; *prāṇa* is the primeval source of all and the immortal inner essence of individuals which manifests in the body as the various breaths and faculties'[1130];

and in Connolly 1997 he sets out certain Upaniṣadic passages which he argues present *prāṇa* as an ultimate principle, some straightforwardly and others metaphorically.[1131] His core argument is that, in certain (though not all) places in the Upaniṣads, the much better known concepts of *ātman* and *brahman* 'were developed on the basis of existing conceptions of *prāṇa*'[1132], a development which was consciously downplayed or even deliberately misinterpreted in later philosophical traditions. His self-professed 'bold and provocative conclusion' is that 'On the subject of *prāṇa* the great Vedānta commentators wilfully misrepresented the teachings of the Upaniṣads.'.[1133]

The Upaniṣadic presentation of *prāṇa* as a 'first principle' is highlighted as early as Deussen [1899] 1906 where, in a sentiment echoed by Frauwallner in his presentation of the early form of his 'fire-doctrine', he notes that the early Upaniṣads especially are 'yet… unable to apprehend the first principle of the universe otherwise than in its most obvious phenomenal forms'.[1134] Yet, even though this statement suggests an acceptance

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[1128] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:44.
[1129] Frauwallner [1953] 1973:45. Keith 1925:516 also suggests that the setting-up of breath as the ultimate principle was rejected as inadequate.
[1130] Connolly 1992:57.
[1131] Connolly 1997:26.
[1132] Connolly 1997:35.
[1133] Connolly 1997:36-37.
[1134] Deussen [1899] 1906:101.

of *prāṇa* as denoting a form of ultimate principle, at least in some early Upaniṣadic passages, Deussen later refers to these passages as being those 'in which the *prāṇa* is recognised as a first principle, but immediately set aside'.[1135] Belvalkar and Ranade too highlight the prominence of *prāṇa* in certain early Upaniṣadic texts, before its eventual subordination to *ātman*, seeing TU 2.2 as 'completing the downward career of Prāṇa by making him merely one of the sheaths or envelopes of the Ātman'.[1136] Another useful summary of the role of *prāṇa* in the Upaniṣads, though one which does not afford it the status of an ultimate principle, is contained in Zysk 1993. His conclusion is that

> 'In their spiritual quest through meditation for the universal principle behind
> all existence, these ascetics realized that breath was the closest physical
> manifestation of the ultimate, unchanging, creative force in man, his *ātman*,
> or soul, the embodiment of the *brahman*, or universal spirit. *Prāṇa* is the seat
> of the *brahman* and arises from the *ātman*.'[1137]

8.   Later Upaniṣadic Interpretations

As the main purpose of this thesis is to analyse what the Upaniṣads actually say, rather than how they have been interpreted, I do not devote significant space to a detailed discussion of the later Indian philosophical schools. Useful summaries may be found in Hiriyanna 1993 and 1995, including in particular a summary of the views of the early Pūrva Mīmāṃsā scholars Prabhākara and Kumārila with regard to the self at Hiriyanna 1993:302-3. However, theories of the ultimate principle were in general not at the forefront of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā philosophy.

The term '*vedānta*' ('end of the Veda') is a term frequently used of the Vedic Upaniṣads themselves, and was appropriated by a number of later philosophical schools which take the Upaniṣads as foundational doctrinal texts. While some later interpreters[1138] produced detailed commentaries on individual Upaniṣads, most, if not all, of the most significant

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[1135] Deussen [1899] 1906:110. See also Coomaraswamy 2000:41: '*Prāṇa* is an essential name of the Self.'
[1136] Belvalkar and Ranade 1927:368-9.
[1137] Zysk 1993:204.
[1138] Notably Śaṅkara.

later Upaniṣadic interpreters base their interpretations not just on the Upaniṣads themselves (or, more accurately, on specific passages from the Upaniṣads), but also on the BS. The BS themselves were translated into English by George Thibaut, as part of the *Sacred Books of the East* series, first, with the commentary by Śaṅkara, in two parts in 1890 and 1896, and then with the commentary of Rāmānuja in 1904. Radhakrishnan 1960 contains an alternative translation, with his own commentary, as well as a lengthy introduction in which he summarises the philosophical interpretations of no fewer than twelve commentators over a period from the eighth to the eighteenth centuries.[1139]

Five of the most significant schools deriving authority from the BS whose teachings have come down to us are the Advaita associated primarily with Śaṅkara, the Viśiṣṭādvaita associated primarily with Rāmānuja, the Dvaita of Madhva, the Bhedābheda of (amongst others) Bhāskara and Nimbārka, and the Śuddhādvaita of Vallabha.[1140] Each of these schools, especially the first two, has been the subject of extensive secondary literature, often written from the perspective of an adherent to, or at least a supporter of, the philosophy in question. A useful brief summary of the BS in the light of the commentaries of all five schools mentioned above is Ghate 1926. His conclusion maintains a degree of objectivity, though tends towards favouring the ideas of Rāmānuja.[1141]

So far as the individual schools are concerned, among the numerous works on Śaṅkara's Advaita, it is worth highlighting Deussen [1883] 1912, which analyses the BS with Śaṅkara's commentary, and also includes a breakdown of the quotations from the Upaniṣads which Śaṅkara's commentary contains[1142], as well as Deutsch 1969 for a succinct overview, and Suthren Hirst 2005, especially for her discussion in Chapter 7 of Śaṅkara's treatment of three key Upaniṣadic phrases.[1143] Rāmānuja's system is covered in Lipner 1986 and receives a fairly recent treatment in Bartley 2002; Madhva's is usefully summarised in Narain 1962; Nimbārka's in Agrawal 1977; and Vallabha's in

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[1139] Radhakrishnan 1960:25-102.

[1140] See Chapter 1.

[1141] As well as being generally dismissive of Śaṅkara, he also dismisses Madhva's theories as 'inferior in character' and 'of little or no merit' (Ghate 1926:168ff).

[1142] Deussen [1883] 1912:30-32. He identifies some 2,060 individual Upaniṣadic quotations in Śaṅkara's commentary, 810 of which come from the CU and 567 from the BU.

[1143] *Tat tvam asi, neti neti,* and *satyaṃ jñānam anantaṃ brahman.*

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Narain 2004. Radhakrishnan 1928 contains a lengthy discussion of Śaṅkara's Advaita and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita[1144]; Sawai 1991 a shorter summary of their competing views. Finally, Dasgupta [1922] 1988 contains extensive summaries of all five schools, Śaṅkara in volume 1 (406-494), Rāmānuja in volume 3 (94-138 on Viśiṣṭādvaita generally and 165-398 on Rāmānuja specifically), Nimbārka in volume 3 (399-444), and Madhva and Vallabha in volume 4 (51-203 and 320-383 respectively).

9.   The Upaniṣads as Literature: literary devices and narratives

It is only relatively recently that much scholarly attention has been paid to the literary presentation of the Upaniṣads. Although the literary presentation of teachings was often mentioned in early commentarial literature, those commentaries paid little, if any, attention to what that literary presentation could contribute to an understanding of the texts.

In 1961, Paul Hacker, discussing the method of 'historical exploration' (*geschichtlichen Erforschung*) of anonymous Sanskrit texts, argued that, while the texts as we have them may well be made up of pieces which had once stood alone, the fact that we have them in the form in which we do should be considered significant. Philological study must accordingly concern itself with the historical, cultural and intellectual reasons behind the changes to texts over time and, therefore, the historical, cultural and intellectual reasons why an individual text ended up in the form in which it did. This concern with the form, as well as the content, of Upaniṣadic teachings led to important individual Upaniṣadic narratives being analysed, often in great detail, as, for example, in Hanefeld 1976, before Brereton 1990, discussed above, used narratives to help define his paradigms.

Olivelle 1999b is a very significant work in this context, not just in its detailed analysis of the Śvetaketu story from the BU, CU and KṣU, but in promoting the general idea that the narrative context in which an Upaniṣadic teaching is presented can be extremely

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[1144] Consistently with the tenor of some of his other work, it is noticeable that Śaṅkara receives over 200 pages, and Rāmānuja only about 60. Radhakrishnan's conclusion on Śaṅkara is verging on the hagiographic (Radhakrishnan 1928:224).

meaningful in extracting what the author/compiler of that teaching sees as its key components. By examining the divergent literary ways in which the compilers of the three versions of the 'Young Śvetaketu' narrative both present the underlying story and develop the character of Śvetaketu, he notes significant differences in their theological and socio-political standpoints. As he says: 'Close attention to language, style, narrative strategy, and choice of words helps us understand what the author is aiming to do, what message, subtle or otherwise, he is attempting to impart…'.[1145] A literary study of the texts which is mindful of the development of characters and narrative episodes, whether within the same text, within different recensions of the same text, or between different texts, enables the scholar to consider the progression of ideas more clearly within the contexts in which they were being presented, to a much greater extent than is allowed by the simple mining of the texts for 'nuggets' of philosophical teaching isolated from their context, and such an approach is key to my own analysis.

Olivelle's work has undoubtedly influenced two others whose recent output has explored Upaniṣadic narrative in depth. Olivelle's own student, Steven Lindquist, focussed much of his early work on one Upaniṣadic character, Yājñavalkya, from his discussion of BU 3.9.28 in 2004, through his 2008 look at women in the BU (the two most important of whom, Gārgī and Maitreyī, both appear in dialogue with Yājñavalkya), to his study of the historicity of Yājñavalkya in 2011 and his complete monograph on Yājñavalkya (forthcoming). Brian Black's 2007 work *The Character of the Self in Ancient India* explicitly acknowledges the influence of Olivelle 1999b, as well as other studies of individual characters or narrative episodes[1146], while seeking to break new ground in looking for common characteristics among the Upaniṣadic dialogues and seeking to derive from those common characteristics 'a consistent set of teachings that are integral to understanding ideas such as *ātman*, *prāṇa*, and immortality'.[1147] The use of dialogue in South Asian religions more generally is discussed in Black and Patton's 2015 edited volume *Dialogue in Early South Asian Religions*.

[1145] Olivelle 1999b:47. Renou 1955 also uses this episode to locate his discussion of the correlations between the BU and CU.
[1146] Black 2007:19.
[1147] *Ibid.*

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Black 2007 analyses Upaniṣadic narratives within the categories of (a) teachers and students; (b) debates between *brahmins*; (c) kings and *brahmins*; and (d) *brahmins* and women, some of which themes I discuss briefly in Chapter 1. Following (even if not explicitly) Hacker's approach, he argues that the Upaniṣadic narrative episodes which he studies are 'not merely superfluous information or literary ornamentation, but fundamental aspects of the philosophical claims of the texts'.[1148] He notes how the antipathy to ritual shown in several places in the early Upaniṣads reflects in the re-definition of certain key *brahmin* characters as teachers rather than ritualists and in their changing relationships with their royal patrons; how the CU responds to these social changes in a more conservative way than the BU[1149]; and how the dialogue narrative form helps depict philosophical truths both as attainable through interaction with others, and 'entrenched within the affairs of everyday life'.[1150]

Black's more recent work has explored literary connections between the Upaniṣads and early Buddhist narratives (Black 2011b and 2012) and the teaching lineages of the BU (Black 2011c), but for my purposes his most significant contribution since 2007 has been his study of secrecy as an Upaniṣadic narrative theme (Black 2011a), a theme also explored in some depth by Jonardon Ganeri in Chapter 3 of Ganeri 2007. Ganeri argues, amongst other things, that the Upaniṣads often present ultimate reality as hidden 'in order to make possible a project of self-discovery'.[1151]

Grinshpon 2003 is another important contribution to the study of the Upaniṣadic narratives and their significance. Like Olivelle before him and Black after him, Grinshpon stresses the importance of what he describes as 'Good-Enough Reading' of the Upaniṣads, in other words a reading which uses the narratives to refine the abstract theories which can be derived from the texts. He presents the Upaniṣadic narratives as 'narratives of crisis', whose characters are 'awakened to their inferiority' and suffer 'metaphysical (or ontological) weakness', the transcendence of which is 'the crux of Upanishadic storytelling'.[1152] Brereton too, at 1997:3n7, argues that the Upaniṣads are

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[1148] Black 2007:169.
[1149] A point emphasised in Olivelle 2009a.
[1150] Black 2007:174.
[1151] Ganeri 2007:22.
[1152] Grinshpon 2003:vii.

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not necessarily 'loosely structured collections of assertions, observations and aphorisms about the nature of things'. He argues, as I do, that they should be read in a way which 'accentuates the connections between the parts of the dialogue, and… assumes that the passage should be seen as a coherent composition', even if this is not necessarily an obvious assumption given the composite nature and range of the topics often discussed, even within an individual passage.

I mention in Chapter 1 the contributions of others in looking at specific Upaniṣadic literary themes and characters. As well as Olivelle 1999b on Śvetaketu and Uddālaka Āruṇi, and Lindquist's work on Yājñavalkya, individual characters have been analysed in works such as Fišer 1984, Reinvang 2000, Hock 2002, and Witzel 2003b (all on Yājñavalkya); Findly 1985 on Gārgī; Bodewitz 2001 on Uddālaka Āruṇi; Black 2011b on Śvetaketu; Lindquist 2008 on Gārgī and Maitreyī; and Lindquist 2011a on Śākalya. Olivelle 1998a:478-486 and Lindquist 2018b both contain helpful lists of Upaniṣadic characters, and, although somewhat dated, Macdonell and Keith 1912 contains a useful encyclopaedia of Vedic characters more broadly. Ruben 1947 contains more detailed studies of individual Upaniṣadic 'philosophers' set in their textual contexts, though see Lindquist 2018b:101 for a critique of Ruben's 'historically positivist reconstruction'.

So far as other specific literary themes are concerned, the roots of the teacher/student motif in the system of *brahmacarya* are discussed in Olivelle 1993, as well as Kaelber 1981 and 1989 and Lubin 2005. Ruben 1928, Thompson 1997 and Brereton 1997 discuss debates between *brahmins*, as does Witzel 1987a, focussing on the 'shattered head' motif, also discussed in Insler 1989-90. As something of an exception to the more recent development of the study of Upaniṣadic literary devices, the motif of *kṣatriyas* teaching *brahmins* is reviewed by many commentators from as early as Garbe 1897 up to Black 2007, via such as Deussen [1899] 1906 and [1897] 1980, Edgerton 1916, Hume 1921, and Frauwallner [1953] 1973, with differing conclusions about its importance. It is also worth noting the valuable work of Edgerton in his discussion of the theme of knowledge as power in the Upaniṣads, particularly in Edgerton 1929, where he stresses the relationship in Vedic thought between knowledge and control.

In Chapter 4, I focus on one particular, and very famous, Upaniṣadic narrative, namely the dialogue between Uddālaka Āruṇi and his son, Śvetaketu, in CU 6. The episode in

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CU 6, its characters, and in particular the teaching encapsulated in the phrase '*tat tvam asi*' have been the subject of extensive study, going back as far as that by Franklin Edgerton in his *Studies in the Veda* article of 1915, with a detailed linguistic analysis appearing in Morgenroth 1970.

The character of Uddālaka Āruṇi, in the particular context of CU 6, is discussed by Ruben in 1947:156-176, and, although not directly focussing on CU 6, the character of Śvetaketu, and his relationship with his father, form the subject of Olivelle's *Young Śvetaketu: A Literary Study of an Upaniṣadic Story* (Olivelle 1999b), mentioned above. Śvetaketu, and the setting of CU 6 in the context of the dialogue between father and son, are also discussed at Bronkhorst 1996. The narrative of CU 6 is one of the three Upaniṣadic narratives which Hanefeld analyses in detail in Hanefeld 1976. He focusses in particular on the structural integrity, or otherwise, of the narrative, as does Bodewitz in Bodewitz 2001. Hanefeld's arguments are also usefully summarised in Bock-Raming 1996. Hanefeld's exposition is generally cogent and useful, though, in 'mining' the narrative in such detail, he perhaps runs the risk of losing sight both of the general thrust of the narrative when read as a whole, and of the broader role played by Uddālaka Āruṇi in the early Upaniṣads.

Uddālaka Āruṇi's empirical focus in his analysis of reality, which I discuss in Chapter 4, has been noted by, amongst others, Black[1153], and discussed in more detail in Chattopadhyaya 1986-7, where Uddālaka is described as a 'pioneer of science'. The word *ādeśa* - which Olivelle translates as 'rule of substitution' and which plays an important part in Uddālaka's explanation of the universe - has been specifically discussed in van Buitenen 1958, Thieme 1968, Slaje 2010, and Acharya 2017; and another important word in the narrative, *vācārambhaṇam*, in van Buitenen 1955 and 1958. Other parts of Uddālaka's teachings have been analysed in Bodewitz 1991/2, Bodewitz 2001, Visigalli 2014, and Acharya 2016.

The famous saying *tat tvam asi*, repeated thirteen times by Uddālaka Āruṇi in CU 6, has traditionally been interpreted, both in Indian circles and in Western exegesis, as 'thou art that' and seen as an unequivocal statement of non-duality. However, that

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[1153] Black 2007:40.

interpretation has been called into question in recent years. The idea that CU 6 teaches a strict non-dualism was called into question in Hanefeld 1976, Sawai 1991 and Bodewitz 2001, and the 'traditional' rendering of the phrase was seriously doubted in an influential 1986 article by Joel Brereton. As I discuss further in Chapter 4, Brereton's conclusion has been adopted with approval by Olivelle (1998a and elsewhere) but challenged by others, including Ganeri, Roebuck, and Phillips.

One of the other narratives involving Uddālaka Āruṇi which I discuss in Chapter 4 is that of the teaching of the 'five fires', which appears in CU 5.3 to 5.10. That narrative, and its counterparts at BU 6.2 and KṣU 1, are the narratives subjected to detailed literary analysis in Olivelle 1999b, where he also discusses their contents, though without directly relating them to the teachings of CU 6. This group of narratives has been discussed by, amongst others, Frauwallner [1953] 1973, Söhnen 1981, Bodewitz 1986 and Killingley 1997.

10. God and Sāṃkhya

In Chapter 5, I look at the role of god (and gods) in the Upaniṣads' quest to find the ultimate principle, noting too the tendency in places to give the ultimate principle personality, even if not necessarily explicit divinity. That enquiry leads also to a brief consideration of the relationship between the Upaniṣads (particularly the KaU and ŚU) with, on the one hand, the BhG, and, on the other, Sāṃkhya philosophy.

Much early Vedic ritual revolved around the propitiation of deified natural forces, such as Agni (fire), Vāyu (wind), Sūrya (sun) etc. Dasgupta notes how, at the end of the Saṃhitā period, there had been a move towards a deified representation of the 'creator and controller of the universe', in the form of Prajāpati, Viśvakarman, Brahmaṇaspati or, in some places, Brahman[1154], but that it was only in the Upaniṣads that the nature of that deity began to be investigated. As he says,

> 'Many visible objects of nature such as the sun or the wind… were tried, but none could render satisfaction to the great ideal that had been aroused… The

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[1154] Dasgupta [1922] 1988 (vol.1):43.

Upaniṣads present to us the history of this quest and the results that were achieved.'.[1155]

Some of the most important studies of the role of the gods in the Vedic period have been done by Jan Gonda. His essay *The Īśvara Idea* in his volume *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion* (Gonda 1965a) surveys the development of ideas of a personified god though the Vedic period into the religious tradition(s) we now know as Hinduism, noting in particular the rise of Rudra in the ŚU as 'the heir of Prajāpati, Puruṣa and Brahman conceptions' in earlier Vedic texts.[1156] He covers much of the same ground in Gonda 1968a; and Gonda 1970 documents the rise to prominence of Śiva and Viṣṇu, again containing some useful observations on the place of Rudra in the ŚU. Gonda 1986 is a detailed and painstaking study of the rise to prominence of Prajāpati in early Vedic texts, a rise which continues into the early Upaniṣads.

Chapter 5 focusses particularly on the later Upaniṣads, notably the KaU and the ŚU. Hauschild's 'critical edition'[1157] of the ŚU from 1927 was an important landmark in the study of these later Upaniṣads, and I have also mentioned above Rau's influential translations of both into German, the ŚU in 1965 and the KaU in 1971. Thomas Oberlies produced his own 'critical edition' of the ŚU in a series of instalments from 1995 to 1998, following on from his overarching study of the text in Oberlies 1988. Morton Smith's *Thinking Class Theism* article of 1975 explores the language of the ŚU, and Salomon 1986 looks in particular at the Vedic citations in the ŚU (an area also covered in Oberlies 1988). Signe Cohen also explores the linguistic structure of the ŚU in Cohen 1998, and, reflecting that article, in her chapter on the ŚU in Cohen 2008, where she makes some useful observations about the possible interpolation of Rudra as the principal deity in the theistic ŚU. Although the KaU has also been much studied, those studies have in general been less useful for the purposes of this thesis, often focussing in detail on small sections of the text rather than looking for thematic development, but I note here the studies in Helfer 1968, Gonda 1977, Lipner 1978, Sharma 1984 and Bodewitz 1985, as well as the narratological study of the KaU's frame

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[1155] *Ibid.*
[1156] Gonda 1965a:162.
[1157] See Olivelle's observations on so-called 'critical editions' of Upaniṣads at 1998a:xv and, in more detail, in 1998b.

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story of Naciketas' visit to the realm of death in DeVries' 1987 article *The Father, the Son and the Ghoulish Host: A Fairy Tale in Early Sanskrit?.*

The relationship between the later Upaniṣads and the BhG is particularly helpfully covered in a number of places in Malinar 2007, as well as in a short section at Cohen 2008:198-200 on the KaU. Although the origins of Sāṃkhya are somewhat murky - see Larson 1979 for both a 'Critical Review of the History of Interpretations of the Sāṃkhya', in which he summarises and reviews the work of fourteen earlier scholars, and 'An Interpretation of the Historical Development of Classical Sāṃkhya' - there is a broad consensus that terminology, and certain nascent ideas, which became important some centuries later in classical Sāṃkhya can be found in the Upaniṣads, especially in the KaU and the ŚU. Larson addresses this in particular at 1979:95-103, while dealing with the relationship between early Sāṃkhya and the BhG at Larson 1979:108-134.[1158] E.H. Johnston also deals with the Sāṃkhya/Upaniṣads relationship in Johnston 1930 (specifically on the ŚU) and Johnston 1937 (more generally). In Johnston 1930 he argues (rather against most other scholars, who see nascent ideas rather than a clearly defined system) for a pre-existing Sāṃkhya philosophy which is reflected in the ŚU. Although he modifies this view in Johnston 1937, it is easy to read that article as an attempt to find a system in the Upaniṣads rather than a more objective questioning of what they actually say.

Finally in this section, I should note again van Buitenen's articles at van Buitenen 1957a and 1957b, as well as Bronkhorst's 1983 article on the role of god in Sāṃkhya, in which he argues that Sāṃkhya philosophy was not always the atheistic system which the classical Sāṃkhya of the Sāṃkhyakārikā is generally taken to be, a view also taken (to some degree at least) by Hauschild 1927, Johnston 1937, van Buitenen 1957a, and Edgerton 1975.[1159]

[1158] See also Malinar 2007:*passim*, but particularly 192-206.

[1159] For the text, and an English translation, of the Sāṃkhyakārikā, see Larson 1979.