

A New Approach to Prohibitive Constructions in the *Ṛgveda* and the *Atharvaveda*

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Negative commands in Vedic have traditionally been divided into two classes: those built with the Aorist stem and those built with the Present stem. The former is said to be “preventive,” used to ward off some dreaded future eventuality, while the latter is said to be “inhibitive,” used to halt some currently ongoing action. I challenge this division on two grounds: one functional and one formal. Re-examining all prohibitions of the two oldest Sanskrit texts, the *Ṛgveda* and the *Atharvaveda*, I find that there is no correlation between “inhibitive” interpretation and use of the Present stem in Vedic. Having established that the traditional division is incorrect, I then propose a new, formal explanation for the attested distribution of stem types.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Vedic Sanskrit a negative command, or prohibition, is regularly expressed by *mā́* plus the injunctive form of a verb (i.e., the augmentless verbal stem with secondary endings). These may be built to Present, Aorist, or (rarely) Perfect tense-aspect stems.¹

Hoffmann (1967) (hereinafter simply “Hoffmann”) hypothesizes a semantic distribution for the three tense-aspect stems in prohibitions, with the Aor. inj. expressing one type of prohibition and the Pres. and Pf. inj. expressing another. Hoffmann’s (pp. 44, 70, 91) primary semantic distinction is between what he terms “preventive” (Aor. inj.) and “inhibitive” (Pres./Pf. inj.). These are both types of interpretations or “readings” of a prohibitive verb. The Aor. inj. after *mā́* is said to be preventive. An example of the preventive reading in English is given in (1).

- (1) *mā́* + AOR. INJ. = “PREVENTIVE”
Don’t be alarmed by what I am about to tell you.

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¹ I refer to these respectively as “Pres. inj.,” “Aor. inj.,” and “Pf. inj.” throughout (plural “Pres. inj.,” etc.). Initial capitals are used for tense-aspect stems, so as to distance the names of these categories from any claims about their meaning (e.g., the morphological Perfect of Sanskrit may or may not denote perfect aspect as it is understood in semantic and cross-linguistic terms). All textual citations are from the *Ṛgveda* (*RV*), *Atharvaveda* (*AV*), and the *Khilāni* (*Kh.*). Citations of the *Atharvaveda* are to the Śaunaka recension (*AVŚ*) unless otherwise marked as Paippalāda (*AVP*). In numbered textual examples, boldface is used for the relevant prohibitive formation, while underlining is used to highlight nearby adverbial or contextual elements that help decide on a particular reading for the bolded item.

This is interpreted as *let it not be the case that you will be alarmed*, with the presupposition that I'm afraid that you *will* or *might* be alarmed. The Pres. or Pf. inj. with *mā* is said to be inhibitive. English examples of the inhibitive reading are given in (2).

- (2) *mā* + PRES. INJ. OR PF. INJ. = “INHIBITIVE”
- Don't leave me!* (said to someone leaving = *stop leaving*).
 - Don't cry!* (said to someone crying = *stop crying* or *don't keep crying*).

These are interpreted as *let it not be the case that you continue leaving/crying*, with the presupposition that you currently *are* leaving/crying.²

I now turn to the Vedic data, beginning with examples that conform to Hoffmann's proposal. Example (3) shows five root-Aor. inj. in preventive use.

- (3) PREVENTIVE READING: AOR. INJ.
*mā no vadhīr indra mā pārā dā, mā naḥ priyā bhójanāni prá moṣṭh
āṇḍā mā no maghavañ chakra nīr bhen, mā naḥ pātrā bhet sahājānuṣāni* (RV I.104.8)
Don't smite us, Indra; **don't hand us over**. **Don't steal** our dear delights.
Don't split apart our “eggs,” o bounteous and powerful one; **don't split** our “cups”
along with their contents.³

Examples (4a) and (4b) show two Pres. inj. in inhibitive use, while (4c) shows a Pf. in inhibitive use.

- (4) INHIBITIVE READINGS: PRES. INJ. (a)–(b) AND PF. INJ. (c)
- śrudhī hávam indra mā riṣanyaḥ* (RV II.11.1a)
Hear (our) summons, Indra; **stop doing damage** (tr. mine).
 - vī uchā duhitar divo, mā cirám tanuthā ápaḥ* (RV V.79.9ab)
Shine forth, Daughter of Heaven; **don't stretch out** [= delay] your work any longer (tr. mine; cf. Hoffmann, p. 79).
 - sóma id vaḥ sutó astu, kálayo mā bibhītana
ápéd eṣá dhvasmāyati, svayám ghaiṣó ápāyati* (RV VIII.66.15)
Let just your soma be pressed. Kalis, **stop fearing**:
this miasma will go away; by itself it will go away.

Examples (3) and (4) are the “well behaved” examples for Hoffmann's account, though we shall see that these are in fact the exception rather than the rule.

The structure of this paper is as follows: §2 demonstrates that Hoffmann's proposed distribution of the prohibitive Pres./Pf. and Aor. cannot be correct. §3 provides an alternative functional explanation for the inhibitive/preventive distinction, which shows how lexical semantics (§3.1), including actionality (§3.2), as well as pragmatics/context (§3.3) are responsible for the inhibitive or preventive character of any given prohibition. In §3.4, I give a quantitative overview of the distribution of prohibition types (preventive/inhibitive) with respect

² Two further prohibitive categories introduced by Hoffmann—which he calls “corrective” (pp. 44, 70–77) and “general prohibitive” (pp. 91–92)—have found no traction in subsequent literature and will be ignored here.

³ All *RV* translations are from Jamison and Brereton 2014, with some minor adjustments, unless otherwise noted (cf. n. 9 below).

to stem selection (i.e., Aor. or Pres./Pf.), showing that Hoffmann’s claims do not stand up against the data. §4 puts forth a formal analysis for the observed distribution of the two stem classes (Pres./Pf. and Aor.), noticing that simple root formations are preferred after *mā* in the earliest language and that this selectional restriction only gradually gives way to morphologically more complex stems (especially sibilant Aorists). The choice of Aor. or Pres./Pf. stem is thus shown to have nothing whatever to do with the “aspectual” meaning of these stem types and everything to do with the interaction between the selectional properties of *mā* and the formal limitations of the particular verbal bases involved. §5 summarizes and concludes.

2. PROBLEMATIZATION

Hoffmann’s theory has gone essentially unchallenged since its formulation and is not uncommonly presented as *communis opinio* (e.g., Willi 2018: 398, Clackson 2007: 162, Willmott 2007: 106). Such a semantic contrast between Aor. and Pres./Pf. injs. in prohibitions is said to provide our “clearest” evidence in support of the supposed perfective/imperfective aspectual contrast between Aor. and Pres. stems in Vedic (Kiparsky 1998: 46).⁴

Yet a re-examination both of Hoffmann’s treatment and of the relevant data in the *RV* and *AV* reveals that the distribution he reports is only rarely borne out in the texts. For one thing, there are many clear counterexamples in both directions. On the one hand, we find Pres. (5a) and Pf. (5b) injs. in preventive use (admitted by Hoffmann [pp. 88–90]). In (5a) the Pres. *mā rarīthāḥ* is immediately followed by an Aor. *mā riṣāma*. Likewise, the Pf. *mā ví mumucaḥ* in (5b) is most readily understood as preventive. It occurs in a typical “journey hymn,” referring to a single, specific action in which Indra is asked, at the present moment, to drive to the sacrificers and drink soma without getting sidetracked at another sacrifice (cf. Jamison and Brereton 2014: 525).

(5) PREVENTIVE PRES. (a) AND PF. (b) INJ.

- a. *mā jāsvane vṛṣabha no rarīthā*_[PRES.], *mā te revātaḥ sakhiyé riṣāma*_[AOR.] (*RV* VI.44.11ab)
Give_[PRES.] us **not** to exhaustion, bull. Let us not come to harm_[AOR.] in our comradeship with you, the wealthy.
- b. *mā aré asmád ví mumucaḥ* (*RV* III.41.8a)
Do not unharness at a distance from us.

On the other hand, we find Aor. injs. in inhibitive use (6) (admitted by Hoffmann [pp. 72–73]).⁵ In (6a) “turn back” presupposes that the addressee is already in the process of going away at speech time. In (6b) the addressee is not currently present, and the speaker would like him to be.

(6) INHIBITIVE AOR. INJ.

- a. *ní vartadhvam mā ánu gāta* (*RV* X.19.1a) [**NB**: NOT ^x*mā(nu) jigāta*]
Turn back; don’t keep going.
- b. *mā aré asmán maghavañ jiyók kaḥ* (*RV* VII.22.6c)
Don’t spend/stop spending a long time at a distance from us, o bounteous one (tr. mine, following Hoffmann, p. 73).

⁴ Similarly Dahl (2010: 23–24, 244–49, 323–25), though here the distinction is between perfective vs. *neutral* aspect.

⁵ Pace Dahl (2010: 324): “Aorist Injunctive forms invariably have a preventive meaning in prohibitive clauses.”

Examples (5a) and (7) show how prohibitions containing Pres./Pf. inj.s. often co-occur alongside prohibitions containing Aor. inj.s., without obvious difference in interpretation. In (7a) a prohibitive Pres. inj., *mā veḥ*, is surrounded by two prohibitive Aor. inj.s., all in preventive use (admitted also by Hoffmann [p. 88]). In (7b) a prohibitive Aor. inj. follows a prohibitive Pres. inj., *mā...āva sṛjaḥ* (again admitted preventive by Hoffmann [p. 89]). In (7c) the Pres. inj. *mā...prā madaḥ* is surrounded by Aor. injunctives. Hoffmann (p. 86) asserts, without providing a reason, that the lone Pres. inj. here is inhibitive while all the Aor. inj.s. are preventive.⁶

(7) CO-OCCURRENCE OF PRES. INJ. AND AOR. INJ.

- a. *mā kāsya yakṣām śādam id dhurō gā*_[AOR.], *mā veśāsya praminatō mā āpēḥ mā bhrātur agne ānṛjor ṛṇam ver*_[PRES.], *mā sākhyur dākṣam ripōr bhujema*_[AOR.] (RV IV.3.13)⁷

Don't ever chase after_[AOR.] (us, as) the specter of a nobody, a crooked man—neither of a tricky neighbor, nor of a friend.

Do not pursue_[PRES.] the debt of a dishonest brother (against us), Agni. **May we not pay for**_[AOR.] the “skill” of a cheating partner.

- b. *mā no agne āva sṛjo*_[PRES.] *aghāya, aviśyāve ripāve duchúnāyai mā datvāte dāsate mādāte no, mā riśate sahasāvan pārā dāḥ*_[AOR.] (RV I.189.5)

Do not release_[PRES.] us, Agni, to the evil man, nor to the greedy one, the cheat, nor to misfortune.

Do not hand us over_[AOR.] to the toothed one who bites nor to the toothless, nor to one who does harm, o strong one.

- c. *mā te mānas tātra gān*_[AOR.] *mā tirō bhūn*_[AOR.], *mā jīvēbhyaḥ prā mado*_[PRES.] *mā ānu gāḥ*_[AOR.] *pitṛṇ*

viśve devā abhī rakṣantu tveḥā (AVŚ VIII.1.7 = AVP XVI.1.7)

Let your mind not go_[AOR.] thither; **let it not become**_[AOR.] lost; **do not neglect**_[PRES.] (those) living, **do not go**_[AOR.] after the Fathers; let all the gods guard over you here.⁸

Examples (6a) and (7a) demonstrate a further peculiarity of prohibitions in Vedic: One and the same form can have both inhibitive (6a) and preventive (7a) uses, in this case a root Aor. inj., *mā gā-* “don’t go/stop going!” Pres./Pf. inj.s. to the same root may likewise attest both prohibitive uses, as in (8). Example (8a) is inhibitive, as “make manifest (your) forms” presupposes that the addressee has not yet appeared or *stopped* hiding; (8b) is preventive, the “clash” being something that has not happened yet.

(8) PRES. INJ. TO √guh ‘HIDE’ WITH BOTH READINGS (INHIBITIVE AND PREVENTIVE)

- a. *āvis kṛnusva rūpāni, mā ātmānam āpa gūhathāḥ*

⁶ Other examples of strings of prohibitions containing a mixture of tense-aspect stems that are parallel in value include RV I.158.4, 162.15ab(?), 20, 183.4ab; VII.1.19, 22; VIII.20.1ab, 21.16ab, 45.23; X.16.1ab (≈ AVŚ XVIII.2.4, not in AVP); AVŚ VII.53.2–4 (≈ AVP XX.11.5–7); XII.3.18cd (≈ AVP XVII.51.8c).

⁷ On the optative *bhujema* with *mā* see Hoffmann, pp. 95–97.

⁸ All translations of the *Atharvaveda Śaunaka* are taken or modified from Whitney and Lanman 1905. Modifications are usually minor—modernizing the language (e.g., *thou/thee/ye* > *you*, etc.). As with the RV translations, substantial points of departure are occasional and pertain only to the prohibitions when good reason can be adduced for reinterpreting the text (cf. n. 9 below).

átho sahasracakṣo tvám, práti paśyāḥ kimīdīnaḥ (AVŚ IV.20.5 ≈ AVP VIII.6.11)
Make manifest (your) forms; **do not hide yourself away [any longer]**;
then may you, O thousand-eyed one, look upon the *kimīdīns*.

- b. *kīm ít te viṣṇo paricákṣyam bhūt, prá yád vavakṣé śipiviṣṭó asmi*
mā vārpo asmád āpa gūha etád, yád anyárūpah samithé babhūtha (RV VII.100.6)
Was (this speech) of yours to be disregarded, when you proclaimed of yourself: “I
am Śipiviṣṭa”?
Do not hide away this shape from us, when you have appeared in another form in
the clash.

Hoffmann’s proposal, then, becomes difficult to maintain. If either tense-aspect stem can have either interpretation, we must conclude that tense-aspect stem selection alone is insufficient to retrieve the reading intended by the speaker and, conversely, that the readings intended by the speaker do not determine tense-aspect stem selection. Thus, the semantic grounds for assuming an inhibitive/preventive distinction are shaky at best and, particularly in the often opaque passages of the *RV* and *AV*, difficult or impossible to determine with certainty.

3. FUNCTIONAL PROPOSAL

I propose, contra Hoffmann 1967, that the choice of morphological tense-aspect stem (Aor. or Pres./Pf. inj.) does not determine whether a prohibition is preventive or inhibitive (i.e., form does not dictate function), nor does the expression of a preventive or inhibitive prohibition require selection of one tense-aspect stem or the other (i.e., function does not determine form). In other words, there is no grammaticalized morphological contrast between preventive and inhibitive prohibitions in Vedic. The verbal morphology plays no role in this distinction.⁹

Instead, the preventive/inhibitive distinction arises from the lexical semantics of a particular root or root–preverb collocation and from pragmatics/context.¹⁰ Such contexts may optionally be made more explicit (i.e., specified lexically/semantically) by the inclusion of an adverbial element, such as adverbs meaning ‘any longer, a long time’, as in (4b) and (6b) above (*cirám, jyók*). Accordingly, we find most roots consistently attested in prohibitions in one tense-aspect stem form or the other, with competing forms to the same root being quite rare.

⁹ Note on methodology: I have not assumed any correlation between tense-aspect stem and prohibitive reading, though I have in all cases been as sympathetic to Hoffmann’s proposal as possible, such that an Aor. inj. is assumed to be preventive unless there is good reason to read it as inhibitive, and a Pres./Pf. inj. is assumed to be inhibitive unless there is good reason to read it as preventive. Further, I have consulted translations of these texts in my interpretations of the data. So as to avoid undue confirmation bias, I have in general reproduced Jamison and Brereton’s (2014) translations of the *RV* examples here (cf. n. 3 above), from which I deviate only if there is good reason to do so—the idea being that my reading of a particular verb may be found more reliable if it matches the reading arrived at independently by authoritative translators (concerning translation of the *AV* cf. n. 8 above). In addition, I have taken into account context at every level in deciding on my interpretations of the texts, particularly where they disagree with those of Hoffmann. This includes root–preverb collocations, temporal and frame adverbials (where present), dependent and participial clauses, and hymn type (e.g., mythological narrative, soma pressing, Dawn hymn, etc.). In the end, decisions inevitably come down to philological judgments. This, in part, is what lends so much value to consideration of the *formal* distribution of prohibitive verbs in addition to their functional distribution. The reliability of my interpretation of these forms has been greatly benefitted by frequent consultation with Stephanie Jamison, though the views expressed here are entirely my own.

¹⁰ As in (6a) above, where a positive imperative occurs before the prohibition containing a verb of related meaning: *ní vartadhvam mānu gāta* “Turn back; don’t keep going.”

In fact, out of ninety-eight verbal bases¹¹ attested in prohibitions in the *RV*, just nine attest competing Aor. and Pres./Pf. pairs in the prohibitive construction ($\approx 9\%$). In the *AV* the number is ten, this time out of eighty-six verbal bases ($\approx 12\%$). Despite the fact that many of these bases could, in principle, build both an Aor. and a Pres./Pf. stem to be made use of in prohibitions (i.e., both stems are attested in some other part of their respective paradigms), remarkably few actually seize this opportunity in the texts as we have them. For instance, \sqrt{mrdh} ‘neglect’ attests the root Aor. $mā mardhiṣ-$ “stop neglecting,” exclusively in inhibitive use in the *RV* (IV.20.10a, VII.73.4d, VII.74.3d, VII.25.4d). One could perfectly well make use of this root’s Pres. stem in such prohibitions ($^*mā mardha-$) if the Pres. inj. were truly required in an inhibitive context, but it never occurs.

More importantly, of the few roots that do attest competing Aor. and Pres./Pf. inj. forms in their prohibitions, virtually none show the semantic distribution predicted by Hoffmann’s account. That is, almost no roots actually attest a Pres./Pf. inj. that is always and only inhibitive and an Aor. inj. that is always and only preventive in all attested prohibitions.

In the *RV* there are just two roots ($\approx 2\%$) that could, under scrutiny, be considered “well behaved” by Hoffmann’s account, namely \sqrt{car} ‘move’ (s-Aor. and thematic Pres. attested once apiece) and $\sqrt{bhī}$ ‘fear’ (Pf. inj. 1x, root Aor. 2x), both outside the Family Books. In the *AV* there are none. The root that comes closest in the *AV* is $\sqrt{sthā}$ ‘stand’, which has two Pres. inj. occurrences (i.e., $mā tiṣṭha-$, not found in the *RV*) that appear to be inhibitive. Yet of the four occurrences of its root-Aor. inj. (i.e., $mā sthā-$), only two are securely preventive; the other two seem better read as inhibitive (*AVŚ* V.7.1a, 13.5c \approx *AVP* VII.9.1a, VIII.2.5c).

For all other verbal bases that attest both Aor. and Pres./Pf. inj. forms in prohibitions the distribution is *not* in line with Hoffmann’s proposal. Either both stems are preventive (most common),¹² or both are inhibitive (\sqrt{tan} ‘stretch’ [*RV*]), or one stem is attested in both uses and the other in only one.¹³ For four roots in the *RV* and nine in the *AV* the Aor. stem attests both readings, with or without a competing Pres./Pf. form attested. The Pres./Pf. inj. in both readings is rarer, attested by one verbal base in the *RV* ($\sqrt{hṛ}$ ‘be angry’ $\rightarrow mā hṛṇī-$ “don’t be/stop being angry”) and two in the *AV* ($\sqrt{dhī}$ ‘think’ $\rightarrow mā ā/vī dīdhī-$ “don’t think/stop hesitating,” $mā bibhī-$ “don’t get scared/stop being afraid”). Further, \sqrt{guh} ‘hide’ attests a preventive Pres. inj. twice in the *RV* and an inhibitive Pres. inj. once in the *AV* (cf. (8) above). There are no roots that securely show a distribution exactly opposite to Hoffmann’s proposal, with a Pres./Pf. in preventive use and an Aor. in inhibitive use. However, \sqrt{tan} ‘stretch’ and \sqrt{duh} ‘milk’ are possible cases in the *RV*, the readings of their Pres. and Aor. stems being somewhat doubtful (cf. also \sqrt{yu} ‘separate’ and \sqrt{kr} ‘make’ in n. 13 above). $\sqrt{hā}$ ‘leave’ is a possible case in the *AV*. In all, the evidence for a morphosemantic explanation of the data is slim and conflicting.¹⁴

¹¹ I use the term *base* to include root formations along with morphologically complex stems, such as those with thematic or sibilant suffixes, as well as derived stems, such as denominatives.

¹² In the *RV*: \sqrt{duh} ‘milk’, \sqrt{vrh} ‘tear’, \sqrt{sridh} ‘blunder’, \sqrt{hvy} ‘make crooked’; in the *AV*: \sqrt{kr} ‘make’, $\sqrt{dā}$ ‘give’, $\sqrt{bād}$ ‘oppress’, \sqrt{syj} ‘send forth’, $\sqrt{hā}$ ‘leave’, \sqrt{hims} ‘injure’; in both texts: \sqrt{dah} ‘burn’.

¹³ In the *AV*: $\sqrt{sthā}$ ‘stand’, with an inhibitive Pres. and Aor. in both uses (also in the *RV*); \sqrt{yu} ‘separate’, with a preventive Pf. (Hoffmann, p. 90) and an Aor. in both uses; $\sqrt{bhī}$ ‘fear’, with a preventive Aor. and a Pf. in both uses. In the *RV* and *AV* combined: \sqrt{kr} ‘make’, with a preventive Pres. (*AV*) and an Aor. in both uses (*RV*).

¹⁴ For this reason I avoid the terms *sense* or *meaning* when referring to Vedic prohibitions. Instead, we may speak of inhibitive or preventive *contexts*. In reference to the verb forms themselves, we may speak of their *use*, *reading*, or *interpretation* (i.e., within a context) as either preventive or inhibitive.

3.1. Lexical Semantics

Further, we find a given root, whether it builds an Aor. or Pres./Pf. inj., displaying remarkable consistency in its readings (preventive or inhibitive). For instance, the root $\sqrt{\text{īś}}$ ‘be(come) master’ formally attests only root-Pres. inj. and in use is exclusively preventive (13x in the *RV*, 5x in the *AV*), as in (9).

- (9) $\sqrt{\text{īś}}$ ‘BE MASTER’, PRES. INJ. WITH PREVENTIVE READING ONLY
mā no ārātir īśata devāsya mārtṛyasya ca (*RV* II.7.2ab)
Let hostility of god and mortal **not gain mastery** over us.

The preventive interpretation of *mā īśata* is admitted also by Hoffmann (pp. 65–66), who argues unconvincingly that *īśata* is an “analogical Aorist formation from the Perfect stem by thematization.” It is indeed likely to have originated as a Pf. as he says, but by the time of its earliest attestation in the *RV* it is manifestly Pres. (Kümmel 2000: 126–27).¹⁵

By contrast, $\sqrt{\text{jīṽ}}$ ‘live’ attests only *iṣ*-Aor. inj. forms, beginning in the *AV*, all fourteen of which are inhibitive in use, as in (10).

- (10) $\sqrt{\text{jīṽ}}$ ‘LIVE’, AOR. INJ. WITH INHIBITIVE READING ONLY
*āhe mriyāsva*_[PRES. IPV.] *mā jīṽṭh*_[AOR. INJ.], *pratyāg abhy ètu tvā viśām* (*AVŚ* V.13.4cd ≈ *AVP* VIII.2.3c–e)
Serpent, **die**_[+CHANGE-OF-STATE], **stop living/don’t keep living**_[–CHANGE-OF-STATE]. Let your poison go back against you.¹⁶

Examples (9) and (10) demonstrate the importance of lexical semantics in determining the “aspectual” reading of a given form. There is nothing about the form of these verbs that tells us how to interpret them, as we (and Hoffmann) are forced to interpret them in precisely the opposite way from what they ought to mean if Hoffmann’s analysis were correct. Rather, the root lexical meaning of (e.g.) $\sqrt{\text{jīṽ}}$ ‘live’ is particularly well suited to inhibitive interpretation, simply due to the fact that one must typically be alive first before being told not to live (any longer). This becomes even clearer when we consider its opposite formulation, in (11).

- (11) $\sqrt{\text{mṛ}}$ ‘DIE’, AOR. INJ. WITH PREVENTIVE READING
*jīṽa*_[PRES. IPV.] *mā mṛthāḥ*_[AOR. INJ.] (*AVŚ* III.31.8b ≈ *AVP* X.7.8b)
Keep living_[–CHANGE-OF-STATE], **don’t die**_[+CHANGE-OF-STATE]!

Both roots in (11) have precisely the same “aspectual” interpretations as in (10), despite having exactly the opposite tense-aspect stem morphology and exchanging negative and positive commands. The Pres. imperative to $\sqrt{\text{jīṽ}}$ ‘live’ is still to be read as continuous “keep living,” while *mā mṛthāḥ* must be read as preventive “don’t die,” as the hymn is meant to promote longevity rather than resuscitation (cf. Hoffmann, p. 73 n. 128). Hoffmann’s analysis would predict (10) to be *coerced* into having a preventive reading by its morphology (i.e., by virtue of being an *Aorist* inj.), yet it is not, nor do we find such coercion in any other attestation of this

¹⁵ The *RV* has no augmented examples; all injunctive examples are prohibitive and 3SG.MID.; the rest are Pres. indicative or optative.

¹⁶ The labels [+/–CHANGE-OF-STATE] are explained below in §3.2.

root in the prohibitions of the *AV*.¹⁷ There seem, then, to be some purely *formal* selectional properties at work here, associated with positive and negative commands. The positive imperative is in both cases Pres., while the prohibition is in both cases Aorist.

In fact, Hoffmann (p. 89) himself resorts to just this sort of lexical explanation in the face of certain counterexamples to his analysis, as shown in (12a) and (12b), which he admits are most likely preventive despite being built to Pres. stems. These “derailments” (Entgleisungen), he says, may be explained by the “punctual Aktionsart” of *áva*√*sjj*, *úd*√*sjj* ‘release/let out’ and *úd*√*vṛh*, *ví*√*vṛh* ‘tear up, apart’, which “approximates the Aorist function” (die der Aoristfunktion nahekommt).

(12) PRES. INJS. WITH LEXICALLY DETERMINED PREVENTIVE READINGS

- a. *mā no agne áva sṛjo aghāya, aviṣyáve ripáve duchúnāyai*
mā datváte dásate mādáte no, mā rīṣate sahasāvan párá dāḥ (*RV* I.189.5)
Do not release us, Agni, to the evil man, nor to the greedy one, the cheat, nor to misfortune.
 Do not hand us over to the toothed one who bites nor to the toothless, nor to one who does harm, o strong one.
- b. *mā kākambīram úd vṛho vānaspátim, áśastīr ví hí nīnaśaḥ*
mótá súro áha evā caná, grīvā ādádhate véḥ (*RV* VI.48.17)
Don’t tear out the Kākambīra tree—pursue the taunts and make them disappear!
 And certainly don’t (tear off the wheel) of the sun: for thus never could you give pursuit to the one who ‘puts the necks’ (of the horses to the chariot-pole?).

The Pres. inj. is so used even though √*sjj* ‘send forth’ attests a perfectly good *s*-Aor. inj. in prohibitions in the *AV*, which are all preventive in interpretation (3x: +*ví AVŚ* XI.2.1c [= *AVP* XVI.104.1c], +*abhí* 19a [= *AVP* XVI.105.9a], +*sám* 26b [= *AVP* XVI.106.6c]). Interestingly, even where the continuative particle *sma* co-occurs with *mā* + *úd*√*sjj*, as in (13), the reading is still preventive, by Hoffmann’s (pp. 88–89) own admission.

(13) PREVENTIVE *mā* + *úd*√*sjj* ‘release’ WITH PARTICLE *sma*

satyāya ca tápase devátābhyo, nidhīm śevadhīm pári dadma etám
mā no dyūté va gān mā sámityām, mā sma anyásmā út sṛjatā purá mát (*AVŚ*
 XII.3.46 ≈ *AVP* XVII.54.6)

Unto truth, unto penance, and unto the deities, we deliver this deposit, (this) treasure;
 let it not be lost in our play, nor in the meeting; **do not [ever?]**¹⁸ release (it) to another
 in preference to me.

¹⁷ One could imagine contexts where a preventive interpretation to *mā jīviṣ-* would be appropriate (e.g., *may your progeny never live* [i.e., *come to exist*]), yet these do not occur with the root √*jīv* but with other roots, such as √*bhū* ‘come into being’ (e.g., *mā tvā prajābhī bhūt* “let progeny not come about for you” [*AVŚ* VII.35.3b, not in *AVP*]).

¹⁸ In examples (13)–(15) the meaning of *sma* seems to me to be something along the lines of ‘ever’. With the indicative, *sma* in Vedic tends to signal repetition (‘keeps/kept doing X’) or universal quantification (‘has/had been doing X’) of the action denoted by the verbal predicate. Monier-Williams (1899: s.v.) glosses it as ‘always’. The semantic kinship of ‘always’ and ‘ever’ has an analog in archaic English, where *ever* could be used in contexts that now call for *always* (e.g., “And so live ever—or else swoon to death”). This interpretation of *mā sma* (“don’t ever”) seems to hold for the examples, cited by Hoffmann (p. 79), from Vedic prose as well (i.e., *TĀ* IV.32.1, *JB* II.419ff, and *ŚB* XI.5.1.1). On *sma* in prohibition, see further Hoffmann, pp. 29, 77, 79, 83, 89, 91–93.

Both of the remaining instances of *sma* + Pres. inj. in the *RV* (14) and *AV* (15) seem likewise to be preventive—here following Jamison (p.c.), contra Hoffmann (pp. 78–79, 83).¹⁹

(14) PREVENTIVE PRES. INJ. WITH PARTICLE *sma* IN THE *Ṛgveda*

sá te jīvātur utá tāsya viddhi, mā smaitādṛg āpa gūhaḥ samaryé
āvīḥ súvaḥ kṛṇuté gūhate busám, sá pādúr asya nirñijo ná mucyate (RV X.27.24)

This is your means of life. And know this—**don’t [ever?] hide away** such a thing in the clash—

when the sun reveals itself, it hides the mist [?]. Its “foot” is released as if from a garment (first interpolation mine).

(15) PREVENTIVE PRES. INJ. WITH PARTICLE *sma* IN THE *Atharvaveda*

mā smaitānt sakhīn kuruthā, balāsaṃ kāsām udyugám
mā smāto ’rvāñ aīḥ pūnas, tát tvā takmann úpa bruve (AVŚ V.22.11c, not in AVP)

Do not [ever?] make them your companions—the *balāsa*, the cough, the *udyugá*;
do not [ever?] come back hitherward from there: for that, O fever, I appeal to you.

3.2. Actionality

Beyond the impressions one gets from individual examples, we may look to the quantitative data for further support of the correlation between prohibition type (i.e., preventive or inhibitive) and a given root’s “actionality” or “situation type.” There are four main situation types (Vendler 1957): “achievements” (DIE, KICK, TRIP, DISAPPEAR, etc.), “accomplishments” (DROWN, BURY, STRIP, COMPOSE, etc.), “activities” (RUN, CRY, PONDER, MILK, etc.), and “states” (KNOW, LOVE, SLEEP, STAND, etc.). There is a cross-linguistically robust divide in the distribution and behavior of the first two and the latter two of these categories—that is, between achievements and accomplishments, on the one hand, and activities and states on the other. The first two situation types may be characterized as bearing the feature [+CHANGE-OF-STATE], while the latter two may be characterized as having a negative value for this feature [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] (cf. Dahl 2010: 40). A handful of roots seem to be ambivalent toward this feature (e.g., \sqrt{yu} ‘keep away, separate’, $\sqrt{ra(n)dh}$ ‘be/make subject’).²⁰

Accordingly, I have coded all roots that occur in prohibitions in the *RV* or *AV* as either [+CHANGE-OF-STATE], [–CHANGE-OF-STATE], or [±CHANGE-OF-STATE].²¹ I then added up how

¹⁹ Pāṇini (III.3.176) states that, at least in post-Vedic Sanskrit, the presence of *sma* licenses a Pres. inj. after *mā*. In fact, however, there is also an example of an Aor. inj. (*darśam*) in the scope of *sma* following *mò* (*mā_u*) in Vedic prose (*ŚB XI.5.1.1: mò sma tvā nagnám darśam*), on which see Hoffmann, pp. 92–93. It is part of the dialogue between Purūravas and Urvaśī (cf. discussion in Jamison and Brereton 2014: 1548–49) and seems contextually to mean “let me not *ever* (*mò sma*) see you naked.” It is probably best understood as preventive here, since she wishes to avoid having anything to do with him.

²⁰ Some roots, such as \sqrt{tap} ‘heat’, may entail a change of state yet pattern with activities in that their action lacks a (practical) endpoint. Such roots are classed here as activities (in contrast to roots like $\sqrt{jī}$ ‘get old’, \sqrt{dah} ‘burn up’, and $\sqrt{śuc}$ ‘flare up, scorch’, which I class as [+CHANGE-OF-STATE]). It should be noted that actionality is a complicated subject, and our understanding of it is far from perfect. Further, the system adopted here is simplified for ease of exposition (see further Smith 1997: 27–90). Every effort has been made to classify each root appropriately, on a case-by-case basis, according to its attested behavior in Vedic, as best as I could determine (cf. n. 22 below).

²¹ Note that situation type (sometimes called “lexical aspect”) is different from telicity (often called “Aktionsart”), which applies at the level of the verb phrase (Dahl 2010: 41–46), including preverbs and (at least) internal

many of each category attest prohibitions with inhibitive interpretations and how many with preventive interpretations.²² The data is summarized in Tables 1 and 2. “Types” refer to the number of distinct forms of a given category that are attested with a given interpretation. “Tokens” count the number of occurrences of each form of a given category that are attested in a given interpretation.²³ All injunctive stem categories are taken together in these figures—Present, Aorist, and Perfect.

TABLE 1: CORRELATION OF SITUATION TYPE TO PROHIBITION TYPE IN THE *RV*

	+CHANGE-OF-STATE		–CHANGE-OF-STATE		±CHANGE-OF-STATE	
	Types	Tokens	Types	Tokens	Types	Tokens
INHIBITIVE	2	4	11	17	0	0
PREVENTIVE	71	233	35	64	6	34

TABLE 2: CORRELATION OF SITUATION TYPE TO PROHIBITION TYPE IN THE *AV*

	+CHANGE-OF-STATE		–CHANGE-OF-STATE		±CHANGE-OF-STATE	
	Types	Tokens	Types	Tokens	Types	Tokens
INHIBITIVE	8	10	14	36	1	1
PREVENTIVE	57	241	32	89	4	11

Hypothesis testing on the above data²⁴ points to a statistically significant correlation between the situation type of the root and its expression in prohibitions as either preventive or inhibitive ($p < .05$ for types and tokens in both texts). Achievements and accomplishments (i.e., [+CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots) tend to be preventive, whereas states and activities (i.e., [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots), while also predominantly preventive, are significantly more likely to attest inhibitive as a use. Importantly, this is true both by type and by token counts.

In the *RV* all five roots that attest Pres./Pf. inhibitives are [–CHANGE-OF-STATE]. Of the eight roots that attest Aor. inhibitives two are [+CHANGE-OF-STATE] (\sqrt{kr} ‘make’ and $\sqrt{bhū}$

arguments. The figures here focus on the lexical features of the roots themselves, though some interaction with preverbs and syntactic arguments has been unavoidable and occasionally necessary. For instance, $\sqrt{rād}$ ‘succeed’ is attested in prohibitions only with the preverb \sqrt{vi} ‘apart’ (*AVŚ* I.1.4d [\approx *AVP* I.6.4d, XIX.26.3b, XX.43.3c], III.29.8d [not in *AVP*]) in the meanings ‘be parted (with), be deprived (of) (mid. + instr.); injure (act.)’. In such cases, it would be misguided to assess the “lexical aspect” of the verb–preverb collocation by that of the bare root (similarly \sqrt{mad} ‘become exhilarated’ but $\sqrt{prā}\sqrt{mad}$ ‘neglect’, and so on).

²² The usual caveats apply: It is extremely difficult to decide with total confidence to which category every lexical item belongs. I have had recourse to the glosses in dictionaries, handbooks, and critical translations—especially Grassmann’s (1872–75) *Wörterbuch*, Whitney’s (1885) *Roots*, Kümmel’s (2011–) “Vedische Verbliste,” Jamison and Brereton’s (2014) translation, and Jamison’s (2015–) online *RV* commentary—in addition to more detailed discussions in the scholarly literature on individual points. Where necessary, I have carried out lexical analyses of my own to determine the most basic meaning of a root according to its textual attestations.

²³ The values in the “types” columns are greater than the number of unique forms attested in prohibitions in each text (for the *RV* 119, for the *AV* 105). This is because several forms of the same type (say, a root Aor.) are found in both inhibitive and preventive prohibitions and are therefore counted more than once apiece. To do otherwise would be to omit data. The total types by this count are for the *RV* 125 and for the *AV* 116. The same is true of the “type” values given in Tables 6 and 8 below. This decision does not significantly affect the results of the hypothesis tests.

²⁴ Fisher’s exact and chi-squared tests were applied to all data here presented for both type and token frequencies, on the basis of which p -values are given where relevant.

‘become’). In the *AV* six of the seven roots that attest Pres./Pf. inhibitives are [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] (excepting $\sqrt{ra(m)bh}$ ‘take hold’). Among roots that attest Aor. inhibitives the spread is more even: eight are [–CHANGE-OF-STATE], seven are [+CHANGE-OF-STATE], and one is [±CHANGE-OF-STATE]. If morphological stem selection dictated prohibition type, we should expect the Pres./Pf. inj. to coerce [+CHANGE-OF-STATE] predicates into having inhibitive interpretation, and we should therefore expect to find more [+CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots that have inhibitive interpretations being built to Pres. stems. Instead, the majority of the inhibitive uses of [+CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots are made with Aor. injunctives. This points to a formal rather than functional motivation for stem selection.

Given that [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots are more likely to yield inhibitive interpretations than [+CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots, we may now wonder whether this feature patterns more strongly with Pres./Pf. inj. than with Aor. inj. used inhibively. In other words, are Pres./Pf. inj. used especially often to express inhibitives to roots with a particular value for the feature [CHANGE-OF-STATE]? It has frequently been noticed in the literature (e.g., Clackson 2007: 134, Dahl 2010: 111–16 (cf. 104), Willi 2018: 425–32; cf. Delbrück 1897: 74–82) that roots that build Pres. stems to the exclusion of (root-)Aor. stems tend to have “atelic” actionality (i.e., they are activities and states, which have the feature [–CHANGE-OF-STATE], as discussed above). We might therefore expect to see a preference for Pres./Pf. inj. among inhibitives to [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots. Yet when we look at the proportion of Pres./Pf. inhibitives vs. Aor. inhibitives with regard to the root lexical feature [CHANGE-OF-STATE], the result is non-significant ($p > 0.05$) in both the *RV* and the *AV* (tokens and types considered). This is based on the following 2×2 contingency tables in Table 3 (type count is given in parentheses where it differs from token count).

TABLE 3: INHIBITIVE USES OF PRES./PF. AND AOR. INJS. AND THE FEATURE [CHANGE-OF-STATE]

	<i>Rgveda</i>		<i>Atharvaveda</i>	
	Pres./Pf.	Aor.	Pres./Pf.	Aor.
+CHANGE-OF-STATE	0	4 (2)	1	9 (7)
–CHANGE-OF-STATE	5	12 (6)	9 (6)	27 (8)

Hence, in inhibitive usage, there is no significant correlation between stem selection (i.e., choice of Pres./Pf. or Aor. inj.) and the feature [CHANGE-OF-STATE]. In particular, inhibitives with the feature value [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] are not significantly more likely to find expression as Pres./Pf. injunctives.

Further, among [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots, a prohibition expressed with the Pres./Pf. inj. is not significantly more likely to be interpreted as inhibitive than one expressed with an Aor. injunctive. This is shown in Table 4 (again, type counts, where they differ from tokens, are in parentheses). The results of hypothesis testing for all data are non-significant ($p > .05$).

TABLE 4: INTERPRETATION OF PRES./PF. AND AOR. INJS. AMONG [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] ROOTS

	<i>Rgveda</i>		<i>Atharvaveda</i>	
	Pres./Pf.	Aor.	Pres./Pf.	Aor.
INHIBITIVE	5	12 (6)	9 (6)	27 (8)
PREVENTIVE	32 (12)	36 (23)	26 (8)	63 (24)

This means that among [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots there is no significant correlation between stem selection (i.e., choice of Pres./Pf. or Aor. inj.) and the interpretation of a prohibition as inhibitive or preventive. So, for instance, while some [–CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots that only build Pres./Pf. stems in the *RV/AV* attest inhibitive use exclusively (e.g., √*dīv* ‘play’ [*RV*]), other roots of this kind are exclusively preventive: e.g., √*vī* ‘pursue, enjoy’ (*RV/AV*), √*ven* ‘track, yearn’ (*RV/AV*), √*i* ‘go’ (*AV*).

Taken together with the discussion above, these facts point to a lack of correlation between Pres./Pf. injs. and inhibitive use (see further §3.4 below), contrary to the predictions of Hoffmann’s analysis. What matters (at least in part) for determining whether a prohibition is interpreted as preventive or inhibitive is whether the root has a positive or negative value for the feature [CHANGE-OF-STATE], not whether the prohibition is expressed with a Pres./Pf. or Aor. injunctive. The inhibitive readings attested for some Pres./Pf. injs. may therefore be attributed in large part to inherent lexical features of their respective roots rather than to the fact that they are built to a Pres./Pf. stem.

Thus, lexical semantics seems in many cases to govern the reading of a prohibitive verb, whatever tense-aspect stem(s) it happens to build, irrespective of any Aor. vs. Pres./Pf. contrast. It should be remembered, however, that a negative value for the feature [CHANGE-OF-STATE] does not guarantee inhibitive interpretation in prohibitions, since most prohibitions are preventive in any case. A variety of factors must conspire to determine whether a prohibition receives preventive or inhibitive interpretation. For one thing, lexical semantic features other than [CHANGE-OF-STATE] may well be at work (cf. §3.1 above). More important, however, seems to be the role of pragmatics and discourse context, to which I now turn.

3.3. Pragmatics and Discourse Context

The lexical semantics of a number of roots permits them (for whatever reason) to be open to either preventive or inhibitive interpretations.²⁵ In such cases, *context alone* must determine which interpretation is to be understood, as seen above for *mā gā*- “don’t go/stop going” in examples (6a) and (7a). For examples with the Pres./Pf. inj., see *mā gūha*- “don’t hide/stop hiding” in (8) above, and consider (16), in which (16a) is inhibitive and (16b) is preventive, but both are built to the Pres. stem of √*hī* ‘be angry’.

(16) PRES. INJ. TO √*hī* ‘BE ANGRY’, BOTH READINGS AS CONTEXTUALLY DETERMINED

- a. *ó śú prá yāhi vājebhir, mā hṛṇīthā abhī asmān*
mahāṁ iva yūvajānih (*RV* VIII.2.19)
Drive forth here with prizes. **Stop being angry** at us,
like a great man with a young wife.²⁶
- b. *mā no hṛṇītām átithir, vásur agnīḥ purupraśastá eṣāh*

²⁵ These are indifferent to situation type, however, and therefore include [+CHANGE-OF-STATE], [–CHANGE-OF-STATE], and [±CHANGE-OF-STATE] roots. The roots in question (e.g., √*hī* ‘be angry’, √*gā* ‘go’) tend to permit a distinction to be made between entry into a state or activity (hence preventive) and the continuation of that state or activity (hence inhibitive), or else allow a simple telic action to be iterated or habituated (e.g., √*vadh* ‘slay’) and therefore inhibited (e.g., *AVŚ* X.1.29b [≈ *AVP* XVI.37.10b]: *mā...vadhīḥ* “stop killing [our livestock]”). No single rule can be formulated, however, to predict whether any given root will or will not allow both readings.

²⁶ Here, Jamison and Brereton (2014) follow Hoffmann (p. 87), but see now Jamison’s (2015–) online *RV* commentary to this verse on the purely *contextual* grounds for interpreting *mā hṛṇīthāḥ* as inhibitive (though still somewhat dubious).

yāḥ suhótā svadhvarāḥ (RV VIII.103.12)²⁷

Let the guest not **be/[get] angry** at us, this good Agni, proclaimed by many, who is the good Hotar of good ceremony (interpolation mine).

In (16b) the prohibition against anger comes after eleven lines of praise for Agni. There is simply no indication that he is currently angry at the praisers and every reason to suppose that he is not. Thus, pragmatics/context, in addition to lexical semantics, plays an important role in determining the appropriate prohibitive reading of a given verb.

Once again, recourse to a contrast between tense-aspect stems is not only unnecessary, it makes false predictions. The root √*hā* ‘leave’ provides an instructive example of this in the *AV*, as shown in (17), where both its Pres. and Aor. inj. forms are attested in prohibitions just two verses apart, yet there does not seem to be any difference between the two in terms of Hoffmann’s preventive/inhibitive opposition.

(17) √*hā* ‘LEAVE’ IN PRES. (a) AND AOR. (b) INJ., SAME READING

- a. *sam krāmatam mā jahītam śārīram, prāṇāpānaū te sayūjāv ihā stām*
śatām jīva śarādo vārdhamān, o ’gnīṣ te gopā adhipā vāsīṣṭhah
āyur yāt te ātīhitam parācair, apānāḥ prāṇāḥ pūnar ā tāv itām
agnīṣ tād āhār nīrṭter upāsthāt, tād ātmāni pūnar ā veśayāmi te

(*AVŚ* VII.53.2–3 ≈ *AVP* XX.11.5–6)

Walk together, [expiration and breath]; **don’t leave** the body; let your breath and expiration be allies here;

live on, increasing a hundred autumns; (let) Agni (be) your best over-ruling shepherd.

Your lifetime that is set over at a distance—(your) expiration, breath, let them come again—

Agni has taken that from the lap of perdition; I cause that to enter again in yourself.

- b. *mā imāṃ prāṇō hāsīn, mō apānō ’vahāya pārā gāt*
saptarṣibhya enam pari dadāmi, tā enam svastī jarāse vahantu
prā viśatam prāṇāpānāv, anaḍvāhāv iva vrajām
ayām jarimnāḥ śevadhī, r āriṣṭa ihā vardhatām

(*AVŚ* VII.53.4–5; verse 4 ≈ *AVP* XX.11.7; verse 5 not in *AVP*)

Let breath **not leave** this man; let expiration, having left him low, not go away;

I commend him to the seven sages; let them carry him happily to old age.

Enter in, breath and expiration, as (two) draft-oxen a stall;

let this treasure of old age increase here unharmed.

Hoffmann (p. 80) interprets (17a) as inhibitive, citing the request for breath to return again (*pūnar*) in verse 3. Yet he fails to mention that the Aor. to the same root, with the same subject (“breath”), occurs just two verses down in (17b). However one interprets the examples in (17)—whether inhibitive or preventive—as far as I can see they must be interpreted in the *same* way, especially given that in verse 5 of (17b) the breath is still being entreated to “enter in”: If the breath being begged to come back in verse 3 of (17a) was enough to warrant an “inhibitive” reading (“stop leaving, leave no longer”) for the Pres. inj. in (17a), then the same should be true

²⁷ On *hṛṇītām* for *hṛṇīta* see Hoffmann, pp. 94–95.

of the Aor. inj. in (17b) (and also for *mā pára gāt*). Yet it seems to me best here, in any case, to understand a preventive reading for both forms: “don’t leave (entirely).” As in (11) above, we may imagine a person on their deathbed gasping their last breaths and still not say “stop dying!” (i.e., *let it not be the case that you are currently on your way out*). Rather, we say “don’t die,” since we are only concerned with the final, terminal moment of death. So too, in the case of (17), the speaker does not want the *last* breath to leave the patient, which is when one is typically said to have stopped breathing: As long as there are any “breaths” remaining, the breath logically has not yet “left” the patient. We do not need to imagine the speaker beseeching each breath to get back inside the patient, nor the breath repeatedly leaving and re-entering the body (this, after all, would be regular breathing, which we would like to continue).²⁸

And so, Hoffmann’s account falsely predicts that, in the face of a morphological contrast, a semantic contrast should be required, where none in fact exists. My account, by contrast, predicts that two morphologically complex verb stems built to the same root, such as we find in (17), may alternate (or “compete”) with one another in precisely this kind of way, without difference in interpretation (see §4 below).

Finally, we find both Pres. and Aor. stems to the same base attested in variant versions of one and the same passage between the *RV* and the *AV* and, within the *AV*, between *AVŚ* and *AVP*. If form truly dictated function in prohibitions, we should not expect to find such variants. In (18a) we find an Aor. inj. to $\sqrt{\text{śuc}}$ ‘scorch’ where in (18b) the Pres. inj. occurs.

(18) VARIANT FORMS OF $\sqrt{\text{śuc}}$ ‘SCORCH’, AOR. (a) AND PRES. (b) INJ.

- a. *mainam agne ví daho mā abhí śūśuco, māśya tvācaṃ cikṣipo mā śārīram śrtām yadā kārasi jātavedó, ’them enam prá hiṇutāt pitṛm̐r ūpa*
(*AVŚ* XVIII.2.4, not in *AVP*)
- b. *mainam agne ví daho mā abhí śoco, māśya tvācaṃ cikṣipo mā śārīram yadā śrtām kṛnávo jātavedo, áthem enam prá hiṇutāt pitṛbhyah* (*RV* X.16.1).
Don’t burn him through, Agni; **don’t scorch** him; don’t singe his skin, nor his body.
When you will make him cooked to readiness, Jātavedas, then impel him forth to the forefathers.

Hoffmann (p. 81) claims that in this ritual burning situation, in which “the request is objectively impossible to fulfill” ([d]ie Bitte ist sachlich unerfüllbar), the preventive/inhibitive opposition is “irrelevant” and “the fact that Present injunctives are preferred in these cases is obviously due to the fact that the burial or cremation takes place in front of the eyes of the speaker” ([d]aß in diesen Fällen Präsensinjunktive bevorzugt werden, beruht offensichtlich darauf, daß die Bestattung bzw. Verbrennung vor den Augen des Sprechenden geschieht). The notion here cannot be of preventing the action altogether, but neither does it seem intended to stop the action, as making him “cooked to readiness” in the *c-pāda* seems to preclude this. Rather, it is meant to prevent the “scorching” from happening *too much* or *all the way*. Cf. later in the same *AV* hymn, where we find the Pres. inj. to $\sqrt{\text{tap}}$ ‘heat’: *śam tapa mā áti tapo, ágne mā tanvām tápah* (*AVŚ* XVIII.2.36ab, not in *AVP*) “Burn propitiously; **do not burn too much** (*áti*); O Agni, **do not**

²⁸ Similar logic can be applied to the *s*-Aor. forms of $\sqrt{\text{hā}}$ ‘leave’ at *AVŚ* VIII.1.15c (= *AVP* XVI.2.5a) and 2.26d (≈ *AVP* 5.6a): Following Hoffmann’s (p. 80) argument as regards the Pres. inj. to $\sqrt{\text{hā}}$, we ought to read these Aor. inj. as inhibitive; following my reasoning here, we ought to read them as preventive. Thus motivated, I have counted all prohibitions built to the root $\sqrt{\text{hā}}$ as preventive in my data and analysis.

burn the body” (NB: *not* #“stop burning too much”). The idea of both passages, then, seems to be “burn/cook him, but not too much/not all the way [i.e., don’t burn him “through” or *up*], not his body or skin,” perhaps so that he still has these available to him when he is “delivered to the forefathers” in the next verse. An analogous notion can be found in ordering food at a restaurant: A person might request that it be “cooked, but don’t burn it/overcook it!” without it being appropriate to say “stop burning it/overcooking it!” There is similarly a notion of a point of overburning in (18) before which something is not considered to be overcooked and after which it is. This point is captured well by the preverb *vi* with *dahaḥ* ‘burn through/up’ (NB: Pres. inj. in preventive use). To say “stop burning up” would be to stretch this culminating point into a line—a process occurring at the moment of utterance—which, again, the temporal clause in the following pāda, aimed at the future and speaking of the body as “cooked,” seems to rule out.

3.4. Distribution of Prohibition Types and Stem Types

In light of the above observations, we may now look more broadly at all the relevant data in the two texts. Tables 5 and 6 indicate that the actual distribution of prohibition types in the *RV*, as nearly as can be determined, is wildly out of step with Hoffmann’s claims and, therefore, with the *communis opinio* (insofar as one exists).

Table 5: DISTRIBUTION OF PROHIBITION TYPES IN THE *ṚGVEDA* (TOKENS)

	COUNT			PERCENT OF TOTAL			PERCENT OF STEM CLASS		
	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.
PREVENTIVE	48	275	6	14%	78%	2%	89%	95%	86%
INHIBITIVE	4 ²⁹	16 ³⁰	1	1%	5%	0.3%	7%	5%	14%
UNCLEAR	2	—	—	1%	—	—	4%	—	—

Table 6: DISTRIBUTION OF PROHIBITION TYPES IN THE *ṚGVEDA* (TYPES)

	COUNT			PERCENT OF TOTAL			PERCENT OF STEM CLASS		
	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.
PREVENTIVE	24	83	4	19%	66%	3%	83%	91%	80%
INHIBITIVE	4	8	1	3%	6%	1%	14%	9%	20%
UNCLEAR	1	—	—	1%	—	—	3%	—	—

²⁹ (1) *mā tanuthāḥ* “don’t keep dragging out” (V.79.9a), (2) *mā hṛṇīthā abhī* “stop being angry at” (VIII.2.19a), (3) *mā dīvyah* “don’t keep playing” (X.34.13a), (4) *mā caratābhī* “stop conjuring against” (X.34.14b).

³⁰ (1) *mā tvā tanat* “let it not hold out on you” (I.91.23c), (2) *mā pārā gāḥ* “go no further” (III.53.2a), (3–6) *mā mardhiṣ-* “stop neglecting” (IV.20.10a, VII.73.4d, VII.74.3d, VII.25.4d), (7–9) *māpa bhūta* “don’t stay away” (IV.35.1a, VII.59.10b, X.11.9d), (10) *mā mām...nī gārīt* “let him not keep swallowing me up” (V.40.7ab), (11) *mā jyók kaḥ* “stop spending a long time” (VII.22.06c), (12–13) *māpa sthā-* “don’t stay away” (VIII.20.1b, X.106.2d), (14–15) *mā dṛśan* “let them no longer see” (VII.104.24d, VIII.33.19c), (16) *mānu gāta* “don’t keep going” (X.19.1a). Cf. Hoffmann, p. 73.

As for the *AV*, the data are somewhat more complicated. Hoffmann (p. 73) notes that “the bulk of questionable cases [of Aor. inj. with inhibitive interpretation] shows up in the *Atharvaveda*.” I have certainly found this to be the case as well. Nonetheless, the general picture for the *AV* strongly resembles that of the *RV*, as shown in Tables 7 and 8 (and confirmed, again, by hypothesis testing).

Table 7: DISTRIBUTION OF PROHIBITION TYPES IN THE *ATHARVAVEDA* (TOKENS)

	COUNT			PERCENT OF TOTAL			PERCENT OF STEM CLASS		
	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.
PREVENTIVE	22	294	19	6%	76%	5%	73%	88%	86%
INHIBITIVE	7	37	3	2%	10%	1%	23%	11%	14%
UNCLEAR	1	5	—	0.3%	1%	—	3%	1%	—

Table 8: DISTRIBUTION OF PROHIBITION TYPES IN THE *ATHARVAVEDA* (TYPES)

	COUNT			PERCENT OF TOTAL			PERCENT OF STEM CLASS		
	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.	PRES. INJ.	AOR. INJ.	PF. INJ.
PREVENTIVE	15	70	3	13%	60%	3%	68%	78%	75%
INHIBITIVE	6	16	1	5%	14%	1%	27%	18%	25%
UNCLEAR	1	4	—	1%	3%	—	5%	4%	—

There is *no* significant correlation between tense-aspect stem selection and the interpretation of a prohibition as either inhibitive or preventive in either text or both taken together. Rather, most readings are preventive, irrespective of tense-aspect stem selection, and most tense-aspect stems are Aor., irrespective of prohibitive reading. The *AV* shows a marked increase from the *RV* in the proportion of inhibitive occurrences overall (both Pres./Pf. and Aor.), yet the number of inhibitive uses is still far less than that of the preventive ones. This discrepancy may be attributed to text type, as there seem to be significantly more occasions to say “stop doing X” in the *AV*, which is in part characterized by an abundance of charms and spells.

It may be supposed, based on the fact that the Pres./Pf. inj. have proportionally more inhibitive readings than do the Aor. inj., that the Pres./Pf. is categorically more “open” to inhibitive readings, even if it does not *require* inhibitive readings. That is, where one does find a Pres./Pf., Tables 5–8 suggest that it is somewhat more likely to be inhibitive than its Aor. counterpart. Such a hypothesis would assume that the Pres./Pf. stem is the default and that the Aor. stem is semantically stronger or more specific in its meaning (i.e., preventive).³¹ Yet the scarcity of verbal bases that attest Pres./Pf. inj. in both readings argues against viewing the Pres./Pf. stem as somehow semantically “unmarked” or “underspecified” in this regard. If it were “unmarked,” we should expect to find Pres./Pf. inj. fluctuating quite freely between one reading and the other for the same root, but in fact both readings to the same Pres./Pf. form are attested

³¹ This would be similar to claims about prohibition in Ancient Greek (e.g., Willmott 2007: 90–110, Smyth 1956: 410–11), which view the Aor. stem as specifically preventive, while the Pres. stem is said to be underspecified in this regard (called a “prohibitive”). But cf. n. 50 below.

only rarely (cf. above). Moreover, the overall scarcity of Pres./Pf. inj. as compared with the preponderance of Aor. inj. makes it difficult to view the Pres./Pf. inj. as any kind of “default” form for prohibition. The fact remains that the Aor. attests many more prohibitive examples than does the Pres./Pf. overall in both texts—a fact which eliminates the possibility of viewing it as a specifically “preventive” form. If, on the other hand, the Aor. were taken to be the “unmarked” category, then we should expect the Pres./Pf. inj. not to be used in preventive contexts, as it so often is. Therefore, an appeal to semantic “markedness” based on stem type will not adequately account for the data.

The hypothesis tests for the above data of both texts point to a non-significant difference ($p > .05$) in the proportion of preventives vs. prohibitives between stem types (i.e., Aor. vs. Pres./Pf.). This result speaks quite clearly against Hoffmann’s conclusions. In negative commands of the *RV* and *AV* form simply does not dictate function, nor does function determine form. As a consequence, no claims can be reliably evaluated concerning the alternation of perfective and imperfective (or neutral) aspect as encoded by the Aor. and Pres./Pf. stems respectively, despite the frequent statements to this effect in the literature (see introduction). This situation is not unlike that of the other modals in Vedic, which likewise alternate in tense-aspect form but not in function (see Bloomfield and Edgerton 1930: 63–64, 94–114, 130–33; Whitney 1889: 220).³² It is only in the indicative, then, that functional alternations between stem types can be reliably observed in Vedic, and there only with great difficulty (cf. most recently Hollenbaugh 2018).

If the “semantic” interpretations along the lines of Hoffmann 1967 are not reliable for determining which injunctive stem is selected in prohibitions, a formal distribution seems to be the likeliest alternative.

4. FORMAL PROPOSAL

I argue for a formal distribution of prohibitions in the *RV* rather than a functional one. I claim that the prohibitive construction was originally built to the root-Aor. inj. as a base, if the root or verbal base in question was capable of forming one. Deviations from this rule are met with typically when, for one reason or another, no root-Aor. stem is available to the verbal base. Further, there is a clear diachronic shift, from the “Family Books” (II–VII) of the *RV* to the *AV*, away from the root Aor. to morphologically more complex verbal bases, above all (derived) *iṣ*-Aor. injunctives.

Crucially, nearly all roots that are capable of building a root-Aor. inj. do so in prohibitions to the exclusion of any other forms, Pres. or otherwise.³³ There are thirty-one roots that regularly build root-Aor. stems and are attested in prohibitions in the *RV*. Of these, twenty-six exclusively attest root-Aor. inj. in prohibitions (84%).³⁴ In the Family Books the number is

³² The crucial difference, as we shall see, is that, while the rest of the non-Pres. modals are “in retreat” (Jamison 2016: 316), the prohibitive injunctives show a clear preference for the Aor. stem.

³³ Here I leave aside reduplicated Aors., which are independently motivated by their causative meaning and can, in a sense, “override” the constraint proposed here that prohibitive verbs be morphologically simplex. This is supported by the fact that the reduplicated Aor. is productively built alongside other Aor. formations to the same root. The reduplicated Aor. is, however, included in the totals underlying the figures in Tables 9 and 10 (cf. n. 44 below).

³⁴ I.e., all except \sqrt{tan} ‘stretch’, \sqrt{su} ‘press’, \sqrt{muc} ‘release’, $\sqrt{bhī}$ ‘fear’, and \sqrt{vyj} ‘twist’ (cf. n. 38 below).

twenty³⁵ out of twenty-three (87%).³⁶ An example for $\acute{a}\sqrt{gam}$ ‘come’ is given in (19). Many similar examples of prohibitive root-Aor. inj. are cited elsewhere in this paper: (3), (6), (7), (11), (12), (13), (17), (20), (25).

- (19) ROOT AOR. SELECTED FOR IN PROHIBITION, $\acute{a}\sqrt{gam}$ ‘COME’
ā māṃ mitrāvaruṇā ihā rakṣataṃ, kulāyāyad viśváyan mā na ā gan (RV VII.50.1ab)
 Guard me here, Mitra and Varuṇa. **Do not let** the nesting or the swelling thing **come upon** us.

For \sqrt{gam} ‘go’ we might naively expect to find examples of the Pres. or Pf. inj. (*mā gacha-* or *mā jagam-*) to mean “don’t go/come”—or “stop going/coming” by Hoffmann’s account—but these are unattested in favor of the root formant observed in (19).

Another example is \sqrt{kr} ‘make’, which attests only root-Aor. inj. in the prohibitions of the RV,³⁷ despite attesting injunctives outside the prohibitive construction that are built to the Pres. stem (e.g., *kṛṇvata* ‘they make’ [RV IV.24.3b], *kṛṇavam* ‘I made’ [RV X.49.1b]) and the Pf. stem (e.g., *cakaram* ‘I have done’ [RV IV.42.6a]), in addition to non-prohibitive root-Aor. inj. (e.g., *kaḥ* ‘he (has) made’ [RV I.174.7b, V.29.4b]). Thus, the preference for morphologically simplex stems proposed here is not necessarily a property of injunctives generally but of prohibitions in particular (though cf. Avery 1885: 329 on the numerical dominance of the inj. Aor. over the Pres./Pf. and the root Aor. over the other Aor. stems in the RV and AV even outside the prohibitive construction).

Roots that lack viable root-Aor. stems, on the other hand, attest either morphologically complex Aor. inj. (20a), morphologically complex Pres./Pf. inj. (20b), or both (21) in prohibitions.

(20) CHARACTERIZED AOR. (a) OR PRES. (b) INJ. STEMS TO VERBS LACKING ROOT FORMANTS

- a. *mā vo rátho madhyamavāḷ rté bhūn, mā yuṣmāvatsu āpiṣu śramiṣma* (RV II.29.4cd)
 Let our chariot not come to be without you when it is travelling in the middle [...] **let us not become weary** while we have friends like you.
- b. *mā tvā mūrā aviṣyāv, o mā upahāsvāna ā dabhan māḥkīm brahmadviṣo vanaḥ* (RV VIII.45.23)
 Let not the greedy dolts, let not the deriders deceive you.
Do not cherish those who hate the sacred formulation.

$\sqrt{śram}$ ‘be weary’ and \sqrt{van} ‘cherish’ are each capable of building *both* a characterized Pres. (*śrāmya-*; *vāna-*) and a characterized Aor. stem (*aśrama-*, *śramiṣ-*; *vanāti*). Accordingly, (20) indicates that, in the absence of a viable root Aor., either characterized stem serves equally well in the prohibitive construction (cf. \sqrt{guh} ‘hide’ (8) and $\sqrt{vṛh}$ ‘tear’ (12b) above; also \sqrt{r} ‘encounter’, $\sqrt{muṣ}$ ‘steal’, $\sqrt{mrś}$ ‘touch’, \sqrt{vid} ‘find’, \sqrt{sad} ‘sit’, \sqrt{sic} ‘pour out’). Thus, Aor. vs.

³⁵ I.e., all except \sqrt{tan} ‘stretch’, \sqrt{su} ‘press’, and \sqrt{muc} ‘release’ (cf. n. 38 below).

³⁶ These counts exclude the Aor. passive, since it can be built even to roots that otherwise lack a root-Aor. stem (cf. Insler 1968). Tables 9 and 10 below, however, include the passive Aors, so as not to leave gaps in the data. The RV and the AV each have two such roots.

³⁷ Possibly once also its variant (*mā...*) *karat* (RV VIII.2.20b), though this may be a (non-prohibitive) subjunctive (see Jamison’s 2015– online RV commentary to this verse; cf. Jamison and Brereton 2014: 1027 and Hoffmann, p. 92).

Pres./Pf. inj. stem alternations in the prohibitions of the *RV* are virtually restricted to bases that do not or cannot build root-Aor. stems.

Roots that build a morphologically complex Aor. (thematic or sibilant) and a morphologically complex Pres. (thematic or otherwise characterized) but lack a root Aor. have the highest rate of attesting competing forms in prohibitions. An example is given in (21), in which (21a) has the Pres. inj. *mā dahāḥ*, whereas (21b) has the *s*-Aor. inj. *mā dhāk*, both interpreted as “don’t burn.”

(21) COMPETING CHARACTERIZED STEMS TO A SINGLE VERB LACKING ROOT FORMANTS

- a. *mā enam agne ví daho*_[PRES.] *mābhí śoco, māśya tvācaṃ cikṣipo mā śārīram yadā śrītām kṛṇāvo jātavedo, áthem enam prá hiṇutāt pitṛbhyah* (*RV* X.16.1)

Don’t burn him through, Agni; don’t scorch him; don’t singe his skin, nor his body.

When you will make him cooked to readiness, Jātavedas, then impel him forth to the forefathers.

- b. *mā mām édho dáśatayaś citó dhāk*_[AOR.], *prá yád vām baddhás tmáni khādati kṣām* (*RV* I.158.4cd).

Let the piled-up, ten-stick kindling not burn me, when he [=Agni], whom you bound by the trunk of his body, chews at the earth.

Of the nine roots that attest competing Aor. and Pres./Pf. stems in prohibitions in the *RV*, six lack regular root formations and show morphologically complex stems of both the Pres./Pf. and the Aor. (\sqrt{car} ‘move’, \sqrt{tan} ‘stretch’, \sqrt{dah} ‘burn’, \sqrt{muc} ‘release’, \sqrt{yu} ‘separate’, \sqrt{sridh} ‘blunder’).³⁸ \sqrt{mad} ‘become exhilarated’ attests a sibilant-Aor. inj. in the *RV* (IX.85.1c *mā...matsata* “let them not become exhilarated”) as well as a thematic-Pres. inj. to *prá* \sqrt{mad} ‘neglect’ in the *AV* and Vedic prose (see (7c) above). The *AV* adds four roots to this list ($\sqrt{bād}$

³⁸ The remaining three roots unexpectedly attest root formations alongside characterized stems in prohibition: \sqrt{duh} ‘milk’ (cf. n. 46 below) attests a *sa*-Aor. inj. (*mā vi dukṣah*, *RV* VII.4.7d) and a root-Pres. inj. (*mā vi dugdhām*, *RV* I.158.4b), $\sqrt{vṛj}$ ‘twist’ attests a root-Aor. inj. (*mā varḥ, varḥtam*, 2x in *RV* VI, VIII) and a nasal-Pres. inj. (*mā vṛṇak*, 2x in *RV* VIII), and $\sqrt{bhī}$ ‘fear’ (cf. n. 47 below) attests a root-Aor. inj. (*mā bhema*, 2x in *RV* I, VIII) and a Pf. inj. (*mā bibhūta(na)/bibheḥ*, *RV* VIII.66.15b; 20x in the *AV*), as well as an *s*-Aor. inj. *mā bhaisīḥ* in the *AV* (*AVŚ* X.9.7d ≈ *AVP* XVI.136.5c). It is possible that the rare *mā vṛṇak* (not in the *AV*) was created based on the frequently used Pres. imperative to this root (i.e., beside *vṛṇdhi* and *vṛṇaktu*) (cf. n. 47 below for a similar suggestion about *mā kuruthāḥ* “don’t make”). The *AV* adds to this list a prohibitive *s*-Aor. of \sqrt{pad} ‘go’ besides its original root Aor., as well as three nonce prohibitive Pres. inj. to roots that otherwise robustly attest root-Aor. inj. in prohibition: $\sqrt{kṛ}$ ‘make’ (*mā kuruthāḥ*), $\sqrt{dā}$ ‘give’ (*mā dadāḥ*), and $\sqrt{sthā}$ ‘stand’ (*mā tiṣṭhah*), on which see n. 47 below. Lastly, \sqrt{su} ‘press’ (prohibitive in the *RV* only) does not show stem alternations in prohibition but does attest a nasal-Pres. inj. where we might reasonably expect a root-Aor. inj. (*mā sunota* *RV* II.30.7b; never **mā so-/su-*). It is worth noting, however, that this example is in direct speech and that the root-Aor. stem to \sqrt{su} is attested exclusively in the imperative in the *RV*, never in the injunctive (cf. Jamison’s 2015– online *RV* commentary for *RV* VIII.1.17a).

Other roots with original root-Aor. stems may attest thematized forms (e.g., \sqrt{tan} ‘stretch’ → *tan-* >> *mā tana-*) or secondarily develop a sibilant-Aor. stem (\sqrt{muc} → *moc-* >> *mā mukṣa-* [besides a Pf. inj. *mā mumuca-* in the *RV* and a thematic Aor. inj. *mā muca-* and Aor. passive inj. *mā moci* in the *AV*])—particularly *seṭ* roots (e.g., $\sqrt{vadhī}$ ‘slay’ has an *iṣ*-Aor. inj. with *mā* [2x, *RV* V and VIII] besides its original root Aor. *mā vadhī-* [11x in the *RV*]), but also, by analogy, some *aniṭ* roots (e.g., $\sqrt{mṛṣ}$ ‘ignore’ shows a development from the original root Aor. *mā mṛṣṭhāḥ* “don’t forget” [*RV* III.33.8a] to an *iṣ*-Aor. *mā marṣiṣṭhāḥ* “don’t neglect” [*RV* I.71.10a], on which see Narten 1964: 199–200). Note that secondarily characterized stems tend to behave like any other characterized stem for the purposes of stem selection in the prohibitive construction (hence *mā tanuthāḥ* [*RV* V.79.9b] beside *mā tanat* [*RV* I.91.23c], etc.).

‘oppress’, √*srj* ‘send forth’, √*hā* ‘leave’, √*hims* ‘injure’) in addition to some found already in the *RV*. A further two roots attest competing morphologically complex Aor. stems in prohibitions in the *RV* (√*radh* ‘be subject’ and √*das* ‘waste’), along with √*muc* ‘release’ in the *AV*.

Predictably, then, roots whose paradigms lack an Aor. stem altogether regularly show a Pres. inj. in prohibitions, this being the only base they have available (NB: the Pf. is by and large excluded from building injunctive stems³⁹), as demonstrated in (22). Again, both inhibitive (22a) and preventive (22b) readings are available, as permitted by the lexical meaning of the root and the local context in which the verb occurs.

(22) PRES. INJS. TO ROOTS THAT LACK AOR. STEMS

- a. *akṣair mā dīvyah kṛṣīm it kṛṣasva* (*RV* X.34.13a)

Don’t keep playing with dice; just plow your own plowland.

- b. *indra túbhyam in maghavann abhūma, vayam dātré harivo mā ví venaḥ* (*RV* VI.44.10ab)

Indra, we have become ready just for you, the giver, you generous possessor of the fallow bays. **Do not lose the track.**

√*dīv* ‘play’ and √*ven* ‘track, yearn’ regularly build only Pres. stems.⁴⁰ Cf. also (7a) and (16) above.

Similarly, certain derived stems belong properly only to the Pres. system and cannot readily build Aor. injunctives. Such is the case with denominatives (23a), desideratives (23b), and intensives (23c).⁴¹ (The first two examples in (23) are preventive, despite Hoffmann [pp. 87–88]; the third can conceivably be inhibitive.)

(23) PRES. INJS. TO (NON-RADICAL) VERBAL BASES THAT BELONG ONLY TO THE PRES. SYSTEM

- a. *mā átra pūṣann āghṛṇa irasyo, várūtrī yád rātiṣācaś ca rāsan* (*RV* VII.40.6ab)

Don’t get envious now, glowing Pūṣan, when the Shielding Goddess and the Gift-Escorts will make bestowal.

- b. *naitām te devā adadus, túbhyaṃ nṛpate áttave*

mā brāhmaṇásya rājanya, gām jīghatso anādyām (*AVŚ* V.18.1 = *AVP* IX.17.1)

The gods did not give her to you for you to eat, O lord of men;

³⁹ The Pf. is, with few exceptions, categorically dispreferred as an “injunctive” base, particularly in the prohibitive construction. Further, the six possible examples of a prohibitive Pf. inj. in the *RV/AV* are beset with morphological problems—the majority not showing simple Pf. stems but adding some additional suffixation and/or other irregularity. In the *RV*: √*dhṛṣ* ‘dare’ (with *-iṣ-*, *dadharṣ-iṣ[-t]*), √*muc* ‘release’ (thematized, *mumuc-a-s*), √*si/sā* ‘bind’ (*siṣe-t*); in the *AV*: √*hims* ‘injure’ (with *-iṣ-*, *jihims-iṣ[-s]*); in both texts: √*bhī* ‘fear’ (*bibhī-ta(na)/bibhe-s*), √*yu* ‘separate’ (*yuyo-thāḥ/-ta/-ma*). The last two of these, at least, are on their way to becoming Presents and may well already have been (perceived as) Pres. injs. in the *RV*. While the motivation for the occurrence of such forms is not entirely clear, it is in keeping with the overall analysis presented here that all but two of these roots (√*bhī* and √*muc*) lack a root-Aor. stem altogether, only one of which attests a non-passive root-Aor. inj. with *mā* (√*bhī* has *mā bhema* [2x in *RV* I, VIII] beside *mā bibhīta(na)/bibheḥ* [1x in *RV* VIII, 20x in the *AV*] and the *s*-Aor. *mā bhaiṣīḥ* [1x in *AV* X]). All Pf. injs. with *mā* are preventive except *bibhe/-* in four of its twenty-one occurrences in the two texts.

⁴⁰ There are no other verbal bases built to √*ven* ‘track, yearn’. √*dīv* ‘play’ does have a Pf. in the *AV* (*didéva*, *didīvire*), in addition to a one-off *iṣ*-Aor. at *RV* X.34.5a (1SG.SJV. *nā daviṣāṇi* “I shall not play (with dice) [any longer]”) in the same “Gambler” hymn as (22a), and in the same “inhibitive” context(!). However, its regular formation can only be said to be the Pres. stem *dīvya-*. On the avoidance of the Pf. inj. in general, see n. 39 above.

⁴¹ Along, at least in principle, with *áya*-causatives that lack corresponding reduplicated Aor. stems, on which see (26) below and accompanying discussion.

do not, O noble, **desire/seek/try to eat** the cow of the Brahman that is not to be eaten.

- c. *mā tvā sómasya bárbrhat, sutásya mádhumattamah* (*Kh.* II.13.4b, Scheftelowitz 1906: 85).

Let the sweetest of pressed soma **not strengthen you to the utmost**.⁴²

Putting these distributional facts together, we may generalize that (i) if a root builds a root Aor., it will use it in the prohibitive construction; (ii) roots that lack a root Aor. will attest morphologically complex injunctives—whether Aor. inj. (e.g., \sqrt{sram} ‘be weary’), Pres./Pf. inj. (e.g., \sqrt{van} ‘cherish’), competing sibilant/thematic Aor. injs. (\sqrt{das} ‘waste’), or competing Aor. and Pres./Pf. injs. (e.g., \sqrt{dah} ‘burn’); and (iii) roots or derived stems that do not or cannot build an Aor. will attest only a Pres./Pf. inj. in prohibitions (e.g., $\sqrt{d\bar{t}v}$ ‘play’, *irasy-* ‘be/get envious’).

There are between four and six roots (out of ninety-eight) that may legitimately be said to go against this generalization in the *RV* (i.e., 4–6%). In the Family Books the number is two to four out of fifty-seven (i.e., 4–7%). In other words, this analysis accounts for some 95% of the data as attested in the *RV*. I therefore posit stem selection for R̥gvedic prohibitions based not on tense-aspect but on a formal preference for morphological simplicity of the prohibitive verbal base. Thus, the prohibitive construction was originally built directly to the root, as seen most robustly in the Family Books of the *RV*, and only later could be formed to bases that were morphologically more complex.

We have already seen (cf. Tables 5 and 6 above) that the Aor. is overwhelmingly preferred to the Pres./Pf. in prohibitions. According to Whitney (1889: 217–18) the verbal bases of the prohibitive construction are “prevalingly aorist.”⁴³ I point out that the data suggests something more specific, namely that in the prohibitive construction the injunctives are prevalingly *root* Aorist (noticed in passing already by Avery [1885: 331], regarding both the prohibitive and the non-prohibitive Aor. inj.). The formal proposal put forth here entails that the root-Aor. inj., in particular, is preferred among the Aor. stems in prohibition, at least in the earliest language. This is borne out, as shown in Table 9.

⁴² Cf. Hoffmann’s (p. 89) inhibitive interpretation: “nicht soll dich (Agni) der süßeste des gepreßten Somas immer wieder bedrücken (?)”

⁴³ In particular, Whitney says that “the relation of the imperfect [= Pres./Pf. inj.] to the aorist construction, in point of frequency, is in *RV*. about as one to five, in *AV*. still less, or about one to six” (1889: 218). My counts corroborate this statement almost exactly for token frequencies. With *mā RV* II–VII has 27 Pres./Pf. injs. to 136 Aor. injs. (about 1:5). In *RV* I–X, the numbers are 61 and 291 (about 1:5). In the *AV* they are 52 and 336 (about 1:6). For types, the counts are, respectively, 16 to 49 (about 1:3), 33 to 86 (about 3:8), and 23 to 82 (about 2:7). In all cases, the proportion of occurrence of Pres./Pf. injs. in this construction decreases relative to that of the Aor. over time. On the decline of the Pres./Pf. inj., see below.

TABLE 9: DISTRIBUTION OF PROHIBITIVE AOR. AND PRES./PF. INJS. IN THE *ṚGVEDA*⁴⁴

		COUNT			PERCENT OF TOTAL			PERCENT OF ALL AORS.		
		ROOT AOR.	THEM. AOR.	SIBLNT. AOR.	ROOT AOR.	THEM. AOR.	SIBLNT. AOR.	ROOT AOR.	THEM. AOR.	SIBLNT. AOR.
TOKENS	II–VII	75	25	13	46%	15%	8%	55%	18%	10%
	I–X	136	65	45	39%	18%	13%	47%	22%	15%
TYPES	II–VII	22	9	10	34%	14%	15%	45%	18%	20%
	I–X	30	16	23	25%	13%	19%	35%	19%	27%

		COUNT			PERCENT OF TOTAL		
		PRES.	PF.	PRES./PF.	PRES.	PF.	PRES./PF.
TOKENS	II–VII	24	3	27	15%	2%	17%
	I–X	54	7	61	15%	2%	17%
TYPES	II–VII	13	3	16	20%	5%	25%
	I–X	28	5	33	24%	4%	28%

Table 9 shows that, in terms of token frequency, the root Aor. towers over the other stem classes in the *RV*. In terms of type frequency, the root Aor. is clearly dominant in the Family Books. In the *RV* as a whole, we can observe the sibilant Aor. and Pres. “catching up” to the root Aorist. Note that the sibilant-Aor. and Pres. stems pattern similarly in terms of frequency of occurrence, since, as discussed above (cf. (21)), these are precisely the stem classes that tend to show Aor. vs. Pres. alternation in prohibitions (along with the thematic Aor., to some extent).

Thus, in the *RV* the “formula” for building a prohibitive construction would have been as in (24).

(24) PROHIBITIVE IN THE *RV*: $m\ddot{a}$ + VERBAL ROOT + SECONDARY ENDING

Only if the bare root is not available as a base do *Ṛgvedic* poets resort to a morphologically more complex base, as in the case of denominatives and the like.⁴⁵

Originally the only surface exceptions to this were bases that could not build stems directly to the root, as discussed above.⁴⁶ In such cases the verbal base selected for could be any

⁴⁴ The reduplicated Aor. is excluded from Tables 9 and 10 but is included in the total counts. Percentages will accordingly not add up to 100% (cf. n. 33 above). The token counts for the reduplicated Aor. inj. in prohibition are as follows, equated to percentages of the total prohibitive constructions in each text, along with type counts and their percentages in parentheses: *RV* II–VII: 23 (8) = 14% (12%); *RV* I–X: 45 (17) = 13% (14%); *AV*: 18 (9) = 5% (9%).

⁴⁵ Typologically, this situation is unremarkable, since it is an established cross-linguistic tendency for languages to prefer morphologically simplex imperatival constructions (see, e.g., Jespersen 1922: 403; Lombard 1953: 21; Bat-El 2002: 651; Weiss 2011: 422; Floricic and Molinu 2012: 3).

⁴⁶ Why the prohibitive construction is built to the root *Aorist* far more regularly than to the root Present is not entirely clear. In the *RV* we have root-Pres. inj. to \sqrt{is} ‘be(come) master’ (13x, I–II, VI–X), \sqrt{duh} ‘milk’ (1x, I), and \sqrt{vi} ‘pursue’ (1x, IV); in the *AV* we have them to \sqrt{vi} ‘go’ (1x, *AVŚ* V.22.11c, not in *AVP*), $\sqrt{yā}$ ‘drive’ (2x, *AVŚ* VI.73.3a [≈ *AVP* XIX.10.11a], *AVŚ* XI.2.1a [= *AVP* XVI.104.1a]), and \sqrt{vi} ‘pursue’ (1x, *AVP* XVI.104.2e). In Vedic generally root-Aor.-building roots outnumber root-Pres.-building roots roughly 2:1, but this does not explain the near absence of the root-Pres. inj. in prohibitions in contrast to the utter regularity of the root-Aor. inj. in this construction. Part of the answer surely lies in the observation that injunctives to root Presents are rare *in general*, not just in prohibitions. The roots that most securely build (original) root-Pres. stems tend not to attest injunctives at all (e.g., \sqrt{ad} ‘eat’, \sqrt{as} ‘be’, $\sqrt{ās}$ ‘sit’, \sqrt{i} ‘go’ [not in the *RV*]). This fact is a still greater mystery beyond the scope of

kind of morphologically complex stem, whatever happened to be available (e.g., a denominative stem with *-ya-* but no further suffixing). Thus, surface alternations arose to roots that built characterized Aor. inj. as well as Pres./Pf. inj. but lacked root formations, since either morphologically complex stem was equally viable as an alternative to the preferred but (paradigmatically) unavailable root formation.

Given that speakers associated the *mā́*-construction with selection for a root-Aor. inj. (where available), they could then have generalized that prohibitions simply select for Aor. stems of any variety. This reinterpretation would have been facilitated by (and contributed to) the increasing productivity of the characterized Aor. formations and the resultant conversion of old root Aors. to thematic or sibilant Aors., especially as marked by the suffix *-iṣ-*, a suffix much more common in the *AV* than in the *RV* (at least in the prohibitive construction [Avery 1885: 361]). We should expect, then, to find a general increase in the number of characterized Aors. used in prohibitions in the *AV*, especially sibilant Aors., and a general decline in the occurrence of root Aors. in this construction. This is again borne out, as seen in Table 10, which shows that in the *AV* the sibilant Aor. overtakes the root Aor. in terms of frequency, while the Pres. inj. is “in retreat” (cf. n. 32 above and Avery 1885: 331).

TABLE 10: DISTRIBUTION OF PROHIBITIVE AOR. AND PRES./PF. INJS. IN THE *ATHARVAVEDA*

	COUNT			PERCENT OF TOTAL			PERCENT OF ALL AORS.		
	ROOT AOR.	THEM. AOR.	SIBLNT. AOR.	ROOT AOR.	THEM. AOR.	SIBLNT. AOR.	ROOT AOR.	THEM. AOR.	SIBLNT. AOR.
TOKENS	107	83	128	28%	21%	33%	32%	25%	38%
TYPES	18	21	34	17%	20%	32%	22%	26%	41%

	COUNT			PERCENT OF TOTAL		
	PRES.	Pf.	PRES./PF.	PRES.	Pf.	PRES./PF.
TOKENS	30	22	52	8%	6%	13%
TYPES	20	3	23	19%	3%	22%

In the *AV* there are ten roots that show Aor. vs. Pres./Pf. alternations in prohibitions. Of these, six do not make root Aors., attesting only characterized Aor. and Pres./Pf. stems.⁴⁷ In

the present paper, but, at any rate, the dearth of root-Pres. inj. in prohibition may be understood as part of a larger phenomenon of Vedic whereby root-Pres. inj. are dispreferred in *all* contexts.

⁴⁷ The remaining four roots have root-Aor. stems attested in addition to marked Pres./Pf. stems in prohibitions (quite unexpectedly): \sqrt{kr} ‘make’ (*mā́ kuruthāḥ*, 1x), $\sqrt{dā}$ ‘give’ (*mā́ dadāḥ*, 1x), $\sqrt{sthā}$ ‘stand’ (*mā́ tiṣṭhaḥ*, 2x), and $\sqrt{bhī}$ ‘fear’ (*mā́ bibhīta(na)/bibheḥ*, 20x). The Pres. stems to the first three of these are not found in the prohibitions of the *RV*. The first, *mā́ kuruthāḥ* (*AVŚ* V.22.11c, not in *AVP*), may be modeled on its frequently used Pres. imperative *kuru* (which was replacing *kṛṇuhi* and *kṛdhi*) (cf. n. 38 above for a similar suggestion about *mā́ vṛṇak* “don’t twist”). The form *mā́ dadāḥ* (*AVŚ* XII.4.52ab ≈ *AVP* XVII.20.12ab) is a *hapax legomenon* in quoted speech that may be a nonce formation created after (*ná*) *adadāt* two lines earlier (*AVŚ* XII.4.50a ≈ *AVP* XVII.20.10a). It is also noteworthy that in the *AV* the root-Aor. inj. *mā́...dāḥ* “don’t give” only shows up in a *RV* repetition (1x), while in the *RV* the prohibitive use always has the preverb *pārā* (*mā́...pārā dāḥ*). (Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out these facts to me.) Tellingly, of these three Pres. inj., only the *mā́ tiṣṭhaḥ* examples (*AVŚ* VIII.1.9cd ≈ *AVP* XVI.1.9cd, *AVŚ* X.1.26ab ≈ *AVP* XVI.37.6ab) are plausibly inhibitive in context, so whatever may be going on here cannot be adequately explained by an appeal to semantics. As for $\sqrt{bhī}$ (cf. nn. 38–39 above), the root-Aor. inj. is not attested in the *AV* with *mā́*, only the *s*-Aor. (1x) and Pf. (20x). The root-Aor. inj. *mā́ bhema* is, however, found twice in the *RV* (I, VIII), in addition to one Pf. inj. *mā́ bibhītana* (VIII). If this represents a change in the prohibitive

addition, there are two roots that attest competing Aor. stems in prohibition: \sqrt{pad} ‘go’ (root Aor. and *s*-Aor.) and \sqrt{muc} ‘release’ (thematic Aor. and *s*-Aor.).

In contrast to the *RV*, in the *AV* we find that, of the twenty-four roots capable of building root-Aor. stems that are attested in prohibitions, only eighteen actually utilize them (75%). This is expected, given the general trend towards thematization and conversion of old root Aors. to sibilant Aorists.⁴⁸ The sibilant Aors., accordingly, become the most frequent way of marking prohibition.

The suffix *-iṣ-* is so productive by the time of the *AV* that it is used to build Aor. inj. stems in prohibitions out of bases that originally could not make Aors. at all, such as desideratives (25a), Perfects (25b), and even characterized Pres. stems (25c).

(25) NEW AOR. INJ. FORMS IN THE *AV* BUILT WITH THE *-iṣ-* SUFFIX

- a. *mā vaniṃ mā vācam no vīrtsīḥ* (*AVŚ* V.7.6a ≈ *AVP* VII.9.8a)
Do not seek to thwart our winning/desire **nor** speech.
- b. *vānaspatyá údyato mā jihimsīr, mā taṇḍulāṃ ví śarīr devayāntam* (*AVŚ* XII.3.18cd ≈ *AVP* XVII.51.8c)
 Made of forest tree, uplifted, **do not injure**, do not crush to pieces the god-loving rice-grain.
- c. *sá mā vadhīt pitāraṃ vārdhamāno, mā mātāraṃ prá minīj jānitrīm* (*AVŚ* VI.110.3cd, not in *AVP*)
 Let him not, increasing, slay his father; **let him not harm** his mother who gave him birth.

Contrast the Pres. inj. desiderative given above in (23b) (*mā jighatsaḥ* “don’t seek to eat”), which coexists with the *-iṣ-* suffixed type (25a) in the *AV*. More roots attest prohibitive Pf. inj. that are not extended by *-iṣ-* in the *RV* than in the *AV* (see n. 39 above). For a plain nasal-Pres. inj. in this construction (i.e., without *-iṣ-*), cf. *mā hṛṇī-* “don’t be angry” in (16) above. One also finds *áya*-causatives suffixed with *-iṣ-*, of the type in (26a), alternating with the more expected reduplicated-Aor. stems of the type in (26b). Both are functionally equivalent and preventive.

(26) COMPETING CAUSATIVE AORS. IN THE *AV*: *áya*-PRES. + *-iṣ-* VS. REDUPLICATED AOR.

- a. *nāmas te tāsmai kṛṇ(u)mo, mā vaniṃ vyathayīr máma* (*AVŚ* V.7.2cd)
- b. *namas te tasmai kṛṇmo, mā vaniṃ mama vivyathaḥ* (*AVP* VII.9.2cd, and cf. *AVP* XIX.34.2cd)
 We pay homage to him of yours: **Do not disturb** my victory.

Newly constructed *iṣ-* forms such as these are at least twice as common in the *AV* as they are in the *RV* (6:3, including non-prohibitive occurrences). Three examples alone are met with in the *RV*, only one of which occurs in the Family Books.⁴⁹ By contrast, the *RV* contains twice as

construction of $\sqrt{bhī}$ from the root-Aor. inj. to characterized injunctive forms, it seems broadly in line with the analysis put forth here, though its prolonged preference for the Pf. stem is atypical.

⁴⁸ Again, this count excludes passive Aors. (cf. n. 36 above), which adds two roots to our count (included in Tables 9 and 10 above under “root Aor.”).

⁴⁹ Namely *RV* IV.4.3d: *mākiṣ...ā dadharṣīt* “let no one defy” (Pf. of $\sqrt{dhṛṣ}$ ‘dare’). Of the other two, one is a denominative *mā...ūnāyīḥ* “don’t leave lacking” (*RV* I.53.3d); the other is an *áya*-Pres. *mā...dhvanayīt* “let it not besmirch” (*RV* I.162.15a). Cf. Narten 1964: 55, 155, 193, 292; Hoffmann 1967: 63, 89; Jamison 1983: 115; Kümmel 2000: 48, 89, 268–71.

many (coincidentally also 6:3) injunctive stems built directly to derived Presents or Perfects in prohibitions, without the suffix *-iṣ-*, such as *mā riṣanyah* “stop doing damage” (*RV* II.11.1a) and *mā irasyah* “don’t get envious” (*RV* VII.40.6a) (cf. respectively (4a) and (23a) above).

So, by the *AV* (and perhaps by the later *RV*), the “formula” for constructing prohibitions appears to have changed from what we saw in the *RV* above (24) to that of (27).

(27) PROHIBITIVE IN THE AV: *mā* + VERBAL BASE + *-iṣ-* + SECONDARY ENDING

This is in keeping with the fact that Pāṇini (III.3.175) ends up declaring as a rule that prohibitions are formed with *mā* + the augmentless Aorist. By this stage of the language prohibitions made with Pres./Pf. inj. effectively do not exist (Whitney 1889: 218, 221; but cf. Pāṇini III.3.176 and the discussion of *mā* with *sma* and the Pres. inj. in §3.1 above).

5. CONCLUSION

We have seen that the Aor. vs. Pres./Pf. inj. alternations in the prohibitions of the *RV* and *AV* cannot be motivated in terms of an aspectual contrast (preventive vs. inhibitive) of the kind described by Hoffmann. Any perceived contrast between preventive and inhibitive readings is to be attributed only to the lexical semantics of the verb in question and the local context in which it occurs. In place of Hoffmann’s “semantic” approach, a formal analysis seems to account better for the attested distribution, with stem selection originally based on morphological simplicity but later confined to the Aor. stem (especially as marked with the suffix *-iṣ-*). And so I come to conclusions similar to those of my mentor, Stephanie Jamison, in her work on the Pf. optative (2009), subjunctive (2016: 315, 323), and imperative (2018) in Vedic: “[L]ack of competing forms ... makes it clear that for Vedic it is pointless, indeed perverse, to seek a special function ... from the tense/aspect value of its ... forms. Since there essentially exist no competing forms, a contrastive value ... is unlikely” (Jamison 2009: 39).

I have looked not only at what forms are actually attested, but also at what forms we do *not* find attested, on the assumption that an adequate analysis of prohibitions in Vedic must account for both what its grammar does and what it does not generate. This analysis therefore has an advantage over prior treatments in that it both gives a motivation for attested forms and accounts for the absence of forms that one might theoretically expect to find in prohibitions. Thus, it turns out that characterized Pres./Pf. inj. originally alternate in prohibitions only with characterized Aor. injunctives. Root formations nearly always lack a characterized counterpart to the same root in prohibitions. Only later does the Aor. inj. (of any stem class) come to be the default form in prohibitions, such that by the post-Vedic stage Pres./Pf. inj. are almost never found with *mā* (Whitney 1889: 218, 221).

If the inhibitive/preventive contrast in Vedic really is, as it is said to be, our “clearest” evidence (Kiparsky 1998: 46, Baum 2006: 66) for assuming a perfective/imperfective contrast in Indo-Iranian (Willi 2018: 414), then assuming the existence of such an aspectual contrast for Indo-Iranian becomes problematic, at least outside the indicative. This has serious ramifications for the tense-aspect system of PIE. Given that Anatolian is monothematic, and other IE branches have undergone extensive remodeling in their respective verbal systems, we are essentially left with (Homeric) Greek alone to provide reasonably clear (though by no means unproblematic) evidence for an aspectual contrast between Pres. and Aor. stems in the inherited Indo-European

verbal system.⁵⁰ Still, even if the modal system of Vedic is uninformative as regards aspectual contrast, the indicative forms seem to retain a relatively robust distinction, at least in the *RV*, and seem to provide useful comparanda to the distributions of these stems in other IE languages, above all Greek. It is therefore only in the indicative and indicatival uses of the injunctive that Vedic tense-aspect stem alternations are (for the most part) semantically motivated and have a chance of revealing something of the original workings of the PIE verbal system (cf. Hollenbaugh 2018).

ABBREVIATIONS

Texts

<i>AV</i>	<i>Atharvaveda</i>
<i>AVP</i>	<i>Atharvaveda Paippalāda</i>
<i>AVŚ</i>	<i>Atharvaveda Śaunaka</i>
<i>JB</i>	<i>Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>Kh.</i>	<i>Khilāni</i>
<i>RV</i>	<i>Ṛgveda</i>
<i>ŚB</i>	<i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>TĀ</i>	<i>Taittirīya Arāṇyaka</i>

Grammatical terms:

1	First person
3	Third person
act.	active
Aor./Aors.	Aorist/Aorists
Pf.	Perfect
Pres.	Present
inj./injs.	injunctive/injunctives
instr.	instrumental
ipv.	imperative
mid.	middle
pl.	plural
sjv.	subjunctive

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⁵⁰ Whether there is an preventive/non-preventive distinction in Greek is far from certain, especially in Homer (Willmott 2007: 99–100). As in Vedic, there are many counterexamples in both directions: e.g., **μη** νῦν **ἔτ’** **εἴπη**ς_[Aor.] μηδέν “speak no longer now any (word)” (Soph. *El.* 324); ἀλλὰ **μη** με **καίνετε**_[Pres.] “don’t kill me” (NB: not “stop killing me”) (Eu. *El.* 850).

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