

# How to say the unsayable



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## Abstract

A number of traditional philosophers and religious thinkers advocated an ineffability thesis to the effect that the ultimate reality cannot be expressed as it truly is by human concepts and words. However, if X is ineffable, the question arises as to how words can be used to gesture toward it. We can't even say that X is unsayable, because in doing so, we would have made it sayable. In my talk, I examine the solution offered by the fifth-century Indian grammarian-philosopher Bhartrhari and develop it into a linguistic strategy based on the imposition-cum-negation method. The purpose is to show how we can non-contradictorily say, or rather indicate, the unsayable.

## Profile

Chien-hsing Ho is an associate professor in the Graduate Institute of Religious Studies at Nanhua University, Taiwan. He received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Delhi in 1999. He specializes in Indian and Chinese Madhyamaka, and Buddhist epistemology, with additional research interests in Chan Buddhism, Daoist philosophy, Indian philosophy, and comparative philosophy. He has published articles in refereed journals such as *Philosophy East and West*, *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, and *Asian Philosophy*.

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