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Higher education faces a complex set of challenges today. We are seeing resources diminish at the same time we are hearing calls for greater access and affordability. Demands for greater transparency and accountability are being sounded by both the general public and the government. Government is exerting increasing controls in this long-independent area.

These challenges, however, are merely financial and political, and they are hardly limited to colleges and universities. The fundamental challenges are educational and center around the students themselves. Challenges include high levels of stress, pervasive substance abuse (particularly binge drinking), lack of preparedness for college-level work, and mental and emotional disabilities. In most of these areas, the problem is serious and worsening. Though colleges and universities are striving to address these challenges, few would claim we are turning the tide.

An encouraging trend is the increasing focus in higher education nationwide on promoting student learning. Yet these laudable efforts do not take into account the powerful forces working in opposition. It is well known that learning is inhibited by stress, sleep deprivation, alcohol, and poor diet—and these are among the most conspicuous features of the college student experience.

Something new is required. Education needs a reliable means of developing students directly from within. We need a systematic method for cultivating their creative intelligence, their capacity to learn, and their natural humanity. All education aims at these goals, of course—but the approach thus far has been from the outside in, and the results have been haphazard at best.

Consciousness-Based education was established to address this need. It integrates the best practices of education and places beneath them a proper foundation—direct development of the student from inside out.

The outcomes of Consciousness-Based education have been unprecedented and scientifically verified. These outcomes include significant
growth of intelligence, creativity, learning ability, field independence, ego development, and moral maturity, among others. These results are remarkable because many of these values typically plateau in adolescence—but Consciousness-Based education promotes this growth in students of all ages, developing potentials that otherwise would have remained unexpressed.

Beyond this rich cognitive growth, Consciousness-Based education significantly reduces student stress, boosts self-esteem, improves health, reduces substance use, and enhances interpersonal relationships. All of this comes together to create exceptional learning environments. This approach even measurably improves the quality of life in the surrounding society.

Consciousness-Based education was founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the world authority on the science of consciousness. First pioneered at Maharishi University of Management (previously Maharishi International University, 1971–1995) in Fairfield, Iowa, Consciousness-Based education is being adopted by schools, colleges, and universities around the world. It is easily integrated into any school, without any change in mission or curriculum.

Consciousness-Based education recognizes that student learning depends fundamentally on students’ levels of consciousness or alertness. The more alert and awake the student, the more successful and satisfying the learning.

Consciousness-Based education consists of three components:

- a practical technology for directly developing students’ potential from within,
- a theoretical understanding of consciousness that gives rise to a unifying framework for knowledge, enabling students to easily grasp the fundamental principles of any discipline and to connect these principles to their own personal growth, and
- a set of classroom practices, arising from this understanding, that also helps promote effective teaching and learning.
At the heart of Consciousness-Based education is the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique. The technique was brought to light by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi from the Vedic tradition of India, the world’s most ancient continuous tradition of knowledge. It is practiced for 20 minutes twice daily, once in the morning and once in the afternoon, while sitting comfortably with eyes closed. It is simple, natural, and effortless—so simple, in fact, that ten-year-old children can learn and practice it. It has been learned by more than six million people worldwide, of all ages, religions, and cultures.

The Transcendental Meditation technique differs from other procedures of meditation and relaxation in its effortlessness. It involves no concentration or control of the mind. Neither is it a religion, philosophy, or lifestyle. It involves no new codes of behavior, attitudes, or beliefs, not even the belief it will work.

The Transcendental Meditation program is the most extensively validated program of personal development in the world. It has been the subject of more than 600 scientific research studies, conducted at more than 250 universities and research institutions in more than 30 countries worldwide. These studies have been published in more than 150 scientific and scholarly journals in a broad range of fields, including *Science, Scientific American, American Journal of Physiology, International Journal of Neuroscience, Memory and Cognition, Social Indicators Research, Intelligence, Journal of Mind and Behavior, Education, Journal of Moral Education, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Business and Health, British Journal of Educational Psychology, Journal of Human Stress, Lancet, Physiology and Behavior*, and numerous others. No approach to education has as much empirical support as Consciousness-Based education.

This approach, moreover, has been successfully field-tested over the past 35 years in primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools all over the world, in developed and developing nations, in a wide variety of cultural settings—the United States, Latin America, Europe, Africa, India, and China.

The Transcendental Meditation technique enables one to “dive within.” During the practice, the mind settles inward, naturally and spontaneously, to a state of deep inner quiet, beyond thoughts and per-
conceptions. One experiences consciousness in its pure, silent state, uncolored by mental activity. In this state, consciousness is aware of itself alone, awake to its own unbounded nature.

The technique also gives profound rest, which dissolves accumulated stress and restores balanced functioning to mind and body.

This state of inner wakefulness coupled with deep rest represents a fourth major state of consciousness, distinct from the familiar states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping, known as Transcendental Consciousness.

In this restfully alert state, brain functioning becomes highly integrated and coherent. EEG studies show long-range spatial communication among all brain regions. This coherence is in sharp contrast to the more or less uncoordinated patterns typical of brain activity.

With regular practice, this integrated style of functioning carries over into daily activity. Research studies consistently show a high statistical correlation between brainwave coherence and intelligence, creativity, field independence, emotional stability, and other positive values. The greater one’s EEG coherence, in other words, the greater one’s development in these fundamental areas. At Maharishi University of Management, students even have the option of a Brain Integration Progress Report—an empirical measure of growth of EEG coherence between their first and last years at the University.

The brain is the governor of all human activity—and therefore personal growth and success in any field depend on the degree to which brain functioning is integrated. The increasingly integrated brain functioning that spontaneously results from Transcendental Meditation practice accounts for its multiplicity of benefits to mind, body, and behavior.

Every human being has the natural ability to transcend, to experience the boundless inner reality of life. Every human brain has the natural ability to function coherently. It requires only a simple technique.

Theoretical component—
a unified framework for teaching and learning

Scholars have long called for a way to unify the diverse branches of knowledge. Current global trends are making this need ever more
apparent. The pace of progress is accelerating, the knowledge explosion continues unabated, and knowledge is becoming ever more specialized.

Academic disciplines offer a useful way of compartmentalizing knowledge for purposes of teaching, learning, research, and publication. But each academic discipline explores only one facet of our increasingly complex and interrelated world. The real world, however, is not compartmentalized—an elephant is not a trunk, a tusk, and a tail. Academic disciplines, consequently, are criticized as inadequate, in themselves, for understanding and addressing today’s challenging social problems.

Today, more than ever, we need a means of looking at issues comprehensively, holistically. We need a way of discovering and understanding the natural relationships among all the complex elements that compose the world, even among the complex elements that compose our own disciplines.

Various attempts to address this need have been made under the rubric of interdisciplinary studies—programs or processes that aim to synthesize the perspectives and promote connections among multiple disciplines. Some of these efforts have been criticized as superficial joinings of disciplinary knowledge. But the chief criticism of interdisciplinary studies—levered even by its proponents—is that looking at an issue from multiple perspectives does not, in itself, enable one to find the common ground among contrasting viewpoints, to resolve conflicts, and to arrive at a coherent understanding.

The diverse academic disciplines can be properly unified at only one level—at their source. All academic disciplines are expressions of human consciousness—and if the fundamental principles of consciousness can be identified and understood, then one would gain a grasp of all human knowledge in a single stroke.

This brings us to the theoretical component of Consciousness-Based education. Consciousness-Based education does precisely this—and not as an abstract, theoretical construct but as the result of students’ direct experience of their own silent, pure consciousness. In this sense, practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique forms the laboratory component of Consciousness-Based education, where the theoretical predictions of Consciousness-Based education can be verified through direct personal experience.
This theoretical component offers a rich and deep yet easy-to-grasp intellectual understanding of consciousness—it’s nature and range, how it may be cultivated, its potentials when fully developed. This theoretical component also identifies how the fundamental dynamics of consciousness are found at work in every physical system and in every academic discipline at every level.

With this knowledge as a foundation, teachers and students in all disciplines enjoy a shared and comprehensive understanding of human development and a set of deep principles common to all academic disciplines—a unified framework for knowledge. With this unified framework as a foundation, students can move from subject to subject, discipline to discipline, and readily understand the fundamental principles of the discipline and recognize the principles the discipline shares with the other disciplines they have studied. This approach makes knowledge easy to grasp and personally relevant to the student.

**Pure consciousness and the unified field**

Consciousness has traditionally been understood as the continuous flux of thoughts and perceptions that engages the mind. Thoughts and perceptions, in turn, are widely understood to be merely the by-product of the brain’s electrochemical functioning.

Maharishi has put forward a radically new understanding of human consciousness. In Consciousness-Based education, pure consciousness is understood as the foundation and source of all mental activity, the most silent, creative, and blissful level of the mind—the field of one’s total inner intelligence, one’s innermost Self. (This unbounded value of the Self is written with an uppercase “S” to distinguish it from the ordinary, localized self we typically experience.) Direct experience of this inner field of consciousness awakens it, enlivens its intrinsic properties of creativity and intelligence. Regular experience of pure consciousness through the Transcendental Meditation technique leads to rapid growth of one’s potential, to the development of higher states of human consciousness—to *enlightenment*.

But consciousness is more, even, than this.

Throughout the twentieth century, leading physicists conjectured upon the relation between mind and matter, between consciousness and the physical world; many expressed the conviction that mind is,
somehow, the essential ingredient of the universe. But Maharishi goes further. He has asserted that mind and matter have a common source, and that this source is pure consciousness. Consciousness in its pure, silent state is identical with the most fundamental level of nature’s functioning, the unified field of natural law that has been identified and described by quantum theoretical physicists over the past several decades. Everyone has the potential to experience this field in the simplest form of his or her own awareness. Considerable theoretical evidence, and even empirical evidence, has been put forward in support of this position.

Maharishi has developed these ideas in two bodies of knowledge, the first known as the Science of Creative Intelligence, the second as Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology. The Science of Creative Intelligence examines the nature and range of consciousness and presents a model of human development that includes seven states of consciousness altogether, including four higher states beyond the familiar states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping. These higher states, which develop naturally and spontaneously with Transcendental Meditation practice, bring expanded values of experience of one’s self and the surrounding world. Each represents a progressive stage of enlightenment. Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology examines the dynamics of pure consciousness in fine detail. It reveals the fundamental principles of consciousness that may then be identified in every field of knowledge and every natural system.

Most important for teaching and learning, these sciences reveal how every branch of knowledge emerges from the field of pure consciousness and how this field is actually the Self of every student.

**Strategies for promoting teaching and learning**

Consciousness-Based education also includes a battery of educational strategies that promotes effective teaching and learning. Foremost among these is the precept that parts are always connected to wholes and that learning is most effective when learners are able to connect parts to wholes. In Consciousness-Based education, the parts of knowledge are always connected to the wholeness of knowledge, and the wholeness of knowledge is connected to the Self of the student.
One means of doing this is through *Unified Field Charts*. These wall charts, developed by the faculty at Maharishi University of Management and used in every class, do three things: (1) They show all the branches of the discipline at a glance; (2) They show how the discipline emerges from the field of pure consciousness, the unified field of natural law at the basis of the universe; (3) They show that this field is the Self of the student, which the student experiences during practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique.

In this way students can always see the relation between what they are studying and the discipline as a whole, and they can see the discipline as an expression of their own pure consciousness. Again, this is more than an intellectual formulation—it is the growing reality of students’ experience as they develop higher states of consciousness.

Another strategy is *Main Point Charts*. Developed by the faculty for each lesson and posted on the classroom walls, these charts summarize in a few sentences the main points of the lesson and their relationship to the underlying principles of consciousness. In this way students always have the lesson as a whole in front of them, available at a glance.

**The next paradigm shift**

If higher education is fundamentally about student learning and growth, then Consciousness-Based education represents a major paradigm shift in the history of education. To understand this change, it is useful to reflect on the encouraging paradigm shift that has already been taking place in education over the past several decades.

This shift involves a move from what many call an *instruction paradigm* to a *learning paradigm*. In the instruction paradigm, the mission of colleges and universities is to provide instruction; this is accomplished through a transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. In the learning paradigm, the mission is to produce student learning; this mission is achieved by guiding students in the discovery and construction of knowledge.

This shift is a vitally important advance in education, leading to more successful outcomes and more rewarding experiences for students and teachers alike. But a further paradigm shift remains, and we can understand it by examining a fundamental feature of human experience.
Maharishi observes that every human experience consists of three fundamental components: a knower, a known, and a process of knowing linking knower and known. We may also use the terms experiencer, object of experience, and process of experiencing, or observer, observed, and process of observation.

This threefold structure of experience is nowhere more evident than in schools: The knowers are the students, the known is the knowledge to be learned, and the process of knowing is what the full range of teaching and learning strategies seek to promote.

Understanding this threefold structure helps us understand the paradigm shifts that are taking place.

The instruction paradigm places emphasis on the known. It focuses on the information students are to absorb and the skills they are to learn. In this paradigm, the instructor’s role is to identify what students need to know and deliver it to them.

The learning paradigm emphasizes the process of knowing. It recognizes that students must be actively involved in the learning process, that knowledge is something individuals create and construct for themselves, that students have differing learning styles and differing interests that must be taken into account. In this paradigm, the instructor’s role is to create learning environments and experiences that promote the process of learning.
The Consciousness-Based paradigm embraces the known and the process of knowing but places primary emphasis on the knower—on developing the knower’s potential for learning from within. The following diagram shows the respective emphases of each approach:

But the learning paradigm does not so much abandon the instruction paradigm as enlarge it, so that it includes the process of knowing as well as the known. And the Consciousness-Based approach completes the enlargement to include the knower:

Consciousness-Based education, in summary, is a theory and practice grounded in a systematic science and technology of consciousness, making available the complete experience, systematic development, and comprehensive understanding of the full range of human conscious-
ness. More than 30 years’ experience and extensive scientific research confirm the success of this approach and its applicability to any educational institution.

About this book series
This series of twelve volumes is the result of a unique faculty-wide project that began with the founding of Maharishi University of Management in 1971 and continues to this day. Each volume in the series examines a particular academic discipline in the light of our Consciousness-Based approach to education.

Volumes include:

• an introductory paper introducing the Consciousness-Based understanding of the discipline,
• a Unified Field Chart, if available for publication, for the discipline—a chart that conceptually maps all the branches of the discipline and illustrates how the discipline emerges from the field of pure consciousness and how that field is the Self of every individual. Thus, these charts connect the “parts” of knowledge to the “wholeness” of knowledge and the wholeness of knowledge to the Self of the student;
• subsequent papers that show how this understanding may be applied in various branches of the discipline,
• occasional examples of student work exploring how the Consciousness-Based approach enhances learning in the discipline, and
• an appendix describing Maharishi Vedic Science and Technologies of Consciousness in detail.
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We welcome inquiries and further contributions to this series.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE VOLUME
Terrance Fairchild, Ph.D.
Volume Editor

The term Consciousness-Based refers to that underlying field of all that exists: Ātmā in Vedic language—the unified field for modern science—the absolute, unchanging level of life that is the progenitor of all that is, was, and will ever be. It is infinite, eternal, always whole, always full; it manifests while remaining forever unmanifest. The whole relative universe finds its source in that unchanging field of pure consciousness. To say that literature or anything else is consciousness-based is to be redundant, for everything is consciousness-based. In this volume, Consciousness-Based also means a special application of Maharishi Vedic Science, the unfolding of the highest values of life, based on Vedic Literature and the experience of Transcendental Consciousness during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique and TM-Sidhi program.

A literary text is not a fixed entity; it is open to an unlimited variety of readings; for example, we might read a poem like Yeats' “Byzantium” linguistically, mythically, spiritually, socially, politically, or from a variety of theoretical approaches, such as post-structuralism, Jungian psychology, or Marxian economics. We could interpret Shakespeare’s Hamlet, for example, psychologically, along the lines of class structure or as an historical artifact. A Consciousness-Based approach differs from other literary approaches in that it reads a literary text by examining how the characteristics of pure consciousness, the unified field of natural law, or higher states of consciousness both shape and manifest within the text.

A Consciousness-Based approach to Hamlet offers a reading of the play depicting life out of balance or “an unweeded garden,” as Shakespeare would have it, a universe in need of re-ordering. Elsinore has lost its king to fratricide, and Hamlet’s ambitious and evil uncle Claudius has usurped the legitimacy of the Prince. Restoring order to Denmark falls to Hamlet, the hero of the play, who complains of the enormity of his task: “The time is out of joint. O...that ever I was born to set it right!”
The order that Hamlet brings to Elsinore is a condensed version of the perfect order of the unified field, that level of pure consciousness where the laws of nature create a natural order. A scientific phenomenon in nature is that systems which have fallen into disorder attempt to redress themselves and reestablish order—the wind blows away the pollution; the rain washes the unclean stream; the wounded animal rests itself until well. This reordering of the Universe is exactly what takes place in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Early in the play, Prince Hamlet is despondent to the point of self-destruction, but by the last act he has become clear headed and resolute in his action. At the play’s end the corrupt regime has been overthrown and replaced by noble Fortinbras.

We can compare the restoration of natural order that occurs in *Hamlet* to what is experienced both before and after an individual begins practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique. Prior to the daily practice of alternating pure consciousness with activity, one’s life may be filled with disorderly thinking and behavior, but as soon as one practices the Transcendental Meditation technique for the first time and experiences the deep rest and purification that come with systematic experience of Transcendental Consciousness, coherence develops in the brain and physiology, in thinking and in activity.\(^1\) When we examine a literary text like *Hamlet* from this higher order of interpretation that we call a Consciousness-Based approach, we naturally discover the most profound and universal characteristics of a work of literature. It is this higher order of interpretation, this Consciousness-Based approach to literature that the writers of this volume explore.

\(^1\) For a more comprehensive explanation of Maharishi Vedic Science please refer to Appendix: Kenneth’s Chandler’s “Modern Science and Vedic Science: An Introduction.”
ciples on literary writing and language. This part also contains William Haney’s “Deconstruction and Maharishi Vedic Science” which brings out the universal qualities in Derrida’s relative philosophy of language.

**Part II**
**Literature and Consciousness**
This section applies the theoretical characteristics of consciousness to specific literary works. Terrance Fairchild explores Frank Waters’ *The Man Who Killed the Deer* in terms of the Vedic concept of *Dharma*; Dara Llewellyn examines the nature of short story dynamics as the collapse of wholeness to a point, using the nature of the qualities of the gap from Maharishi Vedic Science in an examination of Welty’s “A Shower of Gold.” Douglas Mackey in “The Dance of Consciousness,” examines how the artist, specifically James Joyce and Thomas Pynchon, who by representing the world as they see it, filtered through a deep awareness of Self, depict the process of evolution of consciousness. Frederick de Armas sees the orderly influence of Transcendental Consciousness in his assessment of de Vega’s *El ganso de oro*. In Eliot’s “Four Quartets,” Terrance Fairchild considers the full range of time, from the most profane examples of the temporal to the most spiritual considerations of the eternal and the immortal.

**Part III**
**Language and Consciousness in Literature**
This section looks at the connection between language and consciousness. Susan Andersen compares Whitman’s idealistic language experiment to create a better America with Maharishi’s theories of language; Evelyn Toft discovers deep parallels between the Vedic levels of language and the ecstatic expressions of John of the Cross. John Flodstrom, in “Language, Self-Knowledge and Maharishi Vedic Science: Grasping the Fullnes of Literary Text,” uses Maharishi Vedic Science and its description of reality in all seven states of consciousness to provide important insights into the connection between literature and the development of the author’s and reader’s self-knowledge.
Part IV
Consciousness in Student Literature Papers
This section offers two examples of senior exit papers using a Consciousness-Based approach. Jennie Rothenberg finds in Ionesco’s “A Stroll in the Air,” a parallel to the TM-Sidhi program, including Yogic Flying. Amber Price’s “The Inner Landscape of Walden Pond” reveals universal principles of consciousness inherent in Thoreau’s seasonal experiences and observations.

Part V
Maharishi Vedic Science and Literature
This section anchors the volume with an excerpt from the book Heaven on Earth through Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology: Theory and Practical Application from the Perspectives of All Disciplines (1989). This article views the full range of literature through the lens of Maharishi Vedic Science, looking at how language and literature originate deep within and take our awareness inward toward the source of our thought and being, allowing us to comprehend the mechanics of creation in general and literature in specific at its most profound level.

Part VI
Appendices
This section includes Dr. Kenneth Chandler’s “Modern Science and Vedic Science: An Introduction,” which served as the introduction to the inaugural issue of the journal Modern Science and Vedic Science and which presents an overview of Maharishi Vedic Science and the new technology of consciousness developed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The second appendix in this section provides a list of relevant links and resources for this volume.

Note:
References to Maharishi’s talks on literature and language cited throughout this volume can now be found in The Flow of Consciousness: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on Literature and Language, Rhoda Orme-Johnson and Susan Andersen (eds.) 2010, which now available from www.mumpress.com.
Part I

Consciousness-Based
Literary Theory
A Unified Field Theory
of Literature

Rhoda F. Orme-Johnson, Ph.D.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rhoda Orme-Johnson was Professor of Literature and Chairperson of the Department of Literature and Languages at Maharishi International University (Maharishi University of Management) from 1979 to 1996. She received her A.B. in mathematics from Vassar College in 1962 and her Ph.D. in comparative literature from the University of Maryland in 1982. She taught at the University of Maryland and the University of Texas at El Paso before becoming a founding faculty member of Maharishi International University. With Susan Andersen, she has edited a collection of lectures on literature and language by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: *The Flow of Consciousness: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on Literature and Language*, Fairfield, IA: Maharishi University of Management Press, 2010. This volume contains many of the videotaped lectures cited in the following article.
A U N I F I E D  F I E L D  T H E O R Y  O F  L I T E R A T U R E

A B S T R A C T

An understanding of the evolution of consciousness through seven states, as described by Maharishi Vedic Science and corroborated by psychophysiological research and unified field theories of modern physics, provides a basis for the development of a unified field theory of literature. The cognitive and perceptual qualities that differentiate the seven states of consciousness provide a means by which experiences described in literature may be understood and appreciated. In addition, Maharishi Vedic Science distinguishes various levels of the mind and their attributes, leading to a reappraisal of the nature of language and its relation to the speaker, to the world of experience, and to the essential components of the literary experience: a) the writer and the creative process, b) the mechanics of reading, and c) the reader’s interpretation of meaning.

According to the unified field theory of literature presented here, the level of consciousness of the writer determines the quality of what is written, as well as its universality and range of influence. This theory also provides a way of understanding how the various literary techniques that are activated in the reading process affect the reader’s consciousness and physiology. And finally, the degree to which the reader can discover meaning in a work is found to be directly related to the reader’s state of consciousness. These considerations shed light on the major questions being discussed by literary theorists today—how the nature and function of literary study might be understood, how literature might be defined, and how the contents of standard anthologies and curricula might be determined—and provide new directions for the reading and teaching of literature.

Introduction

This essay proposes a unified field theory of literature based on recent developments and interpretations of Maharishi Vedic Science, psychophysiology, and unified field theories, one that will begin to establish a common foundation for the discussion of literary theory and criticism. Such a unification is very much needed today as a result of the recent erosion of a widely accepted purpose and methodology for literary study, teaching, and scholarship. Until recently there was a fairly common understanding in academic circles
of what was meant by literature: literature was the collection of those “great books” read in high school and college, the Western tradition from Homer to T. S. Eliot, the subject matter studied by departments of English or literary studies. Even though the “literary canon,” the collection of texts comprising the standard works in a topic area such as English literature, has undergone periodic revisions, there was little discussion of why one would read these great books; they had, many believed, a humanizing effect on the reader and would develop compassionate, responsible individuals.

Nor was there much confusion about how one would read or teach these great books. The New Criticism of the 1930s, which directed attention toward a close reading of the work itself and away from its social context or author’s life, became a well-established practice, so well established, in fact, that even recent critical strategies that challenge its basic assumptions are being absorbed as new methods of close reading. Within this theoretical framework teachers of literature conscientiously guided their students through a sensitive and intelligent appreciation of the form, meaning, and mechanics of a work. Committed to teaching and perpetuating the institutions responsible for preserving knowledge of Western culture, professionals devoted their time to scholarly research, which was most often an elucidation of subtle aspects of how a work originated or evolved into its finished form, or how intricacies of meaning could be interpreted from the structure or figurative language of the work. This research was published as articles in literary journals or books, thus adding to the understanding of our literary and cultural heritage.

**Challenging the Canon: What is Literature?**

In recent years, however, many of these assumptions have come under very close scrutiny. The traditional collection of “great literature” has been widely challenged as being elitist and ethnocentric. For example, scholars have observed that standard anthologies covering American literature, itself a fairly late addition to the literary canon, have almost entirely omitted writings by members of ethnic minority groups. In addition, it has been charged that the very few women writers included in the canon were often devalued by being placed in supposedly minor
schools (see, for example, Renza, 1984), or by being discussed in terms of their biography rather than their writings.

While addressing questions of what should be included in the canon, literary theorists have raised more fundamental issues of how we evaluate literature, whether a work might be valuable for all times or is read and taught mainly because it appears to promote certain social values (Jameson, 1981). Although literary reputations typically rise and fall from generation to generation, some works appear to last longer than others, finding enthusiastic readers in ages and cultures quite remote from their own. Is popularity merely a matter of taste or transitory historical relevance, or are there other factors at work in the longevity or ephemerality of literary works?

Similarly, theorists ask how literature might be distinguished from non-literature. We cannot say that literature is “creative” or imaginative writing only, since all effective writing is obviously creative and imaginative. “Does some essential literariness decree what shall be included in the literary canon—Virginia Woolf’s novels but not her letters? her letters but not Louis L’Amour’s westerns? L’Amour’s westerns but not Jordache’s TV advertisements?” (Staton, 1987, p. 3). Today we read as “literature” many works that originated as sermons, essays, science writing, history, and popular fiction, and passionate debate rages over the criteria by which works should be included in modern anthologies (Smith, 1984). When publishers poll the users of their anthologies, they find the widest disagreement on modern and contemporary authors (Lawall, 1986).

Some theorists ask what criteria can aid us in determining whether a given work is “literature” and therefore deserves to be included in anthologies and in courses on literary studies. Others suggest we abandon the whole idea of a special category called literature and subsume literary studies into a more general discipline called cultural studies and practices (Graff, 1986). A unified field theory of literature would provide a means by which literature can be defined and evaluated and its study as a separate discipline justified.

**Teaching and Criticism**

Along with questions of curricula and the identification of appropriate texts for these curricula, come the issues of what a literary studies
department should teach. Shall we continue to organize courses along the lines of periods, genres, and other classifications of literary works or should we primarily be teaching our students to reflect on the discipline of literary studies itself, to discuss questions of how we read, what we choose to read, how the profession should constitute itself, and what “constraints, pressures, and assumptions—culture-specific, psychological, and ideological as well as (seemingly) text-generated—are operating” in reading (Waller, 1986, p. 32)?

We must ask what critics should do when approaching the work, what critical theories and practices might be most useful to them and their readers. Does scholarly research add yet another interpretation of some work of literature to those already extant, or should it explore how a text comes to have meaning for its audience? Questions of meaning and interpretation have introduced other issues. For example, although structuralist critics insist that there are universal structures of the mind reflected in myth, folktale, and works of literature, as well as in other cultural artifacts (please refer to Scholes, 1974), other theorists question whether there are any “eternal verities of the imagination” or any transcendental vantage point from which to unify either interpretation or theory (Nelson, 1986, p. 4). In fact, the new historicists seek to demystify supposed universals such as Reason, Truth, archetypal figures, and other “such structuralisms and consecrated stereotypes” and insist that a work must be read primarily within its historical or social context (Bruffee, 1986, p. 787).

Over the years there has also been a gradual erosion of the authority of the author, of any sense that the author’s intentions constitute a particularly privileged reading of a work. The extreme relativism in the area of literary interpretation has arisen partly as a result of the development of a large variety of critical approaches that examine works of literature in terms of linguistics, anthropology, sociology, or psychology, particularly neo-Freudian psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic critics, for example, explore an author’s unconscious meanings and, more broadly, many critics observe that interpretation, in general, involves complex issues of social and linguistic practices that undermine any determinate meaning in a work (Coward & Ellis, 1977). Some critical theorists, in fact, have persuasively argued that within the limited context of a work there might be an infinite set of readings possible.
for a given set of words. They have delighted in eroding the apparent meaning in a text by exploring its implicit contradictions, thereby showing that authors may have been unaware of their true intentions, or at best, unaware of their inconsistency. And do we not bring to any reading our own cultural and gender biases, to say nothing of the quality of our consciousness, variables that would preclude our arriving at any universal meaning that will not vary from individual to individual, from culture to culture, from century to century?

The study of literature was seen at one time as the discovery of universal truths about human nature and life, “the supremely civilizing pursuit, the spiritual essence of the social formation” (Eagleton, 1983, p. 31). The study of literature may humanize the reader to some degree, but it has certainly not noticeably improved the quality of life on earth, removed social injustice, nor prevented war or other holocausts. A unified field theory of literature should be able to describe the effects that literature has on its audience and, if these effects are sometimes beneficial, suggest some way to enhance them and therefore advance the study of literature.

These questions challenge the longstanding consensus about the nature of literature and undermine the current activities of literature students and teachers to the extent that many established professionals see theory as threatening or find themselves baffled by the proliferation of critical approaches, each with its abstruse philosophical underpinnings and jargon. Consequently, many have been reluctant to plunge wholeheartedly into the current debate over theory and explore their own sense of what literature is and how it functions, even though every teacher and critic is committed to some sort of theoretical position and critical practice, regardless of how implicit or unexpressed it might be. In any case, judging from the recent proliferation of introductions to critical theory and special issues of journals dedicated to these questions, it is clear that there is a wide audience interested in theoretical discussion related to the reading and teaching of literature.

To summarize, then, there is a great deal of current debate on what constitutes the subject matter of literary studies, how we read that subject matter, why we read it at all, how we interpret or write about it, and even how we can maintain a meaningful discussion when the discourses of the various critical theories have such widely divergent
starting points and terminologies as to be almost unintelligible to each other.

Is a healthy pluralism the best we can hope for, or is it possible to challenge the “pervasive assumption that no theory can acquire permanent, ahistorical truth content” (Nelson, 1986, p. 1) and to develop a unified theory of literature? The greatest barrier to this endeavor would most certainly be the widespread belief that although any particular position may be argued, it is impossible to discover or prove any absolute Truth. Supposed universal truths of any sort are intellectually suspect and subject to the extreme relativism of our age. However, recent lucid and practical interpretations of ancient Vedic texts on consciousness, the latest advances in theoretical physics, and research on the psychophysiology of consciousness, taken together, suggest a new approach. With a new understanding available of both nature and human consciousness, it should be possible to evolve a new understanding of speech and of literary expression. From this, a theory of literature can be developed that will be capable of describing the origins of literary texts and providing a coherent and integrated basis for understanding their effects and evaluating their worth.

**Toward a Unified Theory of Literature**

This article proposes a unified theory of literature calling upon both the most ancient and traditional knowledge of human consciousness contained in Vedic literature, as it has been brought to light by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and the most recent corroboration of the principles of Maharishi Vedic Science in psychophysiological research on consciousness and in the findings of modern physics. Maharishi connects the qualities and dynamical evolution of consciousness with the principles of physics, in both a theoretical and an experiential way (1986). He maintains that both consciousness and the natural world described by physics have their common origin in the unified field of all the laws of nature, as it has been expressed in the ancient Vedic tradition and as it has been recently glimpsed by contemporary unified field theorists. Connections between consciousness and physics provide a basis upon which a unified field theory of literature can be formulated, and, in fact, recent critics are beginning to integrate quantum field theory with the study of literature (please refer to, for example, Hayles, 1984;
Overstreet, 1981). However, they have yet to incorporate knowledge of the profound connections between consciousness and the natural world that Maharishi has elucidated, which would provide a common basis for understanding literary techniques and their effects.

Maharishi describes individual human awareness as having its source and ground state in the unified field of natural law and as having the potential to evolve over time through a series of stable states of consciousness (1986). He points out that the individual perceives and describes the inner and outer worlds of experience differently from the vantage point of each particular state (1967). An understanding of these states and their cognitive differences is extremely relevant to the study of literature. Contrary to the current belief that language or literature determines what we think, a unified field theory of literature will argue that works of literature arise as expressions of individual consciousness and experience, both of which are dependent upon an individual’s state of consciousness. Similarly, Maharishi’s delineation of levels of the individual psyche or mind, from the senses to the ego, brings a valuable perspective to discussions of creativity, the origins of language, thought, and literature, and the way literary techniques affect the reader’s consciousness.

The development of a unified field theory of literature must begin, therefore, with a systematic description of Maharishi’s delineation of the various states of consciousness that comprise the individual’s range of experience. The perceptual and cognitive distinctions between each of these states will be illustrated by examples taken from Western literature which offer descriptions parallel to those given in Maharishi Vedic Science. These literary examples show that Maharishi’s distinctions between states of consciousness provide a universal, cross-cultural knowledge that can reliably elucidate the content and viewpoints of Western literature. In addition, they also often succeed in expressing what are regarded as ineffable experiences, occurring as they do beyond ordinary levels of awareness and thus beyond the language evolved to describe them.

In addition, a description of the distinctions Maharishi draws between the various levels of the mind will add a missing dimension to discussions of the nature of language and the findings of modern linguistics in particular. The tenets of modern linguistics have determined
many of the basic assumptions upon which critical theories are based, and although they have added greatly to our knowledge, they have cut language off from its source in consciousness and set it adrift upon the seas of cultural relativity.

Based on a discussion of (a) states of consciousness, (b) levels of the mind, and (c) the nature of language, it will then be possible to examine how a unified field theory of literature can explain and integrate all the elements of the literary equation: the writer, the process of reading, and the reader. The first section of this discussion will concern writing and the creative process and the role the writer’s consciousness plays in this process. The second will propose an explanation for the way in which the various mechanics of the reading process affect the reader’s consciousness and physiology. The third will address how a unified field theory of literature looks at the means by which the reader creates meaning or interprets a text. All of these discussions will touch now and again upon modern critical theories, but will often diverge widely from recent concepts of the nature of literary studies. After this general discussion, it will be possible to reconsider issues in the definition and teaching of literature, the selection of texts for the literary canon, and the ultimate practicality of a unified field theory of literature for changing consciousness and affecting the way we live, both personally and as members of a larger society.

**Consciousness and the Unified Field**

The development of a unified field theory of literature must begin with a discussion of those elements of Maharishi Vedic Science that are most relevant to a theory of literature and that lead directly to a new appreciation and understanding of language and literature. Maharishi defines Vedic Science as knowledge of “the knower, the known, and the process of knowing which connects the knower with the known” (1986, p. 27). For example, in the state of Transcendental Consciousness, reached when awareness settles down into its least excited state through the Transcendental Meditation technique, one is conscious only of consciousness itself, not of the usual objects of knowledge or thoughts, and, since the eyes are closed and the attention drawn completely within, there are also no objects of perception. One is awake
within, yet in a state of profound physiological quiescence. This state then comprises the knower (the Self) in the process of knowing its Self. It is the state of pure consciousness, that is, consciousness purely aware of itself.

Maharishi describes the state of Transcendental Consciousness as one of self-referral or self-interaction since every other manifestation of consciousness is an excitation of this ground state. He explains how the Self or state of Transcendental Consciousness is reached through the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique and is therefore directly accessible to human awareness:

Human awareness can identify itself with this most basic, self-referral value of consciousness in the state of Samadhi, or transcendental consciousness. This is easily gained and most naturally enjoyed through Transcendental Meditation. The functioning of transcendental pure consciousness is the functioning of natural law in its most settled state. The conscious human mind, identifying itself with this level of nature’s functioning, gains the ability to perform in the style with which nature performs its activity at its most fundamental level. Completely identified in transcendental consciousness with the full potential of natural law, the human mind is a field of all possibilities. (1986, pp. 30–31)

The subjective experience of the state of Transcendental Consciousness is one of unboundedness, bliss, and supreme fulfillment—qualities that clearly distinguish it from normal waking experience.

Maharishi identifies this inner field of consciousness—the field of all possibilities—with the unmanifest basis of the physical world, the unified field described by physics that gives rise through its own self-referral or self-interactive nature to all the forces and particles, to the very laws of nature themselves, and includes this knowledge in the purview of Maharishi Vedic Science:

This state of pure knowledge, where knower, known, and knowledge are in the self-referral state, is that all-powerful, immortal, infinite dynamism at the unmanifest basis of creation. All about this is Vedic Science: all about the knower, the known, and the knowledge, all about consciousness, which means consciousness in its self-referral, self-interacting state and consciousness multiplied in the infinite variety of the whole creation, that performance of nature which goes on and on eternally in all spheres of time, past, present, and future. The knowledge
of this most basic principle of life, this most basic reality of matter and intelligence both together, is the science of pure knowledge, the science of Veda. (1986, p. 27)

He says: “We speak of the unified field in connection with Maharishi Vedic Science because of the similarity of what has been discovered by physics and what exists in the self-referral state of human consciousness” (p. 35). Recent discoveries have begun to corroborate the long search of physicists for a completely unified understanding of the fundamental particles and forces of nature. Sir Isaac Newton’s laws of motion achieved an extraordinary unification of terrestrial and celestial gravity in the seventeenth century, which was extended by Einstein’s general theory of relativity into a subtler understanding of space and time where, for example, space-time curvature is understood to be responsible for the gravitational force the sun exerts on the earth. In the nineteenth century, James Clerk Maxwell related the seemingly disparate forces of electricity and magnetism by means of a set of differential equations that describes the electromagnetic field, including the behavior of light.

In the twentieth century, however, the scientific view of nature became increasingly complicated. With the advance of high energy physics came an understanding of two fundamental forces in nature in addition to those of gravity and electromagnetism: the weak force, which is responsible for the phenomenon of radioactivity and is important in cosmology and astrophysics, and the strong force, which binds neutrons and protons together in atomic nuclei. Moreover, particles could no longer be thought of as immutable and point-like separate elements of matter, but rather in quantum theory are described by an abstract wave function, which is technically a field.

In 1967 the electromagnetic and weak forces were theoretically unified into an electroweak force (please refer to Weinberg, 1974), and recent discoveries of particles predicted by this theory have lent great weight to its validity. Grand unified theories propose a unification of the electroweak force with the strong force, and over the last ten years physicists have gone on to propose various unified quantum field theories in which gravity could finally be united with the other force fields at a very fine time and distance scale, that is, at the Planck scale ($10^{-33}$ cm and $10^{-44}$ sec.) (please refer to Antoniadis, Ellis, Hagelin,
& Nanopoulos). These theories of the physical world cannot easily be related to one’s daily experience. For example, this page, which appears to be a solid piece of matter, can be understood by classical physics to consist of minute particles separated by proportionately vast distances of empty space. Quantum field theory would describe the paper as consisting of discrete or quantized waves of energy, not particles at all. At the Planck scale all the various force fields and matter fields can be understood as fluctuations or waves of an underlying unified field. This would mean that all of the qualities of electromagnetism, gravity, and the nuclear forces, as well as electrons, neutrinos, and so on, would exist in latent or unmanifest form in the unified field and would then become expressed when these fields became differentiated at grosser time and distance scales.

The self-interactive or self-referral characteristic of the unified field accounts for how it spontaneously generates all the particles and forces of nature from within itself through a process that physicists describe as spontaneous symmetry breaking. That is, just as the DNA “refers back” to itself for information and intelligence on how to form the human organism, so the unified field “refers back” to itself to differentiate itself into other stages of manifest nature. At more manifest levels of nature the underlying unity ceases to predominate until, at the level of sensory experience, the world seems to be subject only to the laws of classical mechanics, with billiard-ball type theories of cause and effect that do not require the concept of self-referral to explain them.

Since all the manifest levels of nature emerge from the unified field, all the laws of nature must be present in the unified field in their seed form. As one theoretical physicist has said, “If, as particle theorists are inclined to believe, all the laws of nature have their ultimate origin in the dynamics of the unified field, then the unified field must itself embody the total intelligence of nature’s functioning” (Hagelin, 1987, p. 58). This description echoes Maharishi’s description of the nature of Transcendental Consciousness as a “state of perfect order, the matrix from which all the laws of nature emerge, the source of creative intelligence” (1977, p. 123).

Maharishi explains that just as the “unmanifest basis of creation” is capable of spontaneously producing through its self-referral activity “different characteristics or different shades of its own nature” (1986,
p. 86), so the state of pure knowledge or Transcendental Consciousness is at the source of the various states of consciousness that an individual can experience. Along with the varying states of consciousness that an individual experiences in the course of a day, such as sleeping, dreaming, and the range of waking consciousness (from very dull to crystal clear), are four “higher” states of consciousness. The range of experience possible in these seven states of consciousness invariably influences how the writer, the reader, or the critic (the knower) comes to know (through the process of writing or reading) the meaning of a work of literature (the known).

**States of Consciousness**

Maharishi writes that the seven states of consciousness are as different one from another as spectacles of different colours through which the same view looks different. When the same object is cognized in different states of consciousness, its values are differently appreciated. Life is appreciated differently at each different level of consciousness. (1967, p. 316)

He defines a state of consciousness as a stable mode of perception, cognition, and physiology that can be differentiated from other such states both subjectively and by its unique physiological parameters (1967, 1986). Reality is obviously different in dreaming than it is in waking, and is not perceived at all in sleep. Also, sleeping, dreaming, and waking states each have a unique EEG, respiratory, and biochemical signature that correlates with the subjective experiences of those states.

Maharishi describes how with the repeated experience of Transcendental Consciousness (*Turiya Chetanā*), individual awareness progressively evolves into three higher states of consciousness: (a) Cosmic Consciousness (*Turiyātīt Chetanā*) (b) refined Cosmic Consciousness or God Consciousness (*Bhagavat Chetanā*), and ultimately, (c) Unity Consciousness (*Brāhmī Chetanā*) (1986, p. 115). Each of these higher states is characterized by the blissful experience of Transcendental Consciousness being maintained along with, at the first stage, individual thoughts and inner experience; at the second stage, along with a greatly enhanced perception of objects; and in the third, along with
perception and experience of the unity of all of the natural world. These states of consciousness are explained more fully below.

Maharishi emphasizes that the physiology of the individual is in perfect balance only when Unity Consciousness is attained. In that state development is complete. “If the intellect is in a balanced state then everything is absolutely harmonious and consciousness is brilliant, clear, full of satisfaction, and blissful” (1986, p. 113). In that state, the human mind becomes the field of all possibilities and life is lived without limitations or restrictions.

The qualities of Transcendental Consciousness and the three “higher” states have only come under scientific scrutiny within the last twenty years, but research clearly distinguishes their experiential and psychophysiological parameters from those of sleeping, dreaming, and waking (Farrow & Hebert, 1982; Orme-Johnson, 1977; Badawi, Wallace, Orme-Johnson, & Rouzeré, 1984; Orme-Johnson & Haynes, 1981; please refer to Alexander, Boyer, & Alexander, 1987, for a review of other relevant studies). This research indicates that the regular practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique “acts to unfreeze human development and promote the natural growth of higher states of consciousness beyond the endpoints of human development proposed in current Western psychology” (Alexander et al., 1987, p. 120).

The knowledge of states of consciousness is obviously fundamental to the study of literature, since the states of consciousness of the author and the reader determine much of what happens in the process of communication from one to the other. A unified field theory of literature can therefore describe the difference in experience and worldview between an Emerson and a Hemingway, for example, as well as provide a matrix for discussing literature and the issues raised by literary theory.

Transitory experiences of what may be higher states of consciousness have often been recorded in Western literature, although they are called by various other names: epiphanies, timeless or visionary moments, privileged moments, peak experiences, and so forth. When each is defined, however, it is obvious that states of consciousness beyond the normal waking experience are being described. For example, E. F. N. Jephcott defines the privileged moment as one quite distinct from ordinary waking consciousness, in which an intensification of sensory perception is combined with a unity of awareness of the subject with
nature, not under the auspices of time and individuality, but, as Spinoza would say, *sub specie aeternitatis*, under the aspect of eternity. These experiences, which are accompanied by an intense pleasure and happiness, he feels “are the source of the impulse to create a work of art” (1972, p. 11).

William James, the father of American psychology, called these unusual experiences states of “assurance.” We pass into these states, he wrote,

from out of ordinary consciousness as from a less into a more, as from a smallness into a vastness, and at the same time as from an unrest to a rest. We feel them as reconciling, unifying states. . . . In them the unlimited absorbs the limits and peacefully closes the account. (1902/1958, p. 326)

Besides “the loss of all worry, the sense that all is ultimately well with one, the peace, the harmony,” James noted that these states are also noetic—that is, there is “the sense of perceiving truths not known before. The mysteries of life become lucid” (p. 202). In James’s words, these are “states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect” (p. 300). In addition, they are ineffable, transient, and come spontaneously to the grateful recipient. Many of the instances that James cites occur in great writers and seem to be most familiar to exceptionally creative minds. He noted that these experiences cannot be willfully produced, but seem to arise by themselves. Unfortunately, James wrote, these experiences “come seldom, and they do not come to everyone; and the rest of life makes either no connection with them, or tends to contradict them more than it confirms them” (p. 31).

In the 1950s and 1960s the American humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow expanded James’s work and studied what he called self-actualized people, that is, people who had realized a great deal of their human potential and were functioning at a high level of values and behavior. He gathered instances of the high points of their lives, moments of intuition, “revelation, of illumination, insight, understanding, ecstasy” and called these moments peak experiences, thus enlarging James’s concept of the state of assurance to include states when thoughts, ideas, sense perceptions, emotions, and physical sensations could accompany the experience of the inner core of the individual, or Being, as Maslow called it (1972a, p. 178).
In these experiences, as individuals draw closer to their own essential inner Being, they can thereby more easily see the Being-values in the world around them. As Maslow describes them, in these experiences both the subject and the world seem whole, integrated, unified, perfect, fulfilled, lawful, alive, rich yet simple, beautiful, good, effortless, true, joyful, and self-sufficient. In addition, “there tends to be a loss, even though transient, of fear, anxiety, inhibition, of defense and control, of perplexity, confusion, conflict, . . . The profound fear of disintegration, of insanity, of death, all tend to disappear for the moment” (1970, p. 66).

Maslow also observed the transiency, spontaneity, ineffability, and noetic nature of the peak experience. He writes, “There is universally reported a seeing of formerly hidden truth, a revelation in the strict sense, a stripping away of veils” (1972b, p. 62). In addition, “there is a very characteristic disorientation in time and space, or even the lack of consciousness of time and space. Phrased positively, this is like experiencing universality and eternity” (1970, p. 63). Contemporary developmental psychologists now view these experiences as precursors of higher states of consciousness which reflect “a developmental level of subtlety and comprehensiveness that goes beyond the level which can be readily appreciated within the boundaries of ordinary adult thought” (Alexander et al., 1987, p. 91; please also refer to Alexander, Davies, Dillbeck, Dixon, Oetzel, Muehlman, & Orme-Johnson).

These experiences can occur spontaneously, though rarely or imperfectly. They can be systematically developed, however, through the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique. In either case, they can best be understood in terms of the four higher states of consciousness that Maharishi Vedic Science describes. This systematic framework provides a means to categorize these experiences and appreciate their relevance, and thus goes well beyond the schema of James, Maslow, and modern psychologists. Without this knowledge, these experiences might be questioned as being fanciful, imaginary, unconnected with the more familiar states of consciousness, or unrelated to a creative and productive life. Studied systematically, these experiences illustrate how much a writer or reader’s perception of nature and the individual self depends upon their occurrence or non-occurrence. The best place to begin the development of a unified field theory of litera-
ture is with a discussion of the ground state of consciousness, the state of Transcendental Consciousness.

**Transcendental Consciousness**

Maharishi describes the fourth state of consciousness as Transcendental Consciousness, a state that is experienced when the mind settles into its least excited state. He also calls it pure consciousness because it is unmixed with the more active modes of the mind, such as thought, perception, feelings, memories, and so forth. The subjective experience of Transcendental Consciousness is one of unboundedness, bliss, inner silence, and complete fulfillment (1977; please refer to discussion of Vedic Science above). In this state the individual experiences being at home with all the laws of nature, the silent unmanifest basis of creation. Maharishi describes the state of Transcendental Consciousness as the ground state or least excited state of mind, which can be experienced through the Transcendental Meditation technique:

The Transcendental Meditation technique is an effortless procedure for allowing the excitation of the mind to gradually settle down until the least excited state of mind is reached. This is a state of inner wakefulness with no object of thought or perception, just pure consciousness, aware of its own unbounded nature. It is wholeness, aware of itself, devoid of difference, beyond the division of subject and object—transcendental consciousness. It is a field of all possibilities where all creative potentialities exist together, infinitely correlated but as yet unexpressed. It is a state of perfect order, the matrix from which all the laws of nature emerge, the source of creative intelligence. (p. 123)

The state Maharishi describes closely matches descriptions of the unified field proposed by modern physics. The experience of the most silent, unbounded level of the inner Self as the “matrix from which all the laws of nature emerge” is expressed by Emerson in his essay “Nature.” On the basis of his own subjective experiences Emerson similarly posited one fundamental set of laws of nature both underlying and at the source of natural and therefore human phenomena. He writes: “A rule of one art, or a law of one organization, holds true throughout nature. So intimate is this Unity, that, it is easily seen, it lies under the undermost garment of nature, and betrays its source in Universal Spirit” (1836/1987, p. 995). In his essay on “Self-Reliance”
Emerson describes his own direct experience of the Universal Spirit as the “sense of being, which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul.” This sense of being, Emerson writes, is “not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceed. Here,” he says, “is the fountain of action and thought” (1841/1987, p. 1038).

Emerson says that if the student studies nature, what he will find is that

Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind. . . . So much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not yet possess. And, in fine, the ancient precept, “Know thyself,” and the modern precept, “Study nature,” become at last one maxim. (1837/1987, p. 1010)

Emerson’s subjective experience of a “sense of being” suggests the state of Transcendental Consciousness or the unified field of all the laws of nature. It is not unreasonable that all of nature, including human consciousness, has a common source and can be described by one set of laws; the fact that the mind of the scientist or writer can experience and describe the workings of nature speaks for this connection.

Connections or possible relationships between consciousness and the physical world have been discussed by leading physicists. Nobel Laureate Eugene Wigner writes, “The simple fact is that it becomes increasingly evident that the primitive idea of separating body and soul is not a valid one . . .” (1967/1970, p. 217). Wigner observes that when physics began to deal with microscopic phenomena, it became necessary to entertain a concept of consciousness: “. . . it was not possible to formulate the laws of quantum mechanics in a fully consistent way without reference to the consciousness” (p. 172). Wigner is referring here to Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, which implies that the observer invariably influences the system under observation with his or her consciousness. As theoretical physicist John Hagelin comments, “the clear separation between the observer and the observed, which is the cornerstone of modern empiricist thinking, is ultimately a conception whose utility may be limited to the classical domain” (1987, p. 59).

The consciousness of the observer is not the only issue here; the whole definition of consciousness itself and its relationship to matter must be
reconsidered. Hagelin argues that “most particle theorists would agree that the unified field is the source of both subjective and objective existence” and that it may not be necessary to introduce anything external to the laws of physics to explain the phenomena of consciousness (p. 60). He submits that the unified field is the dynamical origin of all phenomena, including those of consciousness, and that there is an “identity between the ‘objective’ unified field of modern theoretical physics and a ‘subjective’ unified field of consciousness” (p. 59).

There are numerous reports in literature of spontaneous experiences that suggest both the unified field and the state of Transcendental Consciousness that Maharishi describes, consciousness at its most silent, unbounded level where it loses the boundaries of localized thought or perception to become a unified field of all possibilities. For example, as Eugene Ionesco relates:

Once, long ago, I was sometimes overcome by a sort of grace, a euphoria. It was as if, first of all, every notion, every reality was emptied of its content. After this emptiness. . . , it was as if I found myself suddenly at the center of pure ineffable existence; it was as if things had freed themselves of all arbitrary labels, of a framework that didn't suit them, that limited them; social and logical constraint or the need to define them, to organize them, disappeared. It did not seem to me that I was the victim of a nominalist crisis; on the contrary, I think that I became one with the one essential reality, when, along with an immense, serene joy, I was overcome by what I might call the stupefaction of being, the certainty of being, . . .

I say that with words that can only disfigure, that cannot describe the light of this profound, total organic intuition which, surging up as it did from my deepest self, might well have inundated everything, covered everything, both my other self and others. (1968/1971, pp. 150–151, emphasis added)

Ionesco had no name for this experience and could not understand what it was and why he experienced it only sporadically in his youth, and after a time, not at all. An appreciation of Ionesco’s youthful experiences of what is most likely Transcendental Consciousness illuminates his later plays. Having had experiences such as these, Ionesco no doubt found ridiculous the superficiality of daily life that he so dramatically exposes in The Bald Soprano.
Ionesco’s experience of transcending—the gradual emptying of consciousness of its contents until only “pure ineffable existence” remains along with “an immense serene joy” and the “certainty of being”—is similar to that reported by British essayist J. A. Symonds:

It consisted in a gradual but swiftly progressive obliteration of space, time, sensation, and the multitudinous factors of experience which seem to qualify what we are pleased to call our Self. In proportion as these conditions of ordinary consciousness were subtracted, the sense of an underlying or essential consciousness acquired intensity. At last nothing remained but a pure, absolute, abstract Self: The universe became without form and void of content. But Self persisted, formidable in its vivid keenness . . . (quoted in James, 1902/1958, p. 296, emphasis added)

The qualities of this state, its abstract, unbounded, self-sufficient, holistic nature, evoke the qualities of the unified field. Symonds calls his own nature, when identified with this state, the “Self” to distinguish it from the ordinary “self” of daily experience, just as Ionesco distinguishes his “deepest self” from his “other self.”

Experiences of Transcendental Consciousness occur under natural circumstances to a human nervous system that is in a temporary state of unusual purity and silence. As James observed, these experiences may be uncommon, but they are very real. “Our normal waking consciousness,” he wrote,

rational consciousness, as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality. (1902/1958, p. 305)

Since these “types of mentality” reminiscent of Transcendental Consciousness are uncommon and occur unpredictably in ordinary life, the best way to examine them is to study those practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique during which they reliably appear.

Experiences of Transcendental Consciousness occurring during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique have been observed to be correlated with a marked slowing of the respiration rate and heart rate (Farrow & Hebert, 1982; Badawi et al., 1984), and
a global increase in EEG coherence in all frequencies and among all cortical areas (Badawi et al., 1984; D. W. Orme-Johnson, 1977). Self-reported experiences of Transcendental Consciousness are correlated with alpha coherence among front and central areas of the brain (D. W. Orme-Johnson & Haynes, 1981). This is important to note because experiences suggesting Transcendental Consciousness that occur in literature are generally framed by a description of the subject’s psychophysiological quiescence and this identifies them as having their basis in concrete experience rather than as being purely imaginative.

**Cosmic Consciousness**

When an individual has repeatedly experienced Transcendental Consciousness for some time in alternation with waking, dreaming and sleeping states, through the regular practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, for example, the nervous system becomes habituated to maintaining Transcendental Consciousness along with these states, and the state of Cosmic Consciousness begins to develop:

In the state of cosmic consciousness, two different levels of organization in the nervous system function simultaneously while maintaining their separate identities. By virtue of this anatomical separation of function, it becomes possible for transcendental consciousness to co-exist with the waking state of consciousness and with the dreaming and sleeping states of consciousness.

In the early stage of the practice of Transcendental Meditation these two levels of function in the nervous system [waking and transcendental consciousness] are unable to occur at the same time; the function of the one inhibits the function of the other . . . . The practice of the mind in passing from one to another gradually overcomes this physiological inhibition, and the two levels begin to function perfectly at the same time, without inhibiting each other and still maintaining their separate identities. The function of each is independent of the other, and that is why this state of the nervous system corresponds to Cosmic Consciousness, in which Self-awareness exists as separate from activity. Silence is experienced with activity and yet as separate from it. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 314)
Maharishi defines Cosmic Consciousness as the ability to maintain the unbounded, blissful nature of pure consciousness along with thoughts, activity, and even deep sleep, so that the experiencer operates on a background of inner fullness and bliss, of “eternal happiness” (p. 365). The state of Cosmic Consciousness is not a mood nor the result of understanding some concept; it is a physiological state that is experientially based.

Since the essential nature of the Self is transcendental or beyond activity, it is “the silent witness of everything” (pp. 98–99). The individual who is established in Cosmic Consciousness

is simply a silent and innocent witness of what is happening through him; he is a means through which nature fulfils its purpose of evolution.

His actions are a response to the needs of the time. Quite naturally he performs actions which result in every kind of good. (p. 291)

The state of Cosmic Consciousness, Maharishi explains, is accompanied by behavior that is spontaneously right, effective, and in tune with natural law (1967, 1986). It is a state of perfect inner fulfillment and successful outer activity.

Temporary experiences of this state may occur sporadically in an individual who is accustomed to experiencing Transcendental Consciousness, until it is finally established as that individual’s stable state of consciousness. Experiences resembling Maharishi’s definition of Cosmic Consciousness are much less common in literature than are experiences of Transcendental Consciousness, yet they do occur. For example, May Sinclair describes a character’s development of consciousness in her novel Mary Olivier (1919). In Sinclair’s novel, her heroine tells of repeated experiences throughout her life that are extremely similar, if not identical, to the state of pure consciousness that Maharishi describes. She calls it “reality breaking through” and experiences it vividly from time to time until it begins to be a continuous state. She muses:

It had come to her when she was a child in brilliant, clear flashes; it had come again and again in her adolescence, with more brilliant and clearer flashes; then, after leaving her for twenty-three years, it had come like this—streaming in and out of her till its ebb and flow were the rhythm of her life. . . . why had you to wait so long before you could remember it and be aware of it as one continuous, shining background? She had
never been aware of it before; she had only thought about and about it, about Substance, the Thing-in-itself, Reality, God. *Thinking* was not being *aware*. (pp. 377–378, emphasis added)

The experience of pure consciousness as, in Sinclair’s words, “one continuous, shining background,” is symptomatic of the beginning of the establishment of Cosmic Consciousness. Observe that Sinclair’s character clearly distinguishes between contemplation or thinking about Reality and “being aware” of it, that is, experiencing it directly. Maharishi emphasizes that “this state of life is not maintained on the basis of thinking or feeling: it is lived naturally on the level of Being” (1967, p. 434). An understanding of the nature of Mary’s experiences clarifies and justifies the novel’s ending, which may be puzzling for the reader without this dimension. Knowledge of states of consciousness can often provide important insights into character analysis and other aspects of literary interpretation, as will be seen in this section and those that follow.

The experience of pure consciousness being maintained along with activity is also suggested by Thoreau’s description in Walden of occasionally “witnessing” his own thoughts and feelings:

> I only know myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and affections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me, but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it; and that is no more I than it is you. When the play . . . of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, as far as he was concerned. (1854/1960, pp. 94–95)

The doubleness Thoreau relates is not an uncomfortable dissociation for him and suggests an experience of Transcendental Consciousness being maintained, however briefly, along with activity, as it would be in the stable state of Cosmic Consciousness. This is clearly felt in the following lines of the modern Hispanic poet Juan Ramon Jimenez in which he recognizes the “witnessing” Self to be his essential nature:

> I am not I.
> I am this one
Who goes by my side unseen by me;
Whom I, at times, go visit,
And whom I, at times, forget.
He who keeps silent, serene, when I speak,
He who forgives, sweet, when I hate,
He who takes a walk where I am not,
He who will remain standing when I die.


Without an understanding of Transcendental Consciousness beginning to be experienced along with activity, the reader has no clear sense of the meaning of Jimenez’s lines. The other “I” cannot be the soul, which is one possible explanation, because one doesn’t visit the soul. As an individual is rising to the state of Cosmic Consciousness, temporary experiences of the Self as witness to activity would occur, however.

Once the state of Cosmic Consciousness is well established and is lived for some time, the state of refined Cosmic Consciousness begins to develop.

Refined Cosmic Consciousness

The sixth state, refined Cosmic Consciousness, is characterized by continued experience of the Self along with activity, accompanied by an increasingly subtle perception of the environment. The state of refined Cosmic Consciousness develops naturally out of the state of Cosmic Consciousness:

When unbounded awareness starts to co-exist with awareness of boundaries, our comprehension of the boundaries and what lies outside them becomes more complete. ... With such an unrestricted, unbounded awareness, we are able to penetrate into the deeper values of perception. Our perception becomes more refined. We would naturally imagine a state in which the finest perception would be possible, so that the finest relative value of the object of experience would become apparent to our perception.

Before gaining that state, this finest value is hidden from view because our vision falls only on the surface of the object ... However, when the unbounded awareness becomes established on the level of the conscious
mind—we have seen that this is the fifth state of consciousness—then
the perception naturally begins to appreciate deeper values of the object,
until perception is so refined that the finest relative is capable of being
spontaneously perceived on the gross, surface level. (1972a, Lesson 23)

Thus, the early stages of refined Cosmic Consciousness are seen in very
refined perception of the objects of experience.

Consider the following experience of seeing a hyacinth reported by
British poet Kathleen Raine:

I dared scarcely to breathe, held in a kind of fine attention in which I
could sense the very flow of life in the cells. I was not perceiving the
flower but living it. I was aware of the life of the plant as a slow flow or
circulation of a vital current of liquid light of the utmost purity. I could
apprehend as a simple essence formal structure and dynamic process. This dynamic form was, as it seemed, of a spiritual not a material order; or
of a finer matter, or of matter itself perceived as spirit. There was nothing
emotional about this experience which was, on the contrary, an almost
mathematical apprehension of a complex and organized whole, appre-
hended as whole, this whole was living; and as such inspired by a sense
of immaculate holiness. . . . By ‘living’ I do not mean that which distin-
guishes animal from plant or plant from mineral, but rather a quality
possessed by all these in their different degrees. (1975, p. 119, emphasis
added)

Raine says she dared scarcely to breathe, but was held “in a kind of
fine attention.” These words suggest that she was aware that her res-
piration rate had become very reduced as she settled into this state of
consciousness of “fine attention” where she could observe its special
characteristics. This experience apparently lasted for some time, and
when it ended, Raine says, “I returned to dull common consciousness
with a sense of diminution.” The experience was not of a strange state
but rather of something “infinitely familiar, as if I were experiencing
at last things as they are, was where I belonged, where in some sense,
I had always been and would always be.” Since the experience occurs
naturally, Raine is comfortable with it and recognizes it to be natu-
ral, more natural, in fact, than “dull common consciousness.” Raine’s
experience appears to comprise the development of Unity Conscious-
ness, the end result of the development begun in God Consciousness,
as described above, and suggests the bridging of both realities.
Unity Consciousness
When refined Cosmic Consciousness is lived for some time, awareness evolves into the seventh state, Unity Consciousness, where the individual experiences an identity with everything without losing consciousness of the Self, since both inner and outer realities are perceived as unbounded, pure consciousness. Maharishi describes this highest stage of human evolution as follows:

This seventh state of consciousness could very well be called the unified state of consciousness because in that state, the ultimate value of the object, infinite and unmanifest, is made lively when the conscious mind, being lively in the unbounded value of awareness, falls on the object. The object is cognized in terms of the pure subjective value of unbounded, unmanifest awareness. . . . In this unified state of consciousness, the experiencer and the object of experience have both been brought to the same level of infinite value and this encompasses the entire phenomenon of perception and action as well. The gulf between the knower and the object of his knowing has been bridged. When the unbounded perceiver is able to cognize the object in its total reality, cognizing the infinite value of the object, which was hitherto unseen, then the perception can be called total or of supreme value. In this state, the full value of knowledge has been gained, and we can finally speak of complete knowledge. (1972a, Lesson 23)

The state of Unity Consciousness described by Maharishi is the supreme state of human evolution. Until this state is reached all knowledge and experience are inadequately perceived and understood. Individuals living this state of consciousness are rare, and thus experiences of this state, however transient, are appreciated for their singular nature. Even when one has never experienced such a state personally, one is attracted to and moved by the experience of one who has.

Gustave Flaubert describes a transient experience that suggests this state in the 1849–1858 version of his novel The Temptation of St. Anthony, and gives the reader a taste of the bliss that accompanies such an experience:

It is true, often I have felt that something bigger than myself was fusing with my being: bit by bit I went off into the greenery of the pastures and into the current of the rivers that I watched go by; and I no longer knew where my soul was, it was so diffuse, universal, spread out . . . . Your
mind itself finally lost the notion of particularity which kept it on the
alert. It was like an immense harmony engulfing your soul with marvel-
ous palpitations, and you felt in its plenitude an inexpressible compre-
hension of the unrevealed wholeness of things; the interval between you
and the object, like an abyss closing, grew narrower and narrower, until
the difference vanished, because you both were bathed in infinity; you
penetrated each other equally, and a subtle current passed from you into
matter while the life of the elements slowly pervaded you, rising like
a sap; one degree more, and you would have become nature, or nature
become you . . . immortality, boundlessness, infinity, I have all that, I
am that! I feel myself to be Substance, I am Thought! . . . I understand,
I see, I breathe, in the midst of plenitude . . . how calm I am! (Jephcott,
Trans., 1972, p. 31)

The description of St. Anthony’s experience suggests the transition from
the state of refined Cosmic Consciousness to that of Unity Conscious-
ness. The character describes experiencing himself as boundless, infi-
nite, and full and perceives nature as being bathed in the same infinity,
boundlessness, and plenitude. This echoes what Maharishi describes
above as the “experiencer and the object of experience [being] brought
to the same level of infinite value” when the “unified state of conscious-
ness” has been reached. “One degree more,” the character relates, “and
you would have become nature, or nature become you.” This suggests
what Maharishi describes as the “gulf between the knower and the
object of his knowing [being] bridged.”

Maharishi’s descriptions of states of consciousness and the examples
related to them taken from literature show that human consciousness is
capable of experiencing a wide range of consciousness from waking state
to Cosmic Consciousness and onward. Each state is perceptually and
cognitively distinct from the others and the sequence of them indicates a
natural progression toward the most holistic, most comprehensive state
of awareness possible. The Transcendental Meditation technique system-
atically cultivates this development and hastens the natural evolutionary
process (Maharishi, 1967, 1972a; please refer to Alexander et al., 1987,
and Alexander et al., 1988, for research substantiating this statement).

When individuals have a taste of higher states of consciousness,
however briefly they are experienced, they are influenced for life. After
sustaining the experience cited above, Eugene Ionesco wrote that, “I
was saved now. It was impossible for me to become the prey of the
mud of shadows again, because I knew now, in a luminous sort of way, I knew and could no longer forget that I am, I myself am, everything is. The miracle of being . . . ” (p. 156). Ionesco bemoans the fact that although these experiences of “supernormal wakefulness” have come in the “simplest, most natural way,” it is not easy to find the necessary button to press to turn them on; “we fumble about for it in the shadows on one of the walls of an enormous strange house” (p. 157). Similarly, Bernard Berenson reports that a childhood experience of “Itness,” as he called it, furnished him with a touchstone that remained with him for seven decades as:

the goal of my yearning, my longing, my desire. Not always, alas! But often enough in moments when passion, or ambition, or self-righteousness would have had their way with me, the feeling of that moment at the dawn of my conscious life would present itself and like a guardian angel remind me that IT was my goal and that IT was my only real happiness. (1958, p. 19)

Each author lives or experiences particular states of consciousness that determine and structure his or her perception of reality. Writers with spontaneous access to the unified field of consciousness would describe their lives in a way that would be foreign to those who had never had such experiences. They would appreciate the connectedness between consciousness and nature, which others might want to believe in but could find no rational cause to do so. Those at one stage of moral or cognitive development typically cannot fully understand the reasoning of those in higher stages (Alexander et al., 1987).

In other words, literary works, like personal points of view, are generated from different levels of consciousness. There is obviously a wide range of experience possible in waking state consciousness, from dull and narrow to broadly comprehensive and crystal clear, which can also include transitory glimpses of higher states of consciousness, such as the experiences cited above describe. As an individual evolves toward the state of Cosmic Consciousness, he or she would experience and express broader comprehension of the connectedness between individual consciousness and the natural world and would experience a more joyful appreciation of the wholeness of life. Readers who hope to understand the full range of human experience, whether in life or literature, must include the direct knowledge of the development of consciousness in their personal and professional agenda.
Levels of the Mind and the Nature of Language

In previous sections of this essay, nature has been described as a multi-leveled reality, with the level of its utmost simplicity and power hidden from view yet at once underlying and engendering the manifest material world. It has also been shown how this view gives rise to a dependable context in which experiences that occur in works of literature can be elucidated. Since language, the very stuff of literature, must change to express the reality of different states of consciousness, a unified field theory of literature can suggest ways to illuminate this area. Fundamental to such a discussion is the layered nature of the mind.

Maharishi Vedic Science describes the various levels of existence as “the environmental level, the level of the body, the senses, mind, intellect, emotions, and ego.” Finally there is “universal ego,” or Being, or the Self, the core of pure consciousness at the center of human existence (1972a, Lesson 6; 1967; see Figure 1). Maharishi explains:

Levels of the Mind

![Levels of the Mind Diagram]

Figure 1. Maharishi describes the mind as being structured from gross to subtle, from the senses to the Self. Awareness may transcend the grosser levels of the mind to ultimately experience the Self, the three-in-one nature of the unified field.
Certainly the quality of life at these different levels is different. Life has particular characteristics and a particular meaning on the level of the environment; it has a different meaning and value on the level of the body, and again on the level of the senses, the mind, the intellect, and the emotions. On the level of the self, when the self is a small individual ego, life has a different value from the level of Being. (1972a, Lesson 6)

Although an individual operates within a more or less stable state of consciousness, at any given time an individual’s awareness may be primarily employing a particular facet of awareness, such as the intellect or discriminative ability. Maharishi usually refers to the various levels of existence from the senses to the Self as levels of the mind (Manas). One of the levels is also called mind, by which Maharishi means the memory and associational qualities of awareness. An understanding of levels of the mind is important for a discussion both of how literature affects the reader and how language arises in human awareness. Maharishi’s understanding of the process of language and its effects is broader and based on a deeper level of experience than that of current structural linguistics, as can be seen in a brief review of this area.

The founder of modern structural linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure, distinguished three levels of linguistic activity, the broadest of which he called language, by which he meant the whole human potential for speech, including its mental and physical aspects. He called ordinary individual utterance parole. Saussure and his successors focus on the third area, langue, the language systems that evolve and give rise to daily communication, such as the English language. He viewed langue as a system of signs, each of which is composed of a signifier (the sound-image or its graphic representation, the letters on a page, e.g., cat) and a signified (the meaning attached to the sound or letters, e.g., the concept of a small domestic animal). In his system one sees the relationship between signifier, signified, and referent (the actual thing to which the sign refers, e.g., the live animal) as completely arbitrary. We use language by discriminating the subtle differences between one signifier and another (e.g., the difference between cat and cab). Therefore, according to Saussure, meaning is not mysteriously contained within a sign, but is merely agreed upon within a given system.

Much of the current understanding of how language and literature function and relate to outside reality is based on the theories of struc-
tural linguistics. In deciding to focus only on language systems, these theories have chosen to ignore both the source of language in the consciousness of the writer and its effects on the consciousness of the reader. Building upon these theories, structuralist critics of literature analyze literary works as self-enclosed relational systems with their own rules, their own systems of discursive conventions functioning independently of both “reality” and the author or reader (please refer to Lentricchia, 1980).

Although the study of language systems and the necessity for understanding their codes has relevance for the study of literary works, it is also important to look at how the language of literature can transcend relative social codes to lead the awareness inward toward the levels of consciousness from which it originally arose. The contemporary American poet Denise Levertov, for example, writes that poetry is not the “dead level” of “common speech,” but what Whitman called “the path / between reality and the soul,’ / a language / excelling itself to be itself” (1983, p. 15). Language as the path between reality and the soul is not accounted for by Saussure’s concept of *langue*, yet it is perhaps the most important dimension of literary language, and can be related to Saussure’s model.

Maharishi explains that the sign (the signifier “rose,” for example, with its signified meaning) and its referent (the real flower) are both present in their unmanifest seed form within the unified field of consciousness. That is, a speaker in Cosmic Consciousness, whose awareness is established on that level, would give rise to language from that level. Speech arising from that level would therefore contain the power and precision characteristic of the unified field of all the laws of nature. Then, Maharishi comments,

> The language will be in the spirit of the law of least action (least said with most effectiveness) with greatest response for whosoever hears it, and for all harmony and happiness in life, which is the purpose of language . . . . Then expressions would be more lucid, easier to understand, appealing, not creating frustrations in the environment, but creating more harmony. (Maharishi, 1975a)

This understanding of how language arises and affects consciousness is quite different from the Saussurean model. It suggests new ways to understand the whole communication process, or at least puts the cur-
rent understanding of langue into perspective, since it would apply only to waking consciousness and not to other states.

Similarly, when a hearer whose awareness is established in pure consciousness hears the sound “rose,” for example, he or she would at once experience the relationship between the name and the form. That is, when consciousness, the basis of speech, has developed to Cosmic Consciousness, then the sight, sound, fragrance, and all cognitive and material aspects of the thing named would be simultaneously experienced, and communication would become complete and nourishing to both speaker and listener. Maharishi draws an analogy of the mutually nourishing and rewarding relationship between a mother and child to explain these ideas on speech:

Between the speaker and the speech is just that relationship that is between the mother and the child. The child is a source of nourishment to the mother, and on that is based the nourishment that the child receives from the mother. So language becomes lively, it has more life in it, it has more fullness in it if the awareness of the basis of language is there. That is why, along with the study of language, an uncovering procedure for consciousness is vital, and, with the use of language, awareness of the source of language is vital. (1975a)

To explain this more fully, Maharishi (1972b) describes how Vedic grammarians divide speech into four stages from unmanifest to most expressed. The subtlest level is Parā, the transcendental level where speech is not yet expressed but is contained in seed form. At the level of the Self or Parā (the Samhitā or wholeness level of creation), the speaker, speech, and the process of giving rise to speech are one, even though the three aspects of speech can be conceptually differentiated. The next level of speech is pashyanti, the subtle level of speech in which speech is not yet expressed, but the level of Transcendental Consciousness has been so enlivened that it is beginning to rise in impulses. This occurs close to the borderline between the Self and the very finest level of the ego.

The third level of speech is madhyama or the level of mental speech or verbal thought. The madhyama level of speech comprises the levels of mind and intellect where memory, thought, and discrimination function. Madhyama itself can be differentiated into numerous sub-stages through which speech emerges from the impulse level all the way to the
fourth and most manifest level, *vaikhari*, where it is spoken and can be heard (please refer Figure 2).

Thus, according to Maharishi Vedic Science, speech or language ultimately arises from the basis of speech, which is pure consciousness or the Self. Practically speaking, ordinary language emerges directly from the level of awareness of the speaker, travels to the listener, sinks into the listener’s consciousness to whatever level it might, depending upon the listener’s level of awareness, and evokes as much of what originally gave rise to the word as the listener can receive. If both speaker and listener have the basis of speech fully developed in their consciousness, then communication will be most meaningful and effective (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1975a). In this instance, the full range of the object’s reality will be contained within the word chosen to express the speaker’s subjective experience of it. When this word falls upon a listener whose consciousness is also fully developed, it will evoke in that consciousness the full reality from which it sprang (please refer to Figure 2).

![Ideal Communication Diagram](image)

Figure 2. When both speaker and listener have their awareness established at subtle levels of the mind, communication is perfect and is nourishing to both parties.
Maharishi emphasizes that the full value of the connection of the sign to its referent will be communicated only if the consciousness of the listener has been expanded to the level where it is unbounded or nearly unbounded (1974). If this has not taken place, some lesser value of the referent will be communicated. That part of the message that connects it to the unified field, or the Self, will fall on deaf ears, or rather, a deaf mind (please refer to Figure 3). However, Maharishi mentions that more is included in the message than the words.

![Incomplete Communication I](image)

Figure 3. When the listener’s level of awareness is not established at a subtle level of the mind, then the full value of the referent is not experienced.

The silence at the depth of the communication, whether in speech or art, is part of the message and also affects its audience (1970a; 1975a).

When the listener’s consciousness is more developed than the speaker’s, then more may be communicated than the speaker is aware of. The listener may understand the message much more comprehensively than does the speaker, that is, he would understand what is being communicated as well as the nature of the consciousness of the speaker (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1970b; please refer to Figure 4).
Therefore, when the speaker’s awareness is established at the level of Parā, the basis of speech or communication, language can become a means for unfolding life; it can spread the variety of creation without losing the unity from which it arose (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1974; 1975a). Speech and communication are not usually understood in this way. Most individuals do not experience the full range of speech and are only aware of it at the most manifest end of the madhyama level and, of course, on the vaikhari level. At these levels, speech may seem to be entirely relative, arbitrary, and without an absolute basis. But this is a result of the limits of waking-state consciousness, not the nature of language. “How much a word would convey will depend on the comprehension of the speaker. How much a word means will depend upon the comprehension of the reader” (Maharishi, 1976).

**Incomplete Communication II**

![Diagram of Incomplete Communication II](image)

Figure 4. When the listener’s awareness is stationed at a subtler level than the speaker’s, the spoken word evokes a more complete experience of the referent in the listener than the speaker is aware of projecting.

Literature, as well as other forms of communication, is also subject to analysis in terms of levels of speech and levels of the mind and need
not be confined to the arbitrary relativism of the grossest levels of madhyama. Thus, the findings of structural linguistics may only be valid on certain levels of the mind and not relevant to the whole range of speech and consciousness.

Some linguists currently conceive of communication, including literary texts, in terms of the six elements of the speech act described by Roman Jakobson (1960). Jakobson identifies (a) an addresser; (b) an addressee; (c) a message that is passed between them; (d) a shared code that makes the message intelligible; (e) a contact or physical medium of communication (e.g., a book, a verbal utterance); and (f) a context to which the message refers. Depending upon which element dominates the communication, each communicative act is either (a) emotive or expressive of a state of mind; (b) conative, or trying for an effect; (c) poetic; (d) metalinguistic (e.g., “did you mean to say, . . .”); (e) phatic (e.g., “well, we’re finally talking together”; or (f) referential. According to Jakobson, communication is literary or poetic when the message or words themselves are emphasized or “foregrounded” in our attention (please refer to Figure 5).

![Jacobson’s Communication Act](image)

**Figure 5.** This schematic rendition of Jakobson’s communication act shows the elements in plain type and the dominant function in italics.

A unified field theory of literature adds three very important dimensions of communication to Jakobson’s diagram of the communication
act: the level of consciousness of the speaker; the level of consciousness of the listener; and the quality of the environment in which communication takes place. In addition to creating an emotional contact or communicating a message, the quality of speech, it seems, is influenced by the consciousness of the speaker and can influence the consciousness of the listener, not just through imparting information or affecting the feelings, but through enlivening some degree of the unified field at the basis of the listener's consciousness. When this is possible, the communication is not only nourishing for the listener, but the nourishing effect redounds to the speaker, and spreads out into the environment, creating an effect in the collective consciousness.

Collective consciousness has a particular meaning in Maharishi Vedic Science. Maharishi defines collective consciousness as the sum of all the individual consciousnesses that make up a particular group such as a family, a city, or a nation (please refer to D. W. Orme-Johnson & Dillbeck, 1987, for a thorough treatment of Maharishi’s theory and a review of the research on its premises and predictions). The collective consciousness of a group is not a shared understanding of certain ideas or beliefs but rather an entity parallel to an individual’s state of consciousness, one that affects how language is communicated. For example, if an environment is fraught with tension, anyone entering into it notices this tension and may interpret innocent remarks as being threatening. When the tension is dissolved, everyone in the situation feels more at ease and communication flows in a more positive and harmonious manner. The quality of feeling or consciousness surrounding a communication both influences and is influenced by the communication act. Hence the sketch of Jakobson’s model must be redrawn to include the levels of speech operative for both the speaker and the listener and to account for the collective consciousness, which provides the environment in which the communication is taking place (please refer to Figure 6).
Figure 6. This modification of Jacobson’s six elements shows the addresser and the addressee to be composed of four levels of speech, all affecting the communication process. In addition, the message is being transmitted within a certain collective consciousness that influences how it is received, and if appropriate, how it is sent.

The idea of literature or language as an expression of consciousness has been rejected by post-Saussurean linguistics, which insists that our language determines the nature of our experience and not the reverse. Recent theorists argue that “the fundamental agreement between the new rhetoric and post-structuralism that language is constitutive of reality is the basis for a unified field of study” and go on to suggest that this agreement can provide the basis for unifying the areas of writing and literary study (Shumway, 1985, p. 66). Whereas this notion clearly applies to waking state consciousness, it fails to generalize to higher states of consciousness where experience of the source of language, nature, and consciousness precedes and shapes expression. A unified field theory of literature must therefore reevaluate the role of consciousness in the processes of the writing and reading of literature.
A Unified Field Theory of Literature

Maharishi’s understanding of how consciousness determines the quality of the message as it originates with the speaker, as well as the listener’s comprehension of it, justifies an emphasis on the importance of the levels of consciousness of the writer and the reader. Literature communicates not only the words in the text, but the quality of consciousness and emotions of the writer. Similarly, the quality of consciousness of the reader determines how much of the message including its subtle emotional layers can be appreciated. It also determines to what extent the literary techniques employed by the writer can operate effectively within the reader’s consciousness and enliven the unified field at the basis of that consciousness.

A unified field theory of literature, then, is based upon knowledge and experience of the full range of consciousness available to writers and readers, from the unified field at the basis of consciousness to the grosser levels of the mind. A consideration of both the levels of the mind operative at any moment in the creative or the reading process and the means by which the reader’s awareness is led to transcend grosser levels of the mind and move inward toward the Self explains many of the mechanics and effects of literature. It provides a holistic means for understanding how literature affects the reader’s consciousness as well as evaluating how well it does so.

The first area of concern is the consciousness of the writer and the writing process. The second area pertains to the issues of reading, including the self-referral nature of the techniques and conventions the writer employs, and the third will discuss how reading affects the consciousness and physiology of the reader, including how one meaning is accorded to a work. On this basis it will then be possible to consider issues in the teaching of literature: the canon, the definition and evaluation of literature, and the various critical strategies.

The Writer and the Creative Process

Just as physicists describe the universe unfolding from the self-referral state of the unified field, many writers have experienced language and insights emerging from their consciousness when it is in its most silent state. For example, in the quiet of his room in London, Wordsworth
could invoke a remembered scene from nature that would then spontaneously lead his awareness inward; he relates,

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
of Harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
(“Tintern Abbey”)

Wordsworth’s experience of his breath and heart rate slowing down until he appears to be “asleep in body” while his consciousness remains lively accords well with scientific research on the Transcendental Meditation technique. This research describes a state of “restful alertness” in which breath, heart, and metabolic rates decrease in the direction of deep sleep while the brain appears to be awake and alert, showing a predominance of alpha waves and little indication of the slow theta waves that characterize sleep (Wallace, 1970). Wordsworth’s description of himself as “a living soul” with his inner eye enjoying a powerfully harmonious, joyful, and noetic state suggests that he was experiencing Transcendental Consciousness along with thoughts. He credits this state with allowing him “to see into the life of things” and certainly his best poetry dates from the years when he could frequently elicit this experience.

Maharishi discusses how the state of transcendental or pure consciousness gives rise to poetry in a lecture on the Vedic seer Madhuchhandas, “who saw an impulse of his awareness falling into that unbounded ocean of infinity, the unbounded ocean of Being within himself, and immediately his heart flowed” into poetry and he spontaneously sang the verses of the Rk Veda (1972c). Maharishi then generalizes to the “flow of consciousness” of the individual writer: “All successful poets,” he writes, “have tracked the path of transcending. They start from what the eyes see, or the hands feel, or the ears hear, and they travel into space and time and direct their focus on to the beyond.” He says elsewhere that the expressions of poetry spring out of the ecstasy of mutual union of a lively heart and vigilant mind (1971). Whether the writer
is lying or sitting, he says, eyes open or closed, when the mind is deep in silence within and the impulse of speech is lively, then that writer’s expressions will display great comprehension. That is, there will be a profound value of connectedness between the surface values of life and the more profound ones at their depth. When poetry arises from the depths of awareness it will inspire life (1972c). That is, its flow will stimulate a similar flow of life in the listener and enliven various levels of the listener’s consciousness, a point that will be elaborated more fully in the next section.

It is interesting to consider how modern poets perceive the mechanics of the creative process. In a poem entitled “Poetics,” the American poet A. R. Ammons looks at a birch tree and observes how a poem emerges from his intention to make that tree come alive to the reader (1972). He says:

I look for the way
things will turn
out spiraling from a center,
the shape
things will take to come forth in

With a form that imitates the process of ideas “spiraling from a center,” Ammons moves around this idea, taking it up again and again as his poem considers from what “wells of possibility/how a thing will/unfold.”

The “wells of possibility” may mean more than the mere imaginative resources of the poet. This is finally suggested by the last stanza in which the poet finds himself

not so much looking for the shape
as being available
to any shape that may be
summoning itself
through me
from the self not mine but ours. (p. 199)

When Ammons indicates that the self from which the poem arises is not only his self but a self held in common by all, he is suggesting that his inner self is tapping a larger Self at his source. Ammons’ ideas place him in that tradition we call Emersonian, not because Ammons
is imitating Emerson or has derived his poetics from him, but because Ammons understands his own experience of the creative process in a way that is similar to Emerson’s. Emerson wrote in “The Poet,” for example, that “poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings, and attempt to write them down . . .” (1844/1987, p. 1070).

The poet arrives at the perfect combination of sound and sense, truth and music, whenever, Emerson says, he is “so finely organized” that he can hear them with his inner ear. The phrase “so finely organized” suggests the refinement of the nervous system that results from repeated experiences of pure consciousness that allow an individual to “see into the life of things” or appreciate reality from that level. Robert Browning expresses a similar recognition of the deepest structures of consciousness, an “inmost centre” hemmed in by the gross flesh, as the source of truth:

Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate’er you may believe:
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fullness; and around
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth;
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Blinds it, and makes all error; and, “to know
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendor may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And you trace back the effluence to its spring
And source within us, where broods radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour . . .
(Paracelsus, 1835/1906, p. 54)

Browning observes that his language and insights, “the effluence,” can be traced back to its radiant “spring and source within us.” Without a technique for systematically eliciting such experiences, Browning recognizes that they come only “as chance shall favour.”
These ideas raise several issues. In order for a writer spontaneously to experience pure consciousness, that writer’s consciousness must be, if even temporarily, “finely organized,” that is, in a state of balance and subtlety. This means that the writer is functioning at a level of the mind that is deeper and more integrated than usual, a level closer to the intelligence and organizing power of the unified field of natural law. At this level, the writer’s consciousness would necessarily be broader, more comprehensive, and holistic. The writing emerging from this level would reflect these qualities, as well as being better crafted, since the skills the writer had developed would be functioning optimally at subtler, more holistic levels of awareness. It follows from this that writers with ready access to the unified field of consciousness within would produce works exhibiting these qualities. Writers without spontaneous access to their Self would do well to cultivate the ability to have it, since it is the experience of the source of order and intelligence that brings these qualities into the mind and body of the experiencer, purifying, refining, and balancing the nervous system.

Maharishi frequently notes that the essential force of a work of literature lies in the purity of the writer’s consciousness (1975b). If one’s awareness is finely attuned to the unified field, he says, one is able to express broad comprehension in very compact expressions; one can suggest the “ocean in a drop.” The greatness of poetry depends partly upon the writer’s skill and partly upon the depth of consciousness from which it springs, upon how deep and lively the writer’s level of consciousness is (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1970a; 1971).

When you talk of simplicity of expressions, of great comprehension contained in literature, then we know it must come out from a simple level of consciousness, from a purer level of consciousness. . . . What makes a beautiful literary piece is spontaneity of rhyme, orderliness, greater comprehension, compactness. When all these beautiful qualities are found together, they inspire every phase of speech, every phase of thinking, every phase of intellect, every phase of perception, every phase of activity. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1976)

Maharishi explains that one radiates the quality of one’s consciousness or inner silence (1970a, 1972d). The bliss experienced at subtle levels of the mind, a bliss that is non-verbal or non-graphic, is readily perceptible in an artist or writer’s work. In fact, Maharishi observes,
artists’ or writers’ states of consciousness can be deduced from their work by a viewer whose consciousness is sufficiently highly evolved to be functioning on subtle levels of the mind.

When the writer’s consciousness is functioning on subtle levels, it follows that writing will flow spontaneously, as Emerson and others have observed. Maharishi often comments that great literature is not belabored, but is the spontaneous outburst of awareness of the connectedness of all the different forms and phenomena of creation with that level of consciousness from which they arise. The poet, he says, writes as he feels, as spontaneously as he breathes, even without his knowing it (1971, 1975b, 1976). This is not to denigrate the importance of learning the skill or craft of writing. In fact, Maharishi emphasizes the necessity of learning the particular skills of one’s art so that the maximum amount of creativity can be expressed through them. He also adds that even though one might devote one’s time to developing a skill to perfection, there is not enough time in life also to develop all the other skills necessary to a fulfilled and successful life. If one develops one’s consciousness at the same time that one is specializing in a skill, one will simultaneously culture success and fulfillment on many levels of life (1970a).

The school of phenomenological criticism also emphasizes the importance of the author’s consciousness and discusses its effect on the reader’s consciousness. Its methodology is based on the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. When Husserl begins his phenomenological method by turning away from the external world to examine the contents of consciousness alone and thereby arrive at an absolute notion of essences, he is attempting to begin from the inner certainties of consciousness (please refer to Lentricchia, 1980). The phenomenological method is therefore attempting to be a science of consciousness, one that would reveal the “deep structures” of the mind—if it were practiced with similar results by everyone.

Husserl’s method, however, can be shown to consist in a description of his own experiences of subtle states of consciousness, not instructions on how to evoke these experiences. Therefore, his method has not been practiced with success by his followers, and his approach lies open to charges of being merely intuitional and arbitrary, rather than universal and transcendental as he hoped. Similarly, the phenomenological criti-
cism of literature attempts to open itself to the full range of the work, primarily by understanding the author’s consciousness, and thus it is obviously less interested in the social questions that are so important to today’s new historicists. Even without a method for refining their own consciousness, some phenomenological critics have contributed valuable insights into the writing and reading of literature, because their consciousness may have been operating naturally on subtle, intuitive levels. With a reliable technique for refining their consciousness and therefore intuition, such as the Transcendental Meditation technique, critics could employ phenomenological criticism to better advantage and enter more fully into the consciousness of the writer.

The principle of the emergence of great art or literature from the consciousness of its author clearly places a great degree of importance upon the writer. However, in order to fully grasp and appreciate an author’s state of consciousness and its functioning in a work of literature, the reader must develop his or her own consciousness. A unified field theory of literature proposes that the development of consciousness of each reader, from high school student to critic, be a high priority in the study of literature. Before taking up this question in some detail, it would first be useful to discuss how a unified field theory of literature would describe and explain the way in which literary techniques can affect the reader’s consciousness.

**The Self-Referral Mechanics of Reading**

When a unified field theory of literature examines the reading process from the aspect of consciousness, it becomes evident that the essential mechanics of reading are those of self-referral. That is, the language and structure of a work will ideally direct the reader’s awareness inward to some degree, if not to the Self, at least toward the Self, toward the level of pure consciousness underlying the more active levels of the mind. This process can also be called “transcending” because in reading literature the reader’s consciousness will transcend the grosser states of awareness and settle into quieter, subtler levels of the mind. Since reading occurs with the eyes open and the intellect and emotions lively, the reader would very seldom, if ever, transcend all the way to the level of infinite silence and bliss of Transcendental Consciousness, as happens in the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique. However,
the same term for taking the mind from gross to subtler levels is used to describe the mechanics of literature since it would seem that the same law of nature is at work.

The mechanics of literature will take the reader’s awareness inward, however, only if the text being read is of sufficient excellence and connectedness and the reader’s consciousness is trained or accustomed to turn inward. The role played by the reader’s consciousness will be discussed more fully in a later section. This section will describe some of the mechanics of transcending operative in reading literature and suggest how a unified field theory of literature can elucidate and provide a framework for understanding how these techniques affect the consciousness of the reader.

The process of self-referral can be triggered through a number of dimensions of a work. First, its meaning or themes, the truths about nature and consciousness that it describes or enacts, take readers inward as they absorb or synthesize these ideas. Second, descriptions of experiences of higher states of consciousness or insights into the source of thought reverberate in the consciousness of those who have had such experiences, reminding readers of their existence and inspiring them to take their attention toward the Self. Thirdly, the process of self-referral can function independently of meaning or inspiration, and can be produced by literary techniques that induce the reader’s awareness to transcend to finer levels of the mind or intellect in the direction of the inner silence of the Self. Such techniques include, for example, the use of gaps between elements of the text, figurative language, rhythm, harmony, and point of view, to name a few. An examination of several of these areas will illustrate the usefulness of a unified field theory of literature in understanding how literature works.

Gaps
The area of reader-response criticism explores how readers participate in creating the meaning of a work by interacting with the text (please refer to Tompkins, 1980). “Literary texts are full of unexpected twists and turns, and frustration of expectations,” Wolfgang Iser observes. By continually positing missing connections, reviewing what has already happened in the text in the light of what has just unfolded, and dynamically reformulating the meaning, the reader brings into play the
“faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself” (1980 p. 55). Iser notes, “The manner in which the reader experiences the text will reflect his own disposition, and in this respect the literary text acts as a kind of mirror,” thus recognizing the role the reader’s consciousness plays in the process. Still, Iser believes that the “oscillation between the building and the breaking of illusions” is very much like “the way in which we gather experience in life. And thus the ‘reality’ of the reading experience can illuminate basic patterns of real experience” (pp. 62, 56). This process, he claims, “does not merely entail the discovery of the unformulated . . . it also entails the possibility that we may formulate ourselves and so discover what had previously seemed to elude our consciousness” (1974/1980, p. 68).

Iser’s recognition of the influence the dynamical process of reading has on the reader’s consciousness, as well as the limitations of that consciousness, is very valuable. However, the gaps that Iser discusses not only provoke the mind and intellect to discover the meaning of the text, but they can act on other levels of the mind as well. With each gap or hiatus in the flow of the text, the reader is allowed or even required to turn inward for a fraction of a second in order to posit the missing connection, or simply to rest between the activity that precedes and follows the gap. That is, in the silence of gaps in the meaning of the text, or even between the lines on the page or between the words, the reader will “refer back” to the self and momentarily sink into a deeper level of consciousness. Consequently, the reading process processes the reader, adding an experiential dimension to the intellectual meaning of the work, as will be evident in the consideration of a few stanzas of a poem.

In Louis Simpson’s poem “Physical Universe,” the reader follows a wakeful husband and father around the house at dawn as he makes himself a cup of coffee and idly takes up his son’s textbook on astronomy. As the father reads, he becomes caught up in the textbook’s description of the vastness of the primordial galaxy:

“Pulled one way by its own gravity,
the other way by the sun,
it broke, forming smaller clouds,
the protoplanets. Earth
was 2000 times as wide as it is now.”
The earth was without form, and void, 
and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

“Then the sun began to shine, . . .” 

The idea that the earth was 2000 times as wide as it is now expands the reader’s concept of the earth. The break in the poem gives the father and the reader a moment to sink inward, and the ensuing lines from Genesis seem to come from deep within memory, as if from the void from which creation itself arose.

The next gap, which is emphasized by an asterisk, again gives the reader an opportunity to transcend. The lines from Genesis in the context of a scientific textbook on astronomy bring two different versions of the creation into the reader’s awareness. As Iser observes, “the reader will strive, even if unconsciously, to fit everything together in a consistent pattern” (1974/1980, p. 58). This gap in the text of the poem allows readers a moment to dive into their consciousness and bring the two contrasting ideas into some sort of relationship. Simpson allows his readers to enjoy this moment of self-referral and lets the silence speak for itself. When the poem resumes, the story of creation is underway and the poet brings us back to the present moment.

The gaps between the stanzas are clearly part of the logic of the poem and allow its readers to transcend the surface value of the words to some extent, settle into, and more profoundly experience the poem’s deeper questions on the nature of reality. Simpson says he chooses poetry rather than prose in which to develop his narratives because he feels that the movement of the poetic line can express more feeling than prose. He wants to “increase understanding, by touching the springs of nature,” by a “writing that penetrates beneath the surface to currents of feeling and thought” (1980/1982, p. 413). That, for Simpson, is realism—a realism that is perhaps at the opposite pole of contemporary poetry from A. R. Ammons—yet his work achieves the same goal: at its best it leads the reader’s awareness inward.

Through form and meaning, Louis Simpson’s poem swings the reader’s awareness from abstract to concrete, from the vastness of the galaxies to the father sitting at his kitchen table early Tuesday morning on the seventh of July; it moves the reader’s awareness from outer to inner,
from inner to outer, from activity to rest and back again. Maharishi explains that as literature swings the awareness from abstract to concrete, it sharpens the intellect and cultures the emotions:

The whole personality gets refined because there is first a very concrete appreciation of something. Then there is a very abstract appreciation immediately after that. And this expands emotions and intellect, expands awareness . . . . And the more these opposite values are put together in an expression, the more literary it becomes and the more cultural value there is in it. Literature cultures emotions, cultures speech, cultures intellect, cultures the whole personality. This is its value.

This is precisely what happens with greater speed in Transcendental Meditation. Awareness expands, immediately expands to unboundedness, becomes abstract. Then immediately it becomes concrete on a thought. Immediately it expands, immediately it contracts. This contraction and abstraction, contraction and expansion, contraction and expansion, at quick intervals, develops a universal value in individual existence.

Literature, remaining on the gross [level of awareness], shakes awareness from contractions to expansions, from expansions to contractions, from contractions to expansions. This is the fruit of the study of literature. All display of creative intelligence, all the value that we have in transcending, emerging from the transcendent into the relative, getting to the transcendent from the relative, emerging from the transcendent to the relative, awareness going back and forth—the same phenomenon is available to quite a great extent in the study of literature. (1974)

As Maharishi explains, the study of literature can enhance the evolution of consciousness. In addition, the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique can greatly enhance the reader’s response to literature, since it improves readers’ ability to transcend when the text encourages them to do so. The principle of awareness swinging from concrete to abstract provides insights into how other literary techniques, such as figurative language, affect the reader’s consciousness and thereby complement the intellectual experience of a work.
Figurative Language
Symbols too swing the reader’s awareness from the concrete object to the deeper ideas they evoke. Similarly, the terms of a metaphor encourage the reader to transcend to a subtler, more intuitive, holistic level of consciousness in order to connect the disparate objects involved in the metaphor. The reader attempts to make sense of figurative speech, to look for the wholeness in it, and in so doing must move to a subtler, and therefore more unifying level of consciousness. For example, when we read Kabir’s description of what lies inside a clay jug, we encounter the unexpected.

Inside this clay jug there are canyons and pine mountains,
and the maker of canyons and pine mountains!
All seven oceans are inside, and hundreds of millions of stars.
The acid that tests gold is there, and the one who judges jewels.
And the music from the strings that no one touches, and the source of all water. (Bly, Trans., 1980, p. 272)

What does one experience in reading these lines? The awareness moves from the surface idea of a clay jug to a more profound one. The mind naturally transcends to subtler levels of consciousness in order to make sense of the juxtaposition of a simple clay jug and the contents of the universe, both manifest (“hundreds of millions of stars”) and unmanifest (“the source of all water”). The mind asks, what kind of clay jug is this? Kabir obviously isn’t talking merely about looking into the mouth of a piece of pottery; he might mean another kind of clay jug. Might it be the fleshly body and nervous system inside of which is consciousness, consciousness identified with the unified field, the source of all creation? In attempting to synthesize the terms of the metaphor—and we cannot help trying to do so—awareness must transcend to more silent and holistic levels of consciousness.

The movement of awareness in the consideration of the clay jug from pottery to flesh is effortless and pleasurable, and can stir up waves of delight. The experience of new insights and the expansion of consciousness that follow such moments of self-referral or transcending are often blissful. The level of Transcendental Consciousness is extremely blissful, and any inward movement of the awareness toward its source is
often accompanied by some degree of bliss or pleasure, which no doubt accounts for a great deal of the charm of reading.

Maharishi points out that when contrasting values are put together in one comprehensive expression then “the entire mechanics of evolution would be available there.” This can only occur when the writer’s “awareness is very natural . . . . And when this comes on the level of meaning, it’s a joy to the intellect, it results in expansion of the intellect, enlivenment of the full potential of the intellect. It’s a joy to one’s ego” (1976).

Meaning aside, the flow of “orderly rhythmic patterns of speech” found in literature expresses the rhythms of nature. “The flow of the [reader’s] consciousness moves with [this flow] and is evolved by it” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1976). Thus the flow of rhythm in literature is of utmost importance.

Rhythm
There is, of course, a rhythmical component to all speech and writing. We recall those famous lines from *Pygmalion*, George Bernard Shaw’s play about the nature and uses of language, where Mr. Doolittle tries to extract some money from Professor Higgins. When Higgins asks Doolittle to explain what he wants, the ensuing conversation emphasizes the nature of rhythm and its effects:

Doolittle [“most musical, most melancholy”]. I’ll tell you, Governor, if you’ll only let me get a word in. I’m willing to tell you. I’m wanting to tell you. I’m waiting to tell you.

Higgins. Pickering, this chap has a certain natural gift of rhetoric. Observe the rhythm of his native woodnotes wild. “I’m willing to tell you: I’m wanting to tell you: I’m waiting to tell you.” Sentimental rhetoric! that’s the Welsh strain in him (II).

This illustration of the natural rhythms that can be found in prose contains something of the more musical and flowing rhythms of poetry.

When discussing rhythm and harmony in poetry, English teachers frequently cite Alexander Pope’s lines to the poet that illustrate their meaning by their own variation, first of sounds and then of rhythms:

The sound must seem an Echo to the sense:
Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
But when the loud surges lash the sounding shore,
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar:
When Ajax strives some rock’s vast weight to throw,
The line too labours, and the words move slow;
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o’er th’ unbending corn, and skims along the main.

Pope’s lines illustrate how different sounds and rhythmic stresses in the line can cause the lines to echo or recreate the action being described.

Poetry is written for the ear, even the silent ear, and the accent of the words in the line adds a dimension of meaning to the poetry that is subtle yet very real. A. R. Ammons compares a poem to a walk because, he says, a poem is not just a mental activity,

it has body, rhythm, feeling, sound, and mind, conscious and subconscious. The pace at which a poet walks (and thinks), his natural breath-length, the line he pursues, whether forthright and straight or weaving and meditative, his whole “air,” whether of aimlessness or purpose—all these things and many more figure into the “physiology” of the poem he writes . . . . [The poem] may be lumbering, clipped, wavering, tripping . . . . It can’t be extracted and contemplated. It is non-reproducible and non-logical . . . . There is only one way to know it and that is to enter into it (1967/1982, pp. 5, 6).

All types of rhythms, whether of prose or poetry, affect the consciousness of the listener, who is “walked” by the rhythm of the language.

In a consideration of the differences in rhythm between Ṛk Veda and Sama Veda, Maharishi shows that the chanting of a verse, first in the style of Ṛk Veda and then in the style of Sama Veda, illustrates the ways rhythm and sound are used in poetry not only to enhance the meaning, but to give the listener a direct experience of waves of consciousness as they spread into creation (1972b). Maharishi explains that the mechanics of the evolutionary process go through phases of rest and activity. Great literature is “the spontaneous flow of life in letters” and in its flow, it “brings the Self, the unmanifest Self, pure consciousness, unbounded awareness, in flow” with it. Specifically, when the rhythm of activity and rest is found on the level of rhythm, meaning, and sound in a piece of literature, while at the same time the writer is bringing two
very contrasting values together, then the reader’s consciousness can really flow with the flow of the literature:

All three things [rhythm, meaning, and sound] come together when consciousness is trained to flow in all these three values, and then that flow is the flow of evolution. Literature is a very, very beautiful field and the teachers of literature have only to lead their students to increase their ability to have this comprehension of great contrasting values close together, and this naturally develops through the practice of Transcendental Meditation. (1976)

William Butler Yeats also writes of how rhythm deeply affects consciousness, but not only those “energetic rhythms, as of a man running,” he says, but those “wavering, meditative, organic rhythms, which are the embodiment of the imagination, that neither desires nor hates, because it has done with time, and only wishes to gaze upon some reality, some beauty . . . . He describes how rhythm affects consciousness and therefore can prolong the poet’s creative moments:

The purpose of rhythm, it has always seemed to me, is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state . . . in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols. (1900/1961, p. 159)

Yeats describes being poised in a state that resembles both waking and sleeping, where the awareness apparently lies close to the state of pure consciousness and can readily perceive symbols emerging into the more conscious mind. He writes in his autobiography:

I know now that revelation is from the self, but from that age-long memoried self, that shapes the elaborate shell of the mollusc and the child in the womb, that teaches the birds to make their nest; and that genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind. (1924/1965, pp. 182–183)

Here Yeats recognizes that poetry comes from the “buried self” and through the use of rhythm, among its other techniques, allows the consciousness of the reader to linger in that state and experience the “crisis” that joins that age-long memoried self to the trivial daily mind.
Not all the rhythms of nature or poetry are always accessible to all listeners. For there to be a perfect transmission of meaning, the consciousness of the listener must be at least as refined as that of the writer who created the verses.

**Narrative Techniques**

Narrative techniques, such as authorial intrusion, can also lead the consciousness of the reader to deeper levels of the mind. For example, when the voice of the author breaks into a story and interrupts the illusion, the reader turns inward, remembering self, place, and feeling. The modern British novelist John Fowles shows us his character in a moment of contemplation, and then speaks in his own voice: “Charles did not know it, but in those brief poised seconds above the waiting sea, in that luminous evening silence broken only by the waves’ quiet wash, the whole Victorian Age was lost. *And I do not mean he had taken the wrong path*” (1967/1970, p. 63, emphasis added). In breaking in on the illusion of the fictional world, Fowles gives his readers pause and creates a moment of self-referral as they step outside the flow of the narrative and are reminded of their own existence.

One of the most important techniques in fiction is that of point of view. A novel is often told from the point of view of one of the characters, and the reader knows little that the character doesn’t know. This gives the reader an opportunity to share the character’s world-view and then, as the character’s boundaries are expanded, so are the reader’s. Jane Austen’s novel *Emma* is brilliantly constructed to lead the reader to identify with Emma and see relationships as she does. Although Austen gives plenty of evidence that Emma is interpreting events as she chooses, evidence that is pointedly obvious on a later reading, the first-time reader innocently shares Emma’s illusions that the match she is making between her friend Harriet and Mr. Elton is proceeding well.

When Mr. Elton unexpectedly proposes to Emma, her illusions are shattered. She is mortified to realize that she had misconstrued his past actions because she wished to see them as attentions to Harriet and that he had mistaken her friendliness for interest. Self-knowledge finally dawns and Austen’s Emma is too intelligent and open-hearted to blame anyone but herself: “If she had so misinterpreted his feelings, she had little right to wonder that he, with self-interest to blind him,
should have mistaken her’s [sic]” (1816/1972, p. 93). Austen constructs her novel so that the reader shares Emma’s growth of self-knowledge. Since Emma is intelligent and charming, the reader is drawn into an easy identification with her and begins to see the world as she does. When Emma learns from her mistakes, so does the reader. Each wave of self-knowledge that Austen creates for her character acts to turn her reader inward.

Readers must realize that along with Emma they have been mistaken and must judge for themselves. By the end of the novel, Emma is wiser, and the reader is more vigilant, taking note of Austen’s clues and turning reflectively back onto the self to consider them in the light of personal judgment, past events, and the like. Austen’s novel gives her readers a powerful experience of self-referral as they frequently refer back to themselves to realize that each event is just a fictional possibility and that the reading process itself is the only reality. She shakes her readers out of a controlled illusion and gradually teases them inward toward self-knowledge, toward the authentic Self.

Self-referral appears to be the most basic experience in the reading process. It takes the reader beyond the surface levels of a work, from concrete imagery to more holistic levels of inner awareness. Many other evolutionary processes are also at work in literature. In fiction, for example, the reader may identify with one or more of the characters, going from sympathy to empathy as one sees oneself in the character. This process engages readers on the level of the ego and the emotions, and their consciousness expands along with the character’s as the character goes through stages of learning, maturation, and the evolution of consciousness. If the writer brings out the transcendental aspects of a character’s consciousness, then readers can also perceive the Self in that character, and thus grow in the qualities of refined Cosmic Consciousness. Or if the writer evokes the deepest levels of the natural world, the reader can appreciate a unity between the Self within and the Self in nature, and thus grow toward Unity Consciousness. Maharishi explains:

This is because no matter what state of existence, it breathes in the process of evolution . . . beautiful existence, static existence, flowing existence—it breathes in the process of evolution. And because, as we have already seen, every literary impulse is in tune with the evolutionary
process, so when a cultured mind looks at a thing, what he sees is the quantum mechanical level of the object, what he sees is that unmanifest level of the object where all the laws of nature are functioning, and he sees that all the laws of nature are taking existence to a higher level.

So it’s the comprehensive vision of a poet or a literary writer that sees, not the surface structure of it, so much as he sees the mechanics involved in its evolution. And that is why, no matter what one sees one sees evolution there, and because evolution is one’s own nature, in everything one sees one’s own nature, and this reference to the self makes everything enjoyable. So the study of literature would even go so far as to develop Unity Consciousness (1976).

By a “cultured mind” Maharishi means the developed or “cultured” consciousness of one who has been practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique and evolving to the level where it is possible to see the Self and the mechanics of evolution in the world of experience. Such a mind would indeed deeply enjoy reading.

**The Joy of Reading**

Since works of literature employ description, characters, sound, rhythm, ideas, associations and, in fact, relate to all aspects of life, they necessarily engage all the levels of the mind. A work of literature evokes the experience of the sensory level of life through describing material objects and evoking their image on the inward eye. The reader is also affected by the sounds of the words, even the silent sounds that enter the mind on the *madhyama* level of speech. Similarly, the finest level of feeling is stirred by literature, and the ego or individual self of the reader is engaged in the work as the writer arouses love or sympathy with the characters presented. The writer allows readers to share in the experience or vision, to create and discover it for themselves, so that it becomes each reader’s own experience.

The most important level of the mind that a work of literature can enliven is the level of the Self or unified field, and this it does by inducing the reader, through its various techniques—gaps, figurative language, narrative techniques, and so forth—to transcend in the direction of the Self. As a result of enlivening all the levels of the mind and directing the awareness inward, a great work of literature can integrate and refine the consciousness of a reader who is open to it.
Since experiences of subtler levels of the mind are increasingly blissful, the joy of reading becomes more intense as the work stimulates more self-referral. According to Maharishi, the experience of happiness is an indication that one’s life is on an evolutionary track; pain and suffering are indications of the opposite, that one’s life is out of tune with evolution (1967; 1972a).

Eminent American critic J. Hillis Miller speaks movingly of the joy of reading. His understanding of the reading experience emphasizes both the value of literature in triggering that joy and the recognition that this joy comes from deep within the consciousness of the reader:

To speak of the joy of reading will remind some of Roland Barthes’s “plaisir du texte.”

But I have in mind more specifically the powerful uses of the word in the Romantic period, not only in Schiller’s “Ode to Joy” but Coleridge’s “Dejection: An Ode,” where the “shaping spirit of Imagination” gives that “Joy” which is “Life, and Life’s effluence, cloud at once and shower,” “the spirit and the power/Which wedding nature gives to us in dower/A new Earth and new Heaven.” And I have in mind Wordsworth’s “Surprised by joy—impatient as the wind,” where a sudden inrush of joy can make the poet forget even the sorrow of his daughter’s death and turn instinctively to “share the transport” of his joy with her, forgetting that she is “deep buried in the silent tomb.” For me, the joy of reading, when it comes, is something like Wordsworth’s sudden joy: surprising, unpredictable both in its nature and in its possible effects, a break in time, in that sense anarchic, a dissolution of preexisting orders, the opening of a sense of freedom that is like a new earth and a new heaven, an influx of power. The joy of reading is in this sense apocalyptic. It has to do with transfiguration and the end but also has to do with a momentary lapse of the fear of death. (1986, p. 2)

Hillis Miller’s beautiful description of his experience illustrates not only the joy of reading, but its ability to change consciousness. Wordsworth’s “sudden joy” and Miller’s “joy of reading” both have “to do with transfiguration and the end.”

As the process of reading great literature swings the awareness from the concrete to the abstract, the reader’s awareness transcends to subtler levels of the mind. Since the body responds to the activity of the mind, literature must affect the reader’s physiology. There must therefore be a
physiological explanation for the joy and transformation reading apparently produces. Psychologists have begun to examine the behavior of the autonomic nervous system corresponding to psychological processes, such as reading or listening to music. The autonomic nervous system has two aspects, the sympathetic system which governs arousal and activity and the parasympathetic which governs rest and renewal. It might be expected that activities such as reading would decrease sympathetic activity (e.g., heart rate, skin conductance, etc.) but this is not exactly the case.

Lacey and his colleagues observed that when subjects were closely attending to an engaging set of aural stimuli their heart rates slowed, whereas when subjects were performing arithmetic tasks, their heart rates increased (Lacey, Kagan, Lacey, & Moss, 1963). Lacey found that the “empathic listening” produced a pattern of cardiac deceleration accompanied by increasing skin conductance, indications of physiological rest along with mental alertness.

Similarly, in a study of reading involvement, Angelotti, Behnke and Carlile (1975) measured the heart rates of teenagers as they rested and then silently read either three pages of history or three pages of fiction, both structured so that the first page contained the exposition or introductory material, the second the highlight or major issue, and the third the conclusion. They found a striking difference between the two experiences: the reading of fiction was associated with a significant drop in the students’ heart rates, from 94 beats per minute to 89, $t_{19} = 6.18, p < .01$, while the reading of history was associated with a drop in heart rate of only one beat per minute (n.s.). The authors conclude that since autonomic activity appears to reflect the degree to which reading involves the reader, the reading of fiction apparently generates more “involvement” than the reading of historical material.

These changes in autonomic activity suggest that “empathic listening” and “involved reading” effect changes in the reader’s physiology in the direction of those produced by the Transcendental Meditation technique, though not nearly of the same magnitude. Physiological and psychological research on the Transcendental Meditation technique has found that transcending is associated with a state of “restful alertness” (Wallace, 1970). This state is characterized by reduced heart rate, oxygen consumption, metabolic rate, and respiration rate, together with
increased EEG coherence (see Chalmers, Clements, Schenkluh, & Weinless; D. W. Orme-Johnson & Farrow, 1977; Badawi et al., 1984; D. W. Orme-Johnson, 1977). Thus, “involved reading” apparently creates a physiological state similar to, although not as profound as that created by the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique. Since transcending is a blissful process, this could account for the joy experienced during reading.

Similarly, the regular experience of transcending through the Transcendental Meditation technique promotes individual growth or evolution of consciousness in the direction of greater intelligence (Aron, D. W. Orme-Johnson, & Brubaker, 1981; Tjoa, 1975), better mental and physiological health (D. W. Orme-Johnson, 1987; Wallace, Dillbeck, Jacobe, & Harrington, 1982), and increased creativity (Travis, 1979), and produces a wide spectrum of physiological and psychological benefits (see Wallace, 1986 for a comprehensive review). The experience of transcending regularly through the Transcendental Meditation technique promotes not only cognitive and physiological evolution, but appears to enhance growth toward a higher level of principled moral reasoning as well (Nidich, Ryncarz, Abrams, Orme-Johnson, & Wallace, 1983). The process of transcending to deeper levels of consciousness while reading may also be the physiological basis for whatever cognitive or moral transformation readers might experience when reading great literature.

Shelley insists in the conclusion to his *Defence of Poetry* that poetry produces elevating and delightful “evanescent visitations” which are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the most enlarged imaginations; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire. The enthusiasm of virtue, love, patriotism, and friendship is essentially linked with these emotions . . . . (1840)

T. S. Eliot would agree. He writes that literature “affects us as entire human beings; it affects our moral and religious existence” (1935/1967, p. 350). However, since both Eliot and Shelley imply in their writing that only a well-developed consciousness can fully respond to literature and thus be humanized by it, it would appear that only those already virtuous would be made more so by their study of literature. Maharishi makes the same point: only those with “cultured minds,” he says, can see the Self in the play of literature. What of the rest of the reading
public with a less evolved moral consciousness, less delicate sensibility, or less enlarged imagination? This brings us to the role of readers and their consciousness in the response to the literary experience.

**The Reader: Knowledge is Structured in Consciousness**

The state of the reader’s consciousness is clearly an essential component in the literary communication process. A great writer may create a work of literature that presents the dynamics of life and the mechanics of consciousness as they express themselves in nature and society, yet the reader may not understand or respond to them as fully as the writer might hope. Inasmuch as any work of literature is a microcosm, a recreation of the world or nature and experience, its meanings can be as varied and multiple, and even as incomprehensible or contradictory as life itself often appears to be.

The various modern critical approaches that analyze meaning or literary form and technique arise from divergent understandings of the mechanics of consciousness and consequently seem fragmented and contradictory. No one critical theory has yet been able to satisfy all temperaments and points of view. However, a unified field-based theory of literature can bring the various critical strategies into a harmonious rapprochement by connecting them to a theory of consciousness and nature derived from Maharishi Vedic Science, one which is not only substantiated by psychological research but open to validation by direct experience.

For example, myth or archetypal criticism argues that certain recurring literary events represent universal patterns of consciousness. Yet to many this criticism seems speculative, unrelated to either experimental research or social realities, and unconcerned about the differences between literature and other cultural artifacts. However, we can think of the primary patterns that myth critics discover in a work as reflecting the principles of consciousness. In this light a consideration of how these primary patterns manifest into story and song would aid the myth critic in not only identifying but interpreting and relating them to the framework of modern science and human experience. An example of such a pattern will suggest how the archetypal method may be enriched by a unified field-based approach to theory and criticism.
The literary pattern of travel to the land of the dead is found in Virgil, Apuleius, Dante, and numerous other classical and medieval authors. In their works, a character enters another world in a quest for knowledge that will transcend sense perception and then returns to the everyday world at a higher level of integration. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Aeneas descends through a cave guided by the Cumean sybil in order to reach the underworld and discover there the route to the site on which he is to found his city. There he learns from his father that

\[
. . . \text{a soul within sustains the heaven}
\]
\[
\text{and earth, the plains of water, and the gleaming}
\]
\[
\text{globe of the moon, the Titan sun, the stars;}
\]
\[
\text{and mind, that pours through every member, mingles}
\]
\[
\text{with that great body. (Mandelbaum, Trans., 1972, p. 156)}
\]

He learns what his destiny will be and sees the souls of future generations. With this knowledge he returns to the world of activity and founds what will become the Roman Empire. Similarly, Psyche, the heroine of the Cupid and Psyche story within Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, descends into the underworld on her quest to be reunited with her divine husband. Psyche gets the boon she seeks, Platonic Beauty or Being, and returns, Apuleius says, greatly enlivened (*longue vegetior*, Met. XI.20). As a result of her descent, Soul is then reunited with Cupid and raised to immortality and eternal bliss.

Modern novels exhibiting this pattern may show a character descending instead into a cave or canyon, or diving into a lake. These descents are typically effortless penetrations into a dark and mysterious realm, which suggests the depths of their consciousness since they yield self-knowledge of a profound intuitive kind and they usually result in a personal transformation that brings greater power and success to the character. The pattern of descent into another world followed by a life-enhancing return thus metaphorically depicts the transcending process, the natural dive of conscious awareness toward its source, the field of pure intelligence or the Self (please refer to R. Orme-Johnson, 1982). The knowledge and experience of transcending to the unified field of Consciousness adds an important dimension to the archetypal critic’s interpretation of this pattern and brings the insights derived from the
archetypal approach into a meaningful relationship with the reader’s own life.

What may distinguish a “great” work of literature from a mediocre one, or one that is not literature at all, might be that it takes the reader through a beneficial transformation of awareness. The role of criticism, then, would be to satisfy the reader’s intellect by discovering how the form, meaning, and techniques of the work affect consciousness. Yet, for any critical approach to yield results, the critic or reader must be at least as highly evolved as the writer, if not more so. If critics do not have broad comprehension, true objectivity, and a profound sense of the evolutionary nature of life, then their reading may be subject to the boundaries of their consciousness, time, culture, and gender. Maharishi notes:

> When we want to analyze an expression, we can do justice to the writer of the expression and to our method of analysis only if we are completely impartial to what we have in front of us, and we can only afford to be impartial when our level of consciousness is exactly the level of consciousness of the writer. If our level of consciousness is higher than the writer’s then we’ll have an analysis of his writing on a much brighter level, on a much grander level. If our level of consciousness is much lower, . . . we’ll not be able to [appreciate the meaning and expression of] the writer. Therefore the analyzers or the literary critics have to have at least the level of consciousness of the writer. Otherwise, they don’t do justice to him. (1976)

Although one will not know what the writer’s level of consciousness is, Maharishi goes on to say that it will always be beneficial for the reader to have a higher level than the writer, “because then he’ll derive greater inspiration, he’ll derive greater charm and greater meaning, and he’ll derive inspired evolution through whatever he reads” (1976).

Hermeneutic critic, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., touches on the issue of broad comprehension when he advises the critic to reconstruct the text in terms of the conventions and ways of seeing that must have governed the writer’s “meanings” (1967). Whereas readers of a later time may assign various “significances” that were clearly not foreseen by the original text, there would nonetheless be a meaning that the author intended and that must be related to the various significances that later readers discover in it. Although Hirsch’s distinction between meaning and significance is a useful one, we can question whether it is possible
really to know a contemporary author’s meaning, let alone one from the past, if readers’ comprehension is limited by the boundaries that their time and culture inevitably impose. It would seem that the obstacles of translating readers into another era are nearly insurmountable. When we look now, for example, at Michelet’s *Roman History* or his *History of France*, we see that they are distinctly stamped by the Romantic worldview, in spite of the fact that Michelet believed he was being objective and conveying to his readers the reality of the past.

The state of the reader’s consciousness, how broad or how bounded it might be, is therefore crucial in the interpretation of literature. Readers who have never experienced pure consciousness, had glimpses of higher states of consciousness, or known of their existence would be unable to understand references to these states and might take them to be merely fanciful or primarily metaphysical speculation. Readers not accustomed to transcending inward might not be particularly moved by the opportunities for self-referral that a text provides and might be resistant to interpretations that are based on an unfamiliar dimension of experience—cognitive or emotional.

Lastly, and most importantly, critics or readers cannot achieve true objectivity and go beyond the limits of their own cultural prejudices until they have developed the ability to take their awareness beyond the limits of the small self and learned to identify their conscious mind with “the self-referral unified field, the fountainhead of all the streams of activity in nature” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 97). Only when they have directly experienced the unified field and know themselves to be “one with the one essential reality” will they begin to understand the relationship of the parts of life with the wholeness of life.

A unified field theory of literature, then, describes how literature affects consciousness and assists in the development and refinement of the reader’s awareness. Thus the interpretation and study of literature must begin with these considerations and conclude with their implications for the teaching of literature.

**Implications for the Teaching of Literature**

The ideas and techniques operative in literature lie ready but dormant, awaiting a creative interaction with both the teacher’s consciousness
A UNIFIED FIELD THEORY OF LITERATURE

and the student’s. The quality of any student’s consciousness influences the quality of their response to literature and to the guidance of the teacher. The quality of the teacher’s consciousness determines his or her response to literature, to criticism, and to the students in the classroom. Developing the self-referral state of consciousness of both student and teacher is therefore a necessary consideration in improving the learning experience.

Teaching and Learning

Students can be taught to recognize symbols, metaphors, or archetypes, but can they be taught to respond to them? If students have a well-developed capacity for self-referral, for transcending the gross surface levels of mental activity in the direction of their own unbounded inner silence, then the images and symbols in a work will strike deeply, and the literary techniques will lead their awareness to subtler levels. It is on these levels that words and ideas can gently expand the boundaries of their thought and feeling and lead them to new holistic perceptions and experiences of their inner selves.

If students fail to “get anything out of” the great works of literature, teachers try to lead them into a work through an understanding and appreciation of its historical or cultural milieu, introduce relevant aspects of the writer’s personality or life experience, appeal to images and analogies from the sciences and from the other arts, or provoke the student to enter into the experience of the characters by acting them out—all valuable classroom techniques, but insufficient to take “insensitive” readers beyond the surface levels of their minds to the deeper regions within.

Maharishi says that teachers offer their students a river of knowledge, but if drops from a waterfall splash on hard rocks and evaporate, they fail to reach their goal; if a student’s consciousness is not flexible and open, it will be impervious to the teacher’s guidance and knowledge (1974). Maharishi emphasizes that it is the teacher’s responsibility to not only give knowledge, but increase the students’ receptivity to knowledge. “The best education,” he says, “will cultivate a habit of working from that totality of natural law, that field which is our own Transcendental Consciousness, our own unbounded awareness” (1986, p. 98). This is substantiated by research on the Transcendental
Meditation technique in educational settings showing improvements in concept learning (Dillbeck, D. W. Orme-Johnson, & Wallace, 1981), intelligence (Aron et al., 1981; Tjoa, 1975), creativity (Travis, 1979), basic academic skills (Nidich, Nidich, & Rainforth), and academic performance (Kember, 1985).

When students learn the Transcendental Meditation technique, they learn to transcend on a daily basis. They would gain the ability to take their awareness from gross to subtle layers of consciousness more frequently when a text they were reading offered an opportunity to do so. Some students appear to be more sensitive to literature; they intuitively understand and are deeply affected by it. Others are not so fortunate. Perhaps the problem lies not in their “insensitivity” but in the quality of their consciousness, a situation that is easily remedied. Maharishi comments:

Literature, as we said, is the flow of consciousness. It’s a flow of life, and one could enjoy the flow of life if the awareness which actually flows is really crystal clear, fluid. On a frozen consciousness, on a frozen level of consciousness, the flow is not available. Stressed minds can hardly flow . . . so to be a good student of literature so that what one studies becomes an inspiration for evolution, one should practice Transcendental Meditation, which releases stresses and strains from consciousness, leaves consciousness pure and crystalline and fluid and flowing. Since we know literature to be the flow of consciousness, the flow of life, the flow of nature, the flow of infinity, totality, then we have to study it on the ground of that infinite, unbounded, total value of consciousness (1976)

Maharishi suggests that teachers begin by telling their students about the mechanics of studying literature, how to analyze, compare, and evaluate. Then they should tell them:

all these different values in the structure of literature are all contained in a particular expression on the basis of the consciousness of the writer. And all these great writers . . . had very natural, very simple, very all-comprehensive awareness. From that level they have spoken, and in order to do justice to their expressions, students should at least have the level of consciousness of those great writers. (1976)

Students should be aware that “literature is a path in which pure consciousness flows, and it flows on both levels, sound and meaning,
comprehending the entirety of the value of consciousness, the value of life.” A. R. Ammons urges a similar point in the teaching of poetry:

I would suggest you teach that poetry leads us to the unstructured sources of our beings, to the unknown, and returns us to our rational, structured selves refreshed. . . . Poetry is a verbal means to a non-verbal source. It is a motion to no-motion, to the still point of contemplation and deep realization, (1967/1982, p. 8)

Secondly, Maharishi points out that if students don’t have pure consciousness available during the reading process, then instead of flowing in and out with the literary work they will be trying instead to apply the principles the teacher gave them. They’ll be “laboring more than getting into that natural impulse of evolution, which is the potentiality of a literary piece” and will quickly become very tired. If the students’ consciousness is pure and flexible, it will be able to fathom deeper meanings and understand the mechanics operating in the literature in a very relaxed way. As the consciousness of the student flows with “the flow of the words, with the orderly and rhythmic flow of the rhymes, of the couplets,” he says, “the student gets refreshed. . . . The study of literature is evolutionary. It’ll take away all the tiredness that the student may have” (1976).

In this context it is interesting to refer once more to J. Hillis Miller’s remarks on the joy of reading. Miller cites his own joy in reading the poetry of Francis Ponge and mentions in an aside that “No doubt this is partly because of my freedom from obligation toward Ponge or to teach Ponge” (1986, p. 2). In other words, Miller’s joy is due in part to his being able to approach Ponge’s poetry without laboring under specific motivations (How will I teach this? What will I write about here? What does this have to do with my other work?) that would interfere with his experience of the work.

Since great literature affects the consciousness of its readers and adds, to whatever degree, to the improvement of human life and society, then questions of what to teach and how to teach it are very relevant. Critical theorists have brought to teachers’ awareness that they have a point of view, implicit or explicit, and that this point of view governs not only choices of critical and pedagogical approaches to literature, but what literature they select for their students to read. A unified field theory
of literature can contribute to these issues and to a much needed revitalization of purpose and direction in the teaching of the humanities.

**Revitalizing the Canon**

Editors and publishers of recent editions of the standard anthologies have begun to create a more balanced canon, rescuing many previously ignored treasures from our cultural heritage in the process. Questions of ethnic balance or balance in the area of gender, however, are not the only ones. Each anthologizer has a particular point of view on life and preferences for particular styles of writing. For example, if an editor believes that life is a difficult affair fraught with suffering and tragedy, which man can only heroically endure until death brings some kind of dignified release, then that editor may select writers who share this view or select similar works by other writers even though they may not be wholly representative of those writers’ work.

There has been a very noticeable prejudice over the last hundred years in favor of so-called naturalistic fiction and poetry in anthologies. Editors have consistently selected works that portray life as depressing, degraded, and hopeless, not necessarily a true picture of reality, but certainly life as they themselves see it, and they have favored those genres most congenial to naturalistic writing and eschewed other genres, such as fantasy or romance, in spite of their long and distinguished history.

George Sand pointed out over one hundred years ago that if our aim is to win sympathy for the distressed, these naturalistic methods may be counterproductive:

Certain artists of our time, casting a serious look upon what surrounds them, devote themselves to painting wretchedness, the abjectness of poverty, Lazarus’s dung-heap. This may belong to the domain of art and philosophy; but when they paint poverty so hideous and degraded, sometimes so vicious and criminal, do they attain their end, and is the effect wholesome, as they would have it? . . . The frightful Death, grinning and playing the fiddle in the pictures of Holbein and his predecessors, did not succeed, under this aspect, in converting the wicked and consoling the victims. Is not our literature proceeding in this somewhat like the artists of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance? (Potter, Trans., 1851/1976, pp. 3–4)
In fact, writers can only paint life as they see it, regardless of their intentions to improve it. As Emerson observes:

The ruin or the blank that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opaque. The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself. (1836/1987, p. 1006)

Therefore, merely adding cultural balance to anthologies will not be sufficient. As one anthologist notes:

New works must teach us how to read, or at least how not to misread, if they will truly renew cultural tradition. Only a discipline that makes a point of being aware of how it reads, and with what assumptions and intertextualities, is in a position to attempt either a broadening of literary understanding or an authentic expansion of canonical texts. (Lawall, 1986, p. 25)

In addition to broadening literary understanding through an awareness of linguistic and social contexts, the canon should expand our ability to read from the surface levels of the mind to the transcendent and to redefine both experientially and intellectually what is meant by the word “literature.”

Maharishi explains that what distinguishes a piece of literature from one that is not literature, or is inferior literature, is that in great literature the surface values being described are simultaneously unfolding the deeper truths which structure those surface values. The expressions that comprise a great work of literature will contain a wide range of meaning in a very compact way. With the element of intellectual fulfillment that accompanies such an experience go the elements of charm, beauty and harmony. Literature must evoke the total value of life, from the surface to the transcendent. The inclusion of the transcendent, Maharishi says, provides the necessary element of wholeness (1975b). Literature that has this range of meaning and beauty in its language has the ability to swing the awareness of the reader from concrete to abstract and thereby deepen the reader’s consciousness. Those pieces that have “gained the dignity of the name literature,” he says, “are those that are naturally helpful to the path of evolution” (1976).
One way that literature expresses the full range of life from its surface to its depth is by engaging all levels of existence, as we discussed earlier, and thus by “inspir[ing] every phase of speech, every phase of thinking, every phase of intellect, every phase of perception, every phase of activity” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1976). Writings that address the intellect only, such as most philosophical or technical writing, would not be literature by this definition. If the writings of Plato or Einstein have entered into the domain of literature, it is because they speak not only to the intellect but to the emotions and the senses by their use of figurative language and other literary techniques, all of which direct the reader’s awareness inward and elicit self-referral; they do not just transfer information from mind to mind or discriminate one logical argument from another on the level of the intellect.

Forms of writing that do not address all levels of the mind from the senses to the Self may be well written but should not necessarily be called literature by this standard. Writings that primarily act upon the grosser emotions or senses, such as advertising or propaganda, promote some direction of activity but do not beneficially transform consciousness. Joyce argues a similar point in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephen Dedalus explains:

The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. The arts which excite them . . . are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I use the general term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing. (1916/1968, p. 205)

By stasis Joyce means epiphanies, those quiescent states of consciousness, which appear to be similar to experiences produced by transcending, when the esthetic image is first conceived or perceived:

The instant wherein that supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image, is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony is the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure, a spiritual state very like to that cardiac condition which the Italian physiologist Luigi Galvani, using a phrase almost as beautiful as Shelley’s, called the enchantment of the heart. (p. 213)
For Joyce, the aesthetic images of literature arise from epiphanies and, when read, would elicit experiences in the reader similar to those that produced them.

“Great” literature, then, as Maharishi would say, would be that which is most transformative of consciousness, which would act on the consciousness of the reader in a number of ways. It would lead the reader’s awareness inward and deliver the joy inherent in words or phrases that are beautiful, harmonious, and true, reflecting the depths and purpose of life while describing the experiences of the senses, intellect, and feelings. It would then refine the intellect and emotions of its readers and inspire them to evolve toward higher levels of consciousness. Maharishi emphasizes that literature is the highest form of speech; it is worthwhile speech. And what makes speech worthwhile is that it expresses the deeper significance of life, the purposefulness of life, the real value of life (1975b). It would, in Maharishi’s words, give expression to the unified field in every breath of daily life.

How do we know, then, if a work of literature is great? We can only judge by the effect it has upon us and upon others. As we change and as the collective consciousness changes, our perception of our own consciousness and the effects of literature will also change. Consequently, the canon will always change to reflect the collective consciousness of every age. The current debate over the canon is evidence of how rapidly collective consciousness has been changing recently, leaving curricula and anthologies lagging behind. It is important that we remain continually sensitive to our own response to what we read, and to our students’ responses, because, Maharishi points out, what we put our attention on becomes more influential in our lives; what we see, we become (1967).

The reading and teaching of great literature can complement our natural tendency to grow in consciousness. It can encourage our desire for self-knowledge, and can enliven our capacity to learn from the most highly evolved minds in our history, to enjoy and be affected by the masterpieces of our culture, those from the past and those not yet written. If we base our theory of literature on scientific research on consciousness, Maharishi Vedic Science, and unified field theories, we can expand our understanding of literature and deepen our experience of it. We will enlarge our critical approaches to great works of art and bring
a new relevance and importance to the reading, study, and teaching of literature.

With Maharishi Vedic Science the study of literature can become a process of unfolding the full potential of life, developing that pure consciousness, which is a field of all possibilities, the home of all the laws of nature, the home of all knowledge, the source of all expressions and all speech. Literature is a very great training for living the absolute. It’s a training in every phase of living to give expression to the absolute in every phase of activity, in every impulse of speech, in every mode of mind. Literature is a very, very great field for comprehending evolutionary processes on the intellectual level and experiencing them on the level of consciousness. (1976)

A unified field-based approach to literature then, in Maharishi’s words, can provide “fulfillment to literature at the very basis of literature, and [make] literature a means to rise to enlightenment.”

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Deconstruction and

*Maharishi Vedic Science*

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ABSTRACT

Literary theorists today tend to locate the source of the meaning of literature in its structure or context (the known) rather than in the author or reader (the knower). Maharishi Vedic Science, on the other hand, locates an absolute value of meaning in the integration of the knower, known, and process of knowing and provides a means of experiencing this value in Transcendental Consciousness. Post-structuralists, among other theorists today, replace Transcendental Consciousness with the notion of cultural and other differences. On the basis of difference, they attempt to undermine the possibility of absolute meaning or universal truth.

Since introducing his theory of deconstruction in the 1960s, Jacques Derrida has challenged the traditional ideas of absolute meaning and a unified knower through his influential “play of différance.” In practice, however, deconstruction leads toward an experience of unbounded abstraction suggestive of the very Transcendental Consciousness it rejects in theory. Maharishi’s descriptions of the levels of language and their relationship to higher states of consciousness resolves this and other contradictions between deconstructive theory and practice. Moreover, the experience of pure Transcendental Consciousness provided by the practical aspect of Maharishi Vedic Science constitutes the three-in-one collectedness of knower, known, and process of knowing sought by literary theory in general and inadvertently approximated through deconstructive analysis.

Introduction

Since we know literature to be the flow of consciousness, the flow of life, the flow of nature, the flow of infinity, totality, then we have to study it on the ground of that infinite, unbounded, total value of consciousness (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1976).

In literary studies today it is commonly held that every act of understanding is embedded in a context of cultural preconceptions, and that to interpret a text is to enter a “hermeneutic circle” without access to a higher theoretical or experiential order of knowledge independent of history. Any theory of interpretation is deluded if it seeks to know a text from some ideal vantage point of disinterested, pure knowl-
edge. The reader necessarily interprets the text from a finite viewpoint, conditioned by personal, social, and historical circumstances, with no way of transcending to an all-inclusive viewpoint.

Deconstruction, the critical theory today that most strongly suggests the possibility of making a critique from an ideal vantage point, is paradoxically also the theory that most rigorously denies the existence of the knower as Transcendental Consciousness. However, although deconstructive theory attempts to undermine the possibility of Transcendental Consciousness, the mechanics of a deconstructive reading seem to allow for an ideal vantage point beyond language and history; they seem to allow, even require, the experience of Transcendental Consciousness.

In this way deconstruction can be said to find completion in the Vedic Science of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, for whom the knower as pure Transcendental Consciousness constitutes the basis for the production and fullest apprehension of meaning. On the basis of the key principles of Maharishi Vedic Science, this paper will develop two major arguments: first, that the principle of difference, with which deconstruction attempts to undermine the experience of unity in the mainstream tradition of Western literature, reflects a restricted or finite state of awareness; and second, that the knowledge of expanded awareness available through Maharishi Vedic Science can bring fulfillment to deconstruction, in both theory and practice. These arguments will be prefaced by a brief overview of both deconstruction and Maharishi Vedic Science.

**Deconstruction**

Founded by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, deconstruction is the main philosophical tenet of post-structuralism, which for the past two decades has been the dominant mode of literary criticism. Deconstruction is an activity of uncovering the systematic contradictions in a text that result from treating the verbal sign (word) as containing an identity between signifier and signified, sound and meaning. Derrida initially defined deconstruction in opposition to Edmund Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, a science of subjectivity in which the pure essence of the self is Transcendental Consciousness, the world is a reflection of consciousness, and speech is an expression of “transcendental signifieds” (absolute meanings) that exist separately from language.
As a form of idealism that explores the world of unchanging essence and pure possibilities, Husserl’s phenomenology holds that pure meaning exists first as a pre-verbal transcendental signified and then finds expression through the human voice. Speech constitutes an immediate expression of truth, whereas writing is but a secondary representation.

Deconstruction finds a paradox inherent in this position; namely, that without the objective, linguistic appearance of writing, the ideal purity of a pre-linguistic absolute meaning or transcendental signified would fall back into the field of subjectivity—an interior monologue—and the empirical formulation of meaning would never find a lasting historical form, given the ephemeral quality of the human voice. For Derrida, writing is constituted by difference, or the division within the sign between its two aspects: the signifier (or sound image) and the signified (or concept). Because the signifier and signified are separated in time and space, meaning or the signified is infinitely postponed. Derrida argues that the difference of writing “always already” contaminates the very essence of speech, which like writing depends on the linguistic sign for the act of communication. For deconstruction, writing thus replaces the purity of the transcendental signified experienced in the pre-verbal immediacy of consciousness as an intuitive truth. That is, the difference inherent in writing replaces the unity of sound and meaning associated with speech. For example, the sign “nature,” whether spoken or written, does not give rise to an absolute meaning or concept, but rather to a series of signifiers, such as “vigor,” “character,” “essence,” “substance,” and so forth, with each of these signifiers giving rise to further signifiers, \textit{ad infinitum}.

To escape what he considers the contradiction of the idea that the expressed form of language can be transcended in the direct apprehension of an absolute meaning or transcendental signified, Derrida (1967/1973a, 1972/1982) has invented a series of terms, such as the influential différance (spelled with an “a”). As we shall see, \textit{différance} suggests an experience of the gap between the signifier and signified as the differential and deferring movement of language that precludes both the possibility of a stable meaning or absolute truth, as well as the possibility of Transcendental Consciousness itself. Through the movement of différance, the signifier not only differs from the signified, but also infinitely defers the signified. As a result, the knower is
deprived of any knowledge of an absolute meaning, whether of the self or other. Deconstruction would thus undermine the notion of “phenomenological silence,” the intuitive, pre-verbal self-presence prior to the representational and therefore divisive function of language. The consequence of precluding the transcendental identity of subject and object, sound and meaning, is the endless play of language, or what Derrida (1972/1981) calls dissemination, a movement of the signifier that prevents the closure or completion of meaning.

One way to understand deconstructive analysis is through the way it purports to undermine, expose, undo, or demystify the so-called traditional ideas, authoritative readings, consensus, or referential meaning of a text, whether fiction or nonfiction. Self-referentiality or the movement of _différance_ replaces the mimetic or referential function of language through which it reflects the world. The deconstructive project may seem counter-intuitive compared to our everyday experience of language as a system of signs that seem to be inherently unified and meaningful and connected to their objects by a natural bond. In its original context, however, deconstruction emerged as a reaction against the conservatism and rigidity in French universities in the 1960s, where a single, traditional, authoritative interpretation of literary texts tended to repress the freedom of the reader’s individual response. As a means of opposing this tendency, deconstruction retains the old meaning of a text and reacts against it, rather than presenting something new, in order to focus on the act of deconstruction itself (Ellis, 1988, pp. 259–279). Through a double stance of being both inside and outside of philosophy, Derrida conceives of deconstruction as effecting real changes in the institutional structures of knowledge and power. As he says in an interview, “My central question is: how can philosophy as such appear to itself as other than itself, so that it can interrogate and reflect upon itself in an original manner?” (Norris, 1987, p. 26). How can philosophy be itself and simultaneously go beyond itself and thereby transcend conventional meaning?

According to deconstructionists, a text spontaneously self-deconstructs by saying both what it asserts and also its reverse. The following statements by American deconstructionists reveal that this critical approach subverts traditional readings which attempt to specify or restrict the meaning of a text.
Deconstructive discourse, in criticism, in philosophy, or in poetry itself, undermines the referential status of the language being deconstructed (Miller, 1975, p. 30). [Deconstruction] undoes the very comforts of mastery and consensus that underlie the illusion that objectivity is situated somewhere outside the self (Johnson, 1980, p. 11). To deconstruct a discourse is to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts (Culler, 1982, p. 86).

A deconstruction, then, shows the text resolutely refusing to offer any privileged reading; . . . deconstructive criticism clearly transgresses the limits established by traditional criticism (Leitch, 1979, pp. 24–25).

As these critics point out, deconstruction attempts to undermine the Western metaphysical tradition, privileged readings, and the notion of absolute meaning. Yet each of these passages also reveals a tendency to break out of the boundaries of an individual or restricted viewpoint into a potentially all-inclusive viewpoint. According to Robert Magliola (1984, p. 124), deconstruction is “on the verge” of another way of “knowing.” Even though Derrida does not concede to a “knowing” that is not language-bound and logical, deconstruction does not exclude the “beyond knowing” of the transcendental experience—an experience of an all-inclusive or ideal vantage point described by Maharishi Vedic Science.

Derrida insists that deconstruction is a process, an act of reading that cannot be reduced to an idea or method. The way deconstruction undermines traditional humanistic ideas can be illustrated through a reading of Emily Dickinson’s poem 668 (Johnson, 1914/1960, p. 332).

“Nature” is what we see—
The Hill—the Afternoon—
Squirrel—Eclipse—the Bumble bee—
Nay—Nature is Heaven—
Nature is what we hear—
The Bobolink—the Sea—
Thunder—the Cricket—
Nay—Nature is Harmony—
Nature is what we know—
Yet have no art to say—
So impotent Our Wisdom is
To her Simplicity.
A traditional reading of this poem posits in theory a transcendental signified or absolute meaning for its key words, such as “Nature,” “Simplicity,” and “Heaven,” although in practice the reader’s experience of the signified is rarely transcendental. Instead the reader experiences a relative meaning largely determined by the social and linguistic conventions of his or her particular culture. The mere concept of “Nature” as a cultural construct replaces the direct experience of an absolute meaning on the level of Transcendental Consciousness. Readers from different cultural and historical contexts will of course interpret the poem differently, and these differences will prevail to a certain extent even for readers within the same context. In the absence of a transcendental signified, meanings usually depend, as structuralist critics have observed, on a relative system of oppositions—such as sensible/intelligible, nature/culture, body/soul, art/self, and so on. The idea of “Nature” may be associated with such values as beauty, purity, or balance, which have significance not in an absolute sense, but only in contrast to the lack of purity and/or balance often associated with culture or society in the second half of the twentieth century. Likewise, “Simplicity” may be associated with values such as unity, order, or peace in contrast to the fragmentation, disorder, or stress associated with postmodern complexity. But traditional readings, while open to such variations, will still find stability on the basis of linguistic and social conventions through which words have definable meanings. Thus, while in theory a traditional understanding of the “Simplicity” of “Nature” implies the experience of Transcendental Consciousness, in practice this understanding relies on the conventional meanings of ordinary common sense. The risk involved in a traditional reading, then, is that an authoritative meaning determined by conventional habits of reading rather than by the poem itself may preempt the possibility of the reader’s moving toward an experience of a transcendental signified.

Deconstruction attempts to undermine conventional meanings and their structure of oppositions through the differential play of writing. Deconstructionists would infinitely defer the traditional meanings of the poem by showing how, on the expressed level, a sign such as “Heaven” is divided within itself, one signifier giving rise not to a signified such as an intuitive experience of bliss, but to a chain of signifiers such as “sky,” “paradise,” “Eden,” and so on, with no interpretive closure
in a blissful experience. Through this play of difference inherent within its expressive form, the poem undermines the possibility of a stable conventional meaning, not to mention a transcendent signified or absolute meaning. Thus the signifier “Simplicity” loses any natural connection to a transcendent signified and expands through an infinite chain of signifiers to a field of indeterminacy or general meaningfulness that negates any traditional idea of “Nature” intended by the poet.

Nonetheless, even in denying the suggested content of poem 668—the sense of simplicity or wholeness—deconstruction moves by means of absolute negativity toward an unbounded abstractness in which the awareness is devoid of the boundaries of all particular thought or meaning and assumes the flavor of an all-inclusive viewpoint. While remaining on the surface level of expressed content, the level of sound or signifiers, deconstruction denies the unity of sound and meaning suggested by a traditional reading of the poem. Yet by infinitely expanding the expressed level of the text, deconstruction inadvertently creates an effect upon the reader's awareness analogous to the taste of infinity itself. Because the transcendent signified of a traditional reading has remained largely a cultural construct—a mere idea as opposed to a direct experience based on expanded awareness—literary theorists today rightly question the validity of an absolute experience of meaning or consciousness as conventionally understood. However, while in theory deconstruction undermines the transcendent signified, in practice it inadvertently suggests a process through which the awareness of the reader expands toward an experience of unbounded consciousness. This experience and its integration with practical, everyday reality is brought to fulfillment, in both theory and practice, by Maharishi Vedic Science, which includes a simple, systematic technique for directly experiencing Transcendental Consciousness through the practice of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique.

**Objective and Subjective Approaches to Knowledge**

In his Vedic Science, Maharishi has described the self-interacting dynamics of consciousness in a way that clearly distinguishes between absolute and relative meanings in all spheres of knowledge, including literature. The basic difference between relative and absolute knowledge, or a restricted versus an all-inclusive viewpoint, can be understood
in terms of the three interacting elements involved in the acquisition of knowledge—the knower, the known, and the process of knowing.

Maharishi defines his Vedic Science, which has its roots in the ancient tradition of knowledge recorded in Vedic literature, as “total knowledge of the knower, the process of knowing, and the known” (1986, p. 28). He locates the origin of these processes in the field of pure consciousness, the unified source of both subjective and objective components of the universe.

The awareness is open to itself, and therefore the awareness knows itself. Because the awareness knows itself it is the knower, it is the known, and it is the process of knowing. This is the state of pure intelligence, wide-awake in its own nature and completely self-referral. This is pure consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness (1986, p. 29).

This state of consciousness is completely self-sufficient. How it emerges from within its own self-referral performance, which is going on eternally at the unmanifest basis of all creation, is Vedic Science . . . .

Vedic Science is the science of Ved. “Ved” means pure knowledge and the infinite organizing power that is inherent in the structure of pure knowledge (1986, p. 26).

Maharishi defines pure knowledge in terms of the self-interacting dynamics of consciousness, the state in which the awareness knows itself. He terms this process the three-in-one structure of pure, Transcendental Consciousness, the simplest form of human awareness, or in the terminology of the Vedic tradition, the Samhita (unity) of Rishi (knower), Devata (process of knowing), and Chhandas (known):

The knower, the known, and the process of knowing which connects the knower with the known—when these three aspects of knowledge are seated one within the other, that is called Samhita. Samhita is the collectedness of knower, known, and knowledge . . . . This state of pure knowledge, where the knower, known, and knowledge are in the self-referral state, is that all-powerful, immortal, infinite dynamism at the unmanifest basis of creation (1986, p. 27).

In contrast to the integrated investigation of Maharishi Vedic Science, which provides knowledge of all aspects of knowledge, modern science, as a solely objective means of investigation, focuses primarily on the object of knowledge. When completely unified, the knower, known, and process of knowing constitute what Maharishi Vedic Sci-
ence describes as the self-interacting dynamics of Transcendental Consciousness, or the Absolute, and what the unified field theorist John Hagelin (1987, p. 77) describes as the three-in-one structure of the unified field. This structural correspondence between pure Transcendental Consciousness and the unified field described by physics suggests their identity and, further, that the unified field of natural law is knowable through the experience of Transcendental Consciousness, a central principle of Maharishi Vedic Science.

Because the existence of the unified Self as Transcendental Consciousness cannot be demonstrated theoretically but must be discovered subjectively through immediate experience, the question in terms of literature also becomes one of experience: Does the apparent development toward unification in literary theory, especially as evinced by deconstruction, suggest that literature can provide a unified experience of non-changing truth—perhaps even the traditional truth of a transcendental signified which deconstruction attempts to undermine? The evidence suggests that it does.

Although new criticism, structuralism, and post-structuralism are methodologies of observation concerned with the right approach to the study of literature, their object of investigation tends primarily to be the text rather than the knower or the process of knowing. Even reader-response criticism, while considering such elements as the “implied reader,” “horizons of expectations,” and “interpretive communities,” provides no systematic study of the reader’s simplest form of awareness, what Maharishi terms Transcendental Consciousness or the Self. Although literary theory and modern science both demand certain prerequisites for advanced study, they are still uneasy about an approach that requires one to develop the self in order to extend one’s knowledge. Even the new historicism—which, after the alleged ahistoricism of deconstruction, attempts to re-situate textual analysis within a historical context—considers the “untranscendable horizon” (Jameson, 1981, p. 10) of literary studies to be not consciousness itself but history, another object of observation. Edward Said (1989, p. 212) notes how “an authoritative, explorative, elegant, learned voice speaks and analyzes, amasses evidence, theorizes, speculates about everything—except itself. Who speaks? For what and to whom?” Said recognizes that concerning the observer the “silence is thunderous,” yet he
places the observer within a network of interacting cultures without recognizing that the basis of the observer as well as culture is pure consciousness.

In contrast, Maharishi Vedic Science emphasizes the development of the subject’s ability to experience pure consciousness as the most critical element of gaining knowledge. This state, in which the awareness is awake to itself unmixed with more active states of mind, constitutes the self-interacting dynamics of pure consciousness in which the knower, known, and process of knowing are completely unified in the state of Samhita.

Modern science and Maharishi Vedic Science both provide insights into how deconstruction can be seen as paradoxically revealing the mechanics whereby literature may expand the reader’s awareness from a relative, discursive viewpoint toward an experience of the unified field of natural law in the state of Transcendental Consciousness. Modern physics defines two levels of reality, the classical and the quantum-mechanical. Newton’s classical, mechanistic billiard ball model of the universe was characterized by the common sense, atomistic distinction between subject and object, the absoluteness of space and time, the notion of detachable parts, and the general validity of linear chains of rational thought. Quantum mechanics, on the other hand, describes a universe which, at the fundamental level of the unified field, is distinguished by its fluid dynamical nature, the fusion of subject and object, the absence of discrete parts, and the web of self-interacting patterns of energy (Hayles, 1984, pp. 15–27).

According to Maharishi Vedic Science, all great literature has its source in the self-referral state of pure consciousness, or Samhita, the home of all the laws of nature that structure the natural universe (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 26). In his essay “Is Consciousness the Unified Field?” John Hagelin observes that Maharishi’s description of Samhita, or the three-in-one unity of pure consciousness, is very similar to the threefold structure of the unified field of natural law. The field itself, defined as pure existence, is devoid of activity and therefore of the notion of time and space. Inherent within the field, however, exists an element called the quantum principle, which embodies the dynamism responsible for the field’s manifestation into the physi-
The quantum principle induces a sort of unmanifest movement within the field, which makes the field a lively field of all possibilities. Once the field begins to move, it becomes aware of its existence: it feels its own influence through its dynamical self-coupling. Within the framework of quantum mechanics, we say that the field has gained the status of an operator that operates on itself. The quantum principle thereby discriminates field as operator, dynamical relationship, and operand, corresponding to Rishi, Devata, and Chhandas [or knower, process of knowing, and known] . . . .

As the source of phenomenal differentiation, the field embodies the unmanifest coexistence of unity and difference in the three-in-one structure of the operator, dynamical relationship, and operand—the same three-in-one structure that exists in pure consciousness. As Hagelin notes, the “nature of consciousness which is said to characterize [the] unified field is pure consciousness—an abstract, unbounded field of consciousness which is not qualified by any object or individual experience” (Hagelin, 1987, p. 57).

While Western thought has traditionally assumed that waking, sleeping, and dreaming states of consciousness define the limits of human potential, Maharishi Vedic Science describes experiences of transcending waking consciousness, of transcending all mental, sensory, and emotional experience without loss of awareness (1966, 1969, 1986). Maharishi explains that each state of consciousness, moreover, has its own corresponding physiological style of functioning. This explains why higher states of consciousness are elusive and cannot be achieved, much less sustained, on the basis of thought alone.

Maharishi defines seven states of consciousness—sleeping, dreaming, waking, Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness (when the fourth state becomes integrated with sleeping, dreaming, and waking), God Consciousness (when sensory perception in the fifth state is refined to perceive the finest relative aspects of every object), and Unity Consciousness (when both the inner and outer realities are experienced as unbounded, pure consciousness)—and explains that:
They are as different one from another as spectacles of different colours through which the same view looks different. When the same object is cognized in different states of consciousness, its values are differently appreciated. Life is appreciated differently at each different level of consciousness (1969, p. 316).

The Absolute Theory of Literature
In her seminal essay, “A Unified Field Theory of Literature” (1987), Rhoda Orme-Johnson formulates a theory of criticism that incorporates an understanding of the seven states of consciousness, as well as the four levels of the experience of language, presented in Maharishi Vedic Science. She demonstrates that conventional literary theories, by failing to account for higher states of consciousness and subtle levels of language, provide an incomplete understanding of the nature of literature and its effect upon the reader. The unified field theory of literature, on the other hand, illustrates how a work of literature can expand the reader’s awareness through a process of self-referral, and how, in conjunction with the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation program, literature can lead toward a taste of the experience of Transcendental Consciousness or Samhita. The self-referral experience of reading, which allows the awareness to experience more settled states, is triggered by textual elements such as literary themes, descriptions of the experience of higher consciousness, gaps in the structure of the text, figurative language, rhythm, harmony, and point of view. These devices can sometimes swing the reader’s awareness from the concrete to the abstract, from the finite to the infinite, in a manner analogous to the way the Transcendental Meditation technique systematically swings the awareness from the concrete to the abstract levels of awareness, from the ordinary waking state of consciousness to Transcendental Consciousness. The latter process makes the mind more flexible and thereby creates a basis for “experiencing expanded awareness through literature.” When the awareness is flexible, according to Maharishi, literature “shakes awareness from contractions to expansions, from expansions to contractions, from contractions to expansions” (1974). As a result, “the study of literature would even go so far as to develop Unity Consciousness” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1976).
In the Vedic language theory, as explained by Maharishi, ordinary waking and Transcendental Consciousness provide experience of different levels of language (1972a). The language of ordinary waking consciousness corresponds to that described by modern linguistics. Since spoken language belongs to the classical level of reality bounded by space, time, and causality, it involves temporal sequence and a gap between sound and meaning. Language on this temporal level consists of two aspects: Vaikhari or outward speech, and Madhyama or inward speech. At the finest level of the mind, on the other hand, language is experienced with the absence of temporal sequence and a fusion of sound and meaning. Maharishi has commented that this level of language, which is called Pashyanti, corresponds to the junction point between the relative manifest world and the unified field of natural law—pure, Transcendental Consciousness—a field beyond the relative distinctions between subject and object. In Pashyanti the knower experiences any object of awareness (words and sentences) at the borderline between transcendent and waking consciousness, or “between the Self and the very finest level of the ego” (Orme-Johnson, 1987, p. 344).

In defining language in terms of consciousness, Maharishi Vedic Science holds that meaning in \textit{Para}, the highest level of language, is ever present and eternal. The spoken word heard in ordinary waking consciousness is only a partial expression of an eternal meaning or transcendental signified, which requires at least the transcendent state of consciousness to be fully apprehended. Because meaning in \textit{Para} and \textit{Pashyanti} occurs at the pure consciousness level of language and is not produced by human utterance, it is not a temporal effect and therefore not perishable. Maharishi Vedic Science describes it in terms of absolute pure consciousness or pure creative intelligence (1972b).

\textbf{Contemporary Literary Theory}

The interaction of subject and object, when taken to the level of pure consciousness, creates a unity of subject and object completely different from anything conceivable through a Newtonian perspective where language requires the subject-object dichotomy. Deconstructive theory rejects the possibility of transcending the subject-object, knower-known relation toward an absolute identity. Maharishi Vedic Science, however, suggests how in deconstructive analysis the self-referral movement of
the signifier mediates between the subject and object (reader and text) in such a way that the subject can have an immediate experience of more expanded states in the direction of unbounded consciousness. In such an identity, consciousness knows itself by becoming its own subject and object. The deconstructive attempt to undermine the subject/knower through the movement of différance would pertain only to the ordinary subject, not to the transcendental subject, which is beyond the temporal relations undermined by deconstruction.

While in literary criticism each theory has its own interpretation of the relations between knower, known, and process of knowing, the evolution of the major theoretical trends from new criticism to post-structuralism seems to be toward a field concept of the kind represented by Maharishi Vedic Science. The schism in methodology between limited pluralists (such as E. D. Hirsch, Wayne Booth, and M. H. Abrams), who argue for a stable and sharable meaning, and deconstructionists (such as Paul de Man, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida), who claim that meaning is indeterminate, while concerning mainly the text, also involves different notions of the observer. Limited pluralists consider the meaning of text such as Dickinson’s poem 668 to be limited like the finite observer. Operating from ordinary consciousness, each reader shares in the content of the work that may be ambiguous, but only to a limited extent. Deconstructionists, on the other hand, consider the meaning of a text to be unlimited in three basic ways: The observer’s awareness can transcend logical boundaries into the unthinkable paradoxes of deconstructive knowing; the sign’s “iterability” (Derrida, 1977, p. 180) gives it the potential for being repeated in different contexts; and the movement of the signifier infinitely defers the signified and thus undermines the unity of the sign.

By exposing the gap between the signifier and signified, deconstruction attempts to fracture the immanence or self-sufficiency of Transcendental Consciousness and undermine the possibility of the transcendental signified. Yet because deconstruction has been formulated from within the Newtonian perspective rather than the unified field perspective, its undermining of the truth value of meaning can apply only to meaning available in ordinary waking consciousness, not to the quantum reality available in higher states, where unthinkable paradoxes take on an experiential significance. Given that modern science
DECONSTRUCTION AND MAHARISHI VEDIC SCIENCE

posits the existence of a unified field, that the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique allows for this field to be directly experienced, and that readers have often experienced an aesthetic delight resulting from expanded awareness, a closer look at the relationship of pure consciousness to the development of literary theory may clarify the process through which this self-referral experience occurs.

Literary theorists today rightly question the idea of a Transcendental Consciousness as conventionally understood: namely, as an abstraction divorced from direct experience. This questioning in turn has led to the reevaluation of theory alone and has revealed the need to supplement theory with a new kind of practical experience. Ordinary waking consciousness will not suffice for this experience, for the knower, cut off from his or her unbounded potential, is easily overshadowed by the object of knowledge. As Maharishi Vedic Science demonstrates, only experience based in Transcendental Consciousness allows a knowledge in which both the knower and the known are completely present. As will be demonstrated below, literary theories, from new criticism to post-structuralism, reveal increasingly greater unity of knower, known, and process of knowing in our experience of literature.

Although the New Critics of the 1930s and ’40s believed that literature somehow included reality, they thought of the literary text as an autonomous aesthetic object that should be read independently of its biographical, historical, and social context (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1946/1954). The fallacy of focusing primarily on the observed object is that it creates a closed system which pretends to be whole or total, but in effect is often totalitarian. As Winfred Lehmann notes, new criticism directed its attention largely to form, not to the integration of “matter, form and style” (1988, pp. 243–253). New Critics would look mainly at the form of poem 668, independently of its context, and interpret its semantics as the product of form.

Unlike the New Critics, structuralists believe that the objective world is never perceived innocently, but always as an interpretation, as a product of language (Frye, 1957; Barthes, 1970/1974). What they have understood, therefore, is that everything is a reflection of consciousness inasmuch as knowledge is the product of the observer and the observed coming together. Saussurean semiology (the study of signs) provides a basis for this coming together in the notion of the arbitrary and dif-
ferential nature of language. Structuralists hold that the sign is divided from its referent (thing or concept), that the relation between sign and object is arbitrary or conventional, and that meaning is a product of a system of differences. Thus, as we saw in poem 668, the word “Simplicity” derives its meaning not by reference to a specific thing or concept but rather by its difference from other signifiers in the language system, such as complexity, artfulness, diversity, and so on. This self-referral of language, through which a word curves back upon itself (i.e., refers to words of the same or other texts) instead of referring to a world outside the text, is radically extended by post-structuralism, which posits that the sign is not only divided from its object but is also divided within itself. The signifier and signified of the word “Nature” in Dickinson’s poem are thus separated, deconstructionists would assert, by a spatial and temporal gap through which the signified is infinitely deferred. In this way, post-structuralists deny the possibility of an absolute meaning or Transcendental Consciousness. As will be argued below, however, the self-referral of language described by deconstruction, one signifier leading to another in a never-ending chain, can induce a corresponding self-referral within the knower. This subjective self-referral can ultimately lead toward the experience of an absolute signified, defined in terms of Maharishi Vedic Science as Samhita, the unity of knower, known, and process of knowing. From this Vedic Science explanation, signification remains incomplete when grasped as a fragmentary object of knowledge and not in terms of its self-interacting relation to the subtler dimensions of consciousness and language.

Deconstruction and Transcendental Consciousness

In “Structure, Sign, and Play,” Derrida writes that the difference between structuralism and post-structuralism, or deconstruction, is that the former is neutralized by the presence of a center, “that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality” (1967/1978b, p. 279). This center is an unacknowledged absolute, though expressed in terms of its various finite manifestations by different theorists. Ostensibly, what Derrida and other post-structuralists attempt to deconstruct is the absolute truth value of any relative manifestation of the absolute rather than the absolute itself, of which they generally have no direct, shareable experience and therefore,
strictly speaking, can neither undermine nor legitimate. Textualists argue that there is no absolute in the relative, and from this they infer that there is no absolute, that everything is language or difference—a belief not shared by a growing number of scientists (Herbert, 1985; D’Espagnat, 1979/1983). However, the fact that even deconstructive analysis spontaneously tends to lead toward an increasingly abstract or transcendental experience seems to attest to the omnipresence of the absolute, or the unified field of pure intelligence in Nature.

By analyzing the process in deconstruction of the observer knowing the observed, it becomes clear how this theory in fact presupposes a transcendental reality, one characterized by the three-in-one experience of an absolute knowledge described by Maharishi Vedic Science in which the knower is the knowledge himself. Derrida ultimately rejects both Hegelian claims to transcendent concepts and Marxist claims to the primacy of history. His claim that the relationship between the observer and observed involves a play of signification in which the signified of any sign becomes infinitely deferred, being replaced by a chain of signifiers or sounds, makes the reading experience one of becoming instead of being.

From the perspective of Maharishi Vedic Science, Derrida’s theory of deconstruction, in which all signification becomes fiction, is correct insofar that a concept cannot exhaust the thing conceived from the level of waking consciousness. To arrest the synchronic play of signifiers in any text would require the direct experience of an absolute signified. Only pure consciousness can account for a thing completely without a remainder—that is, as an absolute signified or the real-as-referent apprehended not partially but from an all-inclusive viewpoint.

Although Derrida effectively deconstructs the reality of the transcendent as understood from the ordinary waking state of consciousness, it can be shown that his theory of grammatology makes use of the same mechanics of integration between knower, known, and process of knowing described by Maharishi as responsible for the Samhita experience of pure knowledge, or an absolute signified. As described earlier, the notion of the play of différance, the self-referral movement of differing and deferring (1967/1973b, p.136; 1972/1982, pp. 5–13) in which the signifier differs from the signified by a spatial gap and defers it by a temporal gap, is central to Derrida’s theory of deconstruction. Because
in this view the self can be known or thought of only in terms of language, even the self-presence of consciousness is considered an illusion, for like everything else, it is a product of the play of différance. Derrida argues, then, that presence or wholeness is split within itself, language (even in theater) is severed from reality, and the signifier is divided from the signified. He further argues that the self is an abyss of itself produced by the act of differing (or spacing) and deferring (or temporalizing), its identity constituted by its relation to other subjects around it. For Derrida, presence or wholeness—that is, the absolute signified—is only an illusory effect of what he originally called the trace—a notion similar to that of the movement or play of différance.

As Derrida defines it in *Différance*, “the trace is not a presence but a simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself” (1967/1973a, p. 156). In the movement of the signifier, the trace consists of the retention of all past signifiers and the protention of all future signifiers inherent in any particular signifier in the chain, which infinitely defers the signified. In theory, deconstructing the notion of trace is necessary to prevent it from becoming an indestructible substance, or, as it is sometimes accused of being, a transcendental signified. That is, the notions of différance and the trace are theoretically not privileged as absolute signifieds but conceived as ordinary signifiers. Derrida uses these words “under erasure,” and says that the “tracing-out of différance,” or play, remains a silent field beyond structuralist binary oppositions (1967/1973a, p. 135), beyond the structure of relative existence. Thus, in theory he seems to define the trace, différance, and other terms in this series as if they belonged neither to the level of Madhyama, nor to Pashyanti as a transcendental signified, but to a grey zone somewhere in between.

In practice, however, the trace can be likened to the absolute infinite number which in mathematics transcends the intellect. We analyze it through the so-called “reflection principle,” which says simply that the absolute number (trace) cannot be conceptualized, but that we can grasp it as a non-concept. The mind experiences a logical impasse or “aporia,” being unable to transcend the boundaries of the ordinary waking state. Since both the trace and the absolute number belong to the field concept beyond expressed binary oppositions, or the relative field of difference, to be fully apprehended they require experience more subtle than
that allowed by ordinary waking consciousness. Maharishi Vedic Science makes this experience of “aporia” understandable, for it provides the direct experience of Transcendental Consciousness and ultimately of the *Pashyant* and *Para* levels of language.

The remainder of any expression or structure responsible for the experience of “aporia,” the residue which is not only unsaid but also unsayable, is caught in the last lines of Wallace Stevens’ poem “The Snow Man”:

> For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
> And, nothing himself, beholds  
> Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Stevens’ nothingness can be understood from the perspective of Maharishi Vedic Science: Through the process of becoming “nothing himself,” that is, transcending the emptiness of the waking state, the “listener” can behold the fullness of pure consciousness. From the deconstructive perspective, what escapes language is the transcendental signified. But from the perspective of Maharishi Vedic Science, the infinitely deferred transcendental signified of deconstruction is only an object of knowledge not integrated with the knower and the process of knowing. In the experience of pure consciousness the knower, known, and process of knowing are integrated in what may be described as a fullness with no remainder—the “nothing that is not there and the nothing that is,”—even if this fullness remains unsaid, the silence of awareness knowing itself. In terms of the aesthetic experience of literature as described by Maharishi, the fullness available in *Pashyant* is absent (nothing) in *Madhyama* and *Vaikhari* without the experience of expanded awareness.

Derrida’s theory of the self and referent, then, depends on the power of the movement of *différance* to deconstruct what he calls the “metaphysics of presence,” or the identity of subject and object, sound and meaning. Derrida says in “The Voice That Keeps Silence” that “pure *différence*, which constitutes the living present, introduces into self-presence from the beginning all the impurity putatively excluded from it. The living present springs forth out of its nonidentity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace. It is always already a trace” (1967/1973b, 85). The movement of *différance* as a trace of signifiers undermines the traditional notions of the unity of self-presence as
both a Transcendental Consciousness and signified. For Derrida, the collapse of the transcendental signified through the play of \textit{différance} entails the collapse of the subject as the source of meaning. He asserts that if the subject cannot exist as a unified source of meaning, then it cannot exist at all. Derrida undermines the idea of Transcendental Consciousness, in other words, because in his understanding it remains unintegrated with empirical experience. Unity for him thus becomes a mere notion of the intellect. As described by Maharishi Vedic Science, Transcendental Consciousness (the subject) is experienced as integrated with empirical reality (the object) beginning in the state of Cosmic Consciousness (Alexander & Boyer, 1989).

In an early work, Edmund Husserl’s \textit{Origin of Geometry: An Introduction}, Derrida (1962/1978a) argues that there is no self-referral field of “phenomenological silence,” no intuitive self-presence prior to the difference of language. He concludes that because the divisive function of language undermines the immediacy of a self-present identity, then “difference would be transcendental” (p. 153). Thus, in looking for the ground of Transcendental Consciousness, Derrida defines \textit{différance} itself as a transcendental phenomenon. Because the trace or the movement of \textit{différance} is older or more originary than unification, Derrida offers it as a form of the absolute. In his later \textit{Speech and Phenomena} (1967/1973a, 1967/1973b), however, he decides that this formulation is incoherent (see Dews, 1987, p. 19). Here he speaks of \textit{différance} as a “primordial non-self-presence” (1967/1973a, p. 81). Derrida asserts that the movement of \textit{différance} does not occur within the transcendental subject; rather \textit{différance} as a non-transcendental, non-originary source of meaning paradoxically produces the transcendental subject.

But the power of deconstruction to undermine unity does not extend beyond ordinary waking consciousness, for the attributes of \textit{différance}—the movement of differing and deferring—can be shown to pre-exist within the unity of Samhita. Viewed from the perspective of Maharishi Vedic Science, the \textit{différance} ascribed to self-presence is not an impurity but rather the essence of its self-interacting dynamism. As noted above, Maharishi describes the unified field of natural law, while unmanifest, as a field of infinite dynamism and all possibilities. Pure \textit{différance}, which Derrida attributes to the expressed values of the “living present,” thus appears most similar to the unexpressed or timeless
“presence” of the unified field of pure intelligence, pure consciousness, where the impulses of natural law interact within themselves. Pure *différance* also seems to entail the unity of sound and meaning that Maharishi ascribes to the *Pashyanti* level of language, where the words of a sentence are experienced as a meaning-whole. This unmanifest field of *différance*, then, can be experienced through the self-interacting dynamics of pure consciousness. Maharishi Vedic Science brings deconstruction to fulfillment by providing a systematic means to experience pure consciousness, which deconstruction inadvertently suggests in practice but cannot verify in theory, based solely on the experience of literature in the waking state on the level of *Madhyama*.

Derrida has no recourse but to deconstruct the transcendental signified and subject. Like the German idealist philosophers, Derrida rejects the reflection model of consciousness in which the subject knows itself as an object through the process of self-referral, inasmuch as the implication that the subject pre-exists reflection is a contradiction and leads finally to an infinite regress (Dews, 1987, pp. 21, 29). The German idealist J. G. Fichte describes this infinite regress as the need for the subject in the subject-object relation to be the object of a higher subject, which in turn would be the object of a still higher subject, and so on. The move here seems to be away from unity toward increasing diversity—a function of what Maharishi Vedic Science terms the mistake of the intellect or *Pragya-aparadha*. Fichte attempts to overcome this difficulty with the theory of the self as “positing” itself, as emerging absolutely into a relation with itself, yet the difficulty remains in reconciling the contradiction of the simultaneity of a self-present identity and the distinction of knower, known, and process of knowing. Fichte ultimately says of this “intellectual intuition” that “everyone must discover it immediately in himself, or he will never make its acquaintance” (1794/1982, p. 38). Fichte says you have to experience this state in order to know it, but unlike Maharishi Vedic Science, he does not offer a direct means to this experience. According to Maharishi, it is the duality of subject and object, mind and body, that is ultimately a notion of the intellect. The one reality is Samhita, the three-in-one collectedness of the knower, known, and process of knowing, which his Vedic Science makes accessible to everyone on the level of consciousness.
Just as unmanifest \textit{différance} inheres objectively in the unified field of physics, so it also inheres subjectively in the realm of consciousness, not just in the Freudian division between conscious and unconscious, but in the very nature of pure consciousness, the self-interactive, self-sufficient field of pure intelligence. Maharishi notes that Vedanta, the last of the six Upangas, explains that because it is the nature of pure intelligence to be intelligent, consciousness spontaneously becomes aware of its own existence through the process of self-referral. This means that the unity of Transcendental Consciousness, in order to become conscious of itself—its unity—must paradoxically experience itself as a relation of subject and object in which there is an oscillation of infinite frequency between three and one, duality and identity. Whether in language, consciousness, or the material world, then, the unity of self-presence already encompasses an unmanifest spatial/temporalizing movement. In this way the movement inherent in the play of \textit{différance} can be accommodated with unity. However, the difference between the knower, known, and process of knowing of the waking state must be transformed into the self-interacting unity or wholeness of the knower knowing himself in the transcendental state before the paradoxical nature of identity can be fully apprehended. Maharishi explains that the apparent contradiction of this differential unity is an illusion of the waking state, created when one has no experience of unity amidst diversity, of the dynamical field of pure consciousness underlying one’s perceptions—the experience that characterizes Unity Consciousness.

\textbf{The Self-Referral of Language}

As argued above, even though deconstruction would make the self or reader a relative product of \textit{différance} without distinguishing between levels of consciousness, the self-referential nature of language as posited by post-structuralism provides an avenue of play or movement that allows the self to expand beyond its finite waking state boundaries toward the transcendental. (Robert Magliola, 1984, makes a similar assertion in comparing deconstruction to Buddhist philosophy.) Without the textual movement of \textit{différance} through which meaning expands to become a trace of all past and future signifiers, the reader’s awareness in waking consciousness may come to rest on a level of the signified determined by his or her immediate historical circumstance. One can
argue that the reader, as in French universities in the 1960s, may be led to believe that the bond between the signifier and signified is natural, when in fact it is still conventional or politically motivated. We have argued from the perspective of Maharishi Vedic Science, however, that deconstructive free-play, one version of the experience of language in the ordinary waking state, can have the effect of expanding the reader’s awareness through a spontaneous abstraction of thought toward a level of pure awareness. The play of the signifier infinitely defers meaning from the Madhyama level of language, rendering the meaning of a text increasingly abstract, and thus in effect inadvertently pushing the reader’s awareness toward the Para level of language.

This reciprocal self-referral of the reader and the text results in a meaning that may actually be construed as an absolute signified. According to deconstruction, in the self-referral of the text meaning becomes undecidable because the galaxy of signifiers the reader synchronically associates with any particular word constitutes a trace of all other words in the dictionary. The self-referral of the text produces a corresponding self-referral experience within the reader. This experience of increasingly abstract awareness may resemble the experience in the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique through which awareness knows itself to be the three-in-one Samhita of knower, known, and process of knowing. Maharishi (1976) describes this experience as follows:

The Transcendental Meditation technique is an effortless procedure for allowing the excitations of the mind gradually to settle down until the least excited state of mind is reached. This is a state of inner wakefulness with no object of thought or perception, just pure consciousness, aware of its own unbounded nature. It is wholeness, aware of itself, devoid of differences, beyond the division of subject and object—Transcendental Consciousness (p. 123).

The mutual self-interaction between the unbounded text and reader collapses the opposition between reference and self-referral, between the objective and subjective angles of textual meaning. Since meaning is structured in consciousness, even the apparently mimetic or referential status of language could be experienced in terms of the knower through the process of self-referral. Both the real-as-referent (or thing) and the absolute signified would turn out to be the same fluctuations of
consciousness, when embodied in either the Pashyanti or Para levels of language. As Maharishi says:

All the laws of nature have their expression in the relative, yet the Absolute is inherent deep within them. Each law is constant; it never changes . . . .

In the absolute state when the object of perception is the subject of perception itself, the law has its absolute status. In this state the variable aspect of the object of perception has disappeared...and has gained the level of unbounded subjectivity. The observed has become unbounded, and it has become the observer. The knowledge is absolute, it has no relativity in it because the subject-object relationship has expanded so that the object is in terms of the Self. The object has gained the quality of self-referral (1980, pp. 75–76).

Derrida is of course right to say that the absolute signified and the real-as-referent are infinitely deferred, for if the meaning of a concept or the reality of a thing is complete only in the infinity of Transcendental Consciousness, then ordinary waking consciousness, the only state of awareness Derrida recognizes, would have no access to the wholeness of the “fully present.” In the pure consciousness of Maharishi Vedic Science, however, the absolute signified is experienced not only as a sound or image; it acquires in Pashyanti polysensory characteristics through which it is simultaneously heard, visualized, felt, tasted, and so forth. But to explain these experiences would require a discussion of the “Sidhis” (perfections of mind and body) of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras (1912/1982), which is beyond the scope of the present paper (Gelderloos, 1989). Still, the current linguistic emphasis of literary theory suggests the possibility long recognized in Vedic literature that the human nervous system, when fully developed, can function on the level of ritam bhara pragyā, “that awareness which knows only truth,” or Jyotish mati pragyā, “all-knowing awareness,” that totality of awareness from which everything can be known.

In Maharishi Vedic Science, as in deconstruction, sound precedes meaning; Ved is the sound made by the self-interacting dynamics or transformations of the unified field of pure intelligence. Meaning unfolds in the universe in the finite expressions of Vedic literature. As Kenneth Chandler has summarized, “the sequential emergence of the
diverse laws of nature from the unified field can be directly experienced in the field of consciousness as a sequence of sounds; these are presented in the sequential emergence of phonological structures of the Vedic texts” (1987, p. 15). Even though at the level of Para sound (the signifier) and form (the signified) are united, sound comes first in the consciousness of the knower. Because of the unbounded nature of sound in Para, it contains all possible meanings within it, which could then be cognized and expressed sequentially. Derrida’s waking-state notion of originary arche-writing or the arche-gramm, which he considers prior to speech and through which he attempts to undermine the possibility of a transcendental signified (1967/1976, pp. 6–73), may be a reflection of the originary sound on the Para level of language.

Derrida fails to appreciate that the transcendental signified as an objectifiable meaning does not have to be separable from language, that language as différence exists not only in the Vaikhari and Madhyama levels but also in Pashyanti and Parā, and that différence can indeed be transcendental as he tentatively asserted in Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry and later retracted. In the movement of différence, a gap always exists between the implicit meaning intended by a speaker and its explicit representation, since the speaker, listener, and language for Derrida all reside strictly in the domain of time and space. In the unified field of pure intelligence or pure consciousness, which is beyond time and space, the knower would gain access to the unity of sound and form in the Pashyanti level of language, and ultimately in Para. This experience would explain how a writer can have a flash of insight at the sound value of pure inscription before he or she is able to give it meaningful expression. The expression into form of the experience of pure meaning, which is beyond space/time, would be extended temporally through writing or speech and thus become available to the reader’s waking-state experience.

For Derrida, the infinite nature of meaning does not imply that “anything goes,” but rather that meaning is determined by its context, beyond which it cannot exist. As he says in “Signature Event Context,” “Every sign . . . can be cited . . . . This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring” (1977, pp. 185–186). Meaning is part of an interweaving context of language, authorial
intention, reader response, culture, and the phenomenal world. But meaning is also part of the cosmic context of the unified field of pure consciousness, which is all-pervading and therefore not a center in the ordinary sense. Derrida’s "absolutely illimitable" contexts thus appear to have their basis in a single, underlying reality, which he calls the play of différance, the movement of differing and deferring responsible for the production of meaning. In his notions of différance, arche-writing, and the trace, Derrida has still not surrendered the "idea of the first," an origin analogous to the self-referral of the unified field. In terms of Maharishi Vedic Science, as we have seen, différance is inseparable from the self-interacting dynamics of consciousness. As Maharishi states, "The structure of knowledge in its completeness, in its wholeness, is in the self-referring value of pure consciousness. In this self-referring field where the observer and observed are the same, pure awareness knows itself, and in that region is the nature of pure knowledge" (1980, p. 77).

The fact that meaning for Derrida is both determined (not anything goes) and indeterminate seems to result from the ultimate or unified field context of any sign. According to Maharishi Vedic Science, the unified field can be appreciated in terms of two values: the unbounded, unmanifest yet dynamical value of self-interactions, and the manifest value of their finite expressions. This field context endows the sign with two aspects: one unmanifest, silent, and one lively, intelligible, available to the senses. The latter aspect of meaning, which is available to ordinary waking-state experience and corresponds to Vaikhari and Madhyama, is identified with the object. The former aspect, which corresponds to Para and is therefore identified with the subject, can be glimpsed through literature as the mind expands toward the experience of the self-interacting dynamics of pure consciousness. As Maharishi states:

There will be on one hand a certain number of basic relative structures of knowledge, and on the other hand, one absolute structure of knowledge . . . . if we are defining the structure of knowledge, it is better to define it in terms of the modes of knowledge, which we have seen to be the knower, rather than the objects of knowledge. (1980, p. 76)
The Fulfillment of the Reader as Critic

J. Hillis Miller (1976) demonstrates this point in the context of literary criticism by distinguishing between what he calls the canny and the uncanny critic—between the Socratic, theoretical critic who reads the text as a closed form with a fixed meaning, and the Apollonian/Dionysian critic who follows the thread of logic into the abyss of the alogical or absurd. Although the uncanny critic may begin with reason, he follows the thread of logic to the limits of rational intelligence where he confronts an impasse or “aporia.” At this point, the critic does not escape the labyrinth, the abyss of the open text; on the contrary, his “interpretation or solving of the puzzle of the textual web only adds more filaments to the web” (p. 337). When there is an “abyssing” of all logical identifiable meaning, when the “bottom drops out” and reveals an underlying infinity, then the critic experiences what is called jouissance or thrill by Roland Barthes (1973/1975) and free-play by Derrida (1967/1973a).

The opposition between canny and uncanny criticism corresponds to the levels of existence described by Maharishi Vedic Science: “the environmental level, the level of the body, the senses, mind, intellect, emotions, and ego,” and finally the Self, the essence of pure consciousness (1972c, Lesson 6). The canny awareness remains on the grosser levels, whereas the uncanny awareness tends to expand toward universality (see Orme-Johnson, 1987, pp. 341–349). Because “aporia” is experienced as being essentially the same by all critics, it seems to resemble the traditional idea of critical understanding. However, while traditional meaning as a “limited pluralism” (Booth, 1979) involves sharing a finite number of particular thoughts (or meanings) in ordinary waking consciousness, “aporia” points to the possibility of an experience of pure consciousness which underlies all thought but is itself beyond relative thinking. The desire for a limited pluralism is undermined by the fact that the significance of a concept cannot be limited as long as the different faculties of understanding through which it is apprehended function through a limited, discursive viewpoint. A shared meaning is ultimately the function of a self-referral, universal viewpoint characteristic of Samhita.

A reading of Dickinson’s poem 668 with the benefit of the insight of Maharishi Vedic Science illustrates the movement toward an experi-
ence of unity. In identifying “Nature,” the poem as a whole progresses from the concrete “what we see,” through the more subtle “what we hear,” to the abstract “Harmony” of “what we know.” Within this overall progression, the fourth line—“Nature is Heaven”—creates a repetition or micro-swing of the concrete-abstract, finite-infinite progression that brings us “To her Simplicity.” This movement reflects Maharishi’s description of how great poets “start from what the eyes see, or the hands feel, or the ears hear, and they travel into space and time and direct their focus on to the beyond” (1971). The self-referral process through which the reader appreciates the poem from an expanded viewpoint is induced by textual elements such as figurative language, theme, rhythm, point of view, and structural gaps. These elements have the effect of taking the reader’s attention from the expressed form of the text to its suggested content, a movement from the concrete images of sense experience, “The Hill,” “the Sea,” “the Cricket,” to the abstract metaphor “Nature is Heaven” and the assertion “Nature is Harmony.”

The rhythm and harmony of the assonance and line structure, the elevated theme of simplicity and heaven, and the contrast between the concrete and abstract, all create a wave-like motion of contraction and expansion in the reader’s awareness, a fluctuation from the individual waves of ordinary waking consciousness toward the unbounded ocean of pure consciousness, the simplest form of awareness.

Any experience of the transcendental signified that approaches the Pashyanti and Para levels of language in a phrase such as “Nature is what we know” depends upon this movement of the reader’s awareness. Knowing the sun from Pashyanti and Para would no longer involve a contradiction, for the sun would not be a metaphor that refers to something absent but a unity of sound and meaning available to direct experience. Furthermore, without an expansion of consciousness and a corresponding taste of bliss, the blissful meaning suggested by the poem will remain dormant, a mere notion of the intellect. A greater appreciation of this self-referral effect upon the reader will give literary critics a better understanding of the act of reading. Meaning depends on more than the intellect and mind making an association between a signifier and signified.

While the clarity of experiences of Transcendental Consciousness may differ, according to Maharishi this difference is neurophysiologi-
cal rather than conceptual; that is, it is determined by the capacity of the physiology to sustain the freedom experienced as the wholeness of bliss, which Maharishi Vedic Science makes available through its practical application. This intimate connection between the mind and body has also been recognized by Roland Barthes, who describes reading as sometimes involving what he calls the “body of bliss” lightened of its conceptual closure (Barthes, 1973/1975, p. 62). By referring to this experience as “the body of bliss,” Barthes may be reflecting the description in Maharishi Vedic Science of the importance of the physiological condition in sustaining an experience of bliss associated with pure consciousness. When the awareness moves from the grosser levels through the subtle fields of the thought process, then, in Maharishi’s words, it “begins to experience increasing charm at every step until it reaches the state of transcendental bliss-consciousness” (1969, p. 136).

The deconstructive reading of a text would thus seem to facilitate the act of critical understanding as defined by the limited pluralists. Whereas the canny critics would differ in their logical interpretations of a quasi-transcendental signified—a process which tends toward relativism—the uncanny critics would each arrive at a moment when—as determined by their states of consciousness—they would have an occasion to experience delight in the face of unboundedness. Each uncanny critic would be able to transcend the boundaries of logic toward the self-interacting dynamics of pure consciousness, the field of infinite free-play, unboundedness, or jouissance. In terms of Maharishi Vedic Science, the canny experience corresponds to the temporality of the Vaikhari and Madhyama levels of language, while the uncanny experience corresponds to the unity of Pashyanti and Para.

The unity of the knower and the known when the awareness knows itself as an absolute signified is the fulfillment of the deconstructive play of différance. In the self-referral experience of the deconstructive model more than in other non-Vedic critical approaches, the observer moves in the direction of transcending boundaries toward a field of unity. But the movement of différance, although potentially making available increasingly abstract awareness in the direction of transcendental experience, is a function of the ordinary waking intellect; it cannot provide a systematic, effortless experience of Transcendental Consciousness. Maharishi Vedic Science, on the other hand, not only
provides insight into the waking-state mechanics of deconstructive analysis, but also, in the Transcendental Meditation technique, provides systematic, effortless, direct experience of Transcendental Consciousness. With the development of higher states of consciousness, the self-interaction of the reader and text results in meaning ultimately becoming identical with the reader, defined by Maharishi Vedic Science as the self-interacting dynamics of pure consciousness. This unity of subject and object defines the ideal vantage point of a higher experiential as well as theoretical order of knowledge sought by scientists and literary scholars.

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Part II

Literature and Consciousness
Operating on the Planck Scale
in Frank Waters’

The Man Who Killed the Deer

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ABSTRACT

Frank Waters’ The Man Who Killed the Deer, among the most metaphysical novels of the twentieth century, was written according to the author as if he were taking dictation from the deepest level of consciousness. A perfect vehicle for interpretation through such Maharishi Vedic Science concepts as dharma and infinite correlation, it is the story of Martiniano, a man who has lost his spiritual pulse, but through the subtle efforts of his tribe in its desire for cultural unity, Martiniano is delicately led back into harmony.

Introduction

The Man Who Killed the Deer has long been recognized as an extraordinary metaphysical novel. The mechanics of what makes it both extraordinary and metaphysical, however, still need elaboration, and this present age is an ideal one to make such an evaluation. In recent history, no society, not even the Transcendentalists of the early 19th century nor the modernists at the beginning of the twentieth century, has had such a broad metaphysical influence as our own. This contemporary interest in the spiritual element, moreover, is not simply relegated to the humanities. As we move further into the new millennium, science draws closer to fully accepting Einstein’s unified field theory, and quantum physics inexorably blurs the distinctions between consciousness and matter. This metaphysical side of the new physics can be seen in questions such as, when is a particle not a particle or a wave not a wave? The answer is when we as subjects choose. The subjectivity of such a response, nonsensical in classical physics, is commonplace in quantum mechanics. We are entering a new phase in which the clear distinctions between the complete objectivity of science and the total subjectivity of metaphysics are disappearing.

In the famous summit of 1927, which resulted in the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics, the new physicists came to the conclusion that “what we perceive to be physical reality is actually our cognitive construction of it.” Henry Pierce Stapp firmly stated that there is no longer a “substantive physical world, in the usual sense of this term” (Zukav 105). John Hagelin asks the question, “Is Consciousness the Unified Field?” (29ff), and his answer is yes. And John Wheeler has gone so far as to suggest that we not only create our own individual universes from consciousness, but, because of the existence of multiple
possibilities, we may even create multiple universes (Zukav 106–108). This merging of humanistic subjectivity and scientific objectivity has prompted me to look at a metaphysical phenomenon in Frank Waters’ celebrated novel from a position that integrates these two seemingly disparate epistemoologies. Consider the following scene from *The Man Who Killed the Deer*.

Late in the novel, lying in his mountain hut Martiniano listens to the incessant beat of the kiva drums. At a social gathering that same evening in town, the normally loquacious Manuel Rena morosely sits wrapped in his blanket speaking to no one. He too hears the pulsating rhythms. After midnight the trader Rudolfo Beyers cannot sleep; he sits by the fire listening to the drums as well. The kiva drums are heard throughout the pueblo, in the mountains, even in town, like an anxious heart throbbing at fever pitch. The drums speak of something terrible, but their collective voice stimulates no one to action, not even to speech. They beat because Napaita, Estefana’s young son, has not returned from his kiva task in the mountains. In a cave in the freezing dark of winter, concussive, alone, and frightened, he lies in a half-unconscious stupor. He too hears the drums, though not through his ears but rather from somewhere deep inside.

The drums are a curious cultural artifact. They pound out a warning, but their purpose is not to warn. They wring fear and sympathy from loved ones, but they are beaten not to arouse feelings or alarm. The drums beat for reasons unaccountable outside the Pueblo walls. They neither promote search parties, nor incite suffering, at least none that can be seen. Save for the bare report that Napaita is lost, the plight of the stranded child is not even discussed, not even by his mother.

Such an apparent combination of suppressed emotions and impotent non-action (on the surface level of life), considering the boy’s suffering, seems incredible, grossly unfeeling. In this scientific age reared on cause-and-effect and determined action, this retro-response to Napaita’s crisis seems apathetic if not pathetic, like some archaic stoicism gone amuck, but this of course is not the case. Both the kiva drumming and the tribe’s conscious indirect action are a non-rational approach to problem solving that for most resides outside the pale. And yet, it is a

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mystical approach to existence at the heart of *The Man Who Killed the Deer*, as poetic and as fully developed a novel about spiritual life as has ever been written, a novel, like the kiva drumming, conceived in irrationality. In Waters words,

The book has never seemed “mine.” It is an independent entity, with a life of its own . . . . From the day I wrote the first page—in ink on a manuscript that was later destroyed—the novel seemed not my doing . . . . It seemed impelled by the unconscious rather than by rational consciousness.

The value of the tribe’s kiva drumming and its avoidance of direct, surface-level action are best understood through a concept associated with quantum mechanics called infinite correlation. Quantum physics in our generation is coming close to proving Einstein’s unified field, a vacuum state with “no definable shape,” that unifies, upholds, and gives rise to all the unstable phenomena that comprise life. For mystics, Frank Waters among them, the unified field is the field of transcendence, an eternal, indestructible plane of existence that is the foundation and nurturing source of everything. For the ancients, including Indians from both the West and the East, operating from this source of life was the most natural, efficient, and powerful means to accomplishing anything. The reason for the effectiveness of this method of action is embedded in the principle of infinite correlation, explained by the Vedic scholar and most renowned sage of our time, His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi:

absolute consciousness underlies and interconnects all possible information. It is a field of infinite correlation in which an impulse anywhere is an impulse everywhere . . . . When this level of infinite correlation is enlivened by individual awareness, every thought and feeling creates a thrill on all levels of collective consciousness.

This is the principle, in different words, under which the kiva members operate, as application of Maharishi’s principles might imply, to produce a result in one place while far away operating on a subtle level.

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This is operating in the field of consciousness, the most fundamental field of existence that underlies everything. It is the principle at the basis of a profound influence used to promote world peace called the Maharishi Effect. When practitioners of Transcendental Meditation, or advanced practitioners called Sidhas, practice their programs for enlightenment, they create a wave of coherence in the unified field of consciousness that radiates to every part of the universe. This influence simultaneously promotes harmony in the material field, the expressed field of consciousness, while reducing stress that causes all forms of suffering, anxiety, and disharmony. Water’s Pueblo Indians employ a variation of this infinite correlation both to rescue Napaita and to orchestrate the return of their sacred Dawn Lake. Martiniano must also absorb this principle of indirect action if he is ever to “return to the blanket,” that is become a fully functional member of his community.

Logically, to find lost Napaita the tribe should call for help and send out a search party; however, they realize such action—on the surface level of life—would be futile. The mountainous forest where Napaita is lost is extensive; it is dark, and it is cold. Given the time constraints, if the tribe does not find him quickly, Napaita will die. More to the point, such a rational approach is not the Indians’ way. They practice what they teach the kiva boys, and what they teach is the efficacy of drum beating, their scientific response to a crisis.

The Indians know that if they stimulate the source of life, the unified field of consciousness, without going anywhere, and without wasting unnecessary energy, they can best save Napaita. To the uninitiated, those who misunderstand the kiva ways from something like “A Preliminary Study of Pueblo Culture,” the Indian drumming must seem primitive hocus-pocus. The Indians understand that, on the quietest level of human consciousness, they can locate and resolve any problem. They recognize a deep level of life where individuality and universality “are one, condensing into a point (now, here) but expanding into a boundless continuum (always, everywhere).”

In the Vedic tradition, operating from the state of infinite correlation is called a sidhi when practiced internally and a yagya when performed externally.

Both kinds of techniques are used to influence the subtlest laws of nature, and both depend for success on deep silence, like the spiritu-
ally intense silence generated in the kivas. The tribe’s wise old men, like Vedic Pandits, use arcane knowledge to manipulate unseen laws of nature, but, to the untrained, Caucasian mind, their practices appear bizarre, their results coincidental or miraculous, like Beyers’ astonishment at the unaccountable return of the Dawn Lake:

The thing seemed utterly fantastic, impossible, inconceivable: that a bunch of poor, ragged Indians in this day and age of haste and reason were given thirty thousand acres of national forest, right on the watershed, for the practical purpose of jumping around the shores of a tiny lake in an annual orgy of dancing.

That the Indians gave no sign of victory testifies to both a want of arrogance and a lack of surprise at their phenomenal good fortune. They remain composed in their ordeal because they know what they have achieved is not a miracle, for they understand the scientific principles involved—principles as scientific as those involved in sustaining a large man on a thin bicycle. The scientific justification for operating from deep silence, in the field of pure consciousness, at the level of infinite correlation, is again explained by Maharishi:

The unified field is that Planck scale level of nature’s functioning, from where time is generated, from where space is generated, from where energy is generated, from where all the laws of nature begin to take their specific shapes. When the human mind settles down and becomes identified with the level of infinite orderliness, then it becomes consciously stationed at the basis of the universe. This is how we can gain the support of all the laws of nature for our every thought and action. And this is how we can radiate an influence of peace and coherence throughout the environment. By enlivening that basic field of infinite orderliness and harmony in one place, we enliven it everywhere.⁴

The Indians use infinite correlation to solve their problem. Although they have never been introduced to the quantum mechanical explanation, they understand its effect. By working together as a unified whole, they turn each kiva not into a series of individual units but into a unified “vibrating drum.” The same unity of purpose exists in every area of their lives. Inside the kiva, members do not speak, nor move

unnecessarily. Every thought and action becomes a harmonious wave of consciousness, “body, mind, and spirit undifferentiated . . . indivisible, unrestricted, unbound.” Waters contrasts their quiet operations to those of a noisy dynamo, a crude, external, manmade apparatus. The ordinary person can easily believe in the force the dynamo generates; however, the subtle but powerful energy at the basis of everyone’s own being lies beyond the imagination of but a few. This is the force understood by Waters’ simple old men, who operate on the most profound level of existence:

hour after hour this human dynamo, these old men sat silent, bent over, through the night. Calling up through the little round opening in the floor the warmth and power of the sleeping earth-serpent. Calling up from the depths of their own bodies, from the generative organs, the navel center and the heart, their vital life force. . . . And all this infusion of strength and power, grace and will, they loosed as if from the sagittal suture on the crown of the head, covered by the scalp lock—from the corresponding aperture at the top of the kiva. As one powerful, living psychic flow they directed it upon the focus of their single concentration.

The instrument of their spiritual vigil is Martiniano. Although he has not been trained in the kiva rites, Martiniano’s journey into the mountains that particular night, and his subsequent rescue of Napaita, is no coincidence. It comes at the novel’s moment of apotheosis, marking Martiniano’s final redemption and assimilation back into the tribe. His night journey completes and repeats the pattern begun in the novel’s opening moments when Palemon, Napaita’s father, rides into the mountains to save a helpless Martiniano. The journeys taken together, moreover, provide the fullest example of how the Pueblo people perceive and relate to a life they collectively live, generation after generation, exemplified by the old men, Martiniano, and Napaita.

Martiniano’s “decision” to go into the mountains to find Napaita isn’t a rational choice. Had he analyzed what he was doing, he may not have gone, for “There was no hope of tracking the boy, or even keeping on the obliterated trail. Martiniano was not sure he had intended to.” He has simply been awakened by the drums, awakened spiritually that is. Without much thought, and with vague intention, he rides into the mountains. And the result of his non-rational, intuitive meanderings
is that he effortlessly rides exactly to the hidden cave where Napaita is trapped. Hidden as it is, the cave would not have been found had Martiniano actually looked for it. He simply spurs his horse in the direction of a water source near a cliff to take a drink, “And there, just across the stream, on the snowy trail, lay the maimed Napaita.”

Interestingly, Napaita’s return meets with almost no fanfare, at least not externally. The Indians don’t congratulate themselves on their extraordinary effort, for the result is not an unexpected one. They realize that what they have seemingly caused, in this case the saving of Napaita, has arisen not from them but through their harmonious relationship with nature. This same placid attitude underscores all their triumphs, “No celebration, no bragging, no talk at all. They went around as usual, quiet, secretive, impersonal.” They maintain the same equilibrium in all emotional encounters whether their fortune be good or bad. For the Pueblo Indians to swing in either direction, to become excessively passionate or too despondent, is to lose emotional balance. The ideal, as the Indians see it, is to attain perfect harmony with nature, with consciousness. To become immoderate in either pleasure or pain is to exert too much individual ego, too much of the small self, and lose the connection to the universal ego or expanded Self.

Even Rudolfo Beyers, the most sympathetic Pueblo observer, finds the Indians’ attitude and methods of problem solving alternately perplexing and simplistic. Shortly before Napaita’s accident, Beyers sees old, toothless Sun Elk arriving in town. A long-time acquaintance of this aged patriarch, Beyers decides to bait him on the question of the Dawn Lake, the ritual sight for Pueblo ceremonials now in the possession of the federal government and daily defiled by tourists and forest rangers. For years, the tribe’s attempt to recover its sacred Dawn Lake has met with little success, but Martiniano’s act of killing the deer out of season, his fight with the Mexican sheepherder, the publishing of “A Preliminary Study of Pueblo Culture,” and the debate over land titles has again made the old complaint a steamy political issue. Beyers nettles his friend with the news, via the telegraph, that the Indians will lose their hallowed pond. Sun Elk’s response exemplifies the Pueblo belief in transcendental communication in the field of infinite correlation: “Those talking machines! . . . Ha! If white men have so much power, so good medicine, why she use noisy machines and long wires
to carry their thoughts? Ignorant Indian she no use and know just as quick. We no lose our Dawn Lake!"

Sun Elk’s reply suggests that the Indians see the world of phenomena, the world of ordinary experience, as a mere shadow of a deeper existence. The tribe’s forefathers—perhaps everyone’s forefathers—could at one time operate from this more powerful level of existence, what science calls the Planck Scale. From this deep level of life, knowledge is not shrouded, and action is powerful, productive, and benign. Hence the Indians see the return of the Dawn Lake, and, through their kiva drumming, they know they can influence the laws of nature to effect Napaita’s rescue.

The kiva drums, beyond their roles as spiritual technique and fictional plot device, also possess a meta-function in the novel as a structural element. The drums beat at the heart of the tribe buried deep within the kiva, that breast-like edifice that spiritually sustains the tribe. Over-flowing with the milk of Mother Nature, it is at this spiritual teat that Martiniano must be restored. Sent to the white man’s away school, his childhood had been torn from this nourishing source, so that now his own heart no longer beats in tune with that of his people. This is Martiniano’s task, although he is only dimly aware of it, to restore the rhythm of his own being with that of the tribe’s, which has in turn set its rhythm to that of cosmic life. In modern parlance we would say Martiniano needs to re-assimilate himself with his culture, but the word assimilation falls far short of Martiniano’s experience of disassociation. He has not merely lost the cultural thread of his existence; he has fallen from the path of spiritual regeneration and Self-realization, what the Indians of the East call dharma.

Dharma is often simplistically translated as occupation, duty, or code of behavior. The word contains within it all of these meanings but also something much more significant. The term dharma has both general and specific applications. Generally the word simply means order, but also progress. A life that is not orderly is not in harmony with, nor supported by its environment, and therefore cannot be said to possess dharma. This is Martiniano’s condition. On a larger scale dharma means force of evolution. Life in the broadest sense is always progress

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5 Thomas J. Lyon, Frank Waters. (New York: Twayne, 1973) 106. On this theme Lyon says, “The plot of the novel is the growth from alienation into membership.”
ing, even if at times the opposite appears true, not unlike a patient who has been feeling unwell but is actually getting healthier. Spiritual evolution, not Darwinian evolution, is the continuous progression towards balance, fulfillment, and revelation.

More subtle than even evolution lies the field of dharma—the transcendental, unified field at the Planck scale of existence, the unmanifest source of all creation. A person living this field of dharma on the level of consciousness dwells in perfect harmony with all life. Dharma exists for all entities, whether individuals or groups. A group’s dharma is an expression of its collective consciousness. For example, the tribe’s success in recovering the Dawn Lake depends upon its group dharma. Because the Pueblo people think and act with a single purpose, from the field of dharma, their goal is more easily achieved. Any collective group will have its own dharma, for example, the planet, a nation, a city, or a tribe.

Finally, there is individual dharma. When the occupations, the attitude, and the behavior of the individual are in tune with the force of evolution and in contact with the field of dharma, the person is living a dharmic life, and when they are not, when they are characterized by chaos and suffering, the person is living an adharmic life. Martiniano’s life at the novel’s inception is mostly adharmic, and at the end mostly dharmic.

The act of poaching a deer out of season indicates Martiniano’s relationship to dharma. It is one of those wonderfully conceived moments in a great novel that has profound thematic and structural implications from the book’s first word to last. Implicit in the poaching are both Martiniano’s ruin and his salvation, as well as the salvation of the tribe. Martiniano is the quintessential, modernist anti-hero, an exile, a man without a country, an Indian without a tribe. Killing the deer out of season indicates his disdain for the white man’s laws, and ignoring tribal rituals, such as not asking for the deer’s permission, shows an equal contempt for Pueblo codes. Martiniano is thus out of synch with everyone. And the suffering he endures—the blow to his head, the white man’s fine, and the ignominy among the Pueblo people—suggest the lawlessness of his actions, both human and divine.

However, killing the deer proves to be paradoxically beneficial. By disturbing the status quo, through his seemingly minor indiscretion of
killing a deer two days beyond the hunting limit, Martiniano sets in motion forces that will both spiritually reunite him with his tribe and win back the sacred Dawn Lake. Such unpredictable results demonstrate the law of karma, the law of action and reaction. What good or bad will come from any individual act is difficult to forecast unless the act is performed by someone attuned to dharma.

Martiniano’s life, in spite of all that has happened to him, is not entirely severed from dharma. He has fallen nowhere near the spiritual abyss of Panchillo, the drunken Indian who gives away the tribe’s power, its ceremonial, kiva secrets. Palemon’s rescue of Martiniano in the first moments of the novel suggests that the novel’s protagonist’s spirit is still lively. Palemon intuitively listens to his higher self that at its deepest is no different from Martiniano’s, and it is that quiet non-rational self that leads him to where Martiniano lay injured. Martiniano similarly knows, without reasoning, that he will be saved: “I thought many thoughts, but there are no words for my thoughts. And strangely, when Morning Star rose, though I was cold and weak and ill, I felt good. I felt good because I knew help would come. It came. It was Palemon.”

Nonetheless, legion are the signs that Martiniano’s life is far from dharmic. His experience at the away school has deprived him of his most intimate Pueblo culturing, the teachings of the kiva, the spiritual knowledge he can never regain. An outsider, he literally lives outside the Pueblo walls. He dresses in clothing that is a mixture of white and Indian: “old store clothes and shoes like the former, but hair braids and a blanket like the latter.” Symbolic of his culturally divided self are his white man’s shoes that he refuses to knock the heels off, mocassin-style. He misses mandatory ceremonials for which he is fined, whipped, and denied tribal privileges. Beyond all this, his own genes are against him. Only half of Martiniano is tranquil Pueblo; the other half is volatile Apache, making his very self a war of opposites. When he decides to marry, Martiniano chooses a mate as culturally alienated as himself. Flowers Playing is not Pueblo, and she too was sent to away school. Moreover, like Martiniano, she is a tribal mixture, half Ute and half Arapahoe. Hence, this marriage—traditionally a symbol of social union—instead of binding the couple to their culture ironically further isolates them.
Martiniano’s dharmic confusion is most apparent at the kiva council as he recounts the events of the deer killing and his arrest by the forest ranger. To the kiva members there are two parts to such accounts: first the events of the story and, second, how the story is told; of the two the second is most important. This is good reader-response criticism. During the kiva tribunals, the tribal elders listen less to the spin that Martiniano, Palemon, and the other boys put on their stories and more to the tone of their voices, the degree of excitement in their telling, the amount of respect they show the council. They listen for the quality of spiritual consciousness expressed, the way a master bell-maker might listen to the quality of a new bell. What they hear in the four reports of the deer killing is that Palemon’s story rings true but the others less so, especially Martiniano’s.

Martiniano speaks with a sullen defiance that conveys displeasure and defensiveness. He begins his account not with the facts of his hunt but with a complaint against the council. Like a child he berates his elders for not giving him his tribal rights to the communal thresher. His next target is the law: “What is the difference between killing a deer on Tuesday or Thursday? Would I have not killed anyway?” Finally, he ends his tale in “an unseemly show of passion,” revealing a desire to kill the ranger who had humiliated him. His story like Filadephio’s and Jesus’ has been spoken with too much confidence and told “a little too haughtily.” The sin of these young men is to exert their singularity, for “No Indian is an Individual. He is a piece of the Pueblo, the tribe.” Martiniano sees only his own needs and the wrongs done against him.

Because Martiniano cannot resolve his differences with the tribal fathers, he embarks on his own separate peace. He wants a faith, not necessarily a religious faith, just something to believe in. Waters says, “No man can belong to a time until he has also a faith he can belong to.” This is Martiniano’s bane, a lack of belonging. He searches first for a spiritual anchor through his marriage to Flowers Playing, an experience that initially ends his isolation. However, the spirit of the deer he killed begins to haunt him, causing him once more to withdraw into his own small, beleaguered self. With the failure of his marriage to fully supply him with the contentment he longed for, “Martiniano

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felt betrayed. He remembered how barren had been his life before she had come, an oasis of faith in a desert of disbelief. It was nothing but a mirage!” The deer, Martiniano’s own private albatross, is really in a word from Carlos Castaneda, his ally. Symbolically the deer represents Martiniano’s Superego. It will not let him settle for small, easily attainable (spiritual) victories.

Martiniano searches for comfort on the Peyote Road, but the deer he killed invades his dreams, and one night the exact image of the deer blocks his path to the Peyote teepee. Unnerved, Martiniano returns home. The next day he learns the Peyote church has been raided. The deer had saved him, but Martiniano is only dimly aware of his connection to this spirit creature: “There is something between this deer and myself which I cannot understand. Perhaps it will come, now that we no longer fear nor would harm the other.” Martiniano thus rejects the Peyote Road, an act that prepares him for his spiritual return to the tribe, an event that Beyers sees first: “this school-Indian [he perceives] was going back to the blanket.” His speech, actions and appearance corroborate Beyers’ prediction: “Martiniano, long hair down, seemed no longer the obstinate, open rebel he had known. There was about him a soft, pliable, yet resistant secrecy, a deep impenetrability that forbade probing.” The Pueblo side has won out over both the Apache side and the away-school; Martiniano’s life has begun to adhere to dharma, but his resentment against the deer and the tribe had not yet fully abated.

Martiniano plants new seeds, in the earth and in the womb of his wife, symbolizing a new beginning. But new trouble comes when Martiniano finds the Mexican sheepherder living in his freshly cleaned hut in the mountains. Once again the Indian falls into an old pattern, attempting to rid an enemy through violence rather than through courtesy, generosity or friendship. After being brought once more before the Superintendent and the tribe’s elders, Martiniano regresses into the same tired song: “They are all against me. . . . Everything I do is wrong.” Martiniano’s latest suffering, the result of unwise action, is another indicator of a weak dharma, but it is growing stronger. One sign that Martiniano has spiritually developed is his decision to reclaim the blanket taken in the peyote raid. The tribe’s punishment, as he knows it will be, is harsh—fifteen stripes by the lusty Palemon—but Martiniano with a new resolve accepts the whipping as his due, feeling
only compassion for his friend who must administer it. A second sign is that Martiniano—the branded troublemaker—is not implicated, not even questioned, in the scandal over “A Preliminary Study of Pueblo Culture.” He thinks, “This is the first trouble in the Pueblo that has not been laid at my door!”

However, Martiniano’s desire to “vanquish” the deer and the old men has yet to be satiated. At the annual fiesta, he believes he can accomplish both goals by climbing the greased pole and retrieving the venison at its top. The pettiness of his need to triumph shows that Martiniano has failed to comprehend his lesson. His task is to unite himself with his people, not to perform individual, heroic deeds. Therefore, when he fails to ascend the slippery pine, he again feels defeated by the deer. Not long after, his spirit nemesis thwarts him again. Aiming his rifle at the buck and two does that have been trampling his new corn, Martiniano cannot pull the trigger. To add insult, Flowers Playing makes friends with this trio of demons. Watching them eat from her hand, the Indian sees his wife a doe in human form. Flowers Playing, always a few jumps ahead of her husband, finds her personal dharma before Martiniano. She becomes fully integrated into the tribe when they honor her with the role of, what else, Deer Mother in the ceremonially important deer dance.

The deer dance is the deer spirit’s final prick to Martiniano’s conscience. Entranced as he watches it, Martiniano finds himself pulled back into unity with his tribe and back to the pursuit of unity in nature. The deer dance represents the wholeness of life. The males, symbolizing ever-changing phenomena, wildly gyrate around the outside of the circle. Flowers Playing and another deer mother, symbolizing the source of life—T.S. Eliot’s “still point of the turning world”7—softly dance with dignified regularity at the center. Martiniano experiences “for the first time . . . the conscience which turns us back, and the intuition which illumines the forward step, and so holds us on the upward road of self-fulfillment.”

Martiniano completes his spiritual journey when, summoned by the kiva drums, he intuitively goes into the mountains. Directed by his awakened inner self to Napaita, as Palemon had at the beginning been

led to him, Martiniano is reunited with dharma. The narrator says, “He had stumbled upon a queer thing that belonged only to the old men of the kiva.” This queer thing is infinite correlation, that ability to operate on the Planck scale of existence free of all obstacles. Wishing no acknowledgment to satisfy his ego, he simply lays Napaita before the kiva ladder and rides away. His new son, the spiritually named Juan de Bautista, will go to the kiva when it is time. He will not, like his father, be thrown off the path of dharma, the path to Selfhood, and have to struggle like the spiritually blind, the adharmic, to find his way back.

References
From Wholeness to Point:
Dynamics of the Short Story

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FROM WHOLENESS TO POINT: DYNAMICS OF THE SHORT STORY

ABSTRACT

Defining the short story has been an evolving process since this narrative form took shape as a modern genre in the nineteenth century. The qualities of the gap, as expounded in Maharishi Vedic Science. This explanation of the collapse of wholeness to point in the act of creation provides a fundamental understanding of the coalescence of opposing tensions that make the short story a unique narrative form. This study explores the parallel between the qualities of the gap and story dynamics and examines this dynamic of wholeness collapsing to a point in the text of Eudora Welty’s story “A Shower of Gold.”

Storyness

Of all the narrative genres, the short story comes closest to capturing the way we most commonly experience life, that is, one moment at a time. We may feel the push of a full lifetime of experiences up to a particular moment or even the pull of future hopes and dreams, but out of necessity to function within the world, the present moment generally holds the larger share of attention.

The human capability to be aware of the present moment and, at the same time, be aware of the pulls of the past and the future is what the short story conveys. It is no wonder that early recorded literature, such as stories found in Somadeva’s Ocean of Story, include this form and that the genre continues to be a viable form today, no matter its mutations. From tales of the hunt around a bonfire to the flash fiction of today, story continues to be a powerfully dynamic yet tightly coalesced form of literature.

This dynamism in story results from the co-existence of opposite tensions, not just the first word (sound) and the final silence at the end, though these two co-terminals clearly shape the experience of story, but the dynamism also between other opposite tensions: between threshold and closure events, between a moment in time experienced against the infinity of time or between one character viewed (experienced) in relationship to other characters. The narrative of the form unfolds through the natural sequential evolution of sound and silence, moving from wholeness to point—a word at a time, a cognitive chunk at a time, a moment at a time—but held in a coalescing tension, a structural dyna-

1 The term story is used here to imply the basic form of any story—short, short-short, or otherwise.
mism that the reader’s consciousness activates. This study explores the dynamism inherent within story by examining it within the context of consciousness, specifically the emergence of creation as sound within consciousness, as delineated in Maharishi Vedic Science.

**Consciousness in Story**

This study began by referring to the way we live life—a moment at a time. When we talk of experiencing a moment in time and our awareness of how that moment impacts a larger wholeness or totality whether in life or in story, the understanding the role of consciousness is paramount. As part of short story theory, consciousness has been examined mainly in terms of the reader. Cognitive research has, for example, examined cognitive chunking of the reader’s experience in moving through a story. In *Reading for Storyness*, Lohafer points out that, “storying is a way of chunking fictively represented experience for purposes not just of self-expression or vicarious living, but primarily of cognitive management” (38–39).

In parallel moves, literary scholars have identified consistent patterning within story texts that shapes the meaning of the stories. For example, the co-terminal sentences of a story can encapsulate thematic movement or create focus with a story. In *Coming to Terms with the Short Story*, Lohafer discusses how the opening sentence of a story can be seen as a threshold into the storyworld. Gerlach’s study of closure patterning reveals a similarly relevant shaping of meaning. Elsewhere, I have examined the parameters of the storyworld itself—space, time, and individualization of consciousness (as manifested in the characters and narrator(s)) and how they create a patterning of reality that also determines the reader’s response to a story (please see Llewellyn “Short Story Boundaries”).

This present study demonstrates that while cognitive research into the reader’s experience as well as literary critical analysis provide useful principles for examining storyness and how it works, an even more fundamental look at the nature and function of consciousness in its most pure, abstract form (beyond psychology’s descriptions of behavior) can help clarify the dynamic tension that exists within storyness and that controls this short narrative form.
**Maharishi Vedic Science and Consciousness**

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a great sage and Vedic scholar, has for the past fifty years expounded on the knowledge of consciousness contained in the Veda and has provided a deep understanding of the nature of consciousness itself. Maharishi has described the unified field of consciousness or the Self as a field of pure awareness. In Maharishi Vedic Science, the term *Self* (with a capital S) is used to distinguish the *Self* as pure awareness or consciousness, which can be experienced by all individuals (because all beings are an expression of abstract pure consciousness) from the notion of *self* as individual identity. As human beings, we have the capacity (because of the human nervous system) to become aware of ourselves as pure consciousness.

The unified field of pure consciousness, Maharishi explains, has a self-referral reality, a three-in-one structure, resulting from pure consciousness becoming aware of itself—the knower, the known, and the process of knowing. Noted physicist John S. Hagelin, Ph.D., has additionally identified a correspondence between the unified field of consciousness and the unified field of all the laws of nature as described by physics.

This three-in-one nature of consciousness is significant to the discussion of story for the way it reveals the act of creation itself. In *Perfection in Education*, Maharishi describes the interaction within consciousness in this way:

\[
\ldots \text{the self-referral dynamics of consciousness expresses itself in the sequence of sound and silence—} \\
\text{the creative process is in silence, and} \\
\text{the creation is expressed through sound. This alternation of silence and sound, and how much silence and how much sound—quantified values}
\]

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2 Ken Chandler in “Modern Science and Vedic Science: An Introduction” describes the importance of Vedic literature in the science of consciousness: “Many thousands of years ago, the seers of the Himalayas discovered, through exploration of the silent levels of awareness, a unified field where all the laws of nature are found together in a state of wholeness. This unity of nature was directly experienced to be a self-referral state of consciousness which is unbounded, all-pervading, unchanging, and the self-sufficient source of all existing things. They experienced and gave expression to the self-interacting dynamics through which this unified field sequentially gives rise to the diversity of all laws of nature. That experience is expressed in the ancient Vedic literature” (Chandler v). Please refer to the Appendix in this volume for further discussion.

3 “The superstring theory (Physics), the most recent and successful unified field theory, establishes the unified field as a self-referral field. (MVU 6).
of silence and sound quantify the unbounded infinity of self-referral consciousness, creating, giving expression to specific laws of nature—the fundamental building blocks of creation. (10)

Maharishi is describing the basic fundamentals of the creation of human consciousness and the universe, and a natural parallel can be seen in the creation of a short story.

Story is the self-referral phenomenon of the Self expressing itself in a short narrative form. The correspondence can be seen in the dynamism sustaining the two processes: the collapse of wholeness to a point—silence—and the re-emergence of wholeness from the dynamism within silence. Chatman in Story and Discourse describes story as “the continuum of events presupposing the total set of all conceivable details, that is, those that can be projected by the normal laws of the universe” (28). Storyness is more, however, than just the continuum because a continuum suggests stasis. Storyness is dynamic: It is the continuum collapsing into a point—those significant moments around which short stories coalesce.

A fundamental look at the underlying nature of this tension can be seen in the understanding offered by Maharishi, based on his insight into the gaps of silence occurring between the sounds of Vedic literature, the sounds being the expressions of the laws of nature. His Rk Veda cognition—called Apaurusheya Bhāshya (meaning uncreated commentary) reveals the unmanifest value of consciousness:

. . . which, in its self-referral dynamics, constitutes the mechanics of transformation of the previous sounds into the following sound . . . a vision of the sequentially evolving structure of natural law emerging as sounds, submerging into GAPS, emerging as sounds, submerging into GAPS—creating sounds, creating GAPS—all the time remaining within the self-referral quality of dynamic sound and the self-referral quality of dynamic silence in the GAPS between the sounds. (MVU 11)

It is in the tension between sound and silence that the dynamic tension of storyness is first seen. Story begins with a word (initially, sound). That word and the sentence it introduces carry the reader over the threshold and into the storyworld (See Lohafer’s Coming to Terms with the Short Story (52) for a useful discussion of the ontological gap that surrounds a short story). From the Maharishi Vedic Science point
of view, the unified field of pure consciousness is potentially accessible between any two thoughts, any two words, any two syllables.

In the alternation of sound and silence in the act of creation, “a previous sound gets destroyed in the process of the creation of a new sound” (14)—that sequence, here referred to as the qualities of the gap. The wholeness of a sound collapses into a point as it falls silent and then in that gap, which is silent but also contains the potential for dynamism because consciousness by its own nature becomes aware of itself, a new sound begins to emerge, as represented in the following illustration (11–12).

![Diagram: The Qualities of the Gap in Creation](image)

**Figure 1. The Qualities of the Gap in Creation, describing the continuing act of creation.**

We see this collapse of wholeness into a point in the *Pradhvamsa-Abhāva* stage. A continuum exists—the act of creation goes on eternally—but there is also a closure stage, *Prāg-Abhāva* (as within the process of creation) when sound falls silent. Although a sound collapses into silence, Total Silence (the totality of pure silence, *Atyanta-Abhāva*, and lively silence, *Anyonya-Abhāva*, together) has the potential for dynamism within its own nature because consciousness once again becomes aware of itself, creating the dynamism that produces a new sound, which in turn collapses, and so on and so on.

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4 Maharishi Vedic Science defines the four *Abhāvas* to be “the four holistic values of natural law . . . containing the most basic qualities of intelligence . . . in seed form” (13).
In this sequence, the four Abhāvas display “the quality of a catalyst, and at the same time sustain the dynamism within its internal nature” (13). Creation is sustained by these two opposing forces: the collapse of wholeness into a point as a sound falls silent, followed by the emergence of wholeness from that silence into a new sound. Think in terms of music: Strike a key on a piano and a sound or tone resonates and then falls silent. The tone must fall silent for the next tone to be distinguished and thus create the diverse tonalites of music. One sustained tone does not create music. We hear a tone in its fullness but also must hear it collapse to create the multi-tones of music.

Let’s examine this dynamism of opposing tensions in the short story (from fullness to point) by applying the Abhāva sequence (qualities of the gap) to a story. We see this dynamic tension both literally and figuratively in “Shower of Gold,” the opening story of Eudora Welty’s collection The Golden Apples. Kate Rainey, the narrator of “Shower of Gold” helps shape the reader’s experience within the collection of stories for it is her words, her sounds, which open the collection and her death and funeral (finally, her silence) which end it. In one sense, her life is the duration or wholeness containing this collection of stories. The reader enters the collection carried by the vehicle of Kate Rainey’s words and viewpoint. Her life is the wholeness (the Pradwamsa-Abhāva value) from which each story in the collection emerges and into which each moment in this opening story collapses. The reader is experiencing various or manifold realities (or values) within each moment because of the larger wholeness, which is best seen in the juxtaposition of Kate Rainey’s role within the community, and her momentary individual interactions with other characters.

Being a member of a larger community, the town of Morgana, Mississippi, Kate Rainey represents the larger wholeness of the town’s population while maintaining her own unique self (point-value) and form. Within this first story, “Shower of Gold,” her words shape the reader’s experience in a very concrete way, both revealing to the reader the shape of Miss Katie’s own self as well as helping shape for the reader other characters, such as her neighbors across the street, Miss Snowdie and Miss Snowdie’s husband, the ubiquitous King MacLain. This shaping effect is especially apparent when Miss Katie disrupts a possible moment of reunion between the husband and wife (a moment
we’ll look at below). Miss Kate, all the while, observes her world and talks about it at length, revealing her own intrusive verbosity as she tells the reader, “Sure I can churn and talk” (Welty 2). And talk she does through the rest of the story, never letting the reader forget whose voice, whose sounds are being heard, as she sees herself speaking for the whole town.

Miss Katie speaks for the town (a wholeness value) as well as herself (a point value) when describing the marriage of Miss Snowdie and King MacLain. She exclaims: “‘I swan!’ we all say. Just like he wants us to, the scoundrel!” (Welty 4). This exclamation of “we all say” is an important boundary marker for the reader because the words suggest that there is a communal or group consciousness in Morgana, Mississippi, for which Miss Katie, as a representative member, can speak. She is, thus, a point value, a collapse of wholeness, or a coalesced form of the larger wholeness that is the town.

The town is apparently shocked at King’s continuing licentious behavior during his marriage to Miss Snowdie and Miss Katie reports that shock like a Greek chorus. The exclamation above, which reports the town’s view of King, also suggests that Miss Katie believes her perception to be powerful enough to discern King MacLain’s secret intent in marrying the albino Miss Snowdie, unspoken though that intent may be on King’s part.

Here, Miss Katie’s role in the story, though representing an Abhāva point-value, has expanded to a holistic level of human consciousness (Pradwamsa-Abhāva), representing the town as a true whole: She feels that she knows what King MacLain really feels inside. Consequently, not only do Miss Katie’s words have the power to convey her own consciousness (what her words reveal about herself—her avid curiosity as well as her role as the town crier) but her powers of perception shape the reader’s experience of other characters. For example, the reader doubts King MacLain’s integrity even before he is revealed as a philanderer because, according to Miss Katie’ implications, he chooses his bride Miss Snowdie for the shock value of his marriage rather than from any real feelings of love.

In addition to this wholeness and point dynamic between the town and the representative character of Katie Rain, we see time follows a similar pattern of opposing tensions between wholeness and point(s) as
the marriage of King MacLain and Miss Snowdie plays out. A single moment (a potential reunion on the porch steps) shapes the couple’s married life to come. Miss Katie intrudes on this event and by her point-value presence influences the participants (collapsing their marriage) in that moment in time (caught, interestingly enough, in the particular sound of a creaking stair step).

Miss Katie herself points out the intrusion of her presence when she tells the reader, “That was where I come in,” as she begins to report the abortive reunion of Miss Snowdie and King on the porch that evening. The reader already knows that Miss Katie supposedly disapproves of King MacLain’s licentious ways, so her intrusive presence at this significant moment takes on added impact. It is her chattering with Miss Snowdie that keeps King’s wife from hearing the creak of her husband’s step on the porch. It is Miss Katie’s milking hat (a symbolic point value), worn by one of the twins, that adds to King’s general startlement and makes him flee. Miss Katie’s apparently innocent role of helping Miss Snowdie is in question, as both characters recognize. Miss Katie tells the reader: “I think she kind of holds it against me, because I was there that day when he come; and she don’t like my baby any more” (Welty 18). The phrase “that day” implies a point value or a moment of collapsed time in the wholeness of the MacLain marriage. Miss Katie’s intrusive presence at that point in time has helped determine Miss Snowdie’s role as the abandoned wife in the life of the town, revealing the impact of the larger wholeness of the town’s mores.

Such significant moments that are pivotal to a story’s plot or which encapsulate the larger wholeness a story represents have long been recognized in story theory. Nadine Gordimer’s compelling image of the flash of a firefly, perhaps, best represents these telling moments in a short story: “Short-story writers see by the light of the flash; theirs is the art of the only thing one can be sure of—the present moment” (May 180). The image of the flash effectively captures the present moment but suggests that the present moment is frozen, as a photograph is, even isolated. Story always connects the moment to a larger wholeness. The reader experiences the flash of the moment when it is experienced in dynamic tension against a fuller view or a larger field.

We accept that moments of time may often be more significant in a short story than in a novel because time spent reading a story is short
(remember Poe) and the time configured within the text is typically short. Experiences come close together for readers and characters both, having, perhaps, more influence and shaping power on one another than do more isolated incidents in an extended novel. But moments, being not only part of the larger wholeness but also central to the meaning of the wholeness, are the mainspring of the compression (compaction, coalescence) with which the short story is identified.

Elsewhere I have examined such pivotal and encapsulating moments in Faulkner’s *Go Down Moses*. Faulkner compacts an entire lifetime in a single compressed moment of time in the symbol of an unexploded cartridge, which is viewed by the narrator as containing two lives. (For further discussion of compressed moments in time in the short story, please see Llewellyn, “Waves of Time,” 511). Time, like the individuation of consciousness seen (experienced) in a single character set against the larger consciousness represented by a community of various characters, sustains a tension between a single moment and a longer duration of time. Time collapses in on itself to be caught in a single moment. Wholeness must be collapsed to a point for dynamism to occur and time to become linear. Wholeness, by itself, while possessing all the moments of time in suspension, holds the potential for dynamism but remains static until it collapses in on itself; the element of *Pradwamsa-Abhāva* in the *Abhāva* sequence is one of movement, forward progression.

Story occurs because of this contraction—the coalescence resulting from compression of these opposing tensions of wholeness and point. A larger wholeness of experience is compressed or coalesced into a smaller duration of reading, mimicking the very dynamic of creation and evolution as revealed in the *Abhāva* sequence detailing the qualities of the gap. The act of creation is creation, whether it is the creation of a universe, the cosmos, the creation of a single human consciousness, or the creation of a brilliant short narrative. The dynamics remain the same—wholeness and point—always beginning, always ending, always beginning.

The stance here in talking about the experience of coalescence—the collapse to a point in the short story—is reader-response. It is in the reader’s consciousness that the opposing tensions become activated. The old notion of catharsis would suggest that it is the reader’s emotional
self that is allowed to be born anew through the experience of story and that may still hold true but more is going on. Maharishi describes that it is the nature of human intelligence to entertain the coexistence of opposites. The reader’s awareness in reading a short story is required to do just that—entertain the coexistence of opposite value—wholeness and point value. It is in the reader’s awareness that the compression or coalescence peculiar to the short story occurs. It is in the shift from wholeness to point (field and particle in the parlance of physics) that the manifold capacity of the short story to be experienced simultaneously occurs, and in so doing, creates the dramatic tension which pulls the story in on itself and coalescence.

The reader is pulled by this tension into experiencing both the wholeness and the point in a “single cognitive moment.” It is not merely a matter of cognitive chunking. It is the human capacity for manifold vision, experiencing a moment or idea on different levels of awareness at the same time, that is at work—processing and comprehending disparate representation or moments of reality in a “single” experience of wholeness. One may be experiencing the moment, but one is aware of a larger wholeness underlying that moment, just as a person may be aware of an individual wave while never losing sight of the vast, unbounded ocean. The unified field of pure consciousness, by its holistic nature, contains this capacity for awareness of both wholeness and point.

The short story is not a narrative that can be successfully expanded or that tension between wholeness and point would be stretched beyond the experiential ability of a reader to cognize the two together in a singularity, and that ultimate, unified experience with all its dramatic, cognitive, and affective repercussions would be lost. The short story is a dynamic coalescence of opposing tensions, explored in a single cognitive “moment” of reading, and experienced much the same way we live—a moment at a time—all the while aware of the larger wholeness of life, of time, of consciousness.

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**Works Cited**


The Dance of Consciousness

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Douglas A. Mackey, born in Evanston, Illinois in 1947, is a writer, editor, and literary critic living in Fairfield, Iowa. He holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Kansas. A former software engineer at HRSoft, Inc., in 2001, he became enterprise editor and webmaster at Smartphone and Pocket PC magazine. Dr. Mackey has edited both textbook and reference books and is currently editor of a series of books on time, space, and consciousness, published by Time Portal Publications, including Timeshift (1996) and The Reality of Time (2005), both by Janet Iris Sussman. He has also written seven books including Weird Scenes inside the Godmind, 2001; The Dance of Consciousness, 1994; Doors into the Play (with Sydney H. Spayde), 1993; The Work of Ian Watson, 1989; Philip K. Dick, 1988; D. H. Lawrence: The Poet Who Was Not Wrong, 1986; and The Rainbow Quest of Thomas Pynchon, 1980.
THE DANCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

ABSTRACT

Great writers have consistently pointed the way to transcendence: to Transcendental Consciousness and the states beyond it. The artist, by representing the world as he or she sees it, filtered through a deep awareness of Self, depicts the process of evolution of consciousness. Archetypal patterns in many modern works reflect the universal quest for enlightenment. Thomas Pynchon’s The Crying of Lot 49 and James Joyce’s Ulysses trace mythic themes that reveal the Absolute in everyday life. Modern-day heroes are portrayed in the light of the hidden patterns animating their journeys through the bewildering landscapes of the modern world.

Invitation to the Dance

When you look at a painting or read a great work of literature for the first time, you see the tip of an iceberg. An immense subjectivity seethes beneath its surface, vibrating, yearning to be born again in you, if you will receive it. When you do, the work becomes translucent, revealing its crystalline depths. You gaze into the gap between two distant worlds—your mind and the artist’s. Then the work becomes transparent and duality dissolves. The original creative energy streams into you.

That is the experience drawing us to art. It gives us a glimpse of the spaces beyond conscious awareness. It speaks in a tongue slightly unfamiliar and yet somehow native to our deepest souls. We recognize something in it that is in us. This is the sense, in picking up the book of an author we love, of going home.

Art should be judged as to whether or not it expands consciousness. If a certain book, song, or sculpture actually raises and refines your awareness, exhilarates and refreshes you, and bathes you with creative energy, then it may be considered “good.” If it does this to enough people over a long period of time, then it may be accorded greatness.

The world as we know it is structured by our consciousness. Consciousness is a sub-stance; literally, it “stands under” all things. We see as much as we are capable of seeing, and that capability is a function of our level of consciousness. When the level of consciousness rises, so does the level of reality that we perceive.
This does not mean that objects of perception are not really there. It is just that they are made of the substance of consciousness. We shape these objects according to our lights, but others may shape them differently, because the structure of the perceived world reflects the structure of the mind that perceives it. As infinite as the possibilities for perception is the field on which all these differences dance—and that field we shall call pure consciousness. The higher levels of consciousness we shall be exploring in this book all have pure consciousness at their basis.

**Maharishi Vedic Science and Seven States of Consciousness**

I borrow Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s delineation of seven levels of consciousness, distinguished by characteristic patterns of mental and physical functioning. The first two levels are deep sleep and dreaming, commonly experienced by everyone. In deep sleep there is no mental activity but simply consciousness in a state of complete inertness. Nothing can be experienced. Dreaming is a more advanced state than deep sleep; there is some vague, illusory mental activity. But the subordinate status of that level of reality immediately becomes apparent when we awake.

A work of literature may depict sleep and dreaming but usually only within the context of a state of consciousness beyond them. For example, we shall see that August Strindberg in *A Dream Play* is concerned with the waking state of consciousness and uses the dream state as a metaphor to reveal the real nature of the waking state.

The third state of consciousness, the waking state, is the ordinary conscious functioning level of daily life. But in comparison to higher states, one is not really awake in it. In works by Beckett, Strindberg, and Pirandello that we shall analyze, the waking state is seen as a level of absurdity, illusion, and suffering. The reason is: in this state, consciousness is overshadowed by the objects of perception.

Ordinarily, people define their existence in terms of the content of their thoughts. If they are able to think, they conclude that they exist. *Cogito, ergo sum* is very much the logic of the waking state. At this level, one is a slave to one’s perceptions; one’s true subjective nature is overshadowed by the object one perceives. The self is not known in itself and can only be defined in relation to external circumstances.
Like everything else in the changing, relative world, the self seems finite, bounded, and transitory.

It is only in the fourth state of consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness, that one realizes what pure consciousness is. The process of meditation involves following a thought to its source in pure consciousness. As a wave settles down and becomes one with the sea, so the conscious awareness finds itself settling down to an ocean of unbounded awareness. The essential Self is realized as pure intelligence and infinite energy in a state of lively potentiality. This condition is called transcendental because it is beyond thought. Yet it is also the very source and substance of thought.

The fourth state is absolute. It never changes, it is always there, but unless we know how to become aware of it, life must remain shrouded in the boundaries of the first three relative states of consciousness, and the absolute Self will not be known. Ignorance—literally, the act of ignoring—is the only thing separating any human being from the bliss of Transcendental Consciousness.

Knowledge of the true nature of the Self can be found in every religious tradition. For Christ, the way and the truth and the life was the “I,” the unbounded pure consciousness, the kingdom of Heaven within. For Buddha, nirvana was the ultimate goal of life, and though he would not have that state with “Self,” nirvana is the Absolute I equate here with pure consciousness. True religion emphasizes the desirability of Self-realization: it promises eternal happiness and freedom from the suffering characteristic of the waking state.

Great poets and artists have consistently pointed the way to transcendence—to Transcendental Consciousness and the states beyond it. Their expressions of transcendence tend to be highly individualistic and subjective—complementary to science, which uses objective methods to gain the highest possible knowledge and put it to work. Yet the artist, by representing the world as he or she sees it, filtered through a deep awareness of Self, touches the universal level in every person. The artist plumbs the subjective to its infinite source, while the scientist finds ways and means of following the galaxies to their origin beyond space and time, and of locating the source of life in every cell of a flower’s petal.
The “experience” of Transcendental Consciousness is in a sense not an experience because there is no object of experience. It is simply consciousness without an object: the state of pure Being. Yet in that Being there is a lively potentiality like the still surface of a pond that has not been disturbed into ripples: “It is the revelation of the Self, in the Self, by the Self.”

C. G. Jung, Ingmar Bergman, and Thomas Pynchon have pointed very strongly towards the transcendental state in their work. They use the metaphor of the Quest to dramatize the innate human need to go beyond the ever-changing field of the relative world and discover the absolute, pure nature of the Self.

In the boundlessness of Transcendental Consciousness, there is but one thing lacking: boundaries. There is no object of perception: no people, no trees, no houses, not even any thoughts. But in the fifth state, Cosmic Consciousness, relative perceptions coexist with the transcendental state. One sees, hears, and senses as completely as in the waking state, but unlike the waking state, in Cosmic Consciousness the object of perception never overshadows the pure nature of the Self. One is fully conscious inside, whether sleeping, dreaming, or waking, twenty-four hours a day. This paradoxical state (how can one be asleep yet awake?) is one of “enlightenment,” a condition of life naturally arrived at through repeated exposure to Transcendental Consciousness. We consider Juan Ramon Jiménez, Alexander Scriabin, and D. H. Lawrence as modern prophets of this level of enlightenment.

When the Absolute is established in the awareness as an ever-present reality, the subjective sphere attains maximum evolution. The objective world now has a chance to rise to fullness. Because, as Maharishi Mahesh Yogi often quotes from the Rk Veda, “knowledge is structured in consciousness,” we can really begin to understand and appreciate the world when the full range of the mind’s potentialities is available. The sixth state, God Consciousness, is the refinement of perceptions on the basis of Cosmic Consciousness until objects are apprehended at their most subtle, or celestial, level. Man does not become God here, but he is able to perceive the creation from the standpoint of the Creator and thereby appreciate the supreme values of relative life. We can read Hart Crane and Rainer Maria Rilke as exponents of this glorification of experience.
Even in God Consciousness, however, there is duality. The separation between absolute Self and the relative world, realized in Cosmic Consciousness, continues here, although the gap lessens as the subllest values of the relative open up to the senses. The evolution of consciousness to the seventh state, Unity Consciousness, resolves this duality altogether. It is as if the Self has grown so great that it overflows into the subjective realm and completely permeates the object. The experience of Unity is expressed in the Vedic aphorism Tat tvam asi, “thou art That.” The house, the tree, the other person, is seen and enjoyed and valued as oneself. The relative world is seen ultimately as maya, a veil over the Absolute, with each individual wave on the sea of life perceived in essence as unindividuated water. Unity Consciousness, then, upholds the full value of both relative and Absolute, but the Absolute, or pure consciousness, is found everywhere as the fundamental reality. We can examine works by Robert M. Pirsig, James Joyce, and John Cowper Powys as representing a unified view of life paralleling this highest level of consciousness.

This brief summary of the seven states of consciousness is abstract, but as we survey specific works of literature, these states should acquire more human coloring.

Literature and Higher States of Consciousness
I can’t speculate whether the authors mentioned above were themselves in higher states of consciousness. It may very well be that great artists and writers through the ages have had at least glimpses of Transcendental Consciousness, to say nothing of Transcendent Consciousness, to say nothing of the states beyond it. But there is no way to know for sure that is the case, even in the rare cases (such as Wordsworth) where we have personal reports. And it is not necessary for the purposes of this study. A work of literature can reveal a higher state of consciousness in several different ways. First, a character can be portrayed as being in one of these states, as in D. H. Lawrence’s The Escaped Cock, where Christ’s resurrection takes on the meaning of an entry into Cosmic Consciousness. Secondly, a work may suggest higher consciousness through symbol and archetype; an example of this is the castle that blossoms into a chrysanthemum at the end of Strindberg’s A Dream Play. Thirdly, the work may imply a higher state by its very form, as Ulysses, through its unitive structure, suggests Unity Consciousness.
Related Views of Consciousness

Symbol, myth, and archetype are especially relevant to the ensuing analyses. As these terms are often used interchangeably, I shall try to differentiate them in terms of their relationship to consciousness. A symbol is any image that points beyond its literal form to more abstract levels. It doesn’t have a single, concrete referent as a “sign” does; it does not merely stand for something else. A symbol usually evokes a complex of emotional and intellectual associations, and is ambiguous by nature.

As Aniela Jaffe notes in her notes to C. G. Jung’s *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, “symbol” derives from *symbolon*, the broken coin whose halves fit together precisely and is shared between two parting friends as a representation of their essential unity. A verbal symbol is a window on the Absolute. Its purpose is to restore the broken link between a man’s conscious mind and his transcendental nature by taking him from the level of the concrete image through levels of greater abstraction towards the ultimate abstraction of Transcendental Consciousness.

The archetype is a universal symbol, a form or pattern that has such a great degree of abstraction that it tends to be repeated in different times and places with many different colorings. Leopold Bloom and Odysseus are cases of the archetypal explorer-hero who undertakes a quest for home. But they themselves are not archetypes: They are manifestations of the archetype.

There is some confusion between the terms myth and archetype. Jung points out that an archetype is “an irrepresentable unconscious, pre-existent form,” “empty and purely formal,” a possibility not filled in by content. A myth, on the other hand, is a manifestation of the archetype, its content determined by cultural and environmental influences.

A myth is a story, old or new, that tells the tale of the expansion of consciousness. Not only ancient legends of gods and heroes, but modern works as well, can be seen as mythic when they strike this universal chord. It may seem strange now to call *Waiting for Godot* a myth, but in five thousand years it may be quite natural to do so.

As myths are stories about the evolution and fulfillment of consciousness, the higher states of consciousness are always implicit in them. The Oedipus myth is a symbolic tale of the transition to Cosmic Consciousness. At the beginning of Sophocles’ play, Oedipus is the most accomplished of men, yet plunged into ignorance of his own Self,
a condition symbolized by his lack of knowledge about the true identity of his parents. When the revelation of his incest and patricide comes, it is agonizingly painful to bear and he gouges out his eyes. But this act, purely tragic on the surface, symbolizes a deeper accession to wisdom. Oedipus finds that by withdrawing his senses from the outer world he gains a higher vision and becomes a seer and a prophet. Like all great tragedy, *Oedipus Rex* conveys a sense of transcendence and victory through surrender to the necessity of change in the relative sphere. If the story of a man’s painful defeat is all that we derive from Oedipus, then we have not penetrated its mythic level.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell has postulated the one great archetypal pattern of the “monomyth” as the essential root myth in which all stories have their source. Simply stated, the monomyth is the Quest or hero-journey: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.” Campbell designates these three stages of the monomyth as Separation, Initiation, and Return.

The structure of the monomyth contains all the possibilities for the evolution of consciousness. In meditation, we leave the relative behind, dip into the Absolute, then return to the world with increased energy and intelligence. This brief journey encompasses Separation (indeed, the ultimate separation of Absolute and relative), Initiation (the union of the conscious mind with its own essential nature in Transcendental Consciousness), and Return (with the boon of an enriched awareness of life, which serves as a basis for positive action in society). This natural expansion of consciousness is thus reflected in the most essential pattern to be found in myth and literature.

When a meditating individual, by virtue of many exposures to Transcendental Consciousness, stabilizes Cosmic Consciousness, the possibility of further transcendence is ruled out. Once Transcendental Consciousness is established as a permanent reality, the Absolute is ever-present and there is no longer any need to transcend the relative to get there. However, cosically conscious people find themselves in a state of radical separation from the phenomenal world. They know themselves to be eternal, but outside them matter is in a state of per-
petual flux. Though free, blissful, and infinite, they are separate from the world, and this duality must be resolved by a further evolution of consciousness.

If Cosmic Consciousness represents Separation, God Consciousness represents Initiation, and Unity Consciousness, Return. The Initiation stage of the monomyth, which may include such events as the hero’s union with the mother-goddess or atonement with the father-creator, is symbolic of the godlike refinement of perception that occurs in God Consciousness, and of the harmony of the individual with the forces of nature that comes in that state. Campbell recognizes the boon gained at this stage as “intrinsically . . . an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being.”

The Return phase corresponds to Unity Consciousness because here the division that was created in Cosmic Consciousness is entirely mended. As the mythic hero returns to his homeland with the boon, so the evolving person brings the boon of his or her enlightenment “home” to the outside world, investing everything seen with the infinite nature of the Self. The world glows with the very light by which he or she is conscious. Campbell beautifully describes the entire process of evolution of consciousness from Transcendental Consciousness to Unity, although he does not use those terms:

This is the stage of Narcissus looking into the pool, of the Buddha sitting contemplative under the tree, but it is not the ultimate goal; it is a requisite step, but not the end. The aim is not to see, but to realize that one is, that essence [Transcendental Consciousness]; then one is free to wander as that essence in the world [Cosmic Consciousness]. Furthermore: the world too is of that essence. The essence of oneself and the essence of the world: these two are one. Hence separateness, withdrawal, is no longer necessary. Wherever the hero may wander, whatever he may do, he is ever in the presence of his own essence—for he has the perfected eye to see. There is no separateness [Unity Consciousness].

Thus the monomyth is recapitulated in the evolution of the individual consciousness in each meditation and in the totality of one’s spiritual growth.

The ultimate symbolic value of the mythic narrative is in its relevance to an individual’s evolution. The hero is Everyman in the process of expanding his awareness. His story is our story.
Consciousness is a dimension in the study of literature that is all too often totally ignored—consciousness, that is, in the sense of the unbounded, unmanifest Self that is at the basis of personal and cosmic existence. Consciousness in its more limited “waking state” aspect as ego-awareness and so on is simply too insubstantial a basis for serious discussion of great works.

Higher states of consciousness are becoming more widely known and experienced. These archetypal modalities of consciousness are innate in every individual and may be identified in the art and literature of all ages. It makes no difference in what time period we locate them, but I have chosen representative works from the twentieth century. The art and literature of this period, whatever verdict history will render about its ultimate artistic value, is replete with indications of humankind’s evolution into a new paradigm in which enlightenment is understood and accepted as every person’s birthright.

**Transcendence in Pynchon’s The Crying of Lot 49**
The exuberant novelist Thomas Pynchon uses myth to synthesize scientific and religious values. The great American myth of the journey westward to the Promised Land has of necessity been transformed into the discovery of new countries of the soul. Pynchon sets *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) on the West Coast, the leading edge of this transformation, in which both science and religion will be seen to play significant roles. The heroine is named Oedipa Maas, and the story is of her quest—ostensibly for the secret of an organization named Tristero, but on a deeper level for some oasis in the wasteland of twentieth century America.

Pynchon surveys the contemporary scene in all its hip and trendy diversity, unstinting in his manic laughter towards a menagerie of Southern California types. There is Mucho Maas, Oedipa’s husband, a used-car salesman turned disc jockey who gulps LSD and chases teenyboppers. There is Dr. Hilarius, her Freudian psychiatrist, an ex-Nazi who experimented in concentration camps on inducing insanity by making faces too hideous to behold. There is Metzger, a lawyer and former child-star “Baby Igor” who is fixated on his lost youth and eventually elopes with “a depraved 15-year-old.” There is Randolph Driblette, a solipsistic director who commits suicide after his production of an
obscure Jacobean tragedy closes. There is Mike Fallopian, a partisan of
the right-wing Peter Pinguid Society, opposed to “industrial anything.”
There is John Nefastis, inventor of a perpetual-motion machine, who
enjoys having sex in front of the TV during the evening news. There
is Emery Bortz, an English professor who spends his days in a ham-
mock, surrounded by graduate students, drinking beer and pontificat-
ing. There are the Paranoids, a teenage rock and roll band, who sport
identical bangs and mohair suits and drooping jaws. There is Pierce
Inverarity, a dead multimillionaire, who has single-handedly built an
empire of shopping centers, tract houses, and industrial complexes in
the decadent paradise of San Narciso, California.

Oedipa herself starts as a typical middle American housewife, but
soon she gets the “call to adventure”—the first stage of the monomythic
quest. She is named executor of Pierce Inverarity’s will. A former lover
of his, she had once traveled to Mexico with him, where a particular
painting captured her eye:

. . . in the central painting of a triptych, titled “Bordando el Manto Ter-
restre,” were a number of frail girls with heart-shaped faces, huge eyes,
spun-gold hair, prisoners in the top room of a circular tower, embroi-
dering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the slit windows and into a
void: for all the other buildings and creatures, all the waves, ships and
forests of the earth were contained in this tapestry, and the tapestry was
the world.7

She identifies with Rapunzel, trapped in a tower, letting her hair
down into a void and hoping someone will climb it.

The thing that comes to her out of the void is Tristero. In her per-
egrinations she gradually becomes aware that underneath such mas-
sive enterprises as Yoyodyne, Pierce’s giant aerospace corporation,
there lurks an anti-establishment counterforce. It seems that Yoyodyne
employees use an alternate mail service called W.A.S.T.E. Alerted by
an allusion in The Courier’s Tragedy, a Jacobean revenge play, she learns
of a mysterious organization called Tristero, one of whose chief opera-
tions has for centuries been to run a private mail service and to sabotage
the established one.

In Oedipa’s attempt to execute Pierce’s will, “to bestow life on what
had persisted,” Tristero continues to intrude. As she struggles through
the bewildering maze of Pierce’s holdings, the cryptic image of a muted
post-horn—the sign of Tristero—confronts her again and again, and she feels compelled to find out more about it.

In her quest for Tristero she is the sole adventurer. Her husband Mucho, as well as Metzger, Driblette, and all the other men she meets are but fragmented personalities, and all resort to escapism to protect themselves from the potentially frightening realizations that she is making. But she doubts her own ability to complete the quest:

Oedipa wondered whether, at the end of this (if it were supposed to end), she too might not be left with only compiled memories of clues, announcements, intimations, but never the central truth itself, which must somehow each time be too bright for her memory to hold: which must always blaze out, destroying its own message irreversibly, leaving an overexposed blank when the ordinary world came back. How can the finite mind, indeed, grasp and hold the infinite, even if it is able to glimpse it?

Oedipa seeks some ultimate wholeness, knowing that to refuse the challenge will strand her in some spiritual desert like the one Mucho inhabits. Saturated with LSD, he cannot distinguish the edges of things, and his individuality is subsumed by pseudomysticism:

“Whenever I put the headset on now,” he’d continued, “I really do understand what I find there. When those kids sing about ‘She loves you,’ yeah well, you know, she does, she’s any number of people, all over the world, back through time, different colors, sizes ages, shapes, distances from death, but she loves. And the ‘you’ is everybody. And herself. Oedipa, the human voice, you “ know, it’s a flipping miracle.”

Mucho ends his quest in a false absolute. Driblette, the solipsistic director, does the same. He invests all his energies on the play, making it a little universe that he projects, like the dark machine in the center of a planetarium. When the run of the play is over, he cannot sustain the vision of a random world beyond his control, and so he takes a walk “into that vast sink of the primal blood of the Pacific.”

Tristero is more than vaguely malevolent. It is represented in *The Courier’s Tragedy* by masked figures dressed entirely in black who assassinate an evil duke, After Oedipa traces the text of the play to a used bookstore to procure the only remaining copy, the store mysteriously burns down. Because she is the only person aware of the monolithic
extent of the Tristero conspiracy, she wonders at times if she is not just succumbing to paranoia. But there is ample evidence that she, unlike Driblette, is not merely projecting her world.

She finds that the W.A.S.T.E. system is virtually omnipresent, and that all the lost, alienated souls of this chaotic society are using it in an attempt to have real communication with one another. The official channels of the U.S. Mail are not appropriate for their deepest secrets. But W.A.S.T.E. offers them some hope: “Decorating each alienation, each species of withdrawal, as cufflink, decal, aimless doodling, there was somehow always the post horn.”

The search for Tristero leads her to the slums, where she comes into touch with a real person, so different from the lunatics she has been associating with. The man is an old sailor suffering from delirium tremens, one of the numberless lost souls, with a post horn tattooed on his hand:

She was overcome all at once by a need to touch him, as if she could not believe in him, or would not remember him, without it. Exhausted, hardly knowing what she was doing, she came the last three steps and sat, took the man in her arms, actually held him, gazing out of her smudged eyes down the stairs, back into the morning. She felt wetness against her breast and saw that he was crying again. He hardly breathed but tears came as if being pumped. “I can't help,” she whispered, rocking him, “I can't help.”

But she can. She acts as a mother-goddess, bringing fertility back to the wasteland of modern life, fighting with tenderness the conformity, uniformity, and technological flash created by the likes of Pierce Inverarity and the Protestant-capitalist tradition. That tradition created a mass of have-nots as well as haves, and the have-nots, according to Calvinist theology, are the preterite, those passed-over, the damned. Oedipa rediscovers part of herself among the have-nots.

Oedipa is uncertain by the end of the novel whether Tristero is part of Pierce’s empire, whether he had left that too as part of his inheritance. Why did he possess a collection of stamps that included Tristero forgeries of conventional stamps? The issue is left unresolved, but she does realize that her quest to order Pierce’s world has led her to the secret of the nation itself: “She had dedicated herself weeks ago, to
making sense of what Inverarity had left behind, never suspecting that the legacy was America.”

Thus the real inheritors of the Inverarity empire are the disinherited anonymous masses, the true Americans. Standing on a railroad track, she has an epiphany: she thinks of the kids, squatters, drifters who followed the tracks, sleeping in junkyards and freight cars, sharing a secret language, “as if they were in exile from somewhere else invisible yet congruent with the cheered land she lived in.” And Tristero is the secret voice, muted like the post horn, but omnipresent, indomitable.

In the final scene of the novel, Oedipa attends an auction of Pierce’s Tristero forgeries, and Loren Passerine, “the finest auctioneer in the West,” is “crying” the sale of these stamps:

The men inside the auction room wore black mohair and had pale, cruel faces. They watched her come in, trying each to conceal his thoughts. Loren Passerine, on his podium, hovered like a puppet-master, his eyes bright, his smile practiced and relentless. He stared at her, smiling, as if saying, I’m surprised you actually came . . . . An assistant closed the heavy door on the lobby windows and the sun. She heard a lock snap shut; the sound echoes a moment. Passerine spread his arms in a gesture that seemed to belong to the priesthood of some remote culture; perhaps to a descending angel. The auctioneer cleared his throat. Oedipa settled back, to await the crying of lot 49.

It is perhaps futile to try to explain this ending, for the sense of ambiguity, of a mystery that is too bright (or too dark) for the mind to hold, is surely part of Pynchon’s intention. But two things at least are clear; first, Tristero exists; it is not a product of Oedipa’s paranoia. There is a hidden meaning behind the surface appearances of American life. Second, a religious initiation rite of sorts is beginning. Oedipa is about to learn whether Tristero is evil or whether it merely has a forbidding aspect. Certainly it is easy to fear the unknown, and when Tristero’s mysteries are revealed to her, it may be that Oedipa will not feel impelled, like Oedipus, to pluck out her eyes.

Pynchon’s allusion to Oedipus is purposeful. Oedipus Rex is also a detective story, and it ends with the seeker reaching the goal of his quest in himself. Oedipus’s determination to find the culprit that was bringing the gods’ disfavor upon Thebes resulted in the discovery of his incest and patricide. The play echoes the theme that “knowledge
is structured in consciousness”: that the evil or good we see outside us is a reflection of the quality we harbor within. But Oedipa is a relative innocent, and Pynchon’s novel lacks a tragic tone. Her sensitivity enabled her to detect Tristero, and her sympathy with the plight of the disinherited masses of the earth has entitled her to initiation. I am tempted to read the ending of *The Crying of Lot 49* as ultimately hopeful.

Tristero, in its “cruel” aspect, is like the sphinx that posed the riddle to Oedipus, “What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three in the evening?” Oedipus’s answer was “Man” (a baby crawls, an adult stands upright, an old man hobbies on a cane). This too is Oedipa’s way of answering the riddle of Tristero. Her realization that the spirit of the American people is “coded” in Pierce Inverarity’s testament shows that she has penetrated to the human level of the riddle.

As a heroine, Oedipa is about to experience the mythic transcendence at the end of the quest. She is no longer the damsel locked in the tower waiting for rescue from without, weaving her tapestry of delusion to pass the time. She has become an agent for order, leaving the insularity of her home, venturing into dangerous, unknown regions, and attempting to bridge the world of appearances with the “transcendent meaning” that Tristero represents.

Oedipa is, in fact, a Maxwell’s Demon. This is an imaginary being invented by the physicist James Clerk Maxwell that is an important motif in the novel. As it is explained to Oedipa:

The Demon could sit in a box among air molecules that were moving at all different random speeds, and sort out the fast molecules from the slow ones. Fast molecules have more energy than slow ones. Concentrate enough of them in one place and you have a region of high temperature. You can then use the difference in temperature between this hot region of the box and any cooler region, to drive a heat engine. Since the Demon only sat and sorted, you wouldn’t have put any real work into the system. So you would be violating the Second Law of Thermodynamics, getting something for nothing, causing perpetual motion.\(^{15}\)

Without going into the complexities of the Nefastis machine which operates on this principle, it is possible to compare Oedipa to Maxwell’s Demon because she sorts through the various clues she is presented
with and comes out with energy in the form of greater information. Not really a have or a have-not, neither in the Establishment nor out of it, she can monitor the borderline between the two and attempt to reduce the entropy, or amount of disorderliness or randomness, in the system she perceives. By sorting the hot and cold molecules—that is, the elect and the preterite—she learns of the existence of the alienated people of the world, represented by Tristero. The Second Law of Thermodynamics holds that entropy is inexorably increasing in the universe, but she circumvents that law and creates more orderliness through the information between her sorting Demon and her surface consciousness. To keep this flow going is to defy the Second Law; if the information were not communicated then its greater potential for randomness would cause the Second Law to prevail again.

This Demon is the daimon, the intuitive intellect of man which often in Greek tragedy appears as a powerful external force, a god (like Apollo in Oedipus Rex) who forces the hero towards an action that may have tragic consequences but is ultimately for the best. Oedipa listens to her Demon and thus has the only chance of anybody in the novel of resisting the entropic wave that is slowly but surely engulfing Mucho, Driblette, Hilarius, Metzger, and the rest, like the tide of “the primal blood of the Pacific.”

The surface of phenomenal life is a constant ebb and flow; nothing lasts, especially in a superficial culture like Pynchon’s California. To “go with the flow” in that tide is to commit spiritual suicide. The false absolute that Mucho and Driblette sought through sensation dissolved the boundaries of their egos in the infinitely changing field of sense perceptions. The conscious ego, for all its shortcomings, is at least a link with a greater consciousness, and this Oedipa intuits. So she holds on to her individual ego while communing with the Demon that leads her on her quest for Tristero. Only that way can she find the greater wholeness of Self that has its basis in the true Absolute: in non-change rather than in change.

Pynchon challenges us all to wake our Demons and sort through the amazing amount of information he gives us in this short book. The more we read it, the less chaotic it seems. Finally, Pynchon seems as purposeful as Joyce in his integration of every detail, every allusion,
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every word into a greater overall plan. The communication current of his mind to ours produces zero entropy.

Pynchon seems to be able to embrace all contradictions. He fills his novels with topical allusions to contemporary culture that are at the same time mythic. His incessant satire always has a seriocomic edge. His scientific background is reflected in the fact that he does not give technology a “bad guy” image as much modern fiction does. Indeed, he finds scientific language rich in metaphors to describe the modern condition, but he is not oblivious to literary tradition either: to fully understand Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* one must be well versed both in calculus and in the Duino Elegies of Rilke. The encyclopedic concerns of Pynchon make his books comparable to Joyce’s in the amount and range of information they attempt to cram between two covers.

*The Crying of Lot 49* is a particular gem because it is brief, economical, and possesses a deceptively simple surface. Its essence is ambiguity. As such it denies the permanence of the relative, and promotes the eternal quest for transcendence.

Pynchon indicates the main stumbling block to the fulfillment of that quest in his use of the myth of Echo and Narcissus (thus we have Echo Courts, the motel at which Oedipa stays in San Narciso). To direct all one’s love towards oneself, as most of the characters do, is to create a closed system, one that is highly susceptible to entropy. Only by keeping a channel of communication open to the outside so that creativity can flow back and forth can the amount of disorder in the system be held in check. Oedipa achieves such a flow between the Demon in herself and her conscious awareness, and she shares a flow of love with the drunken sailor—and, at the end, with all the dispossessed of America.

One sign of entropy is the failure to perceive distinctly a multifarious yet integrated reality. From the beginning Oedipa has this ability. When she drives into San Narciso, she looks down a slope:

. . . onto a vast sprawl of houses which had grown up all together, like a well-tended crop, from the dull brown earth; and she thought of the time she’d opened a transistor radio to replace a battery and seen her first printed circuit. The ordered swirl of houses and streets, from this high angle, sprang at her now with the same unexpected, astonishing clarity as the circuit card had. Though she knew even less about radios
than about Southern Californians, there were to both outward patterns a hieroglyphic sense of concealed meaning, of an intent to communicate... she and the Chevy seemed parked at the centre of an odd, religious instant.¹⁶

This scene suggests a moment of Transcendental Consciousness along with a concrete perception: The world reflects back to the eye the same integrative and coherent pattern in which the brain waves are structured at that moment. Oedipa can’t see beneath the surface—not just of the narcissistic outside world with its entropic homogeneity, but of her own mind. Significantly, she is virtually the only woman in a book populated by variously self-centered and exaggeratedly caricatured males. Does Pynchon see in the Feminine the only hope for reprieve from the wasteland? The archetypal female in human nature is emotional and intuitive, qualities that the men in the book lack. Yet they also abrogate the archetypically male responsibility of questing. So Oedipa is forced to be a whole person, assuming both male and female responsibilities, to solve the greatest mystery—herself.

The implication of the last scene of the book, the auction, is apocalyptic. Oedipa, about to be initiated into the mysteries of Tristero, watches the auctioneer gesture like a priest or a “descending angel.” Certainly that can spell no good for San Narciso and its inmates. But it can signal a release for the preterite—that is, the passed-over in every human being, the part of us that is ultimately free and apart from all surface insanities—invisible for its own protection. Apocalypse means revelation, destruction of ignorance, and what is revealed when the last veil is rent is the orderliness of pure consciousness, the integrated circuitry underlying all relative manifestation.

In an age when many have felt lost in a wasteland as bizarre as Pynchon’s, it is encouraging to read the words of the Bhagavad-Gita: “Even a little of this dharma delivers from great fear.” Dharma is the path of evolution, and the practice of experiencing pure consciousness is the most direct dharma for enlightenment. On this verse Maharishi comments:

Just as the first ray of the sun dispels the darkness of the night, so the first step in this practice dispels the darkness of ignorance and fear. But although the first ray of the rising sun is able to dispel the darkness of the night, the sun still continues to rise, because its nature is not only
to remove darkness, leaving the atmosphere dimly lighted, but also to
shine forth in splendor and illumine the whole earth. The glory of the
sun is its full mid-day light.\(^{17}\)

**Unity in Joyce’s *Ulysses***

In *Ulysses* (1922), James Joyce portrays a developing holistic conscious-
ness, one in which the wholeness is a sum greater than any of its parts.
This wholeness is not supplied too readily; it must be dug for, and it
resides finally not in the book but in the reader’s mind. Joyce presents
a universe, the world of Dublin on June 16, 1904, and provides clues
to the ordering principles of this microcosm. His world, with the inﬁ-
nite detail of life itself, extends into the world of our minds, which
are forever forging new links between events, seeking new dimensions
of order. The Absolute glimmers through the boundaries of this book
as the invisible, inaudible, impalpable essence in relation to which the
seemingly random and unimportant events of June 16, 1904, attain sig-
niﬁcance.

According to Joyce’s friend Frank Budgen, the myth of Ulysses was
the inspiration for the novel, and the realistic details emerged later.
Joyce wanted to portray a “complete man,” and, searching through lit-
erature for a prototype, rejected such characters as Faust and Hamlet,
settling on Ulysses as one who was both father and son, husband and
lover, warrior and conscientious objector (Frank Budgen, *James Joyce
and the Making of Ulysses*).\(^{18}\) Leopold Bloom, the Ulyssian hero of Joyce’s
book, is a rather ordinary, mild-mannered fellow who goes about his
daily work of canvassing for newspaper advertisements while his sultry
wife Molly commits adultery with the dashing Blazes Boylan. Bloom
is so unlikely a successor to his noble Greek prototype that many crit-
ics have read the work as an ironic diminution of the modern man in
general. For example, Bloom does not try to stop the adultery; in fact
he deliberately avoids his home during the hours he knows Boylan will
be there. Is Joyce implying that this is the best that our age can offer to
compare with the ancient heroes and heroines?

I think rather that Joyce elevates the common man to the mythic
level by the comparison. Bloom’s peregrinations about Dublin to vari-
ous pubs and businesses are perhaps on the surface a diminution of
Ulysses’ adventures on the islands where he stopped on his way to
Ithaca. But deep within the literal events of Ulysses is buried the mythic pattern, just as it is in every day of our lives. Each of us is the “complete man,” the anthropos, archetype of the higher Self. We each contain the potential for completeness in that we exist as human beings, thereby participating in cosmic Being. In Vedic thought this original Being is named Purusha (literally, “person”), and we have his equivalents in the West, Adam, Albion (in Blake), and H. C. Earwicker in Joyce’s Finnegans Wake (H. C. E. = Here Comes Everybody). The myth of the original ancestor of the human race signifies that our consciousness, down at its deepest origin, is complete. It is the seed that generates our sense of identity and our desires to make conscious the intuited inner completeness.

The traditional role of the hero is that of pure consciousness moving through space and time and redeeming the imperfections of the relative world. His mere presence in the world indicates the structure of Unity Consciousness, where the Absolute is found in the relative. To see this dimension in Ulysses we must look through the realistic level of detail and discern the mythic lineaments. Richard Ellmann does this by discussing Bloom’s Ulyssean mastery of words:

Bloom has to speak in ordinary language, untrained by anything but natural ingenuity, relaxed rather than tense, not so fastidious as to be above the most well-worn expressions, yet skeptical of them, even taking a keen pleasure in maneuvering among common idioms, allusions, and proverbs. It is this power of speech, mostly inward speech, that inclines Bloom towards Odysseus—resilience, the power to recoup in the mind what he loses in the flesh. (Ulysses on the Liffey)19

Joyce used stream-of-consciousness technique to penetrate to a subtler and richer level of language than outward speech. Furthermore, in that Bloom represents Logos, or the Word beyond all words, his inward speech takes us closer to the essence of all things.

Logos, which comes from the Greek verb lego, “I say,” was in Heraclitus’s philosophy the rational governing principle of the universe immanent in creation. The universe is, as it were, spoken by the supreme intelligence of Logos, and Logos is also the expression of that intelligence, the vibrating individual consciousness of rocks, trees, animals, and people. In the Gospel of St. John, Logos is the Word that is with God and is God—that is, Christ as manifested expression of the ulti-
mate unmanifest source of creation. As Rudolph Steiner interprets the concept: “The lily-of-the-valley produces the seed and the seed again the lily-of-the-valley; in like manner the divine creative Word created the mute human seed—and when this primeval creative Word had glided into the human seed, in order to spring up again within it, it sounded forth in words” (Steiner, The Gospel of St. John). Bloom is associated with Christ at many points as when he floats in the morning bath thinking, “This is my body.” As Ellman explains, “Joyce prefers the human form divine to the divine form human.” The greatest miracle is life in its earthly vestments, experienced fully through the senses. Bloom at every turn reveals the Logos in matter, the Word springing up in the human seed.

Joyce rejects otherworldly religion. Catholicism and theosophy alike are mocked in Ulysses as life-denying. Joyce in his personal religion sacralizes the world, attending to what Blake called the “Minute Particulars.” Ulysses, in its exhaustive realism, transcends the literal fact for the sacred fact saturated with infinity.

Bloom then is the Logos, the divine creative principle. He travels through the world and everywhere he discovers Logos. Matter becomes alive for him, and as the embodied Word he gives expression to the mute universe. In the Hades episode, at a funeral, he considers the question of physical resurrection and decides the conventional view is ridiculous. An acquaintance utters the pious platitude, “I am the resurrection and the life. That touches a man’s inmost heart.” Bloom thinks:

Your heart perhaps but what price the fellow in the six feet by two with his toes to the daisies? No touching that. Seat of the affections. Broken heart. A pump after all, pumping thousands of gallons of blood every day. One fine day it gets bunged up and there you are. Lots of them lying around here: lungs, hearts, livers. Old rusty pumps: damn the thing else. The resurrection and the life. Once you are dead you are dead. That last day idea. Knocking them all up out of their graves. Come forth, Lazarus! And he came fifth and lost the job. Get up! Last day! Then every fellow mousing around for his liver and his lights and the rest of his traps.

In Bloom, Joyce does not idealize or spiritualize matter. He sees it for what it is—a container for the life-essence, complete now in the natural fact and not in some future spiritualized state. Bloom continu-
ally resurrects the dead in his thoughts. He gives life to whatever he perceives, penetrating to the Logos of the matter.

Bloom is the “complete man”: in him is the Logos in its immanence, the Word made flesh, and also in its transcendence as pure consciousness. He is at once a transcendental witness to the events of the day and a participant in them, who can shape them to good ends in an effortless manner. For example, whereas Ulysses had to slay the suitors of Penelope with his bow, Bloom achieves a similar purpose by doing nothing. He leaves Molly to dally all day and finally returns to her bed in the middle of the night. Then we find, in her sleepy ruminations, that Boylan is sinking in her favor and her husband is rising. Her thoughts culminate in the memory of her first lovemaking with Bloom, and the novel ends with her acceptance of him, “and yes I said yes I will Yes.” The outcome may be seen as tentative because this is the story of just one day. Still, this modern Ulysses has succeeded in defeating his wife’s suitor.

Bloom’s seeming passivity is his greatest strength and the mark of his completeness. He is something of an androgyne, embodying characteristics of both the archetypal male and female, and is thus a living Tao. He represents both Yang, the active male force, associated with the sky, light, and the urge to explore and discover, and also Yin, the female, the passive earth, the dark, the centrality of the womb. One passage refers to “the surety of the sense of touch in his firm full masculine feminine passive active hand.” Bloom has a gentle nature, and it takes delight in the physical, but he also has a masculine scientific bent and an analytical temperament. This balance is quite in keeping with his role as Logos, for the Logos is associated in certain traditions with androgyny. According to Mircea Eliade, Christ was thought androgynous by some Christian sects, as was Adam. Furthermore, Adam-Christ was the anthropos existing potentially in every human being:

Simon Magus called the primordial spirit arsenothelys, “male-female.” The Naasenes also imagined the celestial Man, Adamas, as an arsenothelys. Terrestrial Adam was no more an image of the celestial archetype; he too, therefore, was an androgyne. By the fact that the human race descends from Adam, the arsenothelys exists virtually in every man, and spiritual perfection consists precisely in rediscovering within oneself this androgynous nature. The supreme Spirit, the Logos, was itself
androgynous also. . . According to the Naasenes, the cosmic drama contains three elements: (1) the pre-existent Logos as a divine and universal totality; (2) the Fall, which caused the break-up of Creation and the birth of suffering; (3) the coming of the Saviour who by his unity reintegrated the countless fragments which make up our present-day Universe. According to the Naasenes, androgyny is one moment in a vast process of cosmic unification. (Mircea Eliade, *Mephistopheles and the Androgyne*)

Bloom in his androgynous completeness represents both the Logos incarnate and the transcendental pre-existent Logos. As Son, as imminent messiah, he implants the seminal Word in the speechless fallen world, from which he also maintains a paternal, transcendent detachment. And both of these male roles are fulfilled through a sympathy with the feminine. In the phantasmagoric Circe episode, Bloom changes into a woman and is proclaimed as “a finished example of the new womanly man.” In this instance Bloom’s womanliness is shown as a weakness, though from the point of view of the symbolism of androgyny, it actually indicates his secret strength. As Molly says of him at the end, “that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him . . .” Molly responds to the androgynous completeness in his nature. As the masculine-feminine Tao, as the transcendent-immanent Logos, as the Ulyssean “complete man,” Bloom himself is a microcosm. But Joyce’s work contains many levels, and in *Ulysses* the archetypal nuclear family, Father, Mother, and Son, all contained in Bloom, is also represented by the relationship of Bloom, Molly, and the young artist Stephen Dedalus. Stephen is not their natural son but they become in a sense his spiritual parents in the course of the novel. He has no connection with his biological parents and even refuses to fulfill his mother’s dying request to kneel by her bedside and pray. He is alienated from family and friends. His job as a schoolteacher confines him to the trodden paths of pedagogy, and though he extemporizes brilliantly on Shakespeare in a literary gathering, he is not taken seriously as a writer by the established literati. As Telemachus, he searches for his father Ulysses without knowing it. Atonement with the Father is one of the great mythic themes. According to Joseph Campbell, in the traditional idea of initiation, “the father is initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the
larger world” (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*). To be initiated is to be spiritually reborn, and Stephen must achieve this rebirth if he is to take his place confidently as an artist, assuming the nature of the *Logos* and delivering the *Word* to his fellow man.

Bloom as well as Stephen experiences a rebirth through their encounter in accordance with the classic pattern of the initiation, in which, as Campbell puts it, “We are taken from the mother, chewed into fragments and assimilated to the world—annihilating body of the ogre for whom all the precious forms and beings are only the courses of a feast; but then, miraculously reborn, we are more than we were” (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*). Both Bloom and Stephen have experienced a separation from the female. Stephen has been alienated from his mother and conceives of Woman as “allwombing tomb,” a Death Mother. For him the sea is an image of this destructive feminine power, and he avoids swimming in it. Bloom is also alienated from Woman in his own way. He has left Molly at home for the day though knowing of her intended infidelity, and he engages in some furtive and ineffectual infidelities of his own, for example, writing a suggestive letter to a “pen pal.” Both Stephen and Bloom are “annihilated,” or subjected to various humiliations throughout the day, as when Bloom in the Lestrygonians episode feels “as if I had been eaten and spewed” in his disgust with the crudity and dullness of people at lunchtime. The peak of this annihilation occurs in the Circe episode, where Stephen and Bloom find themselves in Dublin’s Nighttown, confronting personified fragments of their psyches. The intense catharsis of coming to terms with their split personalities prepares them for rebirth.

Their souls have parched and cracked from lack of the female water, and they must pass though the Woman in order to be whole again. So Bloom returns finally to his wife, taking Stephen with him. He has shown Stephen a photograph of Molly, and her presence back in the “Ithaca” of the Bloom residence at 7 Eccles Street attracts them both. Although she has gone to bed, the very fact that they are in her domain puts them under her harmonizing, reconciling female influence, Archetypically, the home itself is a female entity; it is a point of rest amidst the activity of the world, a womb.

After sharing a symbolic communion of cocoa, Bloom and Stephen talk and develop their relationship. Bloom is a kind of scientist in his
rootedness to sensory reality, and he tells the artist Stephen of some of his projected inventions and ideas for the betterment of mankind. Stephen recites poetry and discusses linguistics and philosophy. Each is exposed to the other’s bias and becomes more complete. They find a healing from the night’s schizophrenia in a union as father and son. Together, at this moment, they are comprised in a wholeness. Stephen hears in Bloom’s voice the “profound ancient male unfamiliar melody” of the past, and Bloom sees in the “quick young male” the “predestination of a future.” Youth and maturity in sympathetic communication elevate the value of the present moment by filling it with the values of time past and time future, experience and vision. This heightened sense of the moment culminates at their separation, when they go out into the garden and behold “The heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit.” Accompanying this vision are “Meditations of evolution increasingly vaster”; Bloom considers the immeasurable interstellar distances and the “infinitely remote futures in comparison with which the years, threescore and ten, of allotted human life formed a parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity.”

The Father has brought the Son back into touch with concrete reality, and the two have nourished each other on their opposite natures. Now Stephen is replete with the paternal Logos, and we can expect him to start to fulfill his artistic aspirations in giving mature expression of his Word. The vision of the heaventree of stars has sealed their union with sacral import whether or not they ever meet again. It is the moment that is important. As Stephen said earlier in the novel, God is “a shout in the street,” an immanent presence.

After Stephen’s departure, Bloom achieves a reconciliation of sorts with the other person of the trinity, Molly. It is the female spirit that has brought the two men together, and it is the son who restores the harmony between the parents. In the long internal monologue that closes *Ulysses*, Molly, lying in bed after Bloom’s return, reflects on the faults and virtues of Bloom and Boylan, with Bloom coming off rather badly at first. But then her thoughts turn to Stephen. Although she does not know him, she begins to fantasize a romance. As a sensitive, intelligent, poetic youth, he stirs her passion. Compared to Stephen, the satyr Boylan seems crude. But her thoughts soon return to Bloom, and as if strengthened by his association with Stephen, he finds more
favor in her judgment. Finally it is clear that Bloom has triumphed over his rival. Though he didn’t use a long bow to accomplish it, what Bloom did do was forgive and forget: before falling asleep, “He kisses her and in the words of Harry Blamires, “the kisses represent his decisive and final Yes.”35

Molly’s monologue is above all earthy, appropriately so, as she is compared to the Earth Mother Gea-Tellus as she lies on the bed. The feminine archetype is Nature herself, and Molly’s preoccupation with sex is the pure expression of the life force following its natural tendency through the physical world. By sacralizing the earth, she is a goddess of nature, especially when she recalls the day that she and Bloom first made love:

0 that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes and all the queer little streets and pink and blue and yellow houses and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was A Flower of the mountain yes . . .36

Molly has a simple belief in God based on the overwhelming plenitude of nature. For her God is always immanent and redeems the sorrow of life by continual, joyful replenishment. There is little room for distinctions between the sacred and the profane here. All opposites are subsumed under the cosmic unitive eye of Molly.

We do not know whether Bloom and his wife will reconcile their differences come the morning of June 17, 1904 (they have not made love in ten years). The fixture is tentative. But this day of Ulysses has been a turning point of some kind, filled with mythic implications for spiritual rebirth. Joyce has distilled a moment of individual life, unimaginably brief against the life of the stars, and shown it to be infinitely precious, to contain a universe within its tiny compass. The Absolute is with us now, in that shout from the street, and the fulfillment of consciousness is the realization of the constant field of infinite life that permeates the rich and endlessly detailed mosaic of our everyday world.
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21. Ellman, p. 43.


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Tracking the Path of Transcending:
The Source of Creativity
in Lope de Vega’s *El ganso de oro*

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THE SOURCE OF CREATIVITY

ABSTRACT

Spain produced so many important artists and writers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that this epoch in its culture came to be called the “Spanish Golden Age.” This age particularly saw a florescence of drama. One of the most prolific and influential playwrights of this period was Lope de Vega, a contemporary of William Shakespeare. Approximately four hundred of his plays have been preserved. El ganso de oro (The Golden Goose) is one of his lesser-known works, an early effort written between 1588 and 1595. Critics regard it as minor because they believe it fails to integrate all its elements into a cohesive whole. This essay argues that it deserves a more important status. Among Lope’s plays, it stands out as a coherent, unified and metadramatic text that delves into the mechanics of creativity. This argument is upheld by Maharishi Vedic Science, which provides a deep and rich understanding of the metadramatic process depicted in the comedia. El ganso de oro is a play that probes the dynamics of creativity and shows that its source, located within the transcendental Self (symbolized by the metaphorical cave) can lead to the creation of a play or the transformation of an ordinary person into a “hero.” Maharishi Vedic Science holds that such a heroic or enlightened personage, performing spontaneous right action, could restore a society to the ideal extolled in Spain’s Golden Age, that “heaven on earth” so often evoked by poets and philosophers in all societies throughout the ages.

Introduction

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi states that all successful poets “have tracked the path of transcending. They start from what the eyes see, or the hands feel, or the ears hear, and they travel into space and time and direct their focus on to the beyond” (“Poetry” 91). The creative process, then, is akin to the art of transcending. To transcend is to contact the level of unmanifest creative intelligence, which is the source of all creativity. When we hear in Maharishi’s reading of the Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary how intelligence operates within itself to generate nature, “Curving back on myself I create again and again” (9.8), we could almost be listening to Robert Browning who traced his poetic insights to a radiant “spring and source within us” (cited in Orme-Johnson 351). Kenneth Chandler describes a similar source for all humanity:
Many thousands of years ago, the seers of the Himalayas discovered, through the exploration of the silent levels of awareness, a unified field where all the laws of nature are found together in a state of wholeness. This unity of nature was directly experienced to be a self-referral state of consciousness. . . (5).

If literature emerges from this “source” and can be contacted deep within every self, then it would seem writers would want to understand and describe such a process. Lope de Vega was such a writer, and El ganso de oro (1588–95), one of his early neglected comedias, proves itself to be a coherent, unified, and metadramatic text that delves into the mechanics of creativity, tracks the path of transcending, and possesses the power of transformation. In the following pages we will see how its artificial language, Arcadia itself, and its pastoral inhabitants get transformed through the power of transcendence—suggested in this play by the hero’s archetypal journey—into a golden age resembling that mythic time with which Arcadia is often confused.

The Rhetoric of Love

Before examining the play’s transcendental virtues, first let us consider the pastoral world of Vega’s characters, a world constructed equally from a specialized set of social codes and a highly specific and artificial language. The first act of El ganso de oro, notes Richard Glenn, “derives mainly from the traditional motif of the chain of lovers. Three shepherds and two shepherdesses, Belardo, Silvero, Pradelo, Lisena, and Belisa, are hopelessly in love with the wrong man or woman.” Only one couple, Belardo-Belisa, demonstrate romantic reciprocity, but all assiduously seek amorous love experiences indicated by the one type of speech relished in Arcadia: A rhetoric of love ranging from laments for unrequited passion to rhetorical forms of seduction that attempt to bind the love object.

The artificiality of such discourse is deflated by Lisena who repeatedly punctures the poetic, synthetic world her would-be lover seeks to construct. In answer to Pradelo’s seductive rhetoric she proclaims: “Toda me has hecho un jardín” (“You have made me into a garden” [154]). She thus reduces his botanical conceits to an anomalous and risible commonplace. After such a tactical failure, Pradelo’s strategy turns away
from seduction to lament. Taking as a model the mythological tale of Iphis, he threatens suicide:

\begin{quote}
Voy a colgarme de un árbol
ólo para ver si el cielo
convierte a Lisena en mármol
ese corazón de hielo.
\end{quote}

(“I am going to hang myself from a tree, just to see if Heaven will turn Lisena and her heart of ice into marble” [155]).

But again Lisena counters his mythical and poetic language with prosaic common sense. Similar language and a similar response is found in another great Renaissance writer: William Shakespeare. In Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, Rosalind notes: “The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, *videlicet*, in a love cause. . . . Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love” (4.1.89-103). Rosalind’s speech closely parallels Lisena’s debunking of love, and it may be that Shakespeare used *El ganso de oro* as a model (de Armas, *But Not For Love*). Notice the resemblance to Rosalind’s speech in the following:

\begin{quote}
Sois los hombres desta suerte,
que siempre nos engañáis
con fingirnos que os daís muerte,
y de cuantos os matáis
muy poca sangre se vierte...
Que pensar que por amor
ha muerto nadie, es mentira.
\end{quote}

(“You men are such that you are always deceiving us pretending that you kill yourselves, but very little blood is spilled from many that so die. . . . To think that anyone has died for love is a lie” [155]). Leander, Pyramus, and Iphis, Lisena explains, died in accidents, but not for love.\(^3\)

According to William Empson, the essential trick of the old pastoral is “to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language” (11). And yet the power and universality of the shepherds’ discourse is brought into question by Lisena. Not only does she mock her would-be lover’s learned language as inap-
propriate for a rustic, but she also exposes his attempts to appropriate the power of mythology. Rather than mirroring Empson’s universality of feeling, shepherds in *El ganso de oro* seem intent on imitation, to change others rather than being themselves, to sham rather than express their truest feelings.

**Arcadia, The Golden Age, and the Rhetorical Ideal**

Lope de Vega’s Arcadia is thus a rather curious place, one that differs considerably from its pastoral tradition and one which certainly establishes a counterpoint with a second myth often linked to it. The Arcadia of the ancient Greeks was often conceptualized as that idealized utopia known as the Golden Age, but the Arcadia devised by the writers of the Renaissance was not quite so perfect. According to Renato Poggioli, the primeval innocence and happiness of the Golden Age represent the genesis of the pastoral ideal expressed in literature since Theocritus. The Arcadia of the Renaissance is often compared to that earlier age of humankind when truth, harmony, and distributive justice prevailed, a land of perpetual spring according to Ovid, where nature’s gifts to humankind were represented by the holm-oak, bearer of honey and the acorn, a later staple of the Arcadian diet. Indeed, Thomas G. Rosenmeyer asserts that the land of Arcadia and the Golden Age are “two sides of the same coin” (235). They are so closely related in literature and art that Harry Levin has to warn: “Arcadia is one myth; the Golden Age is another; and though they have significant linkages, art history does not help by confounding the two” (194–95).

Because of this constant confusing of the two, one ought to expect, then, the same harmony that characterizes the Golden Age to also be found in de Vega’s Arcadia. But the distance between the two myths is great, particularly in their various uses of language, the issue most germane to this paper. Along with its edenic locations, the Golden Age expresses itself in languages of truth with a clear link between signifier and signified. In the Arcadia of *El ganso de oro*, not only is idealized language derided, but words are used to manipulate, prevaricate, establish boundaries, and cause confusion.

Utilizing a different terminology, Vedic grammarians are also concerned with ideal language which they find in the close connection between linguistic parts. Patanjali states, for example, that “Sound
and sense and the relationship subsisting between the two” are eternal (57–8).\textsuperscript{4} In other words, the syllables of sound in the name (signifier) determine the form (signified). Other Vedic grammarians see ideal speech as emerging from the subllest \textit{para} or transcendental level where name and form are related. Rhoda Orme-Johnson, who summarizes Maharishi’s lectures on Vedic speech, states:

> the full range of the object’s reality will be contained within the word chosen to express the speaker’s subjective experience of it. When this word falls upon a listener whose consciousness is also fully developed, it will evoke in that consciousness the full reality from which it sprang (344).

She explains how a word, any word such as “rose,” can produce a beneficial effect on the consciousness when experienced at the deepest level of the self (346).

Orme-Johnson’s choice of examples is fortunate, for the rose, according to Edward Friedman, is “the ideal poetic symbol. . . . From classical antiquity onward, it has represented beauty and the impermanence of youth, of beauty and of earthly existence” (437). The inept shepherd in Lope’s play utilizes the name of the rose, but his effect remains on the surface:

\textit{¡Y esa frente tan hermosa!}
\textit{¡Y esa boca colorada,}
\textit{que no es boca, sino rosa!}

(“And such a beautiful forehead! And a mouth so red that it is no longer a mouth, but a rose” [154]).

Pradelo’s attempts to cultivate botanical conceits out of language fail to evoke the symbol, much less the form, of the flower, and he is therefore destined to remain instead at the level of what Julia Kristeva calls the sign.\textsuperscript{5} His “rose” fails to move Lisena since his language does not emerge from a deep level, such as the \textit{para} level of consciousness recognized in Vedic literature. Indeed, using them as weapons, Lisena redirects the botanical metaphors against her would-be lover and poet. Thus miss-communication rules in Lope de Vega’s play, producing a false Arcadia.

We see then in Pradelo’s inept attempts that language will always produce an effect, but not necessarily the one desired. When language
originates from a superficial source, the more erratic will be the communication and the more frustrations it will create. In order to give rise to the deepest possible level of speech the speaker (or writer) must possess an expanded awareness, and the listener, in order to fully profit from the speaker’s words, must also operate from a deep level of consciousness. Lisena intuits the superficiality of Pradelo’s language. She also appreciates the depth of feeling expressed by Belardo. Hearing Belardo poeticizing his love for Belisa through an apostrophe to nature (156), Lisena does not attempt to satirize this speaker’s language of love; instead, finding sincerity and truth in his words, she becomes enamored of him. Unfortunately, penetrating the depth of feeling in his poetry does Lisena little good since Belardo is not addressing her.

In her ensuing jealousy, Lisena turns language against herself, embracing a self-inflicted death she had once rejected: “que voy a ahorrarme en los lazos / de la vid más firme y vieja” (“that I am going to hang myself from a noose formed from the oldest and strongest vine” [158]).

Firmeza or constancy in love is replaced by the firm embrace of death. Through language, Arcadia is exposed as a land far removed from the timeless Golden Age. Images of suffering and dissolution predominate over those of harmony and happiness. Relationships are capricious and inconstant; Lisena ignored by Belardo switches her attention to the shepherd Silvero, whom she only pretends to love in order to arouse the passion and jealousy of Belardo.

Silvero accepts that shepherds are often doomed to suicidal thoughts arising from unrequited love, but he will not follow the example of Iphis, although sanctioned by pastoral discourse. He instead appeals to the magical powers of his father Felicio who appears before his cave to solve his son’s difficulties: “Todo lo que jamás ajuste y cuadre / a tu remedio tengo prevenido” (“I have arranged all that will ever be right and proper to bring about your well-being” [158]). Although the magician speaks from a deep level of consciousness, Silvero apprehends his words on a more surface level, believing that his father will unite him with the scornful shepherdess Belisa, an act far from the truth.

The Journey to the Self
We have seen how words spoken or understood only on the surface level of consciousness create misunderstandings and disruptions. The
same can be said of action; Maharishi explains: “All speech, action, and behavior are fluctuations of consciousness. All life emerges from and is sustained by consciousness” (Vedic Knowledge 68). Action in the early stages of Lope de Vega’s play fails to bring fulfillment to its characters unsupported by their environment. The element of consciousness needs to be added to their lives to transform their constant problems into harmony and contentment:

Gaining the full support of nature through development of the full creative potential of consciousness makes the student a master of life. He spontaneously commands situations and circumstances; he spontaneously controls his environment; his behavior is always spontaneously nourishing to himself and everyone around him. He has the ability to spontaneously fulfill his interest without jeopardizing the interest of others (Maharishi, Vedic Knowledge 115).

Lope’s characters on the other hand do jeopardize others. Shepherds construct amorous intrigues to bring unhappiness to rivals, and Belardo-Belisa, the one relationship based on constancy in love expressed in sincere, amorous rhetoric, is literally torn apart by a savage who abducts Belisa and takes her into a hidden cave. The barbarity of the incident suggests a lack of support from nature for the play’s characters, but it also ironically suggests just the opposite—a rise in consciousness symbolized by the descent into a cave.

In most pastorals, the savage (salvaje) is a thoroughly negative character whose intrusion into the pastoral landscape serves to disrupt the prevalent harmony. In Montemayor’s La Diana, for example, three savages must be vanquished by Felismena, an icon of the goddess Diana, before the pilgrimage to Diana’s temple can continue (Damiani 73–5). In El ganso de oro the unvanquished savage is feared by all, and his presence is another sign that Arcadia is not synonymous with the Golden Age. The salvaje, however, does not completely represent evil; for although he causes tragedies, his abduction of Belisa helps to free the shepherds from their false paradise.

Belardo, in love with Belisa, enters the cave to rescue her. Caves are common features in pastoral landscapes, and Lope de Vega makes extensive use of one in his pastoral romance La Arcadia (de Armas, Caves), where he associates it with a vates (poet-prophet). In both play and romance, Lope imitates a number of classical models. In Virgil’s
Fifth Eclogue, the cave appears as the abode of the shepherd-poet (Berg 116). In the Fourth Georgic, it is utilized as a catabasis, a hero’s journey to the depths of the earth in search of knowledge. These journeys, whether to the underworld or merely within a cave, symbolize the journey within the self. Since the poet must go to the deepest levels of the self to gain inspiration, such a journey is also a symbol of poetic creation. In the Fourth Georgic, Orpheus the prototypical poet for many Renaissance writers intent on imitating the classics, descends into the underworld in search of his dead Eurydice: “In Virgil’s Georgics 4 and Ovid’s Metamorphoses 10 and 11, Orpheus is the vates, the eloquent artist, whose lyric power moves the world and the underworld where he charms the spirits of Hades, including immovable Pluto. When Eurydice disappears for a second time, he tames beasts and enchants trees [with his song]” (Barnard 4–5).

Orpheus suggests the Vedic ideal, a poet who can positively affect various levels of the listener’s consciousness. “When poetry arises from the depths of awareness it will inspire life. That is, its flow will stimulate a similar flow of life in the listener and enliven various levels of the listener’s consciousness” (Orme-Johnson 350). In El ganso de oro, Belardo recalls the myth of Orpheus when he readies himself to pursue Belisa into the cave (159). Following the path of the poet, his entrance into the cave symbolizes the journey within consciousness previously traversed by great visionary vates.

Drawing from the Nekya or eleventh book of the Odyssey and from the deeds of heroes such as Gilgamesh, Theseus, and Orpheus, Raymond J. Clark concludes that in a catabasis the hero descends to the lower world in search of wisdom. By alluding to Orpheus, Belardo links his own cave episode to a catabasis. He wanders through dark subterranean passages and eventually stumbles upon a wedding. Belisa (in Belardo’s cave-vision) is marrying the ruler of Naples. The ceremony may be viewed as a projection of Belardo’s fear, a prophecy he does not wish to face. Desperate, he attempts to interrupt the ceremony, only to discover it is an illusion. As it vanishes, he realizes that in his fury he has misplaced the thread to the outer world. Lost in his inner darkness, Belardo laments the folly of his “amoroso exceso” and, since life and love are so precarious, decides to walk with death.
Northrop Frye discussing themes of descent explains, “When it is wisdom that is sought in the lower world, it is almost always wisdom connected with the anxiety of death in some form or other, along with the desire to know what lies beyond” (122). In El ganso de oro, the cave has provided Belardo with a vision of those elements he fears most, separation from his beloved and death. But his experience is not a negative one since he achieves inner stability when confronted by threatening circumstances. Previously, he had been lost even while clutching what would lead him back to the surface (“de un frágil hilo asido / voy entre riscos perdido” “holding a fragile thread I am lost amongst the rocks” [162]). But then, lacking the precious thread, he is forced to rely on nature and his inner awareness to lead him from the cave. Emerging in the countryside around Naples, he finds the world as it should be, since destiny had decreed that this particular shepherd must save Naples from the plague.

Rhoda Orme-Johnson, in her study of Cupid and Psyche from Apuleius’ Golden Ass, finds a catabasis that serves as an archetypal pattern for descents in several modern novels. She also demonstrates how it parallels the path of transcendence during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique: “The pattern of descent into another world followed by a life-enhancing return thus metaphorically depicts the transcending process, the natural dive of conscious awareness toward its source, the field of pure intelligence or the Self” (363). The pattern of transcending is also clearly, albeit metaphorically, depicted in El ganso de oro.

Belardo’s entrance into the cave is like the descent within the Self. At first the shepherd holds on tightly to the thread, making the process difficult. Only when he lets go of it does he succeed, thus mirroring the principles of effortlessness and spontaneity in the Transcendental Meditation technique. In his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, Maharishi explains, “It is, in fact, perfectly easy to lead the attention to the field of Being [transcendence]: one has only to allow the mind to move spontaneously from the gross field of objective experience, through the subtle fields of the thought-process to the ultimate transcendent Reality of existence” (97–8). Later he states: “The process of contemplation and concentration both hold the mind on the conscious thinking level, whereas practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique system-
atically takes the mind to the source of thought, the pure field of creative intelligence” (350). By not concentrating on the thread, but rather letting go, Belardo is able to contact his own analogous field of Being.

**The Hero in Harmony with Nature**

Belardo’s actions follow those of the archetypal hero as described by Joseph Campbell, the hero who emerges triumphant from underground regions or the deeper level of the Self with the power to “bestow boons on his fellow men” (30). In terms of the process of transcending, Belardo, by contacting the deepest level of the self—Being—has, according to Maharishi, “come into contact with the unlimited creative intelligence of the cosmic life” (*Thirty Years* 465), or according to quantum physics, the unified field of all the laws of nature.9

Supported by the laws of nature, Belardo is now capable of assuming his role as hero. Coming out into the world Dardanio, a magician buried for ten centuries, informs him that the opening of his tomb has triggered the plague in Naples. This odd coupling of events illustrates a principle found in the Bhagavad-Gita, namely, that in the field of relativity action is unfathomable.10 According to Maharishi, for action to always be right, to be in harmony with the laws of nature, it is necessary for the actor’s awareness to be permanently open to the field of Being, the field of total potential of natural law in the state of Cosmic Consciousness. In this state life is spontaneously harmonious and action meets with the least possible resistance (*Science of Being* 250).11

This principle of harmonious action is demonstrated in *El ganso de oro* in an exchange between Dardanio and Belardo. Although Belardo may not possess cosmic awareness, he nonetheless has uncanny good luck and repeatedly performs at a high level of right action. His first piece of good fortune is Dardanio’s explanation of how to end the plague. It will only abate, the magician explains, when someone goes to the cave where he himself had been buried and kills the serpent presently abiding there:

*Entra en mi cueva que mostrarte quiero*
*una sierpe encantada y venenosa*
*cuya cerviz degollarás . . .*

(“Enter into my cave. I want to show you the enchanted and poisonous reptile whose head you will sever” [165]).
This discussion with Dardanio proves the deeper laws of nature are no longer hidden from Belardo. Now familiar with the cave, suggesting the more subtle and more powerful levels of the Self, Belardo’s actions will have a greater and more positive impact on his surroundings, as exemplified by his attempt to rid Naples of the serpent/dragon.

An environmentalist’s nightmare, the breath of this fantastical creature poisons the heavens—“la región del aire contagiosa / que agora sobre Nápoles se extiende” (“the contagious region of air that now spreads over Naples” [165]). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, plague was believed to result in part from meteorological phenomena such as comets that corrupted the air. The description of the sierpe recalls one particular type of meteor, the draco volans. Hence, this fiery malefic was thought to be the devil himself (Heninger 95).

Medical manuals of the period explain that meteors also formed in the microcosm of the human body. They were believed to be the products of the fears and passions that plague the self, not unlike the allegorical passions slain by ancient heroes. On entering the cave carrying a “frágil hilo” (“fragile thread” [162]), Belardo compares himself to Theseus who slayed the Minotaur; according to Campbell’s monomyth, a typical heroic deed representing the purging of selfish passions. In terms of Maharishi Vedic Science, a similar cleansing takes place during the Transcendental Meditation technique. As the mind settles to deeper levels of consciousness, the process of transcending removes physical as well as psychological stress accumulated in the nervous system. Thus, metaphorically, the killing of the sierpe will not only restore health to the land, it will also evince Belardo’s newly acquired equanimity and valor.

Having killed the dragon and rid Naples of the plague, Belardo has been transformed from shepherd to hero to monarch whom some even believe: “Poder trajo celestial” (“has brought with him celestial power” [167]). In the logic of Maharishi Vedic Science, Belardo’s archetypal pattern of transformation tracks the process of transcending:

When the mind comes out from the field of Being, the plane of cosmic law, into the relative field of activity, which is under the influence of innumerable laws of nature, it automatically enjoys the support of cosmic law, and this makes possible the accomplishment of any aspiration and the ultimate fulfillment of life (Gita 351).
Although Belardo has become hero and monarch, and through the act of transcending (as represented by his descent into the cave) has come in touch with the creative source, he still possesses human weaknesses. Unlike the enlightened seeker who has gained that state when Transcendental Consciousness is never lost—a state of perfect equanimity, a state where all personal desires are satisfied, a state where all opposites are resolved—Belardo still has room for growth. His insightful acts have led the country to crown him their new king, but he is unable to recognize Belisa (who still acts and speaks in her role as shepherdess) when she comes to Naples, an indication of his still limited awareness.

**Beyond Human Weakness**

Belardo’s inability to recognize Belisa also suggests a lack of communication between Arcadia and Naples. Like these two contrasting realms, many important oppositions exist in Lope’s *comedia*, emphasizing the limited world of differences: pastoral and polis, shepherds and magicians, poets and rulers. However, if there is a chain of opposites that separate, there is also a transcendent realm symbolized by the cave that connects these opposites, reducing them to different manifestations of the same transcendent source. This cave with its transformative qualities is familiar to Belardo, since he has used it to move from the prison of passion to the freedom of destiny.

In spite of his successes in the external world, Belardo remains most concerned with his experiences in the cave, which he has yet to fully understand. We should recall that the cave had provided him with what he sees as a suspect vision of Belisa’s wedding. He has come to believe that the representation of a fickle Belisa marrying a prince must be a shadow play performed by demons:

> ¿Qué más claros testimonios<br>de que ha sido aquella boda<br>dentro del infierno, y toda<br>sombra y ficción de demonios?

(“What clearer testimony [than] that wedding took place in hell and that it was all a shadow and a fiction fashioned by devils?” [164])
He wonders if the cave is as false as the mock-paradise of Arcadia. It is clear he has failed to grasp the significance of what he sees within the cave/Self. In terms of Maharishi Vedic Science, Belardo is in the process of developing awareness. He is aware enough to have a prophetic vision in the cave, but not aware enough to interpret it correctly; he has not yet attained a state such as Cosmic Consciousness, a state of awareness according to Maharishi in which “all knowledge is within its grasp” (Creating an Ideal Society 150). The end of the play will show Belardo attaining to such a state verified by his full support of nature.

From here a number of highly dramatic events bring the play to its conclusion. Belardo (and perhaps the magician Felicio) come to control their behavior and environment, spontaneously fulfilling their desires “without jeopardizing the interests of others” (Vedic Knowledge 115). Felicio, responsible for Belisa’s abduction, gives Silvero the power of invisibility, allowing him to enter the palace of Naples unseen. Paralleling the actions of Gyges recounted by Plato and Herodotus, Silvero will attempt to murder the new monarch to assuage his jealous passion.13

A fratricide by Felicio, the magus ex machina who claims to be following the laws of destiny, is staged but avoided. The magician had warned Silvero that in giving him the dagger, he was “dándote mayor bien del que deseas” (“giving you a greater good than what you desire” [171]). The statement is both literally and figuratively true because instead of a murderer, Silvero turns out to be brother to king Belardo. Felicio explains that he himself was once the king of Athens, but retired to Arcadia where he raised his daughter Belisa. While abiding in Arcadia, he met the old King of Naples who journeying through the area met and fell in love with the nymph Niseida who gave birth to Silvero and Belardo, brothers not raised as brothers. This final anagnorisis paves the way for the happy ending structured by Felicio, whose name is a variation of felicity, and the royal wedding between Belisa and Belardo is the fulfillment of the real vision the cave had depicted. Belardo had not realized at the time that the king he saw marrying Belisa was none other than himself. He had merely misinterpreted his vision since he as yet had not been transformed by the path of transcending (his descent into the cave).14
Belardo’s original distortion of his vision demonstrates the powerlessness of a surface reality, as does the aborted attempts to manipulate the world through superficial language or to operate, with unfathomable and sometimes deadly results, from a state of ignorance. The weaknesses inherent in such superficial thinking and consequential activity is suggested in *El ganso de oro* through two important images. The rose and dragon on a surface level typify a false paradise and a plague-ridden kingdom, and their significance is deepened when related to the transcendental cave that connects the two realms the rose and dragon represent.

In this liminal area between the rose and the dragon, beyond opposing lands, Belardo is nurtured and transformed, emerging from an Orphic *catabasis* capable of ridding the city of contagion. The shepherd has become hero and king. In the language of Maharishi Vedic Science, Belardo has transcended his limited self, his individual ego, symbolized by his entrance into the cave, and there through the transforming power of Being (Transcendental Consciousness) that the cave represents he emerges a wiser and more dynamic individual who enjoys the support of nature. Fulfilled within himself he returns to his kingdom ready to take on great responsibility and exert the positive influence of his highly developed state of consciousness for the benefit of all humanity. His benign effect on his environment is seen in the healing of Naples and through the marriages that restore order and resolve the play’s love interests. Pradelo marries Lisena, Silvero marries the daughter of the king of Rome, and Belardo marries Belisa, who turns out to be the daughter of the king of Athens.

Helping to comprehend the symbolic patterning in the play’s conflicts and resolutions, Maharishi Vedic Science also assists in a deeper understanding of the metadramatic process of Lope’s play. For *El ganso de oro* not only functions as a *comedia*, it also probes the dynamics of creativity. It demonstrates that the source of creativity is located within the transcendental Self (the metaphorical cave), and contact with this source can lead to the formulation of a play or can transform an ordinary shepherd into a poet-king, an archetypal hero, an enlightened being. And through the transformation of the individual can come the transformation of society, led by an exalted being like Belardo whose spontaneous right action can lead society away from false paradises and
plagued lands toward a restoration of the primordial Golden Age, that “Heaven on earth” so often evoked by poets and philosophers throughout the ages.16

Notes
1 All Spanish citations from El ganso de oro are followed by my own English translations.
2 When the princess Anaxarate mocked Iphis, he hanged himself in despair on the door of her house. Anaxarate was punished for her lack of compassion by Venus, who turned her into stone.
3 Rosalind gives as examples Troilus and Leander. Traces of the Pyramus story can be found later in Shakespeare’s play (de Armas, But Not For Love).
4 I would like to thank Peter M. Scharf of Brown University for pointing out this reference. Modern scholars debate whether the author of the Yoga Sutras is the same Patanjali who wrote the Mahabhasya presumably in the first or second century B.C.
5 Kristeva’s notion of symbols is far from the transcendental since she sees their meaning as acquired knowledge rather than an intuitive exercise.
6 In this instance of role-reversal, Lisena sees herself as the Iphis of mythology, while Belardo must be envisioned as the uncaring princess Anaxarate.
7 Belardo’s love rhetoric ranges from apostrophes to nature (156–7) to the discussion of the representation of the beloved’s name on a tablilla through the use of two letters, b and a, and a picture of a flower, the lis (158). Belisa accepts these verbal gifts from her lover since they seem to emerge from a deeper level of consciousness. Maharishi explains that in those whose speech arises from the unified field “expressions would be more lucid, easier to understand, appealing, not creating frustrations in the environment, but creating more harmony” (Fulfilling the Purpose of Language, cited in Orme-Johnson 343). While Pradelo’s botanical conceits lead to frustration, Belardo’s flower contributes to the harmony between the lovers. In addition, Belardo’s rhetoric will not emerge as inappropriate in a rustic, since he will be shown to be of royal blood at the end of the comedia.
According to Oleh Mazur: “The geographical location of Lope’s salvaje was Europe, and his favorite abode a cave in the mountains” (212).

“Quantum field theories of modern science have glimpsed the unified field, the home of all the laws of nature, and Maharishi has shown that the complete knowledge of the unified field is available in Maharishi Vedic Science” (Maharishi Technology 13).

Commenting on the verse “Unfathomable is the course of action,” Maharishi states: “Every thought, word or act sets up waves of influence in the atmosphere. These waves travel through space and strike against everything in creation. Wherever they strike they have some effect. The effect of a particular thought on any particular object cannot be known because of the diversity and vast extent of creation” (Commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita 276).

Speaking of Cosmic Consciousness, Maharishi asserts: “The individual then comes in tune with the cosmic life, the movements of the individual are in accord with the movements of the entire cosmos, the purpose of the individual is found in the purpose of the entire cosmos, and the life of the individual is found established in cosmic life” (Science of Being 250).

An ancient Greek legend describes Theseus as the son of Aegeus, king of Athens. He was one of seven youths, who along with seven maidens, were sent to Crete every year to be devoured by the Minotaur (a monster that was half human and half bull, the offspring of Pasiphae and a bull). In Crete, Ariadne, the daughter of king Minos and Pasiphae, fell in love with Theseus and provided him with a sword to kill the Minotaur and a thread to find the way out of the labyrinth where this beast abided.

On tales of invisibility in Spanish Golden Age literature see de Armas, “Invisibility and Interpolation.”

“When the Absolute informs itself about itself and becomes aware of the infinite potentiality of its own nature, the flow of information begins. . . . On this level all information is ‘inside information.’ If individual awareness can attune itself to this level of consciousness, all knowledge is within its grasp” (Creating an Ideal Society, 150).

Belardo is one of the poetic names used by Lope de Vega.
In the literature of the Spanish Golden Age, one of the more common ways of evoking the first age of humankind was through reference to the goddess Astraea. See de Armas, *The Return of Astraea*.

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Time, Eternity, and Immortality
in T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*

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ABSTRACT

The Four Quartets is regarded by many as the greatest philosophical poem of the twentieth century. Eliot’s earlier epic, The Wasteland, has had a more lasting influence, but the latter poem is a fuller, more mature treatment of Eliot’s spiritual vision. The Four Quartets considers the relationship between life in time, a life of bondage and suffering, and life in eternity, freedom and happiness. Prior to composing the Four Quartets Eliot had converted to Anglicanism, but the poem remains primarily Eastern with the Bhagavad-Gita as its principle source of inspiration. Because Maharishi Vedic Science is the most comprehensive discussion on the relationship between life in time and life in eternity, between ignorance and enlightenment, and because its practical methodologies—the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique and the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program—provide the means for living life in eternity, it exists as the most appropriate body of knowledge for elucidating the full scope of Eliot’s masterpiece.

Introduction

Thomas Stearns Eliot was a set of mind-bending contradictions. An American from St. Louis, he moved to England and took British citizenship. A man who had always wanted to be a poet, he studied philosophy at Harvard. A writer who filled his poetry with Eastern philosophy, he converted to Anglicanism. One of the world’s great intellectuals, Eliot read detective fiction and wrote limericks about cats in his spare time. The most revolutionary poet of his age (who literally changed the direction of poetry), he is now seen by post-structuralists as a crypto-fascist. These same kinds of opposing characteristics exist everywhere in Eliot’s poetry and nowhere more than in his masterpiece Four Quartets. Sometimes called a “negative poet” for his unrelenting attack on modern life in his earlier works, in the Four Quartets he sees things differently. The life of time and change that he had previously depicted as the “wasteland” is in the Four Quartets supported by an underlying, spiritual absolute, a level of life where the two extremes of time and timeless are indistinguishable. Moreover, Eliot espouses the experience of this transcendental field as the spiritually transforming value of all life both for the individual and the world. Therefore, in Eliot’s last and greatest poetic effort, we find not a nega-
tive or dualistic view of life after all, but rather the vision of a man who passionately believed in a spiritual unity.

What particularly satisfies about the *Four Quartets* is that they complete Eliot’s broad spiritual landscape begun with “Prufrock,” “Gerontion” and *The Wasteland*, poems about failure in a bankrupt universe. But with the words from the Upanishads, “Datta . . . Dayadhvam . . . Damyata,” spoken by the thunder at *The Wasteland*’s conclusion, Eliot anticipates a revitalized world that he fully conceives in the *Four Quartets*. In this later poem, Eliot once again includes the world of desire, fear and death that haunted *The Wasteland* and other earlier efforts, but in the *Quartets* the importance of this darker world has been diminished, relegated to the sphere of time to form a mere backdrop to Eliot’s expanded vision of life as unblemished eternity.

Tradition has it that Eliot had long wanted to write a poem imitating music, an intention confirmed in his essay “The Music of Poetry.” The structure of his *Quartets*, with the introduction of an initial theme and an elaboration and variation on that theme, and a series of movements repeated in each quartet, suggests that he was not only indebted thematically and structurally to music, he was also indebted to the famous quartets of Mozart or Beethoven (Matthiessen 182) for the poem’s name. Eliot’s primary theme—time and the timeless—consistent with the temporal qualities of music, is presented in the *Four Quartets*’ opening lines:

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past . . .  
all time is eternally present.

Time more than anything defines the contrasting dimensions of relative existence: an apparent snare with no escape, a continuum of change ever wearing away the fabric of existence, a flow and beauty in constant renewal, a series of exquisite moments that bind life together. Time defines the human condition—the constant reminder that our days are numbered, that our “too, too solid flesh” will too soon melt. The fatal image of time symbolizes the Modern Age—the gravedigger delivering the newborn child, the conflation of womb and tomb. Over

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1 Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 5.1. Eliot uses Deussen’s *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, p. 489 which translates these words as “Give, sympathize, control.”
the span of English literature, poets as diverse as Spenser, Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, Yeats and Dylan Thomas (“Time held me green and dying”) have vilified time as an assassin without conscience, a long-held view of time in cultures much older than our own:

All the hopes of man in this world are consistently destroyed by Time. Time alone, O sage, wears everything out in this world; there is nothing in creation which is beyond its reach. Time alone creates innumerable universes, and in a very short time Time destroys everything (Venkatesananda 16).

When we make “time run,” suggests Andrew Marvell, when we allow our lives to be dictated by deadlines, when we compress too much activity into too few hours, time catapults us toward our end. But if we could reverse Marvell’s dictum, slow time down, make time stop, transcend time, peacefully settle into the silence of eternity, we would have “world enough, and time” for everything. In such a state, we would exchange roles with time and we would become its gentle annihilator. Hence, timelessness or eternity is the second element in Eliot’s equation for the *Four Quartets*:

\[ \text{Time} + \text{eternity} = \text{entirety (everything, wholeness)} \]

The *Four Quartets’* opening four lines demonstrate Eliot’s grasp of time, its spiritual significance, and its philosophically exasperating nature which the poet contemplates in the line: “time is eternally present,” an assertion that lends to time both relative and absolute properties while conflating its various, fluctuating forms—*the past* forever disappearing, *the future* forever being born, and *the present* forever being renewed into a single moment. Pointedly juxtaposing time and eternity, Eliot calls attention to the close relationship between them. By merging past, present, and future, he creates the eternal present, absolute and relative, never changing and always fleeting, captured in time like the lovers on Keats’ urn for future unborn generations.

Because time and eternity are fundamental to the *Four Quartets*, this subject has been mined again and again by Eliot critics. Nevertheless, it is a topic that needs to be sifted once more. Previous analyses have not examined time and eternity in a fully systematic way. Proponents of both Eastern and Western thought have made invaluable commentaries on the significance of time in the *Quartets*, but they miss the poem’s
most vital element, Eliot’s sincere conviction that eternity can and must be incorporated into the life of time as the sole means to revitalize the wasteland of modern life. Read with greatest profundity, the *Four Quartets* presents the triumph of life over time. With the Bhagavad-Gita as his primary inspiration, Eliot moves forward in a continuous ebb and flow of time and eternity until he reaches the end of the poem, which is its true beginning, life lived forever in the timeless, no longer touched by the binding influence of time. This absolute state Maharishi Vedic Science calls *Brahmi Chetna*, Unity Consciousness: individual life raised to the level of the universal, the temporal raised to the level of the eternal. Simply stated, the *Four Quartets* present a progression, a nonlinear evolution of human consciousness, away from the wasteland suffering of time-locked existence and toward the full beatitude of spiritual life in the eternal freedom lived beyond time.

Maharishi Vedic Science, which includes Maharishi’s extensive commentaries on Vedic Literature, substantial video collection on the relationship between time-bound relativity and the varieties of timeless existence, a weighty library of texts on the Transcendental Meditation technique and its application to every conceivable field, and a collection of scientific papers documenting twenty-five years of research, exists as an enormous intellectual resource on the nature of life lived in and out of time. Because of Eliot’s training in Eastern philosophy, and because he routinely draws upon the Bhagavad-Gita, the *Upanishads*, and other Vedic texts, Maharishi Vedic Science is not only an appropriate critical light by which to view Eliot’s poetry, it illuminates it to a degree not previously attained in other critical commentaries. Other studies, such as P. S. Shri’s *T. S. Eliot: Vedanta and Buddhism* and A. N. Dwivedi’s *T. S. Eliot’s Major Poems: An Indian Interpretation*, indiscriminately rather than systematically draw from the huge body of Vedic Literature. Maharishi Vedic Science treats time and its opposite counterpart, transcendent eternity, as complementary components in an ongoing cycle of evolution. More importantly, it provides the means of accelerating this process of evolution through its applied elements—the Transcendental Meditation technique and the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi pro-

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2 For the collected papers containing the extensive scientific research on the practice and benefits of the practical technologies of Vedic Science, the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation and Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi programs, see D. Orme-Johnson, Farrow, Chalmers, Clements, et al.
gram—for experiencing the field of eternity, pure consciousness, which has enormous benefits for every individual, society, and all of life.

The *Four Quartets* also consider the possibility of immortality—the logical fusing of time and eternity, more or less ignored by previous Eliot criticism. Immortality, to the Western scholar, lies either in the field beyond this life or in the metaphorical realm of poetry, inspiring but impractical. But, as we shall see, immortality had greater substance for Eliot than simply as a poetic concept, and for Maharishi Vedic Science it is both the starting point and the natural conclusion of Maharishi’s programs mentioned above. Therefore, in this paper I will employ Maharishi Vedic Science, especially as it relates to time, eternity, and immortality, as a hermeneutical aid to unveil the deepest values of Eliot’s masterpiece.

## The *Four Quartets*

### The Epigraph

The *Four Quartets* like *The Wasteland* begins with an epigraph. In the *Quartets* the epigraph serves as the initial commentary on time and launches the poem’s tone and its basic themes. The epigraph originally pertained only to *Burnt Norton* conceived autonomously, but because of their common theme, it equally applies to each of the *Quartets*. Two quotations in Greek from Heraclitus comprise the epigraph. The following is a fair translation of the first:

> Although logos (universal consciousness) is common to all, most live as though they had an individual wisdom (consciousness) of their own.

The proper sense of this epigraph is important because it introduces the primary concern of the *Four Quartets*, the connection between individual and universal, temporal and eternal. Interpretations of the epigraph are typical of interpretations of the poem as a whole. A few examples will prove instructive. Derek Traversi misreads the line as “a reasonable truth is . . . the common possession of men, whose lives in fact can only be lived significantly in common, in recognition of their essentially social nature” (91). Some interpretations are better than others, but Heraclitus’ epigraph undoubtedly asserts much more than Traversi’s social implications.
For Julia Reibetanz, “[t]he problem that the first fragment broaches is . . . the opposition of individual wisdoms to that of higher Wisdom available to all men” (20). Reibetanz’s reading is more helpful, but she unfortunately cleaves a dichotomy between the higher and lower wisdoms, and in doing so divides the epigraph’s sense of unity implicit in the word “common.” Because logos is common to all, a universality always exists, and, therefore, there can be no real opposition. Others reading the line from a conventionally religious position, take “logos” metaphorically rather than literally to mean the focal point around which all human action revolves (Gish 97). To read the epigraph as a metaphor, unfortunately, is to miss Heraclitus’ profound commentary on the literal relationship between the individual and the divine.

Grover Smith’s more liberal translation of the Heraclitian fragment—“Although there is but one Center, most men live in centers of their own” (251) is among the better interpretations. Heraclitus says there is only one logos, or center of intelligence—analogous to the foundational field of existence Maharishi calls pure consciousness or pure intelligence—but people mistakenly see only their own, individual centers. This misunderstanding of the part for the whole is what Maharishi Vedic Science calls pragya-апардх—the mistake of the intellect—the mistake of believing that an individual consciousness imbedded in time, rather than an eternal, unified consciousness, is the true nature of existence. Reading the line in this broader sense, that there is a primal state common to everyone, suggests that the relationship between logos and individual wisdom is not adversarial, as Reibetanz has suggested; it is simply that the interconnectedness of such a relationship has been lost. An example from modern physics will help clarify what Heraclitus means by a “logos common to all.”

A commonplace exists that Einstein’s greatest disappointment was his failure to prove his unified field theory. In 1967 Professors Weinberg and Salam began to make inroads to redress that disappointment. It was in that year they introduced a theory unifying the weak and electromagnetic forces, two of the four fundamental forces governing physical nature. Seven years later, in 1974, “supersymmetry” was born, a profound mathematical symmetry principle capable of unifying particles of different ‘spin,’ i.e., force fields and matter fields, providing the mathematical basis for completely unified field theories. During the
past several years, the application of this principle has led to the development of completely unified theories of all the fundamental forces and particles of nature based on the heterotic string (Hagelin 74–75).

Unified field theory establishes a fundamental, eternal, non-changing source for all phenomena, or in Heraclitus’ terms a “common logos.” It verifies what Vedic Literature has long avowed, the existence of a unified field of pure consciousness as the basis of all life, a field from which all temporal phenomena emerge. The existence of this field has been further corroborated over the past sixty years by millions of people who experience that common, eternal field of pure consciousness during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique. The discovery of the unified field in physics, the descriptions from Vedic Literature, and experiences during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique demonstrate a profound interconnectedness between time and eternity, a universal or common source for all existence.

Because this common source lies at the basis of all the laws of nature—those laws involved in the organization of every aspect of creation—direct experience of this source has enormous value to everyone. Repeated experience of this source of life, Maharishi explains, will put an end to the violation of natural law, all problems and human suffering that Eliot depicts as the wasteland. When the full potential of natural law is enlivened in Cosmic Consciousness—the second of the enlightened states that Maharishi clearly defined as the seven states of consciousness—complete harmony with the environment and full support of natural law ensues. (Please refer to Notes (1) for a further discussion of higher states of consciousness.) This is life completely free of mistakes in which eternity is breathed into every moment of ever-changing time.

Hence, it is essential to comprehend the intimate relationship between Heraclitus’ “logos,” what Eliot simply calls eternity, and “individual wisdom,” or Eliot’s time-bound existence. In affirming that there exists a “logos . . . common to all,” meaning a logos located everywhere and available to everyone at all times, Heraclitus is neither being superficially philosophical nor casually mystical; he is, in his aphoristic style, describing the true reality of existence. Vedic Science calls the source of life pure consciousness—analogous to Heraclitus’ logos—the eternal fountainhead from which everything springs, always exists, and
is no further away than one’s own Self—eternity that has been lost in the maze of time. The logos of the epigraph, then, holds the same philosophical value for Heraclitus as does Eliot’s own “still point” in *Burnt Norton*.

The second Heraclitus’ quote in the epigraph is complementary to the first: “The way up and the way down are one and the same” is a paradoxical statement that at first seems the coinage of an absurdist, which neither Heraclitus nor Eliot was. They both, however, loved paradoxes that accentuated for them the incongruities of life. Paradoxes also abound in Vedic Literature and quantum physics, disciplines in which Heraclitus’ statement makes perfect sense. From the perspective of the unified field, *the way up and the way down are* [indeed] *one and the same* because everything in creation at the ground state is an equal distance from everything else. I might have said an equal distance in time and space, but on this most fundamental level, time and space exist only *in potentia*. This equal distancing can even apply to manifest, solid objects if the measurement (if infinity could be measured) is taken at an object’s deepest level, at its unified field. The cactus in Arizona, the olive tree in Greece, and the mango tree in India, all separated on the physical level, are homogeneous at their common source, with no lapse in space or time.

Practitioners of the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique also demonstrate daily that distance in either time or space is only a concept. Mentally starting from the field of greatest activity, entrenched in time, they experience ever deeper, less active states of consciousness until they transcend the least excited state of activity and reach the unbounded, eternal field of pure consciousness—a self-referral state of pure potential—from which all other levels of existence find their origin (Maharishi, *Science of Being* 50–57). The change in experience from the ever-changing, waking consciousness to the never-changing Transcendental Consciousness, from an isolated point in time to an unbounded, timeless eternity, is enormous, but the journey is accomplished without physical movement and at the very least expense of energy. All that changes is a shift in awareness. Seen in this light, the axiom, “the way up and the way down are one in the same,” is valid in both theory and experience.
Ostensibly the two Heraclitian aphorisms, one about intelligence and the other about direction, differ from Eliot’s concern in the *Four Quartets* with time and eternity, but all three ideas converge, as if at a Roman crossroads, at the point of interconnectedness where concrete individuality and abstract universality meet, where all roads begin and all roads end, where time and eternity cannot be distinguished, a point Eliot will make again and again in each of the following *Quartets*.

*Burnt Norton*

Eliot chose the title of his first quartet — *Burnt Norton* — from the name of a manor house he once visited in Gloucestershire, England, because its grounds inspired the poem’s central image, the ethereal rose garden. For each of the quartets, Eliot selected a place name, and together they function as “objective correlatives,” concrete foundations to which Eliot tethers his highly abstract, philosophical ideas. Each quartet takes its name from a specific locale that represents for Eliot an emotional or spiritual state. Burnt Norton and its rose garden symbolize vision; East Coker in Somerset (where Eliot is buried), the site of Eliot’s ancestral home, represents physicality and tradition; The Dry Salvages, a group of rocks on the Massachusetts shore line where Eliot played as a child, stand for life’s ebb and flow and the uncertainty of time; and Little Gidding, a religious community begun by Nicholas Ferrar in the seventeenth century, represents the apex of spirituality (Bergonzi 166–167), a theme introduced in *Burnt Norton* that finds its culmination in the last lines of the *Four Quartets*.

The four locales also stand for the four elements cryptically alluded to in the epigraph. East Coker stands for earth, The Dry Salvages water, Little Gidding fire, and Burnt Norton air, the world of thoughts, words, philosophy and poetry (Thompson 84). The owners of the manor house that inspired Eliot, gave it the name Burnt Norton because the present edifice was built on the same spot where its predecessor had burned down. Burnt Norton’s suggestion of rebirth—the phoenix rising from its ashes, the Christian soul ascending to Heaven out of the dross of a discarded body, the twice-born yogi reborn in the fire of Agni—must have held for Eliot extraordinary charm. Like his contemporary James Joyce, Eliot gravitated toward circular structures, ideas that start in one place and return in the end to the exact point of departure; thus in the
title of his first quartet he prefigured his whole poem. Beginning with *Burnt Norton*’s central image, the rose of perfection, and ending with *Little Gidding*’s fire of purification, the rose and fire are compressed into a single symbol of spiritual unity.

However, before the sublime unity of *Little Gidding* can be realized, the first word of *Burnt Norton*, the first word of the *Four Quartets*—profane *Time*—must be accounted for. The *Quartets* taken together, then, embody a journey from the ignorance of time to an awakening in eternity. *Burnt Norton*’s opening lines, in seed form, function as a kind of road atlas for that journey:

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Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
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This passage demonstrates how well Eliot understands time. Sandwiching past, present and future together, he creates the eternal moment, the natural condition of time according to quantum physics and the *Veda*. With a touch of glib humor, Eliot states that the past contains the future, a truism if time is conceived as sequential flow, that is the future flowing into the present and the present flowing into the past, but an absurdity from the perspective of pure philosophy which holds that the future is always becoming and the past is always already gone. Eliot next suggests that the present and past will “perhaps” be “present” in time future. Once again he has his tongue firmly embedded in his cheek. True, what will become of the present and the past must first be found in the future, but because what is already the past and what is currently the present precede the future, is Eliot’s assertion logically possible? Moreover, Eliot adds the qualification “perhaps” they will be found because the future, unlike the past and present, is yet to be formed and remains forever uncertain.

In the first of the *Four Quartets*’ many paradoxes Eliot states, “all time is eternally present.” This line is central to appreciating Eliot’s

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3 Pure knowledge, rather than recorded knowledge, is understood to be directly cognized by the ancient Rishis. Later this knowledge came to be written down in Vedic texts, a vast literature that explains the intricate path from ignorance and suffering to permanent bliss in enlightenment.
philosophical position in the poem. Time he says is not always present; it is *eternally* present. For time to be eternally present, it can have no boundaries. But by its very nature, time creates boundaries. We define relativity by the dimensions of time and space. Again Eliot has made a paradoxical, Heraclitian-like statement that at first seems impossible, a forging together of the opposites time and eternity. His statement proves to be true, however, because time and eternity are from one perspective not antithetical but rather the very same thing. Just as an image in a mirror is both the same and completely different than the thing it reflects, so a moment of time is simply the reflection of eternity. If we could take a moment in time to its deepest physical level, even beyond the level of elementary particles, we would transcend all boundaries and locate eternity, the origin of time, the place where time does not exist and yet the place that gives existence to time. This is a fairly accurate description of what takes place during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique.

Before beginning to meditate, a person’s mind will be found hovering on a thought, a set point in time, and then following the simple but specific criteria of the Transcendental Meditation technique, the mind begins to experience deeper, or less temporally defined, states of a thought until that thought is transcended and only pure awareness without an object of awareness remains (Maharishi, *Science of Being* 50–57). What is most significant about this experience of transcendence, Maharishi explains, is not the experience itself, but rather its cumulative effect. Transcending, the mind becomes reacquainted with its own eternal Self and immediately enjoys increased happiness and freedom and begins to develop such salutary qualities as creativity, adaptability, flexibility, growth, harmony, health, etc., inherent within this deepest level of life.

“What might have been and what has been / Point to one end, which is always present,” Eliot says in the next group of lines. “Always present” can only be a reference to the eternal. If eternity is omnipresent, then past, present and future are only an illusion; this means the destructive characteristics of time that wither away all life must also be an illusion. If time cannot destroy, then it cannot give birth. It is oblivious to change. In the Bhagavad-Gita, one of the primary inspirations for the
Four Quartets, Lord Krishna, speaking of the eternal condition of the life of man, says as much to Arjuna on the battlefield:

He [man] is never born, nor does he ever die; nor once having been, does he cease to be. Unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient, he is not slain when the body is slain (99).

Life, understood in its most developed state lies beyond the reach of time, never takes birth, and never dies. Without this fundamental knowledge that life is eternal, the temporal world of physical existence must be lived in trepidation and despair—or as Eliot would have it, “fear in a handful of dust” (“I. The Burial of the Dead,” The Wasteland).

Eliot states that “time is unredeemable,” a statement with two important implications for this poem. Time is unredeemable first of all because life is eternal, and because eternity is perfection it does not need redeeming. Secondly, being destructive, time cannot redeem; it can only cause change. To live in the temporal world means to remain unredeemed, unliberated, in bondage to the ravages of time, caught in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth in the field of suffering. Joseph Campbell, inspired by both Vedic Literature and the Four Quartets, takes a higher position than Eliot but not necessarily a contradictory one. He contends that time does not need redeeming because it has never fallen:

The eternal cannot change. It's not touched by time. As soon as you have a historical act, a movement, you’re in time. The world of time is a reflex of the energy of what is eternal. But the eternal is not touched by what is here. So the whole doctrine of sin is a false doctrine. It has to do with time. Your eternal character is not touched. You are redeemed (The Hero’s Journey 227).

Krishna, in what Maharishi unfolds as the fundamental teaching of the Bhagavad-Gita (11, 45), implores Arjuna to be free from time, to “Be without the three gunas. . . freed from duality” (126), the field of time. Freedom from duality is redemption in the highest sense of the word because it is one’s own true Self that is being redeemed. The three Gunas to which Krishna alludes are “the finest aspect of creation” (222) and form the building blocks of temporal existence, the creative (Sattva), maintaining (Rajas), and destructive (Tamas) tendencies whose
various transformations and mutations produce time, change, and the opposing forces of duality, such as good and bad, forward and backward, up and down, etc. These opposing forces trap those unawake to the field of pure consciousness in a lifetime of feckless actions that must remain unsatisfied as long as a person operates within the dimensions of time, because action within the field and influence of time cannot produce absolute effects; it can only cause the need for further action, *ad infinitum*. This system of action and its continuously differed fulfillment resembles one of Maharishi’s favorite analogies, the activity of a person groping for the source of darkness in the midst of darkness. Only by transcending the field of change, the field of darkness, can the light of absolute fulfillment be found, as Maharishi explains in his commentary to the Bhagavad-Gita:

‘Be without the three gunas’; be without activity, be your Self [your own eternal, imperishable reality]. This is resolute consciousness, the state of absolute Being, which is the ultimate cause of all causes. This state of consciousness brings harmony to the whole field of cause and effect and glorifies all life (127).

The poem’s most famous image immediately follows the opening, abstract contemplation of time, *Burnt Norton*’s exquisite, evanescent rose garden. With its layered sensuality, the garden strikes a welcome relief to the imageless, philosophical passage that precedes it. Unlike common gardens, Eliot fashioned his from the realm of the imagination, and being non-physical, it need not obey the same laws as those engulfed in time:

Into our first world, shall we follow  
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.  
There they were, dignified invisible,  
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves

With his conspiratorial *we*, Eliot invites the reader to enter with him into the garden. Like the thrush, the garden appearing real but not being real, takes us in. The garden is not real first of all because it is fashioned from Eliot’s mind; secondly the poem’s grammatical past tense suggests that if it ever existed it no longer does. The inhabitants of the garden are no doubt an allusion to Dante’s inhabitants of the underworld. These mysterious, invisible “they” associated with the dead
leaves also seem dead. They are the ghosts of the past whose presence the artist always feels, according to Eliot in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” spirits of those dying generations.

And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.

The imagined bird responds to the imagined music, “unheard music” like the eyebeams that have never been seen, like the imaginary flowers that only have “the look of flowers that are looked at.” The poet like the Creator creates a world that appears real but is always qualified. Only the bird can hear the unheard music because it too exists in the unreal world,

There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool.
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight

With the spirits of the past, “our guests,” we move “in a formal pattern” the narrator says, formal because it is the pattern of Eliot’s poetry. We look at what for Eliot was once a real pool, a memory from Burnt Norton manor, but for us an imaginary pool filled with imaginary water, twice removed being constructed out of sunlight. Like Shelley before him, Eliot makes his imagery here more and more ephemeral to demonstrate how insubstantial is physical existence, but also to create a sense of transcendence by reducing the concreteness of physical objects,

And the lotus rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.

Out of the illusory water, which can even reflect the spirits of the past, grows a lotus rose, a symbol in Vedic Literature of vision and perfection; then a cloud passes signifying the vision’s end.

Eliot ingeniously invests this passage with the various qualities of time and eternity that he examines and reexamines in the Four Quartets
from multiple vantage points. First there is the thrush, as imaginary as
the garden itself, but an intruder into the garden. Not possessing the
garden’s timeless perfection, it is not free like the garden from the stric-
tures of time. The garden, on the other hand, with its perfect beauty,
illusiveness, and transcendence, is the embodiment of timeless charac-
teristics. However, the rose garden is also susceptible to time because it
is an ideal rather than a literal garden. In a hierarchical eternity, it will
outlast a common garden, but like all linguistic constructions born of
time, it will wither with changes in taste and perception, even against
such poetic claims as Shakespeare’s, who boasted he would keep his
love alive in verse forever “‘Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity . . . /
Even in the eyes of all posterity / That wear this world out to the ending
doom” (1380).

Although timeless perfection, the garden in another respect symbol-
izes the very character of phenomenal existence. Like the flatness of the
earth it appears real but is not; it is a kind of magician’s trick:

Know that the world, although appearing as substantial, has nothing
substantial in it: it is a void, being merely an appearance created by the
images and vagaries of the mind. Know the world to be an enchanted
scene, presented by the magic of maya (Shastri 13).

Just as the world is a trick of maya, so the reality of the rose garden is
a trick of the poet, a mirage like the water in the pool made from sun-
light, a mirage that Maharishi Vedic Science would explain in terms
of states of consciousness. Reality depends upon a person’s awareness,
or as Maharishi puts it, “knowledge is different in different states of
consciousness.” Like the imaginary thrush that believes in the imagi-
nary garden, people living waking state of consciousness believe the
material world to be the true nature of life. Only in higher states of
consciousness—Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, or Unity
Consciousness—when the mind has fully realized that it is unbounded
and eternal, can material existence be said to be a mirage. Moreover,
this reality dawns only through the two aspects of knowledge: under-
standing and direct experience, and this knowledge becomes depend-
able only when the experience becomes stabilized.

Another reason not to dismiss the rose garden as simply a mirage
is that it achieves what poets have always struggled to achieve—poetic
immortality. The phrase “unheard music,” a reference to Ode on a Gre-
cian Urn, the touchstone of all immortality poems, attests that poetic immortality is undeniably one of Eliot’s aims in the *Four Quartets*. In Keats’ poem, the magnificent urn, its human figures frozen in time, and the poem celebrating the urn, taken together, each itself an image of eternity, multiply the poem’s immortal effect. W. B. Yeats’ immortal bird hammered out of gold, a closer influence on Eliot, is fashioned out of “the artifice of eternity” in *Sailing to Byzantium* “to sing . . . Of what is past, or passing, or to come.” But all such images of immortality in art, as we know, are simply a convention, indestructible only insofar as art, like everything else, is a permutation of the absolute reality. Hence, in spite of poetic protests to the contrary, no work of art, no poem, not Keats’, nor Yeats’, nor Eliot’s is really indestructible. Keats’ urn, Yeats’ golden bird, and Eliot’s rose garden may each disdain the mutable complexities of life, but each is itself no more immutable than Shelley’s haughty Ozymandias, whose stone plaque arrogantly (and ironically) boasts of his longevity as the stone statue that physically embodies him returns to dust.

This eternal process of creation and destruction, Maharishi explains, is the natural growth and evolution of life (*Bhagavad-Gita* 27). No creative act can exist without a former state being destroyed. The making of a fist destroys the open hand; the opening of the hand destroys the fist; the construction of a high-rise destroys the vacant lot; the blossoming of Spring destroys the bareness of winter. Although immortality can be located in time—“What might have been and what has been/ Point to one end, which is always present”—it cannot however be sustained by time; immortality can be sustained only by its own field of immortality. Maharishi explains that this is why there is always a need for spiritual renewal. An enlightened master, established in that field of immortality, speaks to those established in time, and something of his immortal words becomes lost, no matter how attentive the disciples (*Bhagavad-Gita* 11). For physics this is an example of the second law of thermodynamics: entropy increases over time.

The mortality of poetry, the lasting effect of words, is a chief concern of Eliot’s in the *Four Quartets*. As the acknowledged spokesman of the Modern period, the great poet of his age, Eliot wondered how long his thoughts and those of other poets would remain viable. The language of lesser writers he quickly dismisses: “Words” he says, when
not put to their best use, “strain, / Crack and sometimes break, under
the burden, . . . / Decay with imprecision.” The last word in the line is
telling. Through deeper introspection, Eliot’s persona finally comes to
the conclusion that words, though not immortal themselves, used to
their best advantage can lead to the field of immortality: “Only by the
form, the pattern, / Can words or music reach the stillness.” This abil-
ity to contain eternal silence through poetic patterning is for Eliot the
greatest blessing of poetry.

It is in the stillness where perfect order can be located, where poets
discover the perfection of order through form. The most patterned and
most perfect poetry is the eternal hymns of Rig Veda, notes Maharishi,
“which, in their more expressed form, laid out the whole creation”
(Maharishi, Flow 88). First cognized by enlightened sages and then
later written down in Sanskrit, the language Vedic historians hold to
be closest to the language of cognition, the Veda expresses eternity
through its form and patterning, through “the structure and connect-
edness of the words” (Maharishi, Flow 88–89) that Eliot espouses. It is
the poetic patterning of the Veda, much more than the meaning, that
contains the highest knowledge of life. For that reason, Vedic Pandits
who chant the Vedas are taught the rhythm and meter of the poetry
before learning to comprehend the full significance of what the words
mean. So perfect is the pattern of the Veda that it is possible to speak
volumes about the relationship between sentences, words, letters, and
even the silences in between. Maharishi has commented at length on
Agni, the first word of the Rig Veda, explaining that not only the entire
Veda can be conceived of as a commentary on this one word, but also
that the Veda is a highly condensed form containing the structure and
relationship of all existence absolute and relative (Maharishi, AGNI).
Hence, it is in the poetic patterning of the Veda that the very source of
life is found.

In one of the most deservedly quoted passages in English literature,
Eliot locates this source of life in the ever-changing universe:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.

Eliot discovers the timeless, unmoved mover, within the limits of time,
at a specific point, at the hub of the universe around which all cre-
ation turns, what Joseph Campbell calls the “world navel” (Thousand
Faces 40–46). This hub or point, however, is not a fixed point. It can
be located at any place in creation; that is why everyone who practices
the Transcendental Meditation technique experiences this still point,
this infinite, timeless state, within the boundaries of their own ever-
changing selves wherever and whenever they sit to meditate. Maharishi
alternately uses the terms Self, Being, Brahman, and Absolute to convey
the illusive nature of what Eliot calls the still point:

The hymns of the Vedas and the Bhagavad-Gita sing of the glory of the
imperishable Self, Being, ultimate Reality, the Brahman which is the
supreme, ultimate Absolute. They say: Water cannot wet It nor can fire
burn It. Wind cannot dry It and weapons cannot slay It. It is in front, It
is behind, It is above and below. It is to the right and the left. It is all-
pervading, the omnipresent, divine Being. (Science 35)

Maharishi’s method for locating and describing Being is in one
respect the exact opposite of the manner in which Eliot identifies the
still point, and yet both descriptions come to the same conclusion.
Maharishi Vedic Science understands Being to be all-inclusive—it can
be located everywhere; it is behind, in front, above, and below; it is
immortal—it cannot be harmed: it cannot be burned, dried or slain.
Eliot, contrastingly, takes the opposite tack. Instead of saying what the
still point is, he says what it is not. Seeing the still point as lying outside
the field of time, Eliot says that it cannot be identified by the charac-
teristics of time; it is “Neither flesh nor fleshless; / Neither from nor
towards . . . Neither ascent nor decline.”

So what then is the still point, and where exactly is it to be found?
It is what the phenomenal world is not, and it is found where the world
does not exist. Hence, it is neither this nor that, nor here nor there. How-
ever, immediately following this sequence of negations, Eliot seems to
contradict himself by locating the still point in a specific space–time
reference, where the dance is. But the dance, a noun which might be
taken either as an act or an event, is surprisingly a description, a metaphor to suggest the still point’s paradoxical dynamism that contradicts the quiescence of its name—a dynamism without which the highly-charged universe could not exist.

The dance then, like the still point that it is meant to clarify through analogy, needs clarification itself. The complexity of the dance, simultaneously robust and tranquil, is further complicated by context, where Eliot alters its meaning to suit the ever-fluctuating varieties of existence, making it at one moment absolute, the next relative, and at another simultaneously both. Such contextual variance is one element that makes Eliot so difficult, but in this case he is being neither obscure nor careless; he is actually being faithful to the complexity inherent both in relative existence and its relationship to the absolute. Typical of such complexity is the way the meaning of the word *dance* shifts radically from line to line. When Eliot says, “Except for the point, the still point, / There would be no dance,” dance here can refer to either the act of creation or creation itself. Earlier, however, Eliot says, “at the still point, there the dance is,” equating the dance with the still point, the absolute, timeless, source of creation. Finally he says, “Except for the point, the still point, / There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.” The first dance in this sentence refers to creation and the second to the origin from which the creation emerges. *Dance* as Eliot keenly understands is an appropriate word for all three of his uses—the source, the act, and the object of creation—because, although they are distinct in the field of time, from the perspective of the source they are one and the same.

Many critics believe Eliot’s use of *dance* refers specifically to the Dance of Shiva, the spinning out and maintenance of all creation from the silent, eternal, pure consciousness that changes without changing, creates without creating, manifests without manifesting through the power of *lila* or divine play. However, it is also a reply to the question: “How can we know the dancer from the dance”? from the last line of Yeats’ “Among School Children” (217). The answer is we cannot. The dancer and the dance, the wave and the ocean, the creator and the creation, are ultimately one and the same, but only when the dancer *knows* that the two are one. By *knows* Maharishi means not only understands but also
experiences. To either know the dancer from the dance or to know the dancer is the dance is the difference between states of consciousness.

Knowledge of non-difference between dancer and dance is a specific state of consciousness (see footnote 1) that has nothing to do with knowledge in the other six states of consciousness. In the fifth state of consciousness, for instance, the knowledge that dancer and dance are one is true in the experience of inner awareness, but untrue in the perceptual experience of outer phenomenon. Only in the seventh state, Unity Consciousness, in which refinement on all levels of human experience has been completed, can it be said that “there is only the dance” and the dancer and dance are indistinguishable. What this conflation of dancer and dance in Unity Consciousness means is that on the level of subjectivity (the dancer), everything is absolute, pure consciousness, and on the level of objectivity (the dance), everything is the same absolute, pure consciousness. This Brahmi Chetana, this Unity Consciousness, is the supreme, beatific state of liberation experienced as pure bliss; in Burnt Norton’s next stanza Eliot poetically describe this state:

The inner freedom from the practical desire,
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving.

Eliot’s reference to freedom from desire in this image of enlightenment is accurate but misleading. Maharishi comments that “Desire in the state of ignorance overshadows the pure nature of the self, which is absolute bliss-consciousness, and keeps life in bondage and suffering” (Bhagavad-Gita 237). Therefore, when the mind is permanently established in bliss, “freedom from the practical desire” as Eliot says takes place even as desires continue. Many commentators on the Bhagavad-Gita have made desire the enemy as Eliot does in the Four Quartets. However, Maharishi makes it clear that without desire there would be no action, no motivation to progress, or for that matter even to exist. What is lost in enlightenment, then, is not the inclination to desire but rather the attachment to desire (Bhagavad-Gita 239), an issue that Eliot takes up again in Little Gidding at the end of the Four Quartets. In enlightenment, a person’s relationship to desire changes; it “ceases to be ‘the enemy on earth’” as Lord Krishna calls it in the Bhagavad-Gita. Because enlightenment brings fulfillment, one is no longer driven by
desire for personal gain, but even then desire does not end. An enlightened person acts for the good of all mankind (Bhagavad-Gita 162), and as each person newly steps on to enlightenment, as the bliss and harmony of society increases, the joy of the enlightened person’s fulfillment deepens.

The opposite of fulfillment is the life lived in ignorance of the still point, in the “turning shadow” and the “transient beauty /With slow rotation.” This is the world of impermanence that, like a spinning top losing its momentum, wobbly gyrates around the silent hub. In a mock imitation of Dante, Eliot recreates a descent into the underworld, this time a descent into the subway of the “unreal city.” Unlike the frightening horrors of the Inferno, Eliot’s abyss is a “twittering world,” a typically modern and insipid image made to compare unfavorably to the vitality of a former age. Lost city dwellers, whose faces are “time ridden,” ignorant of eternity, who only know “Time before and time after,” strain to see in the “dim light” and inhale the “faded air” through “unwholesome lungs.” Caught in the vicious wheel of karma, the cycle of impression, action and desire that sustains the cycle of birth and death (Maharishi, Bhagavad-Gita 142), they are “[d]istracted from distraction.” Not anchored to eternity, such “men and bits of paper, [are] whirled by the cold wind.” “[E]mpty of meaning,” where people are “Filled with fancies . . . / Tumid apathy [and] with no concentration” or purpose, this world is horrifying in its vacuity.

Just as Keats found truth and beauty to be primary, those qualities which most reflect transcendence in the world, Eliot, in the final section of Burnt Norton, settles on “Love” as opposed to physical desire, “Not in itself desirable,” as the supreme expression of consciousness, as his antidote to “the twittering world.” Love, more than the ambivalent feelings of human beings, is for Eliot the embodiment of the divine. Christ endures crucifixion out of love and compassion for humanity; Krishna out of love, “Caught in the form of limitation,” takes birth “To protect the righteous and destroy the wicked, to establish dharma firmly . . . age after age” (Maharishi, Bhagavad-Gita 263). Love, untainted by time is the highest expression of the eternal, an act of creation. It is the reason the unmoved moves, the unmanifest manifests.

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4 *Dharma*, Maharishi explains, “is that which promotes worldly prosperity and spiritual freedom” (Bhagavad-Gita 26).
Out of love, the one becomes the many to multiply its bliss, its divine nature. “Love is the sweet expression of life, it is the supreme content of life. Love is the force of life, powerful and sublime” (Maharishi, Love 13). Love, truth, beauty and all desirable qualities find their full value at the origin of life in absolute, pure consciousness—for Eliot at the still point, in the gap between “un-being and being.”

_East Coker_

_Burnt Norton_ examines life “in and out of time” inclusively. _East Coker_, associated with Eliot’s ancestral home, looks at time more personally. The possessive pronoun in the _Quartet_’s opening statement, “In the beginning is my end,” refers to Eliot specifically but also to Everyman. The line also echoes the first words of Genesis: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”—according to Judeo-Christian thought, everyone’s beginning. After _Burnt Norton_’s unrelenting emphasis on eternity, _East Coker_’s beginning with a _beginning_ is slightly startling, but less so when we find how closely Eliot connects it to an _end_-ing, creating an Eliotonian, virtual circle.

As a modernist, Eliot would have found the phrase “In the beginning is my end” to have a nihilistic as well as a spiritual meaning. The _beginning_ foreshadowing all temporal endings is a prefiguration of death and destruction:

Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth.

In this passage we see the eternal cycle of creation and destruction, life under the dominion of time, underscored by the biblical reference “ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” However, given Eliot’s paradoxical proclivity, eternity is implicit even in this bleakest image of time. As each house falls along with its tenants, only to give rise to new houses and new tenants which will subsequently fall, an endless superstructure pervades the cumulative individual moments of creation and destruction. Time is synonymous with change, but because, Maharishi has explained, change _always_ exists, non-change—eternity—is forever found lurking in the midst of change.
In the next stanza, non-change is more easily discovered. With a few brief strokes, Eliot fashions a contemporary scene: “a van passes” in front of a field, almost floating in the heat of the afternoon, “in the empty silence” where “dahlias sleep.” From this modern locale objectively rendered, we are drawn back through the colloquial language of Eliot’s ancestor Thomas Eliot taken from his The Boke Named The Governor into participation in an intimate sixteenth century ritual (Traversi 130):

The association of man and woman
In daunsinge [sic], signifying matrimonie—
A dignified and commodious sacrament.
Two and two, necessare coniunction
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm
Whiche betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles [italics mine].

This stanza celebrates the time-honored event of marriage accompanied by the joyous activity of dancing, a rite played out by countless newlyweds of every generation. The scene depicts physical desire suggested by the act of “leaping through the flames,” as well as tradition, that flow of repeated social-patterning which defies time and connects past, present and future. Woven into the scene’s homespun fabric are three favorite Eliot images: dancing, fire, and circles, scattered everywhere throughout the Four Quartets.

Used to depict the eternal life in Burnt Norton—the play of the phenomenal world whirled into existence from the depths of the unmoved silence—dancing emerges in this quartet a smaller and lighter activity, the joyful gyrations of a few at an event meaningful only to the few. But, like the poetic patterning of Burnt Norton, the dance of East Coker contains joyous freedom and unbridled movement, the same qualities in microcosm of the eternal dance. Typical of his multi-layered vision, Eliot uses dancing in this scene not only as an expression of personal liberty, but also for death, again indicated by the leaping through the fire.

Elsewhere in the Quartets dancing conveys the sordid, meaningless movements of the spiritually lost, the dance of the living dead, and fire and circles are employed with similar ambiguity. Sometimes fire
destroys, at others it purifies, just as circles vacillate between symbols of eternity and confinement. The ambiguity of these recurring elements typifies for Eliot the relationship between the profane and the divine. In their eternal source, everything is simply latent, without qualities, but in their first manifestation—when elements or ideas lie closest to their source—they are most benign. Maharishi uses the analogy of an orange to convey this idea. An orange is sweetest, he points out, when it is freshest (Bhagavad-Gita 206–207). Over time, entropy sets in. The orange sours, and everything is met with opposition. In the field of relativity every positive value is opposed by its negative value; it is the nature of such opposites that produces movement—creative and destructive. Only through transcending is life free of negativity, but also free of positivity, beyond all oppositions, beyond all dualities. However, with transcendence comes bliss, which we might think of as joy or happiness, but it is actually more than happiness (Bhagavad-Gita 166); like unboundedness or wholeness it is an inherent quality of Transcendental Consciousness.

In Section II Eliot introduces the primary concerns of East Coker: the role of the poet caught in that sensuous music of time, and the greatest value of poetry as a means to escape the trap of time. The first stanza is written in a consciously poetic style filled with echoes from Yeats (“triumphal cars”), Frost (the “destructive fire / Which burns before the ice-cap reigns”) and Whitmanesque poets whom Eliot believes have imprecisely represented the turbulent world, “That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory: / A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion.” Instead Eliot hopes to find an honest means of communication, but disillusioned in his search he comes to mistrust “words and meanings [and the] poetry does not matter.” Patterns, so comforting in Burnt Norton, falsify in East Coker because their instability makes them “new in every moment.” Wisdom, solace to the romantic Wordsworth when the spiritual visions of childhood had faded, cannot comfort the modernist Eliot. Old age having known only a lifetime of ignorance acquires not wisdom but folly. In this pessimistic mood, the only knowledge the poet finds is humility.

Such an unfruitful vision of the poet foundering against the waves of time can only lead Eliot’s persona to temporarily view existence as a funeral of darkness, a catalogue of humanity marching into the silence
of death. But with his customary fondness for reversals, Eliot turns this doomed quality of darkness into Godliness, because for him the quietness of darkness can also represent silence—not the silence of doom, but the transcendent silence of the still point:

the mind is conscious but conscious of nothing—
I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be light, and the stillness the dancing.

The deep silence of this stanza emerges through a careful series of negations—waiting without hope, without love, without faith, and finally without thought—a series of discriminations that eventually lead to the dancing stillness. A parallel sequence of discriminations experienced during the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique leads to an analogous state of silence. As the mind—free of expectation—settles down it is fully conscious, but at every point it is less conscious of external phenomenon. Although this movement from grosser to ever refined states of awareness takes place effortlessly, spontaneously without any action on the part of the Transcendental Meditation practitioner, it is as though the intellect is choosing to reject what is less refined in favor of what is more refined at any given moment. When the mind transcends the finest level of phenomena, it leaves off being conscious of anything until it experiences only pure consciousness, a phrase that rings strikingly similar to Eliot’s “conscious but conscious of nothing.”

Eliot instructs us to wait for this moment of spiritual silence “without hope” and “without love,” because such external abstractions belong only to the phenomenal world. To wait without love or hope recalls Eliot’s analysis of the “still point” in *Burnt Norton* where he says, “there we have been: but I cannot say where. /And I cannot say how long, for that is to place it in time.” One must wait without love and without hope, for to do otherwise is also to place one’s self in time. Paradoxically, once the still point has been permanently attained, when consciousness has been fully expanded, hope is realized and love is unrestricted.
Eliot next advises to “wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought.” Waiting without thought means transcending thought; an experience of that lively state of pure potentiality before a thought has formed. Outside of death or the inertia of deep sleep, transcending is the only way the mind can experience thoughtless-ness. To become “ready for thought,” the mind must intimately know the source of thought. Until then, thinking, caught in the web of time, will remain superficial and egocentric; but once the source of thought is established on the level of one’s individual consciousness, thinking becomes powerful, evolutionary and fulfilling. Having gained the source of thought, one becomes “ready” for it, ready to think and then act with profundity, supported by the laws of nature (Maharishi, *Science* 144–145).

The section ends with a vision of the consummate evolutionary state: the darkness of death and the flickering light—earmarks of the sensory world—are transformed into the light of Being. And the stillness of death and the stillness of waiting are transformed into the dancing stillness—vibrant, blissful, pure consciousness. No longer a participant in the life of time, one becomes the silent witness to “the agony / Of death and birth.” Life is lived as the “Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning, / The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry, / [and] The laughter in the garden.”

Section III’s final stanza seems at first nothing more than a clever set piece, a procession of Zen-like conundrums, but with more consideration, it reveals itself to be among the poem’s most profound passages:

You say I am repeating
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
Shall I say it again?

Eliot enjoys being clever, but here what he is hunting is complete truth, “not less than everything.” In pursuit of such a lofty aim, he defies the awkwardness of being repetitive, because what he seeks to understand and convey cannot be repeated too many times; therefore, he reexamines the path to the transcendent still-point, labored over only a half-a-dozen lines previously:

In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
Unraveling the first of this passage’s riddles, Eliot gives us the non-descript place nouns, *there*, *here*, and *not here*, which appear to be different but are metaphysically identical. To “arrive there,” is “to arrive where you [already] are,” Eliot informs us. What kind of a nonsensical journey is this? It is a journey of understanding. Like quantum physics’ mysterious sub-atomic particles which behave simultaneously as particles and waves until a limiting choice is made, so *here* and *there* also function without distinction until a decision is made. As the bumper sticker says, “wherever you go you’ll always be *there*,” but of course on arrival you will always be *here*. When you leave a place, *there* will be *here* and *here* will be *there*. *Here* is to space as *now* is to time. It is always now and it is always here.

Secondly, the journey from *there* to “where you are” is a journey of perspective, a change of consciousness. *There* is the location of *Atman*, the Self—the deepest level of one’s existence, the goal of all conscious and unconscious desires, a return to the primordial, unfractured state of existence from which the journey of personal evolution began. However, because one is and always has been the Self, the journey can be made only in the form of remembering or reawakening to one’s status that has been forgotten; and because one has been asleep to this status, Eliot can say that reawakening to it you “arrive where you are not.”

In one sense, this journey of arriving where you both are and are not is accomplished in a momentary transcendence, a going beyond all sensual experience, beyond the boundaries of the non-self and arriving at the unboundedness of the true Self. Such a journey is very fast but ephemeral. From a broader perspective, reawakening to your own Self is a state of unbroken enlightenment, accomplished at that moment when you fully realize that you have always been your Self, have always been unbounded and eternal, and will never again lose your eternal status (Maharishi, Bhagavad-Gita 357–358). In this state *there* and *here* are experienced as non-different, but until you reawaken to that state, the equivalency of *there* and *here* continues to exist “where you are not.”

In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.

To arrive at knowledge, we “must go by a way which is the way of ignorance” because ignorance, relative, unreliable knowledge, is all that we can know until all ignorance has been burned away in the purifying fire of absolute, unchanging, knowledge. To gain what we want, “not less than everything,” we must dispossess ourselves of what we only think we own. We must give up the “unreal” world for the real world. This is what happens during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique when the mind transcends; it gives up activity (Bhagavad-Gita 198) for silence, time for eternity, the reflection for the mirror. To “arrive at what you are not,” you must “go through the way in which you are not,” but when arriving—that is transcending—you will find not the thing you are not but rather the thing that you are, your deepest reality, and you will realize that you always have been what you are and never have been what you are not (Bhagavad-Gita 357–358).

In Section V, *East Coker* returns to its principal theme, a poet’s “raid on the inarticulate.” As the putative poet of his age, Eliot feels the last two decades have been a waste; words fail him; his poetic powers are deteriorating; imprecision distorts what he wishes to say; and what he wants to discover has already been “found and lost again and again.” Maharishi expounds on this eternal pattern of loss and gain:

The truth of Vedic wisdom is by its very nature independent of time and can therefore never be lost. When, however, man’s vision becomes one-sided and he is caught by the binding influence of the phenomenal world to the exclusion of the absolute phase of Reality, when he is thus confined within the ever-changing phases of existence, his life loses stability and he begins to suffer. When suffering grows, the invincible force of nature moves to set man’s vision right and establish a way of life which will again fulfill the high purpose of his existence. The long history of the world records many such periods in which the ideal pattern of life is first forgotten and then restored to man (Bhagavad-Gita 9).

Despite this endless cycle in which wisdom is lost and gained, Eliot believes “[t]here is only the fight to recover what has been lost . . . . For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.”
The final stanza of *East Coker* brings the poem full circle. “Home is where we start from,” and home is where we want to return. But conventional old age, near the end of personal time, is lived in pitiable isolation “with no before and after, / But a lifetime burning in every moment.” Like Prufrock who “forked no lightning,” who measured out his “life with coffee spoons,” Eliot’s septuagenarians spend “The evening with the photograph album.” It should not be that way:

Old men ought to be explorers  
Here and there does not matter  
We must be still and still moving  
Into another intensity  
For a further union.

“We must be still and still moving,” that is, we must be full of that inner, non-active, silence of pure Being (Maharishi, *Science* 61–62), even as we perform action; we must be anchored in Cosmic Consciousness as we move “into another intensity / For a further union,” the union of the non-self and the Self in Unity Consciousness.

*East Coker* ends with an inversion of its first line, “In my end is my beginning,” often interpreted to mean the *beginning* of eternal life at death with an ascendance into heaven (Mathiessen 185). This line may suggest salvation, but it equally conveys the conditions of Vedic liberation. The fusion of *beginning* and *end* is “the moment in and out of time.” *Beginning* at any time and any place in the grip of time, one proceeds to that eternal end beyond time and space toward a *new beginning* and a rediscovery of the original *beginning*. This is the *end* of the journey of personal evolution that in one sense never takes place, since the relative action of the journey itself loses its validity in the infinite realization. Maharishi gives the name Unity Consciousness to this merging of beginning and end, when experiencer and the object of experience have both been brought to the same level of infinite value and this encompasses the entire phenomenon of perception and action as well.

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Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
The gulf between the knower and the object of his knowing has been bridged (R. Orme-Johnson, A Unified 339).

When what one sees and what one is can no longer be distinguished, time and space lose their relative meanings, and only in such infinite/eternal existence can the beginning and ending be the same. For Eliot this coming together of beginning and end takes place when “the past and future / Are conquered and reconciled.” In this state all life is experienced as eternity without change; therefore, having once arrived at this final state of evolution, even the path of evolution—a series of changes—is seen as an illusion. Such is the paradoxical relationship between the relative and the absolute.

The end is not only the finality for those who discover it; it is, Maharishi says, by its very nature “the source, course and goal” of all existence, the be all and end all of everything. For the spiritual pilgrim it is the journey’s end where ignorance is vanquished and knowledge is fully restored, where all opposites, such as individual and universal, finite and infinite, and time and eternity are resolved. About this state, this non-differentiated beginning and end, the Upanishads declare, “I am that, thou art that, all this is nothing other than that.” I am the Totality; “I am Brahman.”

The Dry Salvages

The Dry Salvages, as the poem’s head note explains, is a ledge of rocks off the coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts, where on vacation Eliot played as a boy and returned to, as a favorite haunt, while at Harvard. Although Eliot did not personally coin the name The Dry Salvages, he nevertheless chose it for its evocative qualities as he had earlier chosen Burnt Norton. Dry, Eliot’s metaphor for spiritual depletion, recalls the imagery of The Wasteland, and salvage suggests human wreckage in need of being salvaged. Taken together the words convey the typically ambiguous Eliot symbol, spiritual barrenness (dry) and, because of the Dry Salvages’ proximity to the sea, spiritual fullness.

Earlier I stated that Eliot associated each quartet with one of the four elements—air, earth, water, and fire—but even if he had not, it seems a given that one of the Quartets would have been devoted to water, an image as fundamental to his poetry as stairways (“Prufrock,” The Wasteland, “Ash Wednesday”). In his earlier opus, The Wasteland, water,
of course, represents life and spirituality, but also “death by water” and, when polluted, the spiritual corruption of modern humanity.

Apparently from his earliest days, water had left a strong impression on Eliot. Not only did he play as a child among the Dry Salvages on the Atlantic sea coast, he also romped on the beaches of the Mississippi which rushed along the west bank of St. Louis where he was raised, and it is these two great natural forces from childhood, the river and the sea, that buoy up the imagery that washes throughout the poem. The poem’s first lines undoubtedly refer to the Mississippi, “Useful, untrustworthy, . . . a conveyor of commerce,” but they also suggest the two other great rivers in Eliot’s life, London’s befouled Thames of *The Wasteland* and, in the phrase “strong brown god,” India’s holy Ganges of the Bhagavad-Gita.

Such critics as Nancy Gish read Eliot’s river as a destructive force only (108), a view inconsistent with Eliot’s typical symbolic pattern-ing. As we have continuously seen, Eliot’s chief symbols, the rose, the circle, dancing, fire, all possess dual characteristics—time and the timeless, permanent and impermanent, sublime and profane, creative and destructive. However, words such as “implacable,” “destroyer,” “unhonored, [and] unpropitiated / By worshipers of the machine” seem initially to confirm Gish’s pessimistic view. But the river is not simply destructive; although untamed and elemental, it is also the antithesis of “the dwellers in the city” who have forgotten the primal font from which all life springs.

The river over time has been crystallized by philosophers and poets into a metaphor for time, as the sequential flow of past, present, future, and unfathomable eternity, that endless expanse that cannot be stepped into twice that encompasses all the changes of sequential time, including Eliot’s progression of “the nursery bedroom,” “the April dooryard,” “the autumn table,” and “the winter gaslight.” “The river is within us, the sea is all about us,” Eliot informs: individuality and eternity, the one an expression of the other, the individual river a tributary of the vast encompassing sea. The river and the sea, the drop and the ocean, are simultaneously different and the same.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, for which Eliot once wrote an introduction, Twain makes the Mississippi River the source of eternity and natural goodness in opposition to its shores which are the sources of temporal
activity and human corruption. For Eliot, all oppositions are found in
the image of water itself. Containing all temporal states within it, the
eternal sea is a primeval intelligence which litters the beach with “hints
of earlier and other creation: / The starfish, the hermit crab, the whale’s
backbone.” It also tosses up the wreckage of humanity’s disparate and
desperate endeavors, containing within its “many voices” the woeful
sounds of time:

The tolling bell
Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried
Ground swell, a time
Older than the time of chronometers, older
Than time counted by anxious worried women
Lying awake, calculating the future,
Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel
And piece together the past and the future,
Between midnight and dawn, when the past is all deception,
The future futureless, before the morning watch
When time stops and time is never ending.

The bells of sea vessels toll out the moments of human life on the
timeless sea, and the faithful Penelopes weave together the deceptive
pasts and the futureless futures waiting for their absent Odysseuses.
The time of the sea predates time (“chronometers”), and the weaving
of grieving wives for absent husbands is an endless cycle that envelopes
both the time that does not exist (“stops”) and the time that never ends,
which are the two extremes of the same thing—eternity.

Stanza II elaborates this theme of never-ending that depicts both the
eternal sea of spirituality and the endless, “soundless wailing” of life in
time. When will this multitude of sufferings and destruction end? the
poet ponders, and his initial conclusion is that “There is no end, but
addition.” The aged of East Coker who spend their evenings with “the
photograph album” are in The Dry Salvages full of “resentment at [their]
failing powers,” and feel cast “[i]n a drifting boat with a slow leakage.”
The fate of these fishermen—that is all humanity—is to sail into the
futureless-future in a fog-bound ocean “littered with wastage.”

Moments of time, moments of human suffering, strung together
become an endless sea of time, a sea defiled by corrupt desires and feck-
less action. From the vantage point of the eternal present, the sailors
who sail this sea of time are “forever bailing”; their past is unreliable, “a partial fallacy,” which they misuse by accepting “superficial notions of evolution,” forgetting the value of history, “The moments of happiness . . . Fruition, fulfillment, security or affection.” The real benefit of the past, the poet says, is found in tradition, in the experiences “of many generations—not forgetting / Something that is probably quite ineffable.”

At the end of this stanza, the poem’s persona fully appreciates the dual meaning of time never-ending, realizing that “Time the destroyer is time the preserver,” that a rock in the ocean can be either a perilous hazard or a navigational marker, that time can be an endless string of miseries or a vision of eternity within time; it is a two-headed coin with the ever changing on one side and the never changing on the other. This is what Hugh Kenner and others have failed to properly comprehend. Kenner seems to think that in *The Dry Salvages* Eliot is simply an advocate for the capturing of brief time, an attainment that would have little if any practical value:

The Dry Salvages . . . is what our capacity for orderly generalization from experience can give us, not the continual apprehension of the still point but an account of how our experience would be related to such an apprehension if we could have it. (316)

What Kenner is missing is that Eliot is after more than just a “glimpse” into timelessness. The eternal moment for Eliot is precious not simply as a visionary experience, but because he realizes that eternity exists everywhere, everywhere that time exists, because the still point is both the center and the source of time. Therefore it is unnecessary to go anywhere to escape time and the suffering associated with it. Eternity is time’s deepest value just as infinity is space’s deepest value. And to know eternity is to know the deepest value of one’s own Being, unbounded and eternal (Maharishi, Bhagavad-Gita 253), and to know this level is to be able to transcend the whips and scorns of time.

Kenner’s complaints, however, are not without merit. Implicitly, he criticizes Eliot for offering eternity as the solution to life lived in time but without stating how this eternity is to be annexed.6 This is certainly

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6 Unless we consider such Zen-like, seemingly impractical, instructions as to “go by the way in which you are not” from *East Coker* as useful guides.
a glaring deficiency, but we must forgive Eliot for his lack of practical solutions, for he is after all a poet and not a sage. But, unlike the Audens of the world who believe poetry has no practical effect on life, Eliot’s spiritual/poetic solutions are offered with the same kind of sincerity as Emerson’s and Mathew Arnold’s. Intellectually he understands that to avoid the destructive nature of time one should simply step out of it, and he offers history, philosophy, and religion to support his position. What he could not offer was a practical method that would actually allow his audience to experience the transcendence he espoused, a role that the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique has proven to fulfill for millions around the world.

In Section III the poet surmises, “I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant—,” a query that directly introduces into his analysis of time Eliot’s chief philosophical source, the Bhagavad-Gita. This apparently random thought will remain unanswered, however, until Eliot once more examines the emptiness of past and future and the fallacy of sequential time, which he compresses into such oxymoronic images as “the future is a faded song,” and flowers “pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened.” In the world of change, time cannot be arrested; it keeps slipping into something else—the future into the present, the present into the past, the past into the remote past, and the remote past into forgetfulness. In this transitory world, the demise of an event exists before it has occurred, has “faded” before it was conceived, turned into a remembrance before it has happened.

The strangeness of time is most peculiar when experienced not between a person and an object but between living beings. Because life is always in flux, precise continuity in human interaction may seem to but does not actually exist. The reason is that everyone is changing in every moment. The friends we talked to yesterday are not the same as those before us now, nor are we the same to them, and because we are different so too are our relationships, things we have said, actions we have performed, attitudes we have held. Because time is continuous in our own lives, we don’t notice the changes in ourselves, nor those in friends we see frequently, but time is nevertheless inexorably producing its effects.

These changes are not only psychologically and sociologically true; they are also physiologically true. In a one-year period more than 90%
of the body’s cells are replaced, and within seven years the transformation is complete. Therefore, when Eliot says, “time is no healer: the patient is no longer here,” he is both metaphorically and scientifically accurate. The next time the doctor and patient meet, a different doctor will be treating a different patient. “You are not those who saw the harbour / Receding, or those who will disembark,” he says. Existence is in a state of constant decay and renewal, and in spite of the discrepancies between what we see, between what we remember, and between what we anticipate, there is only the eternal moment, which is past, present, and future. Those tied to thinking of the temporal world as a continuum live a delusion of time from which they cannot free themselves. Eliot sympathizes with their ignorance, but in the words of the Bhagavad-Gita he pleads with them to

“... consider the future
And the past with equal mind.
At the moment which is not of action or inaction

Which shall fructify in the lives of others:
And do not think of the fruit of action.

... this is your real destination.”

So [said] Krishna, as when he admonished Arjuna
On the field of battle.

The “moment which is not of action or inaction” is the moment of potential action, the gap in time, which is silence and eternity. This is what Maharishi refers to as Transcendental Consciousness, symbolized by Eliot as the sea of eternity, lying in between the shores of temporality and duality. Initiating the action to know this transcendent moment, Eliot says, is the one act that can “fructify in the lives of others.” How does such a personal act bring fruition in other people’s lives? When we transcend action, we raise not only our own consciousness, increase the harmony and deservability of our own lives, purify our own selves, but also that of others and the world in general. This is possible because in the field of transcendental, pure consciousness—Eliot’s eternal moment—everything is infinitely [co-related]. Maharishi explains that “When this level of infinite correlation is enlivened by
individual awareness, every thought and feeling creates a thrill on all levels of collective consciousness” (*Enlightenment* 348).

Therefore, according to Maharishi Vedic Science, if everything is co-related at the deepest level of existence, when a single individual’s awareness becomes enlivened in that unified field of pure consciousness, then some enlivening effect also takes place throughout the world. And when pure consciousness becomes more lively in the field of change, via the individual, natural law gets awakened and all of life benefits. This phenomenon is presently taking place around the world in what has come to be known as the *Maharishi Effect*. (Please refer to Notes (2) for a further discussion of the Maharishi Effect.) Because the Maharishi Effect (both the term and the technique) is recent, it cannot be said to *exactly* express Eliot’s moment of action and inaction that will “fructify in the lives of others.” However Eliot’s explanation of fructification does exactly describe the Maharishi Effect. Eternity, beneficial to everyone, can only exist in the temporal field through the individual consciousness of one who comes to know eternity. As the number of individuals experiencing the field of eternity increases, the greater the impact the Maharishi Effect has on the world.

The moment between action and non-action is for Eliot the “real destination” of all journeys, of life itself. To reach this destination he invokes Krishna’s warning to “not think of the fruit of action.” In his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, the source of Eliot’s allusion, Maharishi explains that this injunction to not consider the end-results of our actions is an impossibility as long as we operate within the temporal field of change. It is the mind’s nature to desire. Desires rise spontaneously whenever there is a lack, thus making desires the precursors to action, and hence an essential part of evolution (Maharishi, *Bhagavad-Gita* 51). The necessity of desires, and the comprehension that they are inescapable, can be seen in the paradoxical desire to be free from desires.

Maharishi further notes it would be absurd to infer “that a man has no right to the fruits of action.” It is not the fruits themselves that are undesirable, it is *attachment* to the fruits which binds a person to the field of time, and it is attachment that limits the kinds of actions and fruits that can be produced or even appreciated. Attachment, as discussed later, is a form of bondage born of discontent. Desire is always
for contentment, but when the fruit of action in pursuit of that contentment falls short, new desires emerge and the continuous cycle is eternally renewed. Only when the mind is fully fulfilled in the bliss of Unity Consciousness is contentment found and attachment dissolved. Desires remain, desires to act for the universal good, but they are no longer binding now that the individual is content (Bhagavad-Gita 134).

The final section of *The Dry Salvages* opens with a series of esoteric but inadequate ways of dealing with time: séances, astrology, handwriting analysis, palmistry, the reading of tea leaves, tarot cards, and modern psychology, each an occult or pseudo-science that attempts to arrest the past or divine the future. These superficial means of fathoming time, “curiosities” Eliot calls them, contrast with true spiritual vision:

> But to apprehend  
> The point of intersection of the timeless  
> With Time, is an occupation for the saint —

Eliot acknowledges historically accepted saints as Krishna, Buddha, Christ, or Thomas Beckett of his *Murder in the Cathedral*, but also those ordinary human beings whose spiritual conviction and perseverance distinguish them from the common lot, and it is these qualities that distinguish Celia—the heroine of Eliot’s *The Cocktail Party*, a dramatic work that shares a spiritual perspective with the *Four Quartets*—from Edward, Lavinia and Peter. Celia, whose everyday world “seems all a delusion,” embraces through “self-surrender” the world of the ascetic presented to her by the mysterious and angelic figure Reilly:

**Reilly**: The destination cannot be described;  
You will know very little until you get there;  
You will journey blind. But the way leads towards possession  
Of what you have sought for in the wrong place.  
**Celia**: That sounds like what I want.  
...............................................................  
I don’t in the least know what I am doing  
Or why I am doing it. There is nothing else to do:  
That is the only reason.  
**Reilly**: It is the best reason. (364–366)
Celia deliberately relinquishes her accustomed life, possessions, and ordinary relationships in order to pursue the strenuous activities of a would-be saint. Eliot presumably believed that only a reclusive existence fraught with hardships and even the specter of danger would result in deep spirituality. This is a vision of spirituality in an adharmic society out of balance with nature, in a world when Transcendental Consciousness is not universally available through a methodology such as the Transcendental Meditation technique. Maharishi addresses the error in this commonly accepted view of spiritual life, alien to all but a few, and explains how such a model in India came to be the rule rather than the exception:

The teaching became one-sided and, deprived of its wholeness, eventually lost its universal appeal. It came to be regarded as mayavada, a philosophy of illusion, holding the world to be only illusory and emphasizing the detached way of life (13).

When a teaching loses its universal truth and general application, it can be sustained only by the most rigorous devotees of the knowledge. Such saintly figures deserve our admiration for keeping the teaching alive, but without universal appeal its effect on the world is minimal. Maharishi’s comments above explain the degeneration of the teaching of Shankara, but they also describe the disintegration of any body of spiritual knowledge. For a teaching to remain vital it must be holistic; it must bring fulfillment to everyone, not simply to those with the will and inclination to reject ordinary life. This is why Eliot’s comment, “For most of us, there is only the unattended / Moment, the moment in and out of time,” is only partially valid. It might have been previously true that the transcendental experience, “the unattended moment,” which is the foundation of a spiritual life was rare, but not any more. The Transcendental Meditation technique that can and does bring the experience of transcendence to anyone who can think, has laid the groundwork for a new generation of directly experienced spirituality that is no longer the sole claim of the recluse.

Eliot concludes The Dry Salvages by again relying on a set of oxymoronic images of heightened spirituality: “The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning / Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply / That it is not heard at all.” These moments for Eliot are the deserved wealth of the saints, won through
right action [which] is freedom
From past and future also.
For most of us, this the aim
Never here to be realized.

“For most of us” the spiritual expectations asserted in this passage are distressingly low: “[n]ever here to be realized.” As we have seen, this need not be the case. Maharishi realizes that a spiritual world must be founded upon that vast majority living a worldly existence, and he understands that their vigorous lifestyle can actually be an asset for spiritual growth. Evolution, he explains, depends upon a balance of deep rest and dynamic activity; hence, the vitality of the householder, the non-recluse, alternated with the Transcendental Meditation technique forms an ideal combination for spiritually revitalizing life in our time (Bhagavad-Gita 10–16).

Maharishi’s teaching also corrects another misunderstanding of spiritual growth commonly accepted and asserted here by Eliot—Buddha’s message of right action—which has actually become inverted. It is not right action that leads to spiritual freedom; it is the other way around. In Maharishi’s words, “The teaching of right action without due emphasis on the primary necessity of realization of Being [pure consciousness] is like building a wall without a foundation” (Bhagavad-Gita 11). Achievement in life is dependent upon right action, right action upon clear thinking, and clear thinking upon the deepest level of silence, which Maharishi refers to as the foundation of action. Permanently gaining this state of deep silence, pure consciousness, which is the source of all life, all activity, a person spontaneously performs right action in accord with the all the laws of nature. Thus it is not right action that leads to enlightenment; it is enlightenment that produces right action.

After this vital discussion of action, The Dry Salvages ends equivocally. In lieu of a confident, beatific vision, Eliot leaves us with only the faint hope that all will be nourished not at but rather “Not too far from the [Buddha’s] yew-tree.” Eternity, he has established in each quartet, exists everywhere that time exists; however, until one actually experiences that fact, it can be said that we live near to rather than in eternity that the yew-tree symbolizes. The reason for this tepid ending is clear enough, for unlike the self-contained Burnt Norton, The Dry Salvages
functions like *East Coker* in the overall structure of the *Four Quartets* as an intermediary state, a stage on the path rather than its final destination; thus Eliot’s most expanded spiritual vision and the completion of that vision is left for the quartet that completes the circle, *Little Gidding*.

**Little Gidding**

*Little Gidding* ranks with *Burnt Norton* as the best of the *Four Quartets*. It has a wider philosophical scope than *East Coker* and *The Dry Salvages*, and is more personal and concrete than *Burnt Norton*. Written primarily in the first half of 1941, the poem was both aided and hindered by the German air raids on London. The ubiquitous sight of fire and ash, the nightly terror of sirens and explosions, the constant presence of death and demolition, creates a visceral immediacy in *Little Gidding* missing in the other *Quartets*, even though such horrors are presented indirectly and symbolically. The air raids, on the other hand, were less beneficial for Eliot’s work habits, causing him to write the poem’s first draft quickly and superficially. Writing about the timeless, he constantly felt the pressure of time, the futureless future: “Like everyone else in this period, his life became one of monotony and anxiety, caught in a middle period when pre-war life seemed unreal and post-war life unimaginable” (Ackroyd, 264).

In spite of his personal anguish, or any doubt he originally had about the quality of *Little Gidding*, the poem begins with amazing surety and affirmation. *Burnt Norton* had posed the problem of time; *East Coker* and *The Dry Salvages* elaborated on time’s character; but *Little Gidding* redeems it and in so doing presents Eliot’s most definitive spiritual vision. The poem’s first two words, “Midwinter spring,” metaphorically suggest its vitality and direction. The phrase is not only the kind of mind-challenging paradox that Eliot relished, but in context it envisions an end to the air raids, a peace in the heart of war, heaven amidst the inferno, an interruption to what had become life’s status quo—suffering as usual. This unlooked-for spring “is its own season/Sempiter nal . . . Suspended in time.” Not a common annual season, it is a new eternal season of its own making, existing in a time that never existed, reconciling and unifying sets of opposites, “pole and tropic . . . When the short day is brightest.”
The opposing forces “frost and fire” literally represent the seasons winter and summer and characterize the harsh weather that define them. Metaphorically they are the polarized means by which the eternal spring comes into being. The fire of war is calmed by the frost of winter, and the holy fire “that is the heart’s heat,” in contrast to the fire of desire (symbolized by leaping through the flames in East Coker), melts the congealed emotions and awakens the dormant inner life. The sun shining on the pond on the shortest day of the year generates a blinding light that “Stirs the dumb spirit.” The “[s]oul’s sap” that had long been frozen “quivers” and begins to flow. This is a celestial spring “not in time’s covenant,” devoid of the taint of earthly existence.

The opening stanza concludes with the question answered in the rest of the poem: “Where is the summer, the unimaginable / Zero summer?” Summer is fullness, more than spring, summer brought about by the fusion of winter and summer—the hedgerow blooming more suddenly from a temporary snow fall—a summer that is “neither budding nor fading.” It is an “unimaginable” summer because suffering and the horrors of war have made it so, but also because it is a zero summer that transcends human imagination. It is the full ripeness of spiritual awakening that the poet longs for, a summer that exceeds the still point and the midwinter spring, embracing all life and all things in the warmth of eternity.

The zero summer is for Eliot analogous to the ancient concept of a paradise on earth, a period of peace and abundance, a period that has long been chronicled in the history of literature as Ram Raj in Valmiki’s Ramayana, Plato’s Republic, More’s Utopia, the many versions of Camelot, and Morris’s The Earthly Paradise to name a few, but with the cynicism and doubt of the twentieth century the dystopia replaced the Utopia in such cautionary tales as Huxley’s Brave New World, Orwell’s 1984, Kafka’s Metamorphosis and in such plays as Brecht’s Baal, Beckett’s Endgame, and Sartre’s No Exit. However, as science comes close to proving Einstein’s unified field, and its discovery of the Maharishi Effect (See Footnote 9)—that only the square root of 1% of a population practicing the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program is needed to reduce the negative effects of a society such as crime, drug abuse, and pollution—this world-wide myth of earthly perfection and harmony no longer need be perceived as a fantasy. Hence, in 1989 Maharishi was
able to predict the orderly growth of the world toward a literal Heaven on Earth.

With individuals who could fully develop their consciousness through the Transcendental Meditation technique and the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program functioning as the units of society, permanently established in and operating from the source of natural law, a society made up of such individuals must be a society of immense growth and creativity. A society based upon the enlivenment of natural law through the growth of consciousness of its individuals would be a balanced society in which the highest values of every area of life would blossom because every area in life is founded in pure consciousness—the source of natural law. In such a Heaven on Earth, such a zero summer, nature and humanity will harmoniously interact in a perfect symbiotic relationship. Maharishi Vedic Science describes the means of achieving Heaven on Earth for each major area of life as well as a vision of what we might expect for each area. Here Maharishi comments on the future status of two areas, crime and agriculture:

Heaven on Earth will be characterized by the absence of the need to rehabilitate, because everyone set on the path of evolution will not create problems either for himself or for his surroundings. Everyone will enjoy perfect freedom in a crime-free society. (*Heaven* 92)

The creativity of man, of the soil, of the clouds, of the sun, of the sea—the creativity of everything is involved in agriculture. When all of these natural processes are evolutionary, life supporting, the farmer’s task is easy and nobody has to suffer from lack of food. Unfolding the full creative potential of the individual is vital for the success of agriculture. (*Heaven* 86)

*Little Gidding* describes the path to the zero summer in language reminiscent of *East Coker’s* (“To arrive where you are, to get where you are not, / You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy”):

If you came this way
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same.

A spiritual pilgrim traveling this route to the midwinter spring would find the “voluptuary sweetness” of May, “the same at the end of the
journey,” and a meaning that fulfills and exceeds the original purpose. The journey begins at any time and from any place that is the “world’s end,” for Eliot: “Now and England.” It is the end of the world because the war has made it so, but every place is the end just as every place is the beginning. That is what distinguishes the still point from the point in time. To get there one must “leave the rough road,” and “put off / Sense and notion.” The coarseness of ordinary desires must be abandoned, and the route taken cannot be one of ideas or even rational thinking. Eliot says the route to the zero summer is through prayer, but for him “prayer is more / Than an order of words,” more than the act or sound of praying; it is a means of transcendence to “the intersection of the timeless moment [that] / Is England and nowhere. Never and always.”

Eliot, the converted Anglican, no doubt sincerely believes in the efficacy of prayer, but on this issue he is also the Harvard graduate in Eastern philosophy. To get to the “timeless moment,” he knows one must transcend all thought. Prayer, a form of contemplation, depends on thought and exists in time; thus prayer as it is normally apprehended is an activity whose ideals may transcend the field of time, but whose method does not. Eliot realizes as much when he adds to the word prayer such qualifications as “more / Than an order of words, the conscious occupation / Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice praying.” He also makes it clear that the prayer he advocates is not an intellectual process, which prayer is generally taken to be: “You are not here to verify, / Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity / Or carry report.” If what Eliot calls prayer is not an exercise of the intellect nor what usually passes for prayer, what then is it? It is a non-intellectual practice uninvolved in activity, sound, or thought that brings the mind to eternity; by description it could very well be the Transcendental Meditation technique.

*Little Gidding*’s second section opens with a long contemplation of death, which from one perspective is the cessation of life, but the subject of death like the subject of time is a Hydra with many heads. To the nihilist, death is annihilation; to the reprobate, Eliot’s citizen of the wasteland, life is a living death; to the Christian, death is a prelude to heaven; to the seeker of enlightenment, death is the death of change; and to the Veda, death is an illusion because life is finally immortal.
In the *Four Quartets* Eliot plays with all of these forms of death, and nowhere more than in *Little Gidding*.

The section opens with three short lyrics organized around the deaths of air, earth, water and fire. The first, which visualizes the choked air of London’s fire bombings, is the most impressive. In this lyric, the “death of air” is the suffocating ash and dust that had formerly been the walls of homes, the structures of former lives. Through a single minimalist image, which conveys the remnants of what had been life, Eliot quietly captures elderly despair in the “Ash on an old man’s sleeve.” Ash is also what “the burnt roses leave,” the roses of Burnt Norton’s eternal garden. In the one word ash, then, Eliot manages to conflate the entire range of human existence. Ash is the sobering destiny of all life lived in time; it is also all that remains of the yogi’s spiritual fire, which burns away the dross of non-existence.\(^7\) These two images — the rose and the fire—come together again in an ecstatic, visionary union at the end of *Little Gidding*, marking the end and the beginning of the *Four Quartet*’s spiritual journey.

Caused in this poem by the unimaginable destruction of war, “the death of earth” is Eliot’s human wasteland that “Gapes at the vanity of toil, / Laughs without mirth,” like the pitiless desert in Shelley’s “Ozymandias.” Deaths by water and fire, like those of air and earth, are the means of change, the end of time. They “succeed / The town, the pasture and the weed . . . deride / The sacrifice that we denied . . . rot / The marred foundations we forgot.”

Eliot’s use of the preposition *of* (as in “the death *of* fire”) in associating death with each of the four elements when he might have chosen the preposition *by* (as in death *by* water) proves to be significant because *of* makes the primal elements, air, earth, water, and fire, both the destroyers and the destroyed. Humanity fouls the air and water and reduces life to ash and dust through wars and other thoughtless acts, and the elements, in turn, the sub-alterns of change, wear away all that exists including the “monuments of time,” human structures created out of naïveté and arrogance.

In *Burnt Norton* Eliot had fashioned a mock-Inferno from a descent into the London subway; in *Little Gidding* he outdoes his earlier effort

\(^7\) “[B]y means of gaining the state of enlightenment, ‘the activities of the senses and of the life-breath’ are offered ‘in the fire of yoga’” (Bhagavad-Gita 296).
by calling upon his experiences as a Kensington fire-spotter (Smith 287). Walking his “dead patrol” through the eerie ruins and rubble that had become London, Eliot’s persona encounters the ghost of a former poetic master. Whom this master might have been has inspired many speculative candidates: Yeats (Kenner 320), Swift (Gish), Shakespeare, Mallarme (Traversi 190), and Shelley (Smith 285) among them, and yet from the final phrase in the passage, “I caught the sudden look of some dead master / Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled / Both one and many,” [my italics]—we may easily deduce that the ghost is a composite rather than a single individual. This notwithstanding, Eliot is undoubtedly paying special homage to Dante, the poet whom he admired most, by closely modeling his own Hades after a passage from the *Inferno’s* Canto XV:

*The Inferno:* a company of shades came into sight
walking beside the bank. They stared at us

............................................
Stared at us so closely by the ghostly crew,
I was recognized by one who seized the hem of my skirt and said: “Wonder of Wonders! You?”

............................................
I answered: “Sir Brunetto, are you here?”

*Little Gidding:* I met one walking, loitering and hurried
As if blown towards me like the metal leaves
Before the urban dawn wind unresisting.
And as I fixed upon the down-turned face
That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge
The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
I caught the sudden look of some dead master

............................................
And heard another’s voice cry: “What! are you here?”

Eliot’s night journey takes place in that familiar hour when the fiendish activity of nightfall is almost over, “After the dark dove with the flickering tongue” has dropped its fire bombs, just prior to the rebirth of day, “Near the ending of interminable night / At the recurrent end of the unending,” at the crack-in-the-world between what isn’t and what is, when time seems nonexistent. In a renewal of conversation that has the ring of an endless debate, the old master asserts a strong desire
to avoid old poetic theories. Reibetanz takes this statement to mean a refusal to discuss poetry at all (155), but this is not the case. The passage is in fact Eliot’s consummate statement on the best use of poetry, a central issue considered in each of the Four Quartets. The dead master is the voice of poetic heritage, the link to the past that in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” Eliot states cannot be avoided. Eliot represents poetry’s present and also its connection to the future; together the two poets form an eternal continuum of poetry.

The dead master cautions that “last year’s words belong to last year’s language / And next year’s words await another voice.” Although the poet of his age, Eliot understands, had stated as much (in “Tradition and the Individual Talent”), that each age speaks in its own language and its own forms. The same could be said for posterity’s greatest sages, such as Krishna, Christ, Moses, and Mohammed, who have extolled the virtues of eternity in languages indigenous to their own times and places. As ages pass, the universal in their statements becomes lost with the changes in language and custom, and it can only be revived by intellects like their own that rise above the constraints of time.

In this vein, as Brunetto had warned Dante, the dead master warns Eliot of the fate of his poetry:

    and pray they [your words] be forgiven
    By others, as I pray you to forgive
    Both bad and good. Last season’s fruit is eaten
    And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.

    And in a pointed reference to Pound’s “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley,” the dead master states that both he and his listener had tried to improve the language of their respective ages, had been “impelled . . . to purify the dialect of the tribe.” But in spite of their good intentions, such “shadow fruit” will come to folly, mistake followed by mistake, unless the younger poet becomes “restored by that refining fire.” This is Little Gidding’s primary theme. In opposition to the destructive fire of the

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8 Consider “Mauberley’s” opening stanza:

    For three years, out of key with his time,
    He strove to resuscitate the dead art
    Of poetry; to maintain “the sublime”
    In the old sense. Wrong from the start—
“dark dove,” the fire of knowledge—the holy fire of the still point—purifies poetry and all existence.

Life can either be purified by the transcendent, “Pentecostal fire,” or be consumed by the coarse fires of ignorance and desire. Cleansed by the spiritual flame, the poet’s consciousness and subsequent poetry will “move in measure, like a dancer,” in the cosmic dance of perfection. The master, having given this sage advice, departs like Hamlet’s ghostly father at the cock’s crow, or like the German bomber before the sounding of the all clear, bringing another day of hope and peace to war-torn Londoners. Later in Section IV, Eliot will reprise the opposing meanings of fire and fire:

The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

The dead master teaches Eliot about his life’s poetic work, detachment, which is the primary lesson of Section III. Attachment, detachment, and indifference, Eliot says, all “flourish in the same hedgerow,” that is they spring from the same source. Indifference resembles the “others as death resembles life”; it comes between attachment and detachment, each of which has the capacity for love, but detachment is superior because it fosters “love beyond desire.” Detachment, according to Eliot, is created out of a sense of the past; “This is the use of memory: /For liberation.”

He says that detachment replaces attachment over time: “love of a country /Begins as attachment to our own field of action /And comes to find that action of little importance.” This loss of importance, he states, is not indifference, because memories still evoke meaning for us even though they no longer have the power over our actions:

History may be servitude,
History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

Eliot’s explanation of detachment and its place in the development of liberation is admirable, but like his earlier discussion of desires is misleading. Maharishi explains that detachment evolves not as a change in attitude, as Eliot would have it, but rather as a matter of fulfillment. The
mind remains attached to the objects of the senses as long as it remains unfulfilled, but as soon as it becomes contented, attachments to lesser experiences lose their charm and the mind becomes detached from them. A person becomes detached from a hut, for example, when moving into a mansion. Maharishi actually prefers to speak of this movement on to fulfillment as gaining equanimity rather than detachment, which possess the negative connotation of aloofness (Bhagavad-Gita 155–158). Eliot’s detachment is based on remoteness that occurs over time, and in spite of his disclaimers, it is difficult not to see this experience as indifference. Eliot is correct, however, in pointing out the vital role of memory in the growth of detachment, but according to Maharishi Vedic Science, in a way that is different from his understanding.

The value of memory (smriti) is to remember one’s original, unbounded status, one’s deepest elemental Self that is transcendental pure consciousness, forgotten in the fragmentation of temporal life. Having gained this state of full liberation, detachment from the fruits of action is the result; new desires arise but because fulfillment, the raison d’etre of all desires, has already been obtained they are no longer binding. Detachment from the things of this world, however, as Eliot’s rendering of detachment suggests, does not translate into aloofness; one still cares deeply about things. Firmly established in the state of fulfillment, life is lived in the stability and security of bliss consciousness as the things of the temporal world continuously change.

Maharishi describes life in this state of consciousness:

Such a carefree state of life in freedom is only possible when a man is contented. And contentment is possible only when the mind is established in bliss-consciousness, the state of the transcendental Absolute, because in the relative field there is no happiness so intense that it could finally satisfy the thirst of the mind for joy. . . . This is the state of perfect detachment (Bhagavad-Gita 333–334).

Section V, the final rumination of time, ties together the Four Quar-
tets’ various strands. It is the end of the poem, the final blossoming of Eliot’s themes and symbolic patterns, his philosophy and his metaphysics: “And to make an end is to make a beginning: / The end is where we start from.” Everything in the last two stanzas is by now familiar, but the familiarity is intentional, for it is through the “remembered gate” that freedom is to be found.
The movement in this final section is a gathering of diversity into unity. Once more Eliot calls for modesty, precision, and flexibility to produce in poetry a “complete consort,” just as fire and water will produce from death an eternal rebirth, and out of the incidents of history comes “a pattern of timeless moments.” To achieve this unity, this image of the great and final reality, everything, even war, death, and the dark “descending dove,” time as well as the timeless, must be included. This Eliot brings about with immense grace and affirmation in the final quatrain, once more through the images of fire and rose and their vacillating qualities relative and absolute, destructive and purifying, mutable and perfect, that merge together at the eternal still point, at the beginning and the end, when all existence,

All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

The expansiveness of Eliot’s vision lies in that one phrase, “the fire and the rose are one,” the fire of destruction and the rose of perfection. Maharishi calls such opposites that define duality—life in time—opposing forces on the battlefield of life. Under what conditions could these antithetical poles be understood to be one? Only in Unity Consciousness, the beginning and ending of the long journey that for the fully enlightened who perceive all change as an illusion never takes place. Only in Unity Consciousness are opposites entirely reconciled. In Unity Consciousness eternity is lived and time is redeemed. It is the greatness of Eliot’s vision and poetic powers that he could imagine such a state. It is the immensely greater vision of Maharishi’s to make the possibility of living such a state universally available.

Notes

1 Time is different in different states of consciousness. Maharishi explains that the field of psychology recognizes three major states of consciousness: sleeping, dreaming, and the waking state. In deep sleep, time does not exist, nor does anything else. During dreaming, time is unpredictable, with its own individual time-logic. In the waking state of consciousness, time changes with the quality of perception: time is different when we are sad or happy, alert or drowsy, etc. These are
the ordinary states of consciousness, but Maharishi has identified four more states of consciousness that are developed by means of such procedures as the Transcendental Meditation technique and the TM-Sidhi program.

When someone practices the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique, that person experiences finer levels of awareness until the finest individual awareness is transcended and only pure awareness remains, or to put it in the theme of this paper, finer fields of time are experienced until only the field of eternity remains. What the mind experiences in this field of eternity, or pure awareness, is a state of consciousness completely different from the three ordinary states mentioned above. This state of consciousness should not to be confused with an altered state of consciousness because its characteristics are unique and stable. For example, the rest experienced during this state is measurably deeper than that found at any moment of deep sleep and, yet, electroencephalograph studies have demonstrated that the mind is even more alert than at any time during ordinary waking state of consciousness. What is experienced is a major fourth state of consciousness called *Turiya Chetna* in Vedic Literature or what Maharishi terms Transcendental Consciousness, the field of eternity to Eliot, the foundation for development of all higher states of consciousness (*Science of Being* 50–57).

The following are summaries of Maharishi’s explanations of the four higher states of consciousness beyond waking, sleeping, and dreaming and their connections to time and the timeless: the first experiences of eternity in this fourth state of consciousness are distinct but fleeting; however, over time the sense of the timeless becomes increasingly familiar, not only during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, but in the waking state of consciousness as well. This is growth toward the fifth state of consciousness—Cosmic Consciousness.

During the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, the mind goes in and out of the fourth state of consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness, each time gaining greater familiarity with this deeper level of the Self. In Cosmic Consciousness the mind becomes permanently established in that transcendental field of pure consciousness. Thereafter, during both the inner experience of the Transcendental-
tal Meditation technique and the outer experience of dynamic activity, pure consciousness is not lost. In this state, the ego or small self comes to realize that it is the cosmic, infinite/eternal Self. Because the cosmic Self is immortal and unchanging, the permanent realization of this state proves that time is an illusion and that one is and always has been eternal. This is a new reality of time understood fully on the level of experience, and not available to the ordinary waking state of consciousness.

The original loss of this eternal status had come about as a matter of forgetting, the way an amnesia victim might forget that she is an heiress to a fortune. The knowledge that life is eternal, lived in the state of Cosmic Consciousness, however, has taken place only on the level of inner awareness, not on the level of outer perception. Hence, in this fifth state of consciousness, two distinct experiences of time exist. On the one hand, one has realized one’s own undivided, eternal nature; on the other, through the senses one continues to perceive a world of changes that define life in time. This is a new experience of duality in which both time and the timeless are lived simultaneously.

The sixth state of consciousness—God Consciousness—results from a refinement of the mechanism of perception as the emotions begin to flow in waves of bliss. Life becomes more fascinating, more beautiful. Happiness develops exponentially, and time is naturally affected by this growing fulfillment. Life is lived less and less in the grip of time, and the ever-increasing experience of bliss makes time less significant. Time passes with increasingly little notice in such a state of exalted joy.

The seventh state of consciousness—Unity Consciousness—is a natural progression of the sixth state. When the organs of perception have been refined to their highest value, nothing remains for them but to realize their own unbounded, eternal condition. In Unity Consciousness, the means of perception have been raised to the same status as one’s mind in Cosmic Consciousness. In Unity Consciousness, one realizes not only am I eternal, but everything I see is also eternal. Change and time continue to be perceived on a superficial level of life, but now their deeper nature, non-change and eternity, is simultaneously perceived. In Unity Consciousness, all opposites such as relative and absolute, change and non-change, time and eternity, are unified in the knowledge, intellectual and experiential, that only one reality
exists; all life is the same transcendental, immortal, pure consciousness. The experience of duality that characterizes Cosmic Consciousness—time in the form of waking state of consciousness coexisting with the timeless in the form of Transcendental Consciousness—is replaced by the two timelessnesses, subjective and objective, in Unity Consciousness. In this state everything is experienced on the level of eternity. For a more detailed explanation of higher states of consciousness according to Maharishi Vedic Science, see Alexander, et al, 1987.

The Maharishi Effect works on the level of collective consciousness, a term that means the atmosphere or influence created by any collection of individuals in any society. For example, if the singers in a choir all sing together then harmony is their collective effect; if they sing off key and out of time then randomness is their collective effect. Taking this example to the level of social interaction: if the individuals in a particular society are orderly they will create an orderly society. Contrastingly, if the individuals are predominantly incoherent, they will produce an incoherent collective consciousness that exhibits itself in various ways harmful to quality of life. Maharishi explains,

> All occurrences of violence, negativity, conflicts, crises or problems in any society are just the expression of growth of stress in the collective consciousness. When the level of stress becomes sufficiently great, it bursts out into external violence and war, or internal crime, accidents and disorder. (cited in Oates, 1990, p. 47)

The heartening element in this grim portrait of social entropy is the implication that there is one solution to all social problems, namely reducing stress. The Transcendental Meditation technique, which has proven itself for years to be effective in reducing individual stress, was put to the test in the early 1970s to see if it were equally effective in reducing societal stress. Realizing that orderly individuals, acting more in harmony with the deepest laws of nature, were more influential than disorderly individuals, Maharishi predicted that a few people practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique, as few as 1% of a given populace, could have a great harmonizing effect on society. This prediction was proven correct in 1974 in a study by Landrith and Borland which showed that crime significantly decreased in cities that had at least 1% of the population practicing the Transcendental Meditation...
technique (Borland and Landrith). Since that early study the Maharishi Effect has been replicated many times, even demonstrated to reduce violence during wars such as those in Zambia and Nicaragua (Oates, 1990, pp. 41–43). The Maharishi Effect has, moreover, become significantly more effective with the addition of the advanced Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program. To produce significant social improvements, this technique reduced the requirements from 1% of the population practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique to the square root of 1% of people practicing the TM-Sidhi program. Practiced together in groups, this program generates a much more manageable harmonizing force (called Super Radiance) that greatly enhances the prospects for solving mankind’s ancient problems.

References


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Part III

Language and Consciousness in Literature
Whitman, Transcendentalism, and the American Dream

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Whitman envisioned a unified America at a time when it was being divided by civil war, an America able to harmonize its differences through the power of language and poetry. For contemporary readers it is difficult to comprehend why Whitman believed poetry could be a force for balancing the needs of individuals and society. This article will evaluate Whitman's claims that his language program could unify the self, culture, and natural law through the aesthetic experience, a claim supported by the principles of Maharishi Vedic Science.

Introduction: The Culture Crisis and Whitman's Language Experiment

The topic of change was uppermost in Whitman's mind as the America of the 1850s drifted inexorably towards civil war, and his *Leaves of Grass* embodied the paradigm shift he felt required to take democracy beyond the present crisis. The spiritual purpose of a nation, he believed, came out in its great literature, and America had so far lacked that vision of itself. Language would help make the shift happen through the vehicle of Whitman's poetry, a "language experiment" to unify a Union drifting apart. Language, Whitman knew, could preserve cultural values through stories. But language also had an inner value which could speak to the higher self of the individual, connecting him or her to cosmic order. Making that connection, Whitman says in the 1855 Preface to *Leaves of Grass*, is the poet's job: "Folks expect of the poet to indicate . . . the path between reality and their souls" (1980, p. 10).

Pondering how to fix it, Whitman asked himself where was the *Union* of States located? He decided it was to be found in the hearts and minds of the country's citizens, in their participation in the flow of natural evolution, not in a charter on paper: "To hold men together by paper and seal or by compulsion is no account, / That only holds men together which aggregates all in a living principle. . . ." ("By Blue Ontario's Shore," 1987, p. 198). He believed the poet could put this "living principle" into a language that would speak to and unite all classes of Americans. He was confident he himself could do this because he knew the secret which connected language to nature and to the Being
in all creatures. This power of language to connect with nature, however, did not work so much through logic nor by representing things symbolically, but rather through direct contact with reality, through a language’s sound and rhythm.

Language could communicate the living presence of people and things and the underlying Self or Oversoul of which they were a part. Whitman saw his poems, then, as ceremonies enacting a ritual of union, yet also as initiations pushing each soul onto its own quest for the Self.

**Self-Culture**

*Leaves of Grass,* therefore, proposes a renewal of American democracy through what Emerson called “self-culture,” the transformation of the ego by the transcendental Self (Albanese, 1988, pp. 13–14). Emerson thought a person needed both culture and self-culture for full human development, for to know culture—the refinement of the mind through contact with great ideas and art—without developing the Transcendentalist inner Genius—the higher self—was a waste of time (“The American Scholar,” 1971, pp. 53–57). Without awakening the higher creative self, a person could not add to or make use of culture; one could merely learn it by rote. Self-culture was, therefore, the prerequisite for existing in harmony with the divine purpose of the cosmos: To live on earth while “be[ing] transformed into the likeness of the eternal world . . . and speak[ing] the language of Heaven” (*Self-Culture*, 1938, p. 104).

Whitman in turn called this total self-development “Personalism,” the unfoldment of the full cultural and spiritual potential of each individual: “The quality of BEING, in the object’s self, according to its own central idea and purpose, and of growing therefrom and thereto—not criticism by other standards, and adjustments thereto—is the lesson of nature” (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, p. 960). In “A Backward Glance Over Traveled Roads” he said, “In the centre of all, and object of all, stands the Human Being, towards whose heroic and spiritual evolution poems and everything directly or indirectly tend, Old World or New” (1982, p. 664).

Kerry Larson (1988) notes that Whitman shifted from his early cultural concerns of political journalism to “extrapolitical means of realizing his dream of consensus.” That is, he began to speak the language of poetry, a far more culturally integrative system than polemics (p.
xvii). The language of his poetry, he believed, would be the clarion call to establish a balanced republic that could accommodate both individual growth and national unity. Furthermore, Whitman’s poetry would unify both culture and the self by means of self-culture through the “aesthetic response”—that shift in the reader’s awareness that leads to the higher Self.

**Cultural Unity**

*Leaves of Grass* foreshadows the crisis in American culture that exists today. Ed Folsom (1994) points out in *The Centennial Essays* that “no American poet has had the impact on succeeding generations that Whitman has had, and no American writer has more fully helped us clarify the elements that compose this culture.” He adds, we will “continue the important work of understanding ourselves through Whitman” (p. xxiii). Whitman sees clearly that the relationship between unity and diversity is the underlying problem of modern culture, a conclusion acknowledged and elaborated in Maharishi Vedic Science. The nation’s motto “e pluribus unum” conveys the ideal of a unity of the majority, but the question remains how to maintain the balance between the needs of the plural and the needs of the individual.

Although Whitman’s poetry enacts unity by accepting and celebrating everything as part of himself, he does not advocate unity at the price of individual identity, nor does he exalt the kind of individuality destructive of the whole. He knows that real unity in diversity is something that is subtle and intangible. The “fusion of the States” Whitman hoped for was not through an obliteration of differences. For “genuine union” is not accomplished through law, economics, or anything on a material level, he tells us, but through “the fervid and tremendous IDEA, melting everything else with resistless heat, and solving all lesser and definite distinctions in vast, indefinite, spiritual, [and] emotional power” (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, pp. 935–6). In other words, his conclusions about unity are in the direction of Maharishi’s explanation, that unity of life is located in consciousness, not in physical or political force. Social unity is achieved through inner unity, through self-culture, through developing the higher Self. Language, a medium with the fluidity of consciousness, is refined enough to carry diverse voices to the inner Self, blending and uniting all into a harmonious
flow without damaging the integrity of any. Culture, language, nature, and aesthetics fit for Whitman into one interlocking, unifying design.

Today, few scholars trust that language can regenerate or unify culture the way Whitman imagined. In this postmodern era that gravitates towards difference rather than unity, this study hopes to rescue Whitman’s unified vision of American culture from the onslaught of fragmenting criticisms by applying Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s pragmatic theories of consciousness and aesthetics grounded in the empiricism of direct experience. This paper will especially apply such fundamental principles from Maharishi Vedic Science as self-referral consciousness, levels of language, and higher states of consciousness to Whitman’s poetry to show that he was neither an impractical “mystic” nor a naive idealist. Like other Transcendentalists, he believed the American Dream must be reinterpreted to include connections to society, to the Transcendentalist Self, alternately called Genius, the Oversoul, and nature, concepts reminiscent of Maharishi’s “totality of natural law.”

This paper, then, will address two major concerns—language and the aesthetic response. Part I will examine Whitman’s “language experiment” and the Vedic levels of language explained by Maharishi. Part II will look closely at the “aesthetic response” that both Whitman and Maharishi Vedic Science see as integrating and leading back to the Self.

The paper will begin with a closer investigation of self-culture, the culturing of the Self, as understood by Whitman and other Transcendentalists and a corresponding concept of Maharishi Vedic Science called self-referral. Both of these forms of culturing, we will see, when incorporated into an individual or society lead to harmony with the Transcendentalists’ nature or Maharishi’s natural law. One way individuals or societies may attune themselves to nature is by experiencing “presence,” the essence of words, a concept denied and deconstructed by current postmodern culture.

Transcendentalists also believed in the correspondence theory of language, that language functions as a bridge between matter and spirit, a theory that shares certain similarities to the Vedic concept namarupa—the correlation between name and form. Moreover, the Transcendentalists believed that language was alive and could even be a model of the higher Self. This transcendental signified, as the postmoderns call
it, is denied by contemporary theorists who believe language is only the play of difference.

Vedic language theory, as explained by Maharishi, would hold that this play of difference is true, but only on the grossest levels of language and speech. By refining one’s sensitivity to subtler levels of speech, the silent but vibrant dimension of words that unify and precede the spoken level—the Self which is the foundation of language—can be experienced. Maharishi Vedic Science describes the primordial sounds of language as those sounds which emanate from nature and are heard in the eternal silence of pure consciousness. Whitman believed that language has both this transcendental aspect to it and also an aspect that was subject to time. The Vedic concept of “levels” of language, missing in contemporary linguistics, offers support to Whitman’s transcendental theories of language and completes the fragmented beliefs of the postmoderns.

Part II considers the aesthetic response in the audience, that joyous psychophysiological reaction to art that creates bliss. Bliss, Maharishi explains, is more than happiness; it is the characteristic of an optimally functioning nervous system. For Whitman, it is the beauty the reader finds in poetry and art that produces a salubrious effect. In what might be termed “Maharishi Vedic Aesthetics,” art is not complete unless it contains wholeness and elicits a response which is integrating and evolutionary for the individual and society. Modern theorists, unfortunately, consider any form of transcendental aesthetics as escapist, a turning away from history and the body. Maharishi Vedic Science provides a model of the aesthetic response as the integration of mind and body, of the timeless with the historical—a model which solves some of the questions of Whitman’s aesthetic.

Against postmodern claims that transcendental aesthetic theories are both impractical and “elitist,” Maharishi Vedic Science offers a practical and universal technique to improve the creativity of the artist and the aesthetic awareness of the audience. Whitman also considered the practicality of his poetry. He believed the rhythm and sound of it would have the effect of bringing the listener back towards the Self. The greatness of the aesthetic experience is finally the transformative potentiality it has for the reader. Maharishi says at one point poetry can actually expand the awareness in a practical way similar to
the Transcendental Meditation technique, though not as profoundly (1974, p. 47).

**Part I. Self-Referral Consciousness and the Levels of Language**

Self-referral transcendental consciousness is the source of “Nature’s Government” and the Self of every being in creation. Language, arising from the subllest levels of consciousness, is flexible enough to embody all the levels of nature including the transcendental level. Language thus has the power, when properly experienced and used, to put the audience in the evolutionary flow of nature.

**Transcendentalist Self-Culture and Maharishi’s “Self-Referral”**

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, and other New England Transcendentalist writers between 1836 and 1860, precursors of Walt Whitman, felt that America was in a unique position to develop a literature at once native and universal. They believed America’s diverse origins and cultures should be reflected in its own literature and no longer mimic one tradition—the European. America was ripe for a literature with a new voice, grounded in a nationalism which welcomed many traditions. This new American culture, unique in the cultures of the world, would also be a universal culture. It would speak of humanity’s supreme spiritual quest, the quest for self-culture—the full unfoldment of the individual personality based on knowledge of the Self, that transcendental aspect of the individual connected to universal intelligence.

Thoreau describes a personal experience of this higher Self, what he called “Genius” or the “Spectator,” in his journal for August 13, 1838: “If with closed ears and eyes I consult consciousness for a moment—immediately are all walls and barriers dissolved. . . . I am from the beginning—knowing no end, no aim. No sun illumines me, for I dissolve all lesser lights in my own intenser and steadier light—I am a restful kernel in the magazine of the universe” (1981, pp. 50–1). This experience of connecting him to cosmic intelligence, his identity with “higher laws,” was what Thoreau felt gave rise to his voice in *Walden*, the expression of an individuality at once American and universal.
Walt Whitman similarly reported the capacity to cease thinking and be in a “state of high exalted musing . . . the objective world suspended or surmounted for a while, & the powers in exaltation, freedom. . . .” (‘Workshop,” 1982, p. 21). Whitman saw his Leaves of Grass as literally unifying his personality with his higher Self. This union, he felt, acted as a model for the spiritual integration of both the individual and the nation.

Union is also at the heart of Maharishi Vedic Science, a science of the unity of Self and how it can be systematically cultured in all people. This science finds that such experiences as those of Whitman and Thoreau are analogous to experiences of “pure” consciousness or “self-referral” consciousness. They point towards union with the Self. Mentioning one characteristic of his union with his higher Self—Thoreau said he was able to go beyond sensory experience and “consult” his own consciousness, which he found to be unbounded in time and space, part of the universal consciousness. Maharishi describes pure consciousness, experienced during the Transcendental Meditation technique, as consciousness in its simplest state, “self-referral” beyond sensory data, complete within itself: “Consciousness coming back onto itself gains an integrated state, because consciousness in itself is completely integrated. This is pure consciousness, or transcendental consciousness” (1986, p. 25). Maharishi Vedic Science also helps to clarify Thoreau’s experience of becoming “a restful kernel in the magazine of the universe.” Maharishi explains that when experiencing self-referral consciousness, one simultaneously experiences the Self of everything, the self-referral functioning of nature itself:

It is the self-referral activity of natural law that is responsible for absolute order in creation. That self-referral activity cannot be hampered from outside. It is the most basic performance in nature. It transcends all activity of natural law in the relative field, but yet is always lively as the basis of the classical, physical world. It is the most refined level of the quantum-mechanical activity of nature, from where absolute orderliness controls, commands, and governs all affairs of the universe. This transcendent level of nature’s functioning is the level of infinite correlation. (1986, p. 75)

Maharishi has re-enlivened the Vedic technologies for culturing transcendental, self-referral awareness to be lived as a permanent real-
Consciousness along with other states of consciousness—waking, dreaming, and sleeping. Enlightenment, or life lived in “higher states of consciousness,” he explains, is the ability to maintain transcendental self-referral consciousness at all times, even with the senses engaged, an achievement that allows one to be in tune with the organizing intelligence of natural law. The gradual process of integrating self-referral consciousness with more active states of awareness can be defined in distinct stages. In such states of integration, which are “the natural continuation of human development beyond the stage of adult formal operations,” the individual lives in harmony with natural law because it is experienced to be the same law upholding every aspect of one’s own nature (1987, p. 91). In his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, Maharishi defines the goal of personal growth as Unity Consciousness, a state in which “complete integration of the Self with the mind is achieved.” In this fullest state of human evolution, self-referral consciousness is lived on the level of mind and perception so that one finally “sees every living being as supported by that Being which is his own Self” (1975, pp. 181–2). Though not so systematically described as in Vedic Science, integrated awareness is also what the Transcendentalists were seeking in their pursuit of “self-culture” and Whitman in his “Personalism”—the development of the whole person.

The Transcendentalists respected all cultural influences that could shed light upon this drive for self-culture; they readily absorbed the transcendental philosophy of the Romantic movement, but also Platonism, Neoplatonism, and, in translation, texts of Vedic literature, especially the Bhagavad-Gita. Bronson Alcott records in his journal for May 10, 1846: “I read more of the Bhagvat Geeta and felt how surpassingly fine were the sentiments. These, or selections from the book, should be included in a Bible for Mankind” (1938, p. 180). Thoreau, equally ecstatic, claimed that from the Vedas “One wise sentence is worth the state of Massachusetts many times over” (1990, p. 61). Although it seems unlikely that Whitman read any Vedic literature before the first edition of Leaves of Grass, he did later, and there are many parallels to the Vedas found in his poetry (see Chari, 1964; Raja-sekharaih, 1970; Cowley, 1959; Nahal, 1988; Nambiar, 1966; Sharma, 1988). His reading of Vedic literature no doubt ultimately contributed
to his belief in the relationship between poetry and nature, the seeming equivalent of Maharishi’s natural law.

**In Harmony with Natural Law: “Nature’s Government”**

Donald Pease asserts that Whitman’s belief in the power of natural law to regenerate the country was more than mere philosophy: “Whitman wrote *Leaves of Grass* . . . to return America to her basis in nature. For Whitman that meant making natural law available as an experience, a resource for real rather than symbolic actions” (1980, pp. 119–20). Pease notes that Whitman’s natural law was not the Hobbesian “brutish” type, but rather a larger regenerative intelligence which “revealed its designs through mankind as well as his environment” (1987, p. 124). This regenerative element of natural law in Whitman (1987, p. 131) is better understood by investigating the principle Maharishi identifies as the “self-referral” performance of nature, a quantum level of organization transcending nature’s physical activity—the silent, orderly creative intelligence coordinating all change in the universe. Maharishi calls this transcendent level of nature’s functioning “Nature’s Government”; it is the unified field of nature, pure intelligence, perceived in the self-referral state of human consciousness:

The absolute Creative Intelligence (the Government of nature) eternally established in its self-referral state, fully alert and awake, most spontaneously, most innocently administers the universe, and spontaneously, most naturally, from within everything and everyone, maintains the destiny of everything and everyone. . . . The absolute formula for every government is to maintain alliance with Creative Intelligence—pure, self-referral intelligence . . . unified state of consciousness . . . through the process of transcending. (1992, pp. 44–45)

A strong perception runs through Transcendentalist writings that nature and human consciousness are not two separate entities. Whitman said that the main intention of *Leaves of Grass* was “To sing the Song of that law of average Identity, and of Yourself, consistently with the divine law of the universal” (“Preface,” 1982, p. 1010). The Transcendentalists also seem to have understood that self-referral was the way to attune oneself to the principle of unity in nature, what Margaret Fuller calls the “central soul”: 


Every relation, every gradation of nature is incalculably precious, but only to the soul which is poised upon itself, and to whom no loss, no change, can bring dull discord, for it is in harmony with the central soul. (1992, p. 312)

The central soul, or “Oversoul” according to Emerson, is the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in any hour, but the act of seeing, and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object are one. (“The Oversoul,” 1979, p. 160)

Maharishi describes a unified state of self-referral in which the mind loses its sense of duality and separation from the external object, an experience of knowingness in which the knower (Rishi), the process of knowing (Devata), and the object known (Chhandas) are perceived as one. The mind in a state of unity within itself—self-referral (Samhita)—is in tune with the self-referral state of nature’s Government, knowing its creative intelligence to be the same as nature’s. In integrated higher states of consciousness, a mind fully infused with self-referral consciousness knows all beings to be non-differentiated from its own Being. Whitman’s poetry frequently speaks from the point of view of non-difference. This view gives him delight because in the humblest creatures he “see[s] in them and myself the same old law” (“Song of Myself,” 1980, pp. 14–15). Emerson, explaining why the American Scholar can understand nature, says it is because the individual and nature function in the same circular or self-referral way:

What is nature to him? There is never a beginning, there is never an end to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself. Therein it resembles his own spirit, whose beginning, whose ending he never can find—so entire, so boundless. Far, too, as her splendors shine, system on system shooting like rays, upward, downward, without centre, without circumference—in the mass and in the particle nature hastens to render account of herself to the mind. (“The American Scholar,” 1971, p. 54)
The Wealth of a Culture Is in Its Language

Alliance with nature’s government happens only when individual and universal intelligence meet in the holistic value of Transcendental Consciousness where specific impulses of natural law are united in a state of pure potentiality. Natural law has two distinct levels according to Maharishi Vedic Science—one that is holistic and universal and coordinates the activity of the whole universe, and a more specific level that coordinates, among other things, the climates and activities of localized areas:

The relationship between the universal aspect of natural law and the local, specific aspects of natural law may be understood from the perspective of quantum mechanics in modern physics. The quantum-mechanical level of reality represents the universal value of natural law, in which all the laws of nature are lively. This quantum-mechanical level becomes expressed on the classical level, in which certain specific aspects of natural law are manifest. (1992, p. 10)

Whitman saw this same relationship between the universal and local operating within a culture’s language. Because language embodies both cosmic and local expressions of nature, its sound and rhythm rendered in poetry can marshal individual places and spirits into the grand march of national, and even universal unity. Among his hopes for the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass was a desire to heal divisions among Americans by reminding them that “The soul of the nation . . . rejects none, it permits all” (1982, p. 26). To capture the multivalent voices of America, to bind them into one rhythmic pulse, Whitman wrote long lines in an unrhymed, rhythmical speech, creating a new form meant to mimic oral rather than literary styles (Hollis, 1983, p. 8). He hoped by this informal and direct appeal to reach every American including uneducated laborers. He believed that sincere speech spoken from “a developed harmonious soul” (1987, p. 20) would awaken the power “slumbering” in words to penetrate even closed minds (“Vocalism,” 1980, p. 310). “The art of art,” he said, “the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity” (1982, p. 13). His poetry would speak with the “insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside” (1982, p. 13). Whitman saw himself as the
nation’s “equalizer,” who could “vivify” and unify the country with his incantations (1982, p. 9):

Chants of the prairie,
Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the Mexican sea,
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota,

Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence equidistant,
Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all . . . .

I will make a song for these States that no one State may under any circumstances be subjected to another State, And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day and by night between all the States . . . . (“Starting From Paumanok,” 1980, pp. 273–275)

Even this short excerpt gives a feeling for Whitman’s famous catalogue technique. Names are so powerful, he believed, that a list of things, places, and people is enough to evoke their presence and to put them harmoniously together, side by side. This passage, furthermore, exemplifies the “performative” role of Whitman’s language. It performs an illocutionary act—carrying out what it says as it says it: “I will make a song” means “As I make this song I perform my promise to you.” Whitman thus demonstrates his belief in the power of language to change things. C. Carroll Hollis points out that there are more illocutionary acts in Whitman than in any other American or English poet, and that these “speech acts” are the main stylistic feature of the early editions of *Leaves* (1980, p. 74).

In “An American Primer,” a collection of notes for a lecture on language, Whitman said, “All the greatness of any land, at any time, lies folded in its names. . . . Thus does history, in all things, hang around a few names” (1987, p. 31). He therefore believed that language could embody the qualities of things and people it named:

Great is Language—it is the mightiest of the sciences, It is the fullness, color, form, diversity of the earth, and of men and women, and of all qualities and processes; It is greater than wealth—it is greater than buildings, ships, religions, paintings, music (1987, p. 392)
Whitman responded to the call of Emerson and the earlier generation of Transcendentalist writers for an authentic American poetry which was not a derivative of Europe. Emerson no doubt inspired Whitman (Gatta, 1985, p. 5) with such statements as, the poet “stands among partial men for the complete man. . . . The poet is the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty. He is a sovereign, and stands on the centre” (“The Poet,” 1982, v. 3, p. 5). Whitman took his cue from Emerson and the earlier Transcendentalists, creating an American idiom out of his vision of the country’s language. He believed the wealth of a culture is in its language. Whitman saw *Leaves of Grass* as a “language experiment,” an “attempt to give the spirit, the body, the man, new words, new potentialities of speech. . . . The new world, the new times, the new peoples, the new vista, need a tongue . . . .” (1987, p. ix)

**A Language Experiment Based on Natural Law**

The Transcendentalist writers held in common two important premises that led to a general theory of language: 1) they believed in an essential unity of human consciousness with universal law; and 2) in the ability of language to express that unity. To these writers language could bridge the gap between matter and spirit—to embody universal truth and temporal truth at the same time. Gay Wilson Allen points out that Whitman’s theory of language is basically Emersonian: words are symbols of things in nature, but nature itself is only a symbol of a spiritual reality transcending the world of the senses (1987, pp. 243–4). This “correspondence theory” of language, which posits a relationship between the physical and spiritual planes, is elaborated in this paper’s next section. Here, it can simply be noted that Whitman reconciled the two levels of existence by insisting that nature and human nature include more subtle levels of reality which can be brought to light and unified through the poet’s skill.

Whitman also felt that nature was too narrowly defined as mere physical law; it had a spiritual dimension as well (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, p. 984). An expanded definition of nature, he argued, must be the basis of poetic language: “the true idea of nature, long absent, must, above all, become fully restored, enlarged, and must furnish the pervading atmosphere to poems, and the test of all high literary and aesthetic compositions” (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, p. 984). When
the full range of nature is embodied in language then “great literature penetrates all” and has the power to change human conditions (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, p. 933). This spiritual dimension of nature furthermore bolstered Whitman’s political vision. America, Whitman said, would evolve through three stages of democracy: it had already surpassed its political foundation and was fast outgrowing, he hoped, the material stage of the nineteenth century. The future destiny of the country thus lay in its spiritual obligation to help every person realize his or her divine Self (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, pp. 942, 960–1, 976–978).

Herbert Levine asserts that “Song of Myself,” the masterpiece of Leaves of Grass, is a model for reuniting a country divided over issues like slavery and expansionism. The poem, he says, demonstrates in its own structure, union, disunion, and reunion, using Whitman as an example of how “it was possible to unify a highly stressed self and, by analogy, an increasingly divided country” (1987, p. 579). Whitman said in “Democratic Vistas” he personally felt the opposite sides of democracy harmonized in his own awareness, a harmony he wanted to present to the people “to be read only in such oneness” (1982, p. 930). Someone had to create unity to show it could be done. Whitman, then, is one of those great poets, who as Bernice Slote puts it, has “a sense of the cosmos and who in their art perform the ritual of union” (1982, p. 954). Jeffrey Steele agrees, calling “Song of Myself” a “psychological ritual” that “constructs a central American archetype—an image of the self liberated within a field of expansive vision” (1987, p. 67). He maintains that we don’t learn ideas from “Song of Myself,” but just the process of reading it “activates a model of being that energizes us as we move through the poem” (1987, p. 73).

The reformative scope of Whitman’s language experiment makes sense within the context of Maharishi Vedic Science. Maharishi’s explanation of the self-referral basis of nature’s creativity in pure consciousness and the human ability to experience that pure consciousness is a framework for understanding how a nation could connect itself to the regenerative power of nature. Maharishi states:

Creativity is the source of all culture. The infinite potential of creativity lies in the state of pure intelligence—unmanifest, unbounded, absolute. . . . As pure consciousness is the home of all the laws of nature,
any nation whose life is grounded in pure consciousness will live the full potential of its culture and will enjoy the support of all the laws of nature. (1978, pp. 317–18)

Maharishi Technologies of Consciousness available today for realigning a culture with natural law are based on the ability to enliven pure consciousness in a whole nation or area (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1995, pp. 178–203). In the absence of such ancient Vedic knowledge for keeping a civilization strong, art has been one of the means of purifying collective consciousness, allowing the audience to “remember” and turn back to its connection with the cosmos through the aesthetic experience. It is through language, through his poetry, that Whitman would lead the nation back to this source of creativity to which Maharishi alludes. Perhaps the most inspiring aspect of Leaves of Grass, then, is this reenactment of linking ourselves with cosmic creativity. Indeed, the individual poems show it is inevitable in the grand march of evolution that humanity will take its place as God’s partners, as he says in “Passage to India,” through the voyage of the “mind’s return,/To reason’s early paradise,/Back, back to wisdom’s birth, to innocent intuitions,/Again with fair creation” (1980, p. 571). Humanity is now estranged from nature, Whitman continues, but “Nature and Man shall be disjoin’d and diffused no more” when “All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook’d and link’d together” by the poet-hero (1980, p. 568).

For most, such an undertaking would be beyond comprehension, but Whitman knew that his plan for uniting America was more than mere declaration. He saw that he must “hook” things together with language, “fann’d by the breath of nature” in such a way that people could through his poetic hints experience intimacy with natural law for themselves (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, p. 992). He felt that “The greatest poet does not moralize”; he works through “indirection,” through the suggestive and holistic power of language, “which leaps overhead” (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, p. 992) to the deepest reality, that reality that eludes language but can be experienced in silence (1982, p. 1152). Whitman’s theory led him to see language as a tool for healing when it comes from the mind of a great poet—a “language shaper.” In An American Primer, his fullest statement about language, he said “Names are magic.—One word can pour such a flood through the soul”
But words, he emphasized, could not be arbitrarily chosen: “Names are a test of the esthetic and of spirituality.—A delicate something there is in the right name—an indemonstrable nourishment that exhilarates the soul” (1987, p. 34).

**Consciousness (or “Presence”) in Language**

Whitman believed it was not language alone that influenced an audience; it was also the distinct voice of the poet imbedded in language. The “flood” pouring through the words to the listener was the writer’s “presence” inherent in the words, what Vedic Science would call the consciousness of the writer in language. Did Whitman actually believe he could encode his poems with his presence so even after his death they would continue to carry his life, his force, even in print? Like many Romantic poets, he believed this exactly. Whitman felt he was recording his voice to be heard by future generations, just as he heard the presence of past poets. Michael Heim, a philosopher of textuality, reminds today’s readers that unlike electronic, computer-generated texts, the printed book traditionally assumes a metaphysical dimension. The book “enhances the sense of private contemplative space” (1987, p. 186), and it “ultimately depends on a deeper level of stasis, of contemplative awareness” behind it (1987, pp. 70–71).

Treating *Leaves of Grass* as an embodiment of his own subjectivity, then, Whitman was in keeping with the nineteenth-century assumptions about the capacity of great literature to preserve the human voice, by the “power of the right voice . . . that touches the soul,” especially those voices recorded from the world’s great oral cultures, like the Greek (1982, p. 1269). Thomas Byers comments on just how large was Whitman’s belief in the power of language:

> The principle of correspondence that relates self, word, and world is the projection of passion for a sense of oneness, of being at home in the cosmos. Whitman’s confidence in the perceptive, creative, and communicative powers of language affirms above all a faith that speech can bridge the gaps of mere existence—that it can call world and self together into the common space and the moment of plenitude, where reality is what is here now (1989, p. 42)

Postmodern language theory, the critical apparatus presently *en vogue*, however, denies that language possesses presence, believing
instead that the writing on the page is “freed” from the “tyranny” of any single voice or consciousness. Postmodern critics have been quick to deconstruct Whitman’s personal “voice” in _Leaves of Grass_ in order to unmask it as an illusion created by the poet—a mere trick of ventriloquism (Bruder, 1986). Postmodernists believe the written word is an autonomous play of signification that points to the absence of both author and a transcendental signified (the presence of the Self and/or absolute meaning). The author’s consciousness, say contemporary theorists, is lost in a maze of language, an arbitrary system of signs that has no relation to the speaking subject or the objects represented. Postmodernism, therefore, undermines the position that words can contain either the stable presence of a writer or any form of non-changing, absolute meaning.

The postmodern view of language focuses instead on the cultural processes which create language systems, rejecting any metaphysical or transcendental foundation for language and culture. In this view, language is a social phenomenon in which sound and meaning are fractured within the word. Meaning, postmodernists argue, can never be unified within the word; rather, it is always the shifting product of an indeterminate “play.” Since today’s critical theorists view absolute meaning as a closed system, indeterminacy is felt to bring freedom to reading. The cost of being “free,” however, is that texts become “unreadable”; they continuously deconstruct themselves like so many waves of interference. This method of reading texts, points out Allen Thiher, “leaves no justification for a belief in the imagistic power of poetic revelation in language” (1984, p. 73). He adds, “The postmodern lives with a kind of nostalgia for the modernist belief that language is rooted in the essence of things” (1984, p. 97). One reason for this nostalgia is the loss of the transforming power of the aesthetic experience, the experience of bliss found at the deeper levels of language that stirs the consciousness of a refined reader. The _aha!_ experience of literature comes with the revelation of a transcendental meaning which is not, as postmodernists fear, a closed and fixed meaning; it is, instead, the unbounded presence inherent in the sound and structure of poetic language.

Vedic language theory explained in Maharishi Vedic Science can address these contradictory views of language by offering a model that allows for both authorial presence and reader freedom. Maharishi has
explained that different experiences of language arise from different states of the writer’s and listener’s consciousness. In the following discussion, this paper will examine Whitman’s theory of language with the Vedic concepts of consciousness and levels of language to support Whitman’s claims for a continued personal presence in language. Maharishi Vedic Science asserts that there is a correlation between name and form, or sound and meaning, at subtler states of awareness, most evident in the case of Vedic sounds. The idea that a thing’s essence is inherent in its name is one of the most ancient and common beliefs about the power of language. In Western culture, writers from Plato to the Modernists have spoken of language’s ability to embody what it describes. This theory assumes for language the existence of a transcendental signified, a transcendental meaning to words. From a common sense point of view, however, one notices that language changes as culture changes, that meaning is relative. Given this pragmatic reality, Whitman’s assertion of a word’s transcendental value is challenged by contemporary critics.

In rebuttal, Thomas Byers points out that a language’s meaning is capable of being both relative and absolute (1989, p. 21). However, it is left up to Maharishi to explain how such a condition is possible. Maharishi describes absolute meaning not as a fixed intellectual interpretation but as a meaning known within an absolute state of consciousness which includes both knower and known as a unity. In this unity, meaning is not separate from the knower; the ultimate “meaning” of any word or object is the absolute unbounded awareness of the knower which becomes the context revealing the absolute status of the known as well. The Śāṁhitā or dynamic unity of Rishi, Devata, and Chhana-das (knower, process of knowing, and known) is the absolute meaning. Other meanings have validity but must be historical, partial, changing. Historical meaning exists as the “play” within the absolute structure of a listener’s Transcendental Consciousness, within the Self. Transcendental or absolute meaning is, in terms of Vedic Science, the dynamics of consciousness, the infinite frequency of the unified state of consciousness containing the potential of plurality, rather than the more restricted definition of a fixed monolithic meaning employed by the postmodernists (Haney, 1981). The importance of defining “transcendental
signified” in this more expanded manner will become apparent in the following discussion of Whitman’s “levels” of language.

The Correspondence Theory of Language

Transcendentalist writers understood language to be a bridge between matter and spirit. That is, there is for them a correspondence between sound and matter. Language, they believed, could in some way express the natural living law which unifies the universe and human intelligence (Gura, 1979). The Transcendentalists read the Vedic literature, so it is not surprising parallel ideas exist between them on the power of language; but the concept of the correlation of name and form (that the name of a thing contains the form or presence of the object named) was inherent, in a less precise way, in the Western correspondence theory. Emerson says, “the poet is the Namer, or Language-maker, naming things sometimes after their appearance, sometimes after their essence, and giving to every one its own name and not another’s, thereby rejoicing the intellect” (“The Poet,” 1983, v. 3 p. 13).

The writer as “legislator” or Namer has a venerable tradition, from the ancient Greeks to the Renaissance, from the Romantics to modern fantasy. As Plato’s Cratylus puts it, “he who knows names knows also the things which are expressed by them” (“Cratylus” v. 1 p. 224). This is the belief that words are referential and have stable transcendental meanings; they are not simply determined arbitrarily by history. Signifier (word) and signified (meaning), the components of the word prised apart by the postmodernists, are united by nature. For Romantic writers of the nineteenth century, “a language of nature” meant, as James McCusick explains, that “Natural phenomena are the privileged example of natural signs; they signify, by a metonymy of cause-and-effect, the Creator, who is both their ground and origin. Imaginative discourse is an extension of this paradigm into human language . . . .” (1986, p. 26). Transcendental poets, therefore, could read God’s book, the “Book of nature,” and take natural objects as a divine symbolic language. They followed Emerson’s thought that “The Universe is the externisation of the soul. . . . The earth, and the heavenly bodies, physics, and chemistry, we sensually treat, as if they were self-existent; but these are the retinue of that Being we have” (“The Poet,” 1983, v. 3 p. 9). It made sense that the objects of nature must also be the language of the
human spirit. Whitman therefore takes his main symbol in *Leaves of Grass* from nature: “A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands” (1980, p. 6), and based on his ability to read the underlying connection between nature and himself, Whitman’s seer persona offers his answer: “I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven./Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,/A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,/Bearing the owner’s name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say *Whose*?” (1980, pp. 6–7).

**The Language of Nature:**

**The Continuum of Consciousness, Language, and Matter**

Isobel Armstrong points out that for nineteenth-century writers language was not fixed or dead, but as Blake termed it, a “living form” which was a “model of the structure of consciousness or being itself” (1982, p. xiii). Poetry could embody living patterns of sound, built from and maintained in consciousness, like Tennyson’s Camelot which was “built by music/therefore never built at all/And therefore built forever” (1973, pp. 272–274). Catherine Albanese states that the American Transcendentalists saw “kinetic” language as capable of expressing the transformation of the life force itself (1988, pp. 22–23). James P. Warren traces in detail the influence of nineteenth-century linguistics on Whitman, especially the “organic” language theory which posits the evolution of language as a reflection of the evolution of human cultures (1990, pp. 12–33).

It is not surprising then that Whitman saw his poetry as an expression of the living consciousness of his age: “Slowly, sternly, inevitably, move the souls of the earth, and names are its signs” (1987, p. 12). Whitman believed that “The great tidal movements in a nation’s life are repeated in great tidal movements in its language” (1984, p. 1627). The English language in an America that was new and vast was bound to respond to the importance of place. For instance, the Native American words for places were more suitable than European names because they were fashioned from the living creative sounds of nature: “All aboriginal names sound good. . . . They are honest words—they give the true length, breadth, depth. They all fit. Mississippi—the word winds with chutes—it rolls a stream three thousand miles long” (1987, p. 18). These
native words Whitman called “natural breaths”: “sounds of rain and
winds, calls as of birds and animals in the woods, syllabled to us for
names . . .” (“Starting from Paumanok,” 1980, p. 287). Whitman also
suggests that language and physical nature are similar in make-up and
evolution: “The science of language has large and close analogies in
geological science, with its ceaseless evolution, its fossils, and its num-
berless submerged layers and hidden strata, the infinite go-before of the
present. Or, perhaps Language is more like some vast living body, or

Maharishi makes the connection between language and conscious-
ness especially clear when he analyzes the word “literature” as a “flow
of letters” and then explains a letter as a “fluctuation of consciousness”
(1976). Maharishi Vedic Science upholds language capable of embody-
ing the qualities of the objects it names by explaining the relationship
of consciousness, language, and matter as a continuum of vibration,
from subtle to gross levels of creation. Language is the bridge or means
by which, if one can experience all the levels of language (described
below), one’s consciousness can participate in the flow or fluctuation of
nature’s creative process itself from unmanifest to manifest.

This process of language’s manifestation, Maharishi states, has its
origin in Transcendental Consciousness, the unified field of natural
law. This is the unmanifest level of the continuum which is continually
fluctuating within itself at an infinite frequency; thus, Maharishi calls
this primordial fluctuation “self-referral” (1986, pp. 25–31). What is
produced by this fluctuation are the primordial sounds or wave patterns
of creation called “Veda,” the expression of the fundamental laws of
both matter and consciousness, as Ken Chandler explains:

According to Maharishi’s exposition of the Veda, the sequential emer-
gence of the diverse laws of nature from the unified field can be directly
experienced in the field of consciousness as a sequence of sounds; these
are presented in the sequential emergence of phonological structures of
the Vedic texts. Veda is just the structure of the self-interacting dynam-
ics through which the unified field gives rise to the diverse expressions
of natural law. (1987, p. 15)

These primordial or Vedic sounds Maharishi calls “The Language
of nature in which Law is expressed in its totality” (1995, p. 55). At
the level of this primordial fluctuation within the unified field of natu-
ral law, the form of matter is inherent in but as yet unmanifest in the sound structure. “Phonemes have a wave form and so does the object,” explains Maharishi. “The growth of speech from consciousness is parallel to the growth of form in matter . . . . The building blocks of speech analyzed [phonology] are parallel to the building blocks of physical existence [physics]. Physics and phonology can be the same because the impulses which constitute the object and the sound have the same form” (1972a). The phenomenon of namarupa, according to Maharishi, has its origin in the continuing process of creation from the unmanifest fluctuations of Veda, which can be known in self-referral consciousness. Both matter and language, Maharishi concludes, can be analyzed as quantum wave functions, as stages of the manifestations of primordial sound, and therefore both matter and language find their common origin in the unified field of pure consciousness (1972a). The Language of nature, existing in everyone’s silent pure consciousness, is “the Language of Veda, the mother of all languages” (1994, p. 228).

**Vedic Language Theory Based on States of Consciousness**

Maharishi’s exposition of Vedic language theory describes the continuum of nature embodied in language from its most abstract quantum level to the most concrete classical level. Each level of language corresponds to a level of natural law, and one’s experience of language depends upon the refinement of one’s consciousness; it takes a flexible consciousness to experience the full range of language, the full range of natural law. Maharishi’s commentary on the Vedic grammarian Panini divides speech, the levels of language, into four stages from grossest to most subtle (1972a):

1) *Baikhari*: language experienced by the senses; spoken speech.

2) *Madhyama*: mental or intellectual speech; duality of speaker separated from the object described. Because there is a gap between subject and object, the subject’s name for the object is arbitrary.

3) *Pashyanti*: the finest impulse of speech. The intuitional wholeness behind speech without the rigidly defined intellectual meaning. This is the finest feeling level of language where unity exists between word and the experience described.
4) Para: the vibrant, silent, preverbal source of language. In this unspoken level of language there is no subject-object duality; it is a state of unbounded consciousness. To experience language on this level, says Maharishi, is to experience the faint impulse of the word and all the qualities contained in the potential form within one's own unbounded awareness. This level of consciousness is the transcendental Self which is the ground Being of all objects. (1972a)

The transcendental signified, where word is unified within itself so that name and form correspond and the listener can intuit the full presence of meaning, is experienced only on the Pashyanti and Para levels of language. The Madhyama and Baikhari levels represent the grosser historical context of speech and contain a gap between signifier and signified, a gap created as the word takes concrete shape in the speaker's mind. These four levels of speech represent different states of consciousness, different experiences of language: Para, transcendental consciousness; Pashyanti, the border between transcendence and historical awareness, integrating both together in an intuitional whole; Madhyama and Baikhari, ordinary waking consciousness in which objects are perceived as “other.” Maharishi points out that the range of a single word is the whole range of life. Modern linguistics is thus only partially correct when it describes the arbitrary functioning of language in waking state consciousness, a condition that is historically determined and always changing (Orme-Johnson, 1987, p. 345 and Haney, 1981, p. 426). This arbitrariness that postmodernists perceive only corresponds to the Madhyama and Baikhari levels of speech. In more subtle, unified states of awareness, those that correspond to the Para and Pashyanti levels, however, this is not the case; language has its “timeless” aspect as well, as great poets and writers have always intuitively known.

The most important thing about the Vedic model is that it posits Para as the source of the grosser levels of speech. This is the self-referral level in which the knower can know the object most truthfully as an aspect of one's own nature. This is the fulfillment of the Transcendentalist aspiration for self-culture, knowledge of the full potential of name and knower together. Maharishi has said that experiencing the full range of speech connects the surface of life to the depths of life in the listener resulting in integration of all aspects of the mind (1976).
Levels of Language in Whitman

Whitman is one of those poets who seem to have understood that language has levels. If *Leaves of Grass* is a “language experiment,” surely one of Whitman’s experiments is to get his readers to feel different levels of sound and meaning, including the transcendental level—the source of both sound and meaning. That there is an absolute meaning to words Whitman has no doubt: “The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail . . . the day and night do not fail,” he says, asserting that “Underneath the ostensible sounds” of words are the unfailing laws of nature (“Song of the Rolling Earth,” 1987, pp. 267–8). The absoluteness of words is not in their fixed intellectual meaning, but in their latent Being. Therefore, the whole truth of words cannot be apprehended by intellectual understanding: “The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every thing,/A book separate, not link’d with the rest nor felt by the intellect,/But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page” (“Shut Not Your Doors,” 1987, p. 456). The latent meaning in words he calls “the drift,” the feeling or presence of words. The drift is not just “subtext,” it is intentional and primary text; it is the real transcendental meaning beyond the sound of the words. Words become more dynamic and truthful when their “inaudible” suggestive values are enlivened, first by the skill of the poet, then by the reader’s own sensitivity. Whitman thus implies that one can touch natural law (“those inaudible words of the earth”) only through the drift of words which is “subtle, untransmissible by print” (“Rolling Earth,” 1987, pp. 266–7).

In terms of Vedic language theory, Whitman’s “drift” could be likened to the *Pashyanti* level of language in which the listener experiences simultaneously the historical context of language along with a degree of timeless “indeterminacy,” a condition that allows for the listener’s participation in unbounded meaning. There also exists in Whitman’s poetry something like the *Para* level of Vedic language theory. *Para*, Maharishi explains, occurs in the state of pure silent awareness, in the unified field of consciousness where there is no subject-object duality, just Being vibrating within itself in the Samhita of Rishi, Devata, and Chhandas. Whitman knows the state of silent awareness to be the source of language and yet it is unsayable: “There is in me—I do not know what it is . . . it is without name—it is a word unsaid. It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol. . . . It is not chaos or death—it
is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is Happiness” (1987, p. 81). This is a silence which although unsayable can be nevertheless “read” as form, union, plan, and it is read within the Self, what Whitman called “the real Me.” This experience of silence is not historical, for time stops as the signifying process touches the source of the signifying capability itself. The historical dimension of the unsaid word is embedded in Para, but only in seed form within the context of the unbounded Self, that Self that Whitman claimed was “Apart from the pulling and hauling . . . . Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it” (“Song of Myself,” 1987, p. 5). In “A Riddle Song” Whitman encourages the reader to guess this riddle of silence: “That which eludes this verse and any verse, / Unheard by sharpest ear . . . . Open but still a secret, the real of the real . . . .” (1987, p. 691).

In the Para experience of language, the ultimate referent of every word—the transcendental signified—is the silent unified field of one’s own pure consciousness. Maharishi explains that in the reading experience it is the process of self-referral that creates bliss: “this reference to the Self in everything makes reading enjoyable” (1976). Whitman similarly claimed to read everything in creation as his real “Self” (“Song of Myself,” 1987). For him, the truth is both plural—“all truths wait in all things” (Leaves 40)—and yet unitary—“a knit of identity” (1987, p. 3)—and, he can know them both because he is “Walt Whitman, a kosmos” (1987, p. 31). This paradox of diversity in unity only makes sense as an experience of expanded consciousness. The silent presence in language unifying all meaning within the listener’s Self is an experience of the subtler levels of speech, as Whitman well knew. He said the poet could only “hint” at such experience; the audience had to solve this riddle on its own; readers had their part to do. They had to “come to poets on equal terms” (1982, p. 14). Maharishi notes that a word has a meaning at every level of consciousness and that the experience of that word will be different in different states of consciousness (1971b). That means that meanings at deeper levels can only be known by someone who has access to them. Vedic literature issues such a warning: “The Richas (verses) of Rig Veda . . . are sustained . . . in the collapse of unbounded intelligence onto its own point . . . . He whose awareness is not open to this field, what can the Richas accomplish for him?” (1994, pp. 170–174). Thus, the transcendental signified on the level of
the Vedic hymns does not reside in written or spoken words but as an impulse of knowledge cognized in unbounded or Transcendental Consciousness.

Whitman conceived of a concept similar to transcendental meanings existing within the Self: “Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright lines? those curves, angles, dots? No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in the ground and sea / They are in the air, they are in you” (“Rolling Earth,” *Leaves*, pp. 265–6). The transcendental meaning is the cognition of an underlying field of the full potentiality of meaning and sound, including the play of difference, latent and waiting to be experienced in each person as he or she reads or speaks. Whitman warns the would-be poet in his 1855 Preface to *Leaves of Grass* that s/he needs to be open to the transcendental field of life as well as the historical. He says if s/he is not qualified—“if to him is not opened the eternity which gives similitude to all periods and locations . . . and which is the bond of time . . . let him merge in the general run and wait his development” (1982, pp. 23–4).

Language is thus a powerful tool for unifying a democracy because it can “leap overhead” and invoke the common ground between all people and things, enlivening the transcendental signified. This experience Whitman thought of as spiritual democracy, an illumination of both the object and subject and consisting of the same underlying unity of each. Words possessing this transcendent basis could therefore nudge a reader beyond the surface; they could be a means for self-culture: “The words of the true poems give you more than the poems,/They give you to form for yourself poems, religions, . . . and everything else . . . Whom they take into space to behold the birth of stars . . . ” (“Song of the Answerer,” 1982, p. 143). Maharishi also profoundly relates the transcendental basis of poetry with the transcendental basis of democracy. Both poetry and government, he shows, are patterns originating in the unmanifest structure of natural law. This structure or blueprint of nature is contained in the verses and rhythms of Veda, he explains. While the Vedic literature contained in books is a manifest transcription of an oral tradition, Veda itself—the essence of Vedic literature—is not known by the words on the page. Veda is the preverbal unmanifest sound of natural law known only in pure consciousness. This “Language of nature” gives rise to all forms in nature. Nature’s government
resides therefore in the silent structuring patterns of these primordial sounds that Maharishi calls “the Constitution of the Universe.” The Constitution of the Universe is not a written document but rather the pattern of natural law lively within the Self of each person and in every atom of creation. There is, then, no differentiation between the administrator and the administered because the source of nature’s government is the Self: “This is the ideal of democracy at the unmanifest basis of creation from where the infinite diversity of the universe is administered with perfect orderliness” (1992, pp. 21–22).

Maharishi’s translation of a verse from the Taittiriya Upanishad explains this ideal democracy and reminds one of Whitman’s Transcendentalist politics: “The Self is administering itself” (1992, pp. 21–22). There is infinite participation within the Self, infinite correlation of all interests, and all possibilities lively there. This transcendental basis of democracy and transcendental basis of poetry are identical with the transcendental basis of natural law, found not outside but inside every citizen. Similarly, Whitman thought that if the transcendental level of natural law could be enlivened in his readers through poetry, the spiritual phase of democracy could be triggered on a large scale—a profound and subtle vision of how to realign a culture to nature through an expanded understanding and experience of the levels of language. Whitman tried to hint, to give some flavor of these levels to his readers, though he realized the readers themselves had to be equal to such an experience. Whitman’s enthusiasm for the power of language could hardly be contained:

Yes! Language is indeed alive! Primordial creation and manifestation of the mind, Language throbs with the pulses of our life. This is the wondrous babe, begotten of the blended love of spirit and of matter—physical, mystical, the Sphinx! Through speech man realizes and incarnates himself. (1984, p. 1651)

**The Evolution of Language According to Whitman**

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. (Thoreau, 1971, p. 98)
Though Whitman spoke of the timeless, absolute basis of language, he nevertheless was quite aware of the cultural changes taking place in the English language in nineteenth-century America, and, in fact, embraced the flux as part of his poetic theory. Whitman accepted change as a part of the divine plan for the advancement of the human race. He adopted the Darwinian theory of biological evolution, but like many other nineteenth-century writers viewed it in a religious light: he felt that human beings were evolving into a more spiritual species (Wong, 1988). Since Whitman believed evolution to be the law of nature, he thought language must follow the same law (1987, pp. 8–12). He thought English was especially suited to be the poetic language of a spiritual democracy due to its ability to absorb creative influences and therefore keep up with the unique American experience:

[English] is the most capacious tongue of all—full of ease, definiteness and power—full of sustenance.—An enormous treasure-house . . . chock full with so many contributions from the north and from the south, from Scandanavia, from Greece and Rome—from Spaniards, Italians and the French. . . . America owes immeasurable respect and love to the past . . . but by far the greatest inheritance is the English language—so long in growing—so fitted. (1987, p. 31)

Whitman felt that language is a dynamic process of growth, but that its changes are orderly and purposeful. He believed the new words coming into usage, for instance scientific words, were not accidental but prompted by the changing needs of the culture. However, this concept of a historically developing language appears to conflict with the correspondence theory of language where name and form are essentially correlated. Nineteenth-century authors, challenged by the rapid changes of the industrial revolution and the loss of traditional values, looked for a way to resolve this conflict by seeing change as a “development” towards some cosmic purpose. Organic theories, such as those of German philologists like Humboldt, also attempted to account for change by searching for a unity that underlies a language’s diversity and growth (Warren, 1990, p. 13).

In a similar way, Thomas Carlyle, the Victorian mythmaker of the post-romantic era who influenced the thinking of American Transcendentalists, explained cultural change through his “clothes” philosophy (Weisbuch 1986; Price 1990). Borrowing a metaphor from the
Germans, Carlyle compared the ever-changing world to clothes worn over a spiritual essence that forever remained constant. Thus, language could change, cultures could change, but Eternity remained unaltered. In this scheme, language is “the garment of thought” even as nature is “the garment of God” (1987, pp. 57, 44). The making of new cultural clothes in every generation need not be frightening, Carlyle believed, since they are but a contemporary expression of perennial truths. And language for the Transcendentalists and Whitman is the means for making the eternal concrete and historical.

Poetry and the “Songs of Nations”

Emerson agreed with Carlyle that “Each age . . . must write its own books”; each age must find the eternal truth but discover it in its own language (“The American Scholar,” 1971, p. 56). At the same time, Emerson felt that all writing was only a partial capturing of some primordial poetry:

For poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings, and attempt to write them down, but we lose ever and anon a word, or a verse, and substitute something of our own, and thus miswrite the poem. The men of more delicate ear write down these cadences more faithfully, and these transcripts, though imperfect, become the songs of the nations. (“The Poet,” 1983, pp. 3, 5–6)

In this passage Emerson asserts an ancient divine language which humanity can no longer hear. In it he avoids the negative Biblical implications of a human fall. He locates instead an epoch in which the very air was music, and from this ancient time of human perfection he attempts to connect the imperfect poetry of modernity—“the songs of the nations”—to the ideal, “primal warblings” that existed before time. The link between these two periods is “the men of more delicate ear,” those sensitive individuals who can hear the ancient music and write it in what Carlyle would call the clothes of the clime—for Emerson, a specific American literature. Expressing a common Transcendentalist view that Whitman shared, Emerson believed each age and place must write its own poetry in order to “reattach” every corner and moment of creation to the non-changing eternal.
Whitman said one only had to travel in the American Midwest to see how irrelevant and “cramped” European poetry is for the American (“Specimen Days,” 1982, p. 866). Each nation must have its own specific culture to preserve and vitalize itself, especially through “national, original archetypes in literature” (1982, p. 972). The national literature exhibits a country’s “particular modes of universal attributes” (1982, p. 973). Each poet displays the “birthmark” of that specific time. Whitman claimed his birthmark was the American Civil War and the expansionist America of the nineteenth century (“Backward Glance,” 1982, p. 660). Each culture, however, has a duty to preserve the world’s wisdom in its own literature. Whitman calls the books from the past great civilizations “little ships . . . bearing its freight so dear—dearer than pride—dearer than love. All the best experience of humanity, folded, saved, freighted to us here. Some of these tiny ships we call Old and New Testament, Homer, Aeschylus, Plato, Juvenal. . . ” (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, pp. 972–3).

Language records differences of time and place in its surface grammar. But Whitman also thought a universal or “deep structure” lay beneath the surface structure of languages that allowed common understanding between people of different dialects. He expresses this in a prose fragment which became the basis of the poem “Song of the Answerer”:

No two have exactly the same language, and the great translator and joiner of the whole is the poet. He has the divine grammar of all tongues and says indifferently and alike, How are you friend? to the President in the midst of his cabinet, and Good day my brother, to Sambo, among the hoes of the sugar field, and both understand him and know that his speech is right. (Hollis, 1983, p. 92)

What makes widely different people know the poet’s speech is “right” is the preverbal unmanifest “divine grammar,” the transcendental signified or meaning intuited beneath individual idioms. The particular words matter, but what matters more is that they become vehicles for the transcendental meaning which the poet can invoke and the audience can feel. The Transcendentalist writers frequently spoke of truths, myths, language or “primal warblings” of which their writings were but manifestations in the present age. Such writing uses cultural language but is not dependent on the historical past or present; truth
is merely rediscovered in each epoch in a fresh way. The Transcendentalists insisted that truth is not imprisoned in some particular time but always available as long as the artist knows “the divine grammar.” There is, says Whitman, a common universal language underlying all specific tongues: “A great observation will detect sameness through all languages, however old, however new, however polished, however rude. As humanity is one under its amazing diversities, language is one under its” (1987, p. 1).

**Primordial Language in Maharishi Vedic Science**

Emerson’s and Whitman’s discussions of culture and self-culture form an interesting parallel to Maharishi’s commentary on the distinctions between cultural and Vedic literature. The Vedic literature printed in books is only the written manifestation of an ancient oral tradition which has preserved the primordial sounds of nature. The Veda itself, Maharishi explains, is not a cultural literature; rather it is the primordial sounds of one’s own self-referral consciousness. These sounds are not created by human beings—they are the impulses of creative intelligence itself, the language of nature from which objects name themselves (1972a). The Veda is therefore in Emerson’s phrase, “written before time was”; it is the sequence of sounds—the emergence of each syllable paralleling the structuring of matter from the unified field of natural law—that is the “blueprint of creation.” The theoretical physicist John Hagelin has suggested that the structure of the unified field in physics and the structure of the unified field of consciousness described by Vedic Science are so parallel that the elementary particles of physics should be, to preserve accuracy, renamed according to Vedic language (1989). Michael Dillbeck, a social psychologist, finds the Vedic blueprint appropriate for describing the laws of human psychology (1988). Tony Nader, who has an M.D. and a Ph.D. in neuroscience, has shown detailed correlations between the human nervous system, the physiology of the universe, and the sounds of Vedic literature (1995). Veda, then, is the general underlying sound sequence which manifests as specific forms and patterns, subjectively as consciousness and objectively as matter.

Maharishi explains that the natural precision of Vedic words is a result of their perfect name and form correlation; that is, the sound
is that particular quality of vibration which structures the particular form of the object. A Vedic word is like the seed containing all the vital information from which the tree grows (1971b). This specific name and form quality, however, is verifiable only in higher states of consciousness, for only in these expanded states is a person sufficiently aware to discriminate the subtle effects of sounds. Such was the case, Maharishi tells us, of the ancient Ayur-Vedic seers who could cognize the correct names of plants; their experience was, “I don’t give it a name; it gives me its name” (1972a).

The Vedic term for the clearest and truest perception of sounds is *Ritam Bhara Pragya* (that intellect which accepts only the truth). This experience is the finest level of discrimination that corresponds to the *Pashyanti* level of language. In *Ritam Bhara Pragya*, one perceives all the sensory and historical qualities of the named object along with its transcendental basis. In this state of awareness, Maharishi says, consciousness is situated at the junction point between intuition and transcendence. The Transcendental Meditation–Sidhi program specifically strengthens this experience (Gelderloos and van den Berg, 1989, p. 383). Although in cultural languages objects have diverse arbitrary names, their common basis in the *Pashyanti* and *Para* levels of language could be perceived in the experience of *Ritam*. This refined discrimination could be experienced in any language, but it exists most effortlessly in the Vedic language in which the sound and form are most perfectly correlated, *not only* on the *Pashyanti* and *Para* levels but on all levels of language.

Since the Vedic language represents the perfect relation between sounds and objects in nature, Maharishi has explained, it can be called the “primordial” language of nature, not a specific cultural language, nor a language of change, but of “the unchanging Unity of life” (1967, p. 3). Maharishi says that “The truth of Vedic wisdom is by its very nature independent of time and can therefore never be lost” (1967, p. 3). Thoreau seemed to perceive this quality of the Vedic literature, even in translation: “What extracts from the Vedas I have read fall on me like light of a higher and purer luminary, which describes a loftier course through a purer stratum,—free from particulars, simple, universal” (1990, p. 62). At another time Thoreau wrote: “Even at this late hour, unworn by time, with a native and inherent dignity it [Vedic literature]
wears the English dress as indifferently as the Sanskrit . . . The great thought is never found in a mean dress, but is of virtue to ennoble any language” (1981, p. 316). Thoreau, as the clothes metaphor indicates, seems able to pierce the surface and perceive something of the Vedas’ transcendental signified, even through the medium of a historical language.

However, Maharishi warns, even the timeless Vedic literature becomes misinterpreted over time when “man’s vision becomes one-sided and he is caught in the binding influence of the phenomenal world . . .” (1967, p. 3). In such periods of ignorance, the Veda is thought to be contained only in books instead of being located in one’s own self-referral consciousness. Maharishi points out that one can be confused by viewing the Vedic literature from the outside, from the point of view of some school of thought, whereas the full meaning of Veda can only be known in Transcendental Consciousness (1967, p. 106).

Vedic literature, though timeless, can be thought of as a model for cultural literature, Maharishi has said, in the way the Veda embodies the full range of natural law, and the way it can bring the audience in attunement with natural law (1972b, 1976). Whitman would agree that the full range of nature and its primary law—evolution towards fulfillment—constitute the only worthy topics of poetry: “For the eternal tendencies of all towards happiness make the only point of sane philosophy. Whatever comprehends less than that . . . is of no account” (1982, p. 16). If Whitman’s statement is true, why then should each culture bother to write mere fragments or parts of the primordial poetry? An explanation can be found in Maharishi’s commentary on cultural integrity.

**Maharishi’s Theory of Cultural Integrity and the “Mother Tongue”**

Each language and culture, Maharishi states, is born from the individual character of its climate and geography, but “all cultures are the expression of the eternal impulse of the Absolute to know itself” (1977, p. 142). Furthermore, he explains, “Nature loves variety. World harmony is not based on the elimination of different cultures; it is based on the ability of each culture to maintain its own integrity on the basis of the infinite adaptability that characterizes life lived in accord with the
laws of nature” (1977, p. 142). Languages, too, are based on the physical differences of place and therefore must reflect some aspect of difference. Maharishi explains that what upholds a specific culture are the two distinct aspects of natural law—the universal and the local. The universal is the unified field of pure consciousness located at the basis of natural law which gives rise to the specific cultures founded on local laws of nature such as climate and geography (1992, p. 10). What does allow a culture to change in a stable and progressive manner is its alliance with both local and universal levels of natural law. Maharishi calls the local language, imbied with the qualities of the local place and culture, “the mother tongue”:

Mother tongue is the Language of nature, which is intimately related to the individual because it is structured and upheld by local laws of nature, which structure the physiology of the individual. Vedic Language is the Language of nature, which is structured and upheld by the universal laws of nature, which are the common basis of all the physiological structures of the universe. This means that there is a direct relationship of the whole with the part—between the mother tongue and Vedic Language. This means mother tongue is the closest to the Vedic Language. (1994, p. 361)

Maharishi often uses the analogy of the sap and the flower to illustrate how the local and universal levels of natural law work together. The sap is the all-pervasive and invisible core giving rise to specialized parts—flower, stem, leaf, thorn—one phenomenon with different forms of expression. Similarly, the skill of the poet, as Whitman remarked many times, integrates what is local with what is universal. Emerson made a joke about Whitman’s integration of universal and local when he remarked that *Leaves of Grass* was a mixture of the Bhagavad-Gita and the *New York Herald*. Whitman took such unification seriously in *Democratic Vistas*:

>[G]ood literature, has certain features shared in common. . . . The combination fraternizes, ties the races—is, in many particulars, under laws applicable indifferently to all, irrespective of climate or date, and, from whatever source, appeals to emotions, pride, love, spirituality, common to humankind. Nevertheless, they touch a man closest (perhaps only actually touch him) . . . out of his own nationality, geography, surroundings, antecedents, etc. (1982, p. 978)
Part II. Higher States of Consciousness and the Aesthetic Response

From a quantum model of the human physiology, the aesthetic response is seen to be based on a self-referral movement of consciousness that is integrating to the whole psychophysiology and connects it to the processes of growth in nature. The aesthetic response is ideally a glimpse of a higher, more refined state of consciousness in which pure unbounded awareness coexists with waking consciousness.

How the Aesthetic Response Connects Us to Natural Law

The purpose of life, Maharishi has explained, is the expansion of happiness, the movement of all beings towards full development (1963, p. 80). The highest purpose of art is the expression of life, but it is also the expansion of happiness, to place individuals in tune with cosmic purpose by culturing the bliss and refinement of the individual nervous system and developing full human potential (Maharishi, 1975). Bliss, Maharishi states, is more than happiness; it is the state of full functioning of mind and body together. When established permanently in the individual nervous system, bliss is a quality of enlightenment or total integration based on the perfect self-referral functioning of the human organism at all times during waking, dreaming, or sleeping with no obstructions to the flow of life (Wallace, 1986).

Art, like language, has its outer use in preserving historical culture; it has its inner value in bringing the human nervous system towards a state of fulfillment that integrates or “cultures” it towards harmony with natural law. Any art which does not take the awareness in an evolutionary direction, does not culture life, does not deserve the name of art, Maharishi explains (1976). Thus, “Culture has as its function to nourish all aspects of life” (1978, p. 597). With this nourishing quality of culture, the aesthetic experience takes on immense significance, what the Transcendentalists called “self-culture,” the movement of awareness from the gross art object to the most refined level of the Self where the aesthetic aha! response expands and integrates awareness.

Western philosophers who write on aesthetics perennially argue about what constitutes beauty in art and whether or not beauty is to be appreciated for its own sake or for the sake of some moral end. Aesthetics as a study has always been highly speculative, but for postmodern
critics it is baseless: “aesthetic ideology involves . . . a confusing of mind and world, sign and thing” (1990, p. 10). For these critics, language is no longer capable of bridging the gap between world and mind; therefore, the aesthetic experience does not really exist, and it is not desirable that it should, since it purports to lead to some privatized and elitist interpretation of texts.

In Maharishi Vedic Science, on the other hand, the aesthetic experience is not viewed as belonging to a private emotional realm. It is an experience of Transcendental Consciousness, a taste of the bliss that results from the Samhita of self-referral awareness where the knower becomes united with the object of knowledge in the process of knowing it. Art, as we have seen, creates bliss, and bliss is the psychophysiological self-referral experience that makes us whole and connects us to our own life processes. Although bliss is subjective, it links the historical subject to the unbounded Self, a point both within and outside culture. Maharishi identifies the goal of art as taking the audience towards this bliss, even if at first only momentarily. Audiences familiar with their own self-referral capabilities will be most open to this aesthetic experience (1975a). Many of the salutary and spiritual characteristics Maharishi attributes to the aesthetic experience can also be found in the philosophy of Whitman.

**Whitman’s Aesthetics of Perfect Health**

For Whitman, things are much simpler than for the postmodern writer. The aesthetic experience is for him the goal of poetry; it is the communication which takes place between poet and reader. It begins with the quality of the poet’s consciousness; the poet is a “seer” “complete in himself . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not” (1982, p. 10). It is the poet’s presence that gives life to language: “If he breathes into any thing that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe” (1982, p. 10). The poet aims beyond the beauty of “dumb real objects” towards the beauty of the soul (1982, p. 10). Beauty for Whitman is the democratic perception that all life is equally precious: “about the proper expression of beauty there is precision and balance . . . one part does not need to be thrust above another” (1982, p.12). The beauty he wishes to convey is the beauty of the whole, the beauty that can only be seen by one who has faith in the purpose
of nature: “The known universe has one complete lover and that is the
greatest poet. . . . Nothing can jar him . . . suffering and darkness can-
not—death and fear cannot.” Beauty for the great poet is not a matter
of “hit or miss . . . it is as inevitable as life . . . it is as exact and plumb as
gravitation” (1982, pp. 11–12). Whitman sees beauty in subjects where
others do not, for he sees with his heart; he is a complete lover, refusing
to reject anything: he would “not call the tortoise unworthy because she
is not something else” (“Song of Myself,” 1987, p. 15).

Whitman embodies his perceptions in language and only “hints”
to the reader of his direction, for “The reader will always have his or
her part to do, just as much as I have had mine. I seek less to state or
display any theme or thought, and more to bring you, reader, into the
atmosphere of the theme or thought—there to pursue your own flight”
poetry is an inter-play of both the reader’s and writer’s consciousness.
Whitman never claims the poet is the final authority; readers have their
share. Poetry for him is a democratic process.

Whitman thought of poetry as something practical and healing and
the poet as someone who understands “first principles” (1982, p. 18)
and can apply them to society through art. In the 1855 Preface to Leaves
of Grass, Whitman characterizes the poet as the feedback mechanism
of the nation: he is the “equalizer” and “supplies what wants supplying
and checks what wants checking” (1982, p. 9). This poet must be in tune
with the self-renewing mechanism of nature. Whitman said he could
not conceive of democracy maintaining itself “without the nature-
element forming a main part—to be its health-element and beauty-
element—to really underlie the whole politics, sanity, religion, and art
of the New World” (“Specimen Days,” 1982, p. 926). And his personal
job he felt was to place readers in touch with nature and self-renewal as
best he could: “I only seek to put you in rapport. Your own brain, heart,
evolution, must not only understand the matter, but largely supply it”
(“Specimen Days,” 1982, p. 924). Here Whitman implies that the tran-
scendental element in the poem is the goal of the aesthetic experience,
a form of meaning neither given, nor received, but shared, using the
words to invoke the unspoken.

Whitman said the final test of all art is nature, and he had a habit
of dramatizing this point by reading authors in the open air under his
cedar tree to see if they made sense in the out-of-doors (“Specimen Days,” 1982, pp. 884, 925). Whitman included physical health in his definition of art: “All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain” (1982, p. 11). The poem contains not only the poet’s spiritual presence but his physiognomy as well; contact with a healthy presence produces the most healing effect. Beauty therefore is wholeness, the contact of which gives health, like fresh air. Whitman expected a specific psychophysiological response from his readers: “My book ought to emanate buoyancy and gladness legitimately enough, for it was grown out of those elements, and has been the comfort of my life since it was originally commenced” (“Backward Glance,” 1982, p. 670).

**An Aesthetics Derived from Maharishi Vedic Science**

A holistic approach to aesthetics has to begin with a holistic understanding of the mind-body correlation. Maharishi Vedic Science describes the mind-body functioning as one quantum field effect and the human body as part of the larger quantum body of the universe. The universal body contains wholeness at every point, so that each cell, each individual body participates in that wholeness while maintaining its individual identity. The microcosm is the macrocosm. The DNA in the cell replicates and responds to the workings of the galaxy. Maharishi views “every human being as the embodiment of the total creative process in nature and renders human life as a field of all possibilities” (Nader, 1995, p. v). This interconnectedness of all life is a natural perception in higher states of consciousness. Professor Tony Nader, a scientist working under the guidance of Maharishi, has found precise correlations in the structures of Vedic literature and human physiology. His research even goes so far as to discover the quantum body of the universe as the universal text of Veda, written in every human body:

> There is nothing beyond one grand field of consciousness, which holds: body is mind—matter is intelligence—physiology is consciousness. This discovery brings to light physiology in terms of its inner intelligence, whose impulses are available in the form of sounds of the Veda and Vedic Literature. (1995, p. viii)

The human body, he continues, is “the reflection of the structuring dynamics of nature,” and it has the ability to experience the “level of pure knowingness” which is “the inner Self of everyone. It is pure
knowledge, wakefulness devoid of any thought, image, or fluctuation. It is unbounded, pure silence” (1995, p. 13). This self-referral silence is the “universal source of all the laws of nature” (1995, p. 4). Far from being static, this silence is dynamic, making the human body and the universe more like fluctuating waves than solid particles: “The physiology is a dynamic field of continuous transformations, which occur within sets of feedback loops that insure continuity within change. The physiology may be likened to a river—it always looks the same, but is always new” (1995, pp. 24–5).

This model of the mind-body as one vibrating continuum of sound from its unmanifest source in silence to its more concrete form in the physical world creates a unique context for discussing the integrated aesthetic experience. This model is one of interacting fields. In literary theory fields can be discussed in terms of “texts”—the intertextual network composed of all individual texts which constantly refer to and resonate with each other. No work is an isolated island. There are no solid particles in cultural studies today. Culture is one continuous body of words. If the individual body can be seen as a text, a structure of sound waves, then we could say that it resonates within itself when stimulated by the answering sounds of the text of literature, producing greater self-harmony and harmony with the larger text of nature. Whitman intuitively understood these dimensions of the textual Word when he says in “Song of the Rolling Earth”:

Human bodies are words . . . Air, soil, water, fire—those are words, / I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate with theirs. . . . The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words of the earth, / The masters know the earth’s words and use them more than audible words. . . . Each man to himself and each woman to herself, is the word of the past and present, and the true word of immortality. (1987, pp. 266–69)

Whitman felt the “meaning” of literature was thus in the experience of it, not in an intellectual formulation; it was for him like listening to music or the ocean (“Specimen Days,” 1982, p. 923). Similarly, Maharishi has emphasized the experiential effect of poetry on the listener’s consciousness rather than its intellectual value:

Meaning has its value in poetry and that value is involved in it. But I would attribute the value of the poetry in the structure and connected-
ness of the words. Meaning has its value in it. It's imbibed in it, but the more poetic value, more value of the poetry lies in the words and their connectedness. Meaning is a secondary aspect of a poem. (1972b)

A poem’s revitalizing quality does not depend on the grosser levels of language where meaning is recognized by the intellect. The true value of poetry happens on what Vedic Language theory calls the Pashyanti and Para levels—the name and form correlation of the transcendental meaning—the levels which can penetrate the whole psychophysiology. The aesthetic experience—being deeply moved and changed by the beauty of art—would seem to have an even more powerful function if experienced in higher states of consciousness. It would, as Maharishi says, take a person back to the bliss (sat-chit-ananda or absolute bliss consciousness) of one’s own Self (1975b). The Self was also in Emerson’s mind in “The Poet,” an essay that insists that the artist can connect any phenomenon to natural law and to the Self, an idea that parallels Maharishi’s statement about literature:

no matter what state of existence, it breathes in the process of evolution. Ugly existence, beautiful existence, static existence, flowing existence, no matter what state of existence, it breathes in the process of evolution. And because, as we have already seen, every literary impulse is in tune with the evolutionary process, when a cultured mind looks at a thing, what he sees is the quantum mechanical level of the object, that unmanifest level of the object where all the laws of nature are functioning. (1976)

And a little further,

and because evolution is one’s own nature, one sees one’s own nature in everything, and this reference to the Self makes everything enjoyable. (1976)

Aesthetic bliss comes not from the subject matter but from the way it is viewed and structured in the work of art. One way the bliss is structured for the audience, says Maharishi, is with contrasting opposites put together in compact expressions. This concentration of contrasts shakes or swings the awareness from one opposite sound, meaning, or rhythm to another in such a way as to make the awareness experience the coexistence of opposites (1974). Whitman uses this technique in “Song of Myself”: “I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-
work of the stars. . . . And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextil-
ions of infidels” (“Song of Myself,” 1987, p. 41). In the first statement,
we must rapidly shift to incorporate both grass and stars in the same
thought, feeling how the one is an expression of the other, thus taking
in the entire process of creation in one sentence. Whitman does a simi-
lar thing with the paradox of a tiny mouse staggering an unimaginable
number of unbelievers into seeing the miracle of its existence. We feel
joy in having our awareness expand to encompass such huge contrasts,
for it makes us experience something of our own unbounded nature.

Maharishi points out that the aesthetic experience unifies opposites,
and therefore “The totality of the value of literature is in raising that
unified awareness where one comprehends in a natural way, without
any effort, the great contrasts: the light and darkness, the mountains
and rivers, the ripples and the ocean” (1976). This aesthetic response
can lead not merely to pleasure but to wisdom (1976). Wisdom resides
in the experience of opposite values harmonized and unified in aware-
ness, taking one out of the ignorance of duality where suffering domi-
nates (1967, pp. 35–37). If enlightenment is the ability of consciousness
to harmonize opposites, particularly the opposites of dynamism and
silence, of unity and diversity (1967, pp. 306–308; 1994, pp. 41–71),
then literature with its formally unified but structured contrasts offers
the mind opportunities to function in a more enlightened way, to main-
tain an expanded perspective while focusing on details (1976). Litera-
ture allows one to place the awareness in an evolutionary direction and,
as Maharishi states, it is only comprehensive awareness which will lead
to fulfillment for humanity by avoiding violation of the laws of nature
(1976). The aesthetic experience can be useful for the growth of the
individual towards enlightenment, but may not happen as easily for
some readers as for others if they are not accustomed to transcending
on a regular basis (1976).

Is the Aesthetic Response Escapist?
According to postmodern literary theory, an aesthetics based on a
movement of awareness towards self-referral lying outside of history
is escapist, leading to a nonproductive state of mind. What keeps it
from being selfish or escapist, according to Maharishi’s explanation
of aesthetics, is that during the aesthetic response one spontaneously
experiences harmony between the gross and subtle levels of life. Thus, it can lead to an integration with life, rather than an alienation from it. Maharishi points out that the aesthetic experience connects and integrates all aspects of the mind (1972b).

Similarly, Whitman thought art could indirectly lead the reader to the “noiseless operation of one’s isolated Self where ‘interior consciousness’ could commune with the ‘divine levels’” (“Democratic Vis-
tas,” 1982, p. 965). He also was adamant that art had a moral purpose; it must “lead to works, books, nobler than any hitherto known” that would “free, arouse, [and] dilate” the reader (1982, p. 988). Whitman did not treat transcendentalism as a form of quietism, but rather as the prerequisite for self-sufficient individuals who could create a new democracy. In spite of its direct promotion of reader involvement and its political aims, Whitman’s poetry is still misunderstood by contemporary theorists because of its advocacy of the transcendental experience. New historicists object that any transcendental theory leaves out the body, and therefore history. They seek to reinscribe the body in their aesthetics. Marxist Terry Eagleton, for example, wants to return to the original meaning of aesthetics—sense perception of the beautiful. Aesthetics, he would have it, could be redeemed from “the burden of idealism” by focusing on its materialistic roots (1990, p. 196). Eagleton admits the difficulty of this goal but calls it a “breathtaking wager” on the body (1990, p. 197). As he himself points out, this appears to be the swing of the pendulum from one extreme—aesthetics as a disembodied “idealized refuge”—to the sensuous or material.

Eagleton dismisses the Romantic aesthetic which informs Whit-
man’s poetry as bourgeois ideology, a glorification of private experience (1990, pp. 8–20). Romantic poets, however, did not gravitate exclusively towards the transcendent; for example, they recognized that in some ways the senses were instrumental to the aesthetic experience while not being the locus of it. Keats is the most obvious example. Consider the “Pleasure Thermometer” passage from “Endymion” where such a stimulus as the touch of a rose leaf or the sound of music can put one beyond the senses “Into a sort of oneness . . . like a floating spirit’s” (1958, pp. 796–7). In a similar way, the speaker in “Song of Myself” section 26 employs the senses as a basis for transcending them: “Now I will do nothing but listen,” he says. After hearing a long catalogue of
sounds, including an orchestra which makes him “lose [his] breath,” Whitman’s speaker settles to the very basis of the sounds to know “the puzzle of puzzles, Being” (1987, pp. 6–38).

Readers of passages like these often focus on only one aspect of the aesthetic experience, either the sensuous or the spiritual, not understanding their interdependence. In fact, most readers cannot reconcile Whitman’s transcendental withdrawal from the senses with his celebration of sensory experience (for exceptions see Sarraccino and Kuebrich). Whitman boldly declares, “I am the poet of the Body, and I am the poet of the Soul,” a statement that led E. H. Miller to call Whitman an “inverted mystic,” one that does not practice asceticism to find God; one that finds God through the senses (Miller, 1957, pp. 66–35; see also Haney, 1981, for an answer to Miller). This is a common misunderstanding about the sensory and the spiritual, a belief that their relationship is basically antagonistic. Maharishi points out, however, that enlightenment, or higher states of consciousness, integrates these two seemingly paradoxical fields to produce a wholeness beyond what each represents individually.

**The Aesthetic Response Integrates Mind and Body**
Authors have described the creative experience in ways that sound like glimpses of higher states of consciousness (Orme-Johnson, 1987, pp. 333–341). The aesthetic response is also creative, as Emerson and Whitman both noted, demanding the reader’s awareness be able to recreate the movement of consciousness inherent in the language. The aesthetic experience also involves glimpses of higher stages of human awareness. The development of these higher states, Maharishi demonstrates, can be described in discrete detail (Alexander et al., 1989), but here it is enough to say each higher state of consciousness—Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness—includes the common factor of transcendental or self-referral consciousness always present during waking, dreaming, and sleeping. A person established in one of these higher states is thus aware of the unified continuum of consciousness underlying all phenomena while also aware of sensory objects as parts of that whole. Thus, reality, Maharishi states, which ranges from gross, concrete levels to abstract, unmanifest levels of exis-
tence, is known in an absolute way, not by the senses but by consciousness alone.

The advantage of studying aesthetics using the Vedic model of language based on levels of consciousness is that it can explain the dynamics behind the aesthetic experience. If awareness is “flexible,” Maharishi points out, it can slip from one level to another, say from the grosser reality of manifest objects to the underlying continuum of consciousness or Self, using the sensuous level as the initial stimulus (1971b, 1972c, 1976). Maharishi notes that the success of poetry rests in the same principle of natural law that guides the Transcendental Meditation technique: transcending (1972c). Transcending is natural because greater intensity of happiness lies in an inward direction, at deeper, more powerful levels of mental activity; and if given the chance, the mind will spontaneously gravitate towards subtler levels of awareness (1967, pp. 317–19). Using the Transcendental Meditation technique as a model for this movement of awareness, Maharishi explains the method for bringing the senses to their most refined and orderly state:

The technique of bringing them ‘all’ under control is to engage any one sense in providing increasing happiness for the mind on the path of transcending—that is, to begin the practice of Transcendental Meditation. In this process, the mind, using a particular sense for passing through the finer levels of experience and transcending the subtest experience, also transcends the field of that sense and the fields of all the senses. Gaining bliss-consciousness in this way, the mind wins automatic control over all the senses (1967, p. 116)

Here Maharishi explains the technology of transcending from one level of the mind’s own transcendent Self. Maharishi explains that the Transcendental Meditation technique greatly enhances this inner directedness of the poet; he says it cultures the mind to become so flexible that any beautiful art object—painting, music, literature, etc.—can be a catalyst for the well-trained mind to slip to finer levels of consciousness where the subtleties of the work of art can be most appreciated (1976). Art, moreover, does more than recreate the path of transcendence. It also can integrate the two poles of the aesthetic continuum—body and mind—by swinging the awareness back and forth between the gross sensory level and the refined transcendental level, thus connecting and integrating all levels of the mind.
After some practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, Maharishi notes that the transcendent comes to be lived naturally on the level of sensory perception; that is, one can experience Transcendental Consciousness along with sensory experience. Whitman reported having a similar experience: “a trance, yet with all the senses alert—only a state of high exalted musing—the tangible and material with all its shows, the objective world suspended or surmounted for a while, & the powers in exaltation, freedom, vision—yet the senses not lost or counteracted” (1928, p. 21). In higher integrated states of consciousness, Maharishi explains that sensory experience is enhanced because pure consciousness is not lost in perception; rather, it remains the basis of it (Wallace, 1986, pp. 251, 253). Integrated unified consciousness is referred to as a “higher” state of consciousness not because it is an elitist category, but because it is an “optimal” state of functioning for the human nervous system (Wallace, 1986, p. 9). This understanding is necessary for a more complete evaluation of the possibilities of “perfect health” in Whitman’s poetry in which transcending the senses simultaneously enlivens and refines them.

A Practical Aesthetics of Consciousness

The implications of Maharishi’s technology of transcending for aesthetics are important. First of all, a Vedic aesthetics provides both a theoretical basis and a practical technique to verify the full potential of the aesthetic response. Secondly, such an aesthetics does include the body and explains the dynamics between it and the mind, showing how they cooperate in producing aesthetic bliss. Third, in being an aesthetics which systematically covers experiences in all states of consciousness, it would account for varying descriptions of the aesthetic response. Finally, the objection that an aesthetics of transcendence is a withdrawal from the world is answered by Maharishi. Ethically such an aesthetics can only be perfected in higher states of consciousness in which the individual is capable of acting from a cosmic rather than a selfish need (1975b). In that regard, Maharishi points out that great literature has the obligation and power to set the trends of time, not merely to record them, by being able to set the awareness of the audience in an evolutionary direction (1976).
Whitman’s Rhythm of Nature

In “A Unified Field Based Theory of Literature” Rhoda Orme-Johnson develops Maharishi’s point that successful literature recreates to some degree the transcending process, noting that various literary techniques take the reader’s awareness to a more silent, settled state, towards self-referral consciousness (1987, p. 353). Although literature cannot swing the awareness towards infinite silence to the same degree as the Transcendental Meditation technique, Maharishi has stated that “it would seem the same law of nature is at work” (1987, p. 353). Orme-Johnson names such techniques as figurative language, gaps, rhythm, harmony, and point of view that would produce this effect (1987, pp. 353–360). Whitman is one such writer whose writing follows this pattern. He seems to work primarily through sound techniques to link the reader back to the Self. Using sound to promote transcending, Whitman found the simplest, most natural way to bypass intellectual thought. C. Carroll Hollis notes the relative lack of metaphor and other figures in Whitman’s early poetry in favor of an oral style (1983, p. 8). Whitman relies on his highly rhythmical lines to lead the reader’s awareness to subtler levels of language and eventually to the reader’s own silent core. It has been commonly noted that his long lines imitate the rhythm of ocean waves. Others emulate the rhythms in the Bible, achieved through paratactic structures: “And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,/And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own” (“Song of Myself,” 1987, p. 6). In his 1855 Preface, Whitman acknowledges sound’s ability to take the reader to the ground of consciousness:

The profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight. The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush. . . . (1982, p. 11)

He asserts here first of all that there are different levels of “rhyme.” Whitman uses the term “rhyme” in its broadest sense to mean all the sound effects of poetry, including rhythm. As rhyme is experienced at subtler more “luxuriant” levels, it becomes a “uniformity” disappearing into the roots of rhyme which are out of sight. These roots, he implies, are unmanifest and self-referral, taking rhyme into its own origin. “Out
of sight” also suggests “out of hearing,” into silence. He then states that rhyme cannot be prescribed arbitrarily for poems because metrics must be derived from nature and fit a specific thought. He is describing in his own terms the way the name and form phenomenon occurs in poetry through the quality of the emerging sound. Metrics cannot be standardly prescribed because each object in a poem will need its own rhythm, will bud out like a lilac or rose on a bush. While onomatopoeia is a technique for imitating the surface representation of sound (“whiz,” “bang”), rhythm and rhyme dive to subtler more fundamental levels of language where the direct pulse of nature can be registered as it arises from its own ground state.

Whitman described himself as a poet “pressing the pulse of life” in order to get beneath surfaces, to treat “[man] as he is in himself” (“To a Historian,” 1987, p. 307). The primordial rhythm that Whitman feels within humanity is the same as he perceives in nature: a dynamism within eternal silence. Whitman described this beat as “the pulsations of all matter, all spirit, throbbing forever—the eternal beats, eternal systole and diastole of life in things—where from I feel and know that death is not the ending, as was thought, but rather the real beginning—and that nothing ever is or can be lost, nor ever die, nor soul, nor matter” (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, p. 988).

Eternal silence underlying dynamic flow is both method and message in Whitman as he illustrates in the systole and diastole of his poetry. For example, this double rhythm of time/eternity is brilliantly recreated in Chants Two and Three of “Song of Myself.” Readers are led step by step by the soothing rhythms of the irregular lines to the roots of rhyme in their own settled awareness. The origin of poems, the universe, and their own experience are felt as one heartbeat. He commands us to

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems, You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left,) You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres of books, You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me, You shall listen to all things and filter them for your self. (1987, p. 2–3)

Now that Whitman has our attention, telling us he will lead us to the source of poetry so we can listen and experience for ourselves, he sub-
merges us in pure “luxuriant” rhyme that tells us the whole story of life, how time and eternity coexist:

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning
and the end, But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.
There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.
Urge and urge and urge,
Always the procreant urge of the world.
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase. . . .
(1987, pp. 2–3)

Each line is a building wave that crashes back to the beginning of the line that comes after it. Along with the rhythmic surges of time we feel the silent fullness that gives birth to it.

Whitman wanted to embody not only eternal rhythms of time in his poetry, but also the specific movements he felt in nineteenth-century America: “the rapidity of movement—the violent contrasts, fluctuations of light and shade, of hope and fear . . .” like “some colossal drama” (“Preface,” 1982, pp. 1000–01). One important way, then, that “Song of Myself” takes readers back to their own selves is through rhythm. Whitman unifies presidents, slaves, politicians, mothers, fathers, children, battles, nature, cities, history, and the future through his relentless wave-like rhythms sweeping us through endless cosmic and human cycles, yet always ending or beginning in the same place: the witnessing eternal Self. These various people and activities “come to me days and nights and go from me again,/But they are not the Me myself” (1987, p. 5). We become that invincible Self as the cumulative rhythm of experience washes over us, leaving us exhilarated and whole, never diminished, because we are never allowed to get stuck in any one event, not even a Civil War: “wider and wider they [the cycles] spread, expanding, always expanding/Outward and outward and forever outward. . . . There is no stoppage and never can be any stoppage” (1987, pp. 73–74). Eventually Whitman reveals through his poem that this ongoing rhythm is identical to the spiritual evolution for the whole human race: “Have you outstript the rest? are you the President? / It
is a trifle, they [every soul] will more than arrive there, every one, and still pass on . . . .” (1987, p. 27). In its structure, “Song of Myself” imitates the evolutionary movement of nature, putting us in that same flow when we read it. (See also Sarracino on Whitman’s cyclical imagery.)

Contemplating this flow, we may notice how Whitman’s rhythms feel like our own breathing. His line lengths, Hollis notes, are linked to the human voice. His cadence is not metrical, but oral, like the cursus of English religious oratorical prose (*The Book of Common Prayer*, for instance). Hollis reminds us that the cursus, meant to be spoken aloud, “is shaped even as it is limited by the physiological requirements of breathing and utterance” (1983, p. 37). Hollis also asserts that the frequent ellipses in Whitman’s poetry do not denote something left out, but are pauses for breath (1983, p. 109). (See also Johnson.)

Maharishi points out that the ancient Vedic seers saw the rhythm of life on the level of their own silent consciousness, and these rhythms became the expressions of the Veda (1972c). For all literature, Maharishi identifies the principle of its natural rhythm—the rapid expansion and contraction of contrasting qualities—as its evolutionary power, the power to put one in touch with the same pulsations of the universe arising from its origin in silence.

Literature does more than describe evolution; it is evolutionary in its mechanics for both writer and reader. Rapid shaking of the awareness through the rhythms and contrasts in literature, Maharishi explains, does not leave us excited, but brings the mind to a settled state, as transcending through the Transcendental Meditation technique brings the mind to restful alertness. When the mind and body are restfully alert, stress—that which covers or blocks one’s true nature—can drop off. One of the traditional goals of literature is catharsis, a kind of purification resulting from the aesthetic response. The purgation the audience receives from the swings of awareness structured by literature leads to witnessing, greater inner silence and perspective, and greater inner stability (1974). Maharishi comments on why one would feel peaceful and reassured at the end of a Shakespeare tragedy, for instance:

If there is a tragedy in a play of Shakespeare, it has a peaceful ending. This peaceful ending, in a transcendental way, brings the message—take it as it comes. It is a beautiful teaching, and this is a theme in that kind
of play. So no matter what the play is, he shows the end to be peaceful, with a deep peace, preparing life for a high jump of evolution (1976).

The rapid rise and fall of contrasts within an ordered whole is a pattern of growth reinforced in the psychophysiology during the aesthetic response. Even though Whitman was one of the first experimenters with “free verse” and did not use the most familiar sound technique of poetry—end rhyme—his poetry has a familiar and natural movement to it that harmonizes our pulses like the movements of nature. On the subject of rhyme Maharishi notes, “Even if the last words don’t rhyme properly, they don’t have to, but there is a rising wave of rhythm. And then, in order to continue this wave of rhythm, the rise of the wave and fall of the wave, in a continuous whole, makes the whole expression a very delightful rhythm of life, the breath of speech” (1971b).

The wave rises from the silent ocean and falls back into it. From the perspective of higher states of consciousness, moreover, this rhythm becomes even more pleasing as one would perceive the rise and fall in nature to be not merely alternating, like night and day, but simultaneous and co-present. In “Song of Myself,” as noted, the regularity of the long wave-like rhythms creates a cumulative effect, settling down the mind so it can gradually become alert to the accompanying silence underneath. Experiencing this double rhythm allows a person to understand how Whitman’s persona can accept and unify all diversity and events within himself. Two rhythms together, silence and dynamism, embody the entire range of life. Maharishi comments on this: “Consciousness is that element which is available in the coexistence of the opposite qualities of intelligence—one silence, one dynamism. To enjoy the situation of the coexistence of silence and dynamism it is interesting to observe that silence and dynamism, both characteristics of natural law, have to be on the extreme level of alertness, because if one is less alert than the other, then the more alert, more powerful, will overshadow the less alert, less powerful (1995, pp. 92–3). When the two are balanced, Maharishi calls this “wholeness on the move”—the most fundamental self-referral movement of both natural law and human intelligence (1995, pp. 96–7).

The best literature allows one to feel this complete range of consciousness. Maharishi explains, “so literature is a path in which pure consciousness flows, and it flows on both levels, sound and meaning,
comprehending the entirety of the value of consciousness, the entirety of life” (1976). The moral quality of literature is thus not in the didactic nature of its message, but in its whole effect on the psychophysiology. (See Steele.)

The Psychophysiology of Reading

Literature is not read with the mind only but with the whole body as well. Emily Dickinson said that the way she knew true poetry was that it “took off the top of her head” and made her so cold no fire could warm her. Keats’ famous dictum that he did not count anything as truth unless it had been tested on his pulses illustrates a common expectation of literature to attune us to our own best rhythms. Whitman wrote in his notebook how poetry should affect one’s self: “Test of a poem. How far it can elevate, enlarge, purify, deepen and make happy the attributes of the body and soul” (quoted in Kaplan, 1980, p. 187).

Bliss becomes lively when a reader is touched by the presence in language from a great literary master. Harold Bloom has called contemporary literary study a “repression of the aesthetic”; he says we who subscribe to this position must return to reading aesthetically “to learn how to talk to ourselves and how to endure ourselves. The true use of Shakespeare or of Cervantes, of Homer or of Dante, of Chaucer or of Rabelais, is to augment one’s own growing inner self.” George Steiner has accused contemporary readers of being embarrassed by the aesthetic experience because it is humbling—it touches one and changes one’s perceptions of life (1989, p. 143). Aesthetic presence is only available, he says, to one who approaches the text with cortesia, “the tact of the heart,” a movement of courtesy and trust. The aesthetic experience is thus “an exchange of liberties” between author and reader, both of whom must give so both can receive (1989, pp. 154–55).

Steiner is one critic who tries to recover presence in language by putting the responsibility on the reader, though he admits his is “a wager on transcendence” (1989, p. 4). Eagleton’s approach to aesthetics is “a wager on the body.” The study of aesthetics continues to be one of wagers and speculations. A fruitful direction for future research in aesthetics must come from a more solid foundation—from trained and integrated minds and nervous systems that spontaneously fathom the dynamics of the play of language. This, far from describing some elitist corps of
critics, should describe the “normal” foundation provided to every student of literature, as Maharishi has remarked (1974, 1976). The student whose education is grounded in “self-culture” is the one most likely to make a contribution to the national or regional culture. The conclusion of this paper finally takes up the challenge education faces today in producing “competent” readers and writers who can renew American culture and participate in a “new world order.”

Conclusion: The Competent Reader

The loss of the true nature of the aesthetic experience has led to confusion about its worth to modern society. The poet Kathleen Raine accounts for the difficulties today’s readers have with poetry, how they have lost the metaphysical dimension of life and the correspondence theory of language:

The language of symbolic analogy is only possible upon the assumption that these multiple planes do in fact exist. Those for whom the material world is the only plane of the real are unable to understand that the symbol—and poetry in the full sense is symbolic discourse, discourse by analogy—has as its primary purpose the evocation of one plane in terms of another. . . . Thus the poem is able to create in the reader a sense of the wholeness and harmony its symbols and its rhythmic unity both realize and affirm. The language of analogy at once presupposes and establishes relations between the different orders of the real, an orientation towards a source and a centre. The idea of the metaphysical is thus implicit in the very figures of symbolic discourse. (1967, p. 108–9)

Raine’s allusion to the planes of discourse is reminiscent of the Vedic levels of language. But how will today’s society recover the levels of discourse, the presence of language? Postmodern critics, finding the aesthetic experience obsolete, promote the teaching of literature as a way to foster “textual power,” the ability to read texts to unmask political and philosophical assumptions so one can protect oneself in one’s culture (Scholes, 1985, pp. 1–39). The fear today is that “unity” is oppressive, a forcing of everyone to think alike. Catherine Belsey describes how new critical practice has outdated the search for truth and presence in literature (1980, pp. 136–7). The Derridean notion of “différance” at the basis of signification has had an enormous influence on the climate of liberal arts education, whether or not one teaches such theories in
the classroom. J. Hillis Miller goes so far as to believe the fragmented,
Derridean approach to knowledge, as applied by Paul de Man’s rhetor-
icity, will liberate human thinking. By helping readers to see that liter-
ature promises truth but can’t deliver it, postmodernists believe readers
will confront “the ethical moment” only to discover there is no longer a
basis for cultural myths, but they will still have to act AS IF there were

This kind of literary shock treatment completely negates Whitman’s
belief in the inspiration and nourishment that can be derived from lan-
guage. Many teachers, raised in the traditional belief of the nourishing
power of the arts, are frustrated by current literary and critical skept-
icism. John Gardner, for example, desires “an old-fashioned view of
what art is. . . . The traditional view is that true art is moral: it seeks to
improve life, not debase it. . . . Art rediscovers, generation by genera-
tion, what is necessary to humanness” (1978, p. 5). Suzi Gablik calls
for a “re-enchantment of art” based on a quantum view of life which
treats the inner and outer worlds as a continuum. She asserts that the
“visionary self—the form of consciousness that has been discredited
and suppressed in modern society” is what we need to see the unity and
aesthetic theory emerging, a theory based on the reunification of sci-
ence and the humanities which will give validity to the arts once more
(1991, pp. 3–47). Quantum and chaos theories and eco-paradigms con-
nect the local and the cosmic, the body and the mind, the human with
the environment, to suggest that literary forms are intimately associ-
ated with natural and human cycles and contribute significantly to a
vision of human evolution.

In short, we need to redefine the competent reader as one whose
consciousness is wide awake, as Whitman’s was, to the evolutionary
experience offered by art. Whitman defines the competent reader in
his 1855 Preface to *Leaves of Grass* as one who could come to the poet
on equal terms (1982, p. 14). He insists that “the process of reading is
not a half-sleep . . . the reader is to do something for himself or herself
to construct the poem . . . the text furnishing the hints. Not the book
needs so much to be the complete thing, but the reader of the book
does” (“Democratic Vistas,” 1982, pp. 992–3). Maharishi states that
the student of literature must have a level of consciousness as high as
that of the author’s to receive the full value of the author’s language, because “On a frozen consciousness, on a frozen level of consciousness, the flow is not available” (1976). Maharishi’s analogy suggests that the consciousness of the reader cannot get in tune with the rhythm of natural law embodied in literature unless it can open itself to the impulses of natural law. “When literature we know to be the flow of consciousness,” Maharishi continues, “the flow of life, the flow of nature, the flow of infinity, totality, then we have to study it on the ground of that infinite, unbounded, total value of consciousness” (1976). For Maharishi, a competent reader is one who enjoys higher states of consciousness, self-referral consciousness permanently established along with waking, dreaming, and sleeping. Full enlightenment is the platform from which a true evaluation of literature, or anything else, can be made.

In his introduction, Maharishi has stated that to properly evaluate the Bhagavad-Gita, a separate commentary from the point of view of each state of consciousness and from each system of Indian philosophy is needed, each having its own criteria of validation, making 24 commentaries in all (1967, p. 14). Each commentary would be based upon a different level of intimacy with and knowledge of natural law. Maharishi has described these levels of intimacy as the seven states of consciousness that develop as human awareness evolves (see Alexander, 1989). In “Song of Myself,” Whitman similarly describes the relationship of his “self” to the laws of the universe from different points of view: as a witness, as a participant, as the co-creator, and finally as the container of everything, including the impulses of natural law that are his own impulses. (See Cowley, 1959.) He felt that “reading” the laws of the universe was his purpose:

“To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow, / All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means” (1987, p. 25). He observed in “A Backward Glance Over Travell’d Roads” that what made his poetry different from most poetry was the attitude of the “I” towards God and the objective universe (1982, pp. 658–9). Reading, in this sense, is more than the deciphering of a text; it is the ability to interpret and interact harmoniously with the entire universe. In fact, Maharishi points out that the goal of being able to read and interpret literature is not to gain intellectual skill as much as it is to gain refinement and wisdom in one’s actions. (1976)
Literature, then, as much as the sciences, must be seen as a study of natural law. Maharishi has pointed out that today “If the existence of the world is threatened, it is because the knowledge of natural law is superficial; it is knowledge of only the electronic and nuclear levels” (1986, p. 32). Knowledge in today’s world, in spite of the enormous and ever-expanding information glut, still contains an immense void—the knowledge of self-referral consciousness, the unified center of knowledge that can be developed systematically in human awareness to connect and make sense of the pieces in the information explosion. Maharishi Vedic Science is a re-enlivenment of the ancient Vedic literature, which explains the full range of human existence from most gross to most subtle, as seen in the Vedic model for levels of speech from the grossest Baikhari to the most refined Para level. Being all-inclusive, Maharishi Vedic Science has the ability to reconcile opposites, such as art and science, because it is the “science of all aspects of life, subjective, objective, and the connection between subjectivity and objectivity” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 34). This means that Vedic Science locates self-referral consciousness to be the same foundation for the sciences as for art, culture, poetry, language, and sound. Vedic Science, therefore, offers fulfillment to the Transcendentalists’ self-culture and Whitman’s theory of language because it demonstrates how language is related to natural law and it provides the technologies to experience that relationship.

This paper has closely examined the viability of Whitman’s language experiment for unifying America at a time of crisis. Whitman offered self-referral consciousness, the method implied in “self-culture,” as his solution—a culturing that opens the awareness to more subtle levels of the self and language. He intuitively knew that it is on the subtler levels of language that the unifying power of natural law could be felt. As Maharishi has explained, this intuition is verified because language has the same structure as the self-referral pure consciousness pervading and upholding both natural law and human awareness. Language is a continuum of the values of natural law. Language used effectively can give a reader the experience of “hearing” simultaneously both the gross and refined levels of language. Such an experience of literature cultures the aesthetic response—the movement of awareness towards a unified Self, and provides the reader with a taste of higher, more integrated
states of consciousness. Both nineteenth-century Transcendentalism and Maharishi Vedic Science promote the inner unity and harmony of the individual as a prerequisite to outer harmony in culture. This is self-culture, what Maharishi calls a society supported by natural law; it is the balance between individual and society that cannot be struck without the integration of each citizen.

Whitman’s “Personalism” and the Transcendentalists’ self-culture together form a visionary model for the full development of the individual to fulfill the goal of democracy. However, that goal will forever remain unfulfilled without a pragmatic means to transform the individual—the kernel of society—through a verifiable method to experience the basis of life, the state of self-referral consciousness. The Transcendental Meditation technique and the advanced Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program have been proven in countless scientific studies to bring a practitioner to self-referral consciousness, and Maharishi Vedic Science is the most complete and far-reaching intellectual elaboration on Self-knowledge in modern history (see Dillbeck, 1988; Wallace, 1986).

Whitman believed the fulfillment of both individual and society was by means of a spiritual democracy that could be achieved through language and poetry, through “competent readers” who could fathom the depth and unity of themselves as well as the diverse but unified text of their culture. In his theory of Personalism, Whitman predicted that a science would someday emerge that would expand its vistas to include the subtler forces of nature, including God, and that such a science would be the true foundation of America (“Preface,” 1982, p. 1003). The science Whitman imagined is a science of nature, a science of life that anticipates Maharishi Vedic Science, a science of natural law. The science Maharishi has founded is both theoretical and empirical, a science that aims to unfold the fullness of both individual and society, a science to complete Whitman’s prophetic vision of a whole nation engaged in self-culture.
References


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[Videotaped lecture with Professor Peter Malekin, July 6, 1976, Seelisberg, Switzerland].


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Transcendental Speech
and Poetic Expression
in John of the Cross

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ABSTRACT

Many parallels exist between Maharishi Vedic Science and John of the Cross’s poetry and prose commentaries. John of the Cross’s commentaries on his poetry afford the most comprehensive description of human development available in the Christian mystical tradition. Maharishi Vedic Science, with its profound model of levels of language, from most expressed to fully transcendent, provides a harmonious, modern correlate to John. Maharishi and John of the Cross are most in agreement on the need for the direct experience of Transcendental Consciousness, which alone provides the most profound experience of language for writers and readers of literary texts.

Introduction

Many points of comparison exist between John of the Cross, and by extension the tradition of sacred rhetoric in the West, and Maharishi Vedic Science, including parallels between the understanding of language, the experience of transcendence as transcendental speech, and the transmission of knowledge through the experience of Transcendental Consciousness, through spoken language and through written texts. John of the Cross lived in the last half of the sixteenth century during Spain’s Golden Age, a time when Spanish genius produced some of Europe’s greatest art, including its greatest mystical literature. Advisor in spiritual matters to Teresa of Jesus, first friar in the reform of the Carmelite Order which she inaugurated, John pursued a spirituality devoted to developing the direct experience of the Divine beyond thought, image, and feeling, which mystical theology calls contemplation. Since the word contemplation generally refers to the activity of thinking, and because Maharishi uses it in this sense to distinguish the active process of contemplation from the effortless process of the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique, I will, to avoid confusion henceforth, refrain from using John of the Cross’s preferred term for the transcendental, direct experience of God.

As this essay progresses, it will become increasingly clear that John of the Cross’s approach to literature and language, although belonging to a different tradition, more than just parallels Maharishi’s. Both John and Maharishi begin with a fundamental position that is radical in the field of literature that the direct experience of divine or Transcendental Consciousness should serve as the basis for all writing and reading.
Moreover, literature and language that has its roots in a spiritual tradition, Sacred Scripture for John and Vedic Literature for Maharishi, will have a much more profound impact on its readers. For both John and Maharishi, the depth of understanding is dependent upon the level of consciousness of the reader. Texts have multiple levels of meaning, and only the most profound readers will grasp their deepest level.

In addition to multiple levels of meaning, John and Maharishi Vedic Science identify levels of language, especially the deepest level, which is transcendental. The reader established on this transcendental level, which John calls Logos, knows wisdom, light, and pure knowledge—the direct knowledge of divine consciousness as opposed to knowledge which derives from a solely rational process. For John, this is the voice of God, where knowledge and language are indistinguishable. For Maharishi Vedic Science, this is the level from which arise the imperishable hymns of the Veda. Therefore, according to John of the Cross and Maharishi Vedic Science, language and literature are best fathomed by linking them back to their transcendental source.

**The Direct Experience of Divine Consciousness**

John of the Cross championed the role of the direct experience of God in the development of spiritual life at a time in history when Counter Reformation Catholicism suspected that those who advocated such experiences were heretics or crypto-Protestants who sought salvation within rather than by engaging in activity. John’s belief in the direct experience of the Divine is his primary spiritual legacy contained in his remarkable literary output.

John of the Cross excelled in two literary arenas: his mystical poetry and his prose commentaries on that poetry. The poetry of John of the Cross illustrates Maharishi’s position that a poet’s greatness lies in the ability to create poetry only if the poet’s consciousness is first established in the profound silence of the transcendent. Maharishi maintains that when poetry arises from the depths of awareness, it inspires life by connecting the surface values of life with the most profound (Orme-Johnson 350). John of the Cross is arguably one of the greatest poets of the Spanish language; moreover, his prose commentaries on his poetry afford the clearest and most comprehensive description of human development available in the Christian mystical tradition.
John recognized that his poetry flowed from his profound experience of transcendental silence, the divine nature of his own soul. In his introduction to the “Cantico espiritual,” he notes that its verses carry something of the transcendental experience that inspired them because they were written “con algún fervor de amor de Dios, cuya sabiduría y amor es tan inmenso . . . el alma que de él es informada y movida en alguna manera esa misma abundancia e ímpetu lleva en el su decir” (“with a certain burning love of God. The wisdom and charity of God is so vast . . . and the soul informed and moved by it bears in some way this very abundance and impulsiveness in her words.”) (C Prólogo 1) In his poetry John offers his readers “dichos de amor en inteligencia mística” (“expressions of love arising from mystical understanding”), verses inspired by his experiences of the Divine in transcendence, whose prose commentaries cannot begin to exhaust their meanings (C Prólogo 1).

Let us now examine more closely this direct transcendental experience of the Divine which John acknowledges as giving rise to his poetry and which is central to his understanding of human spiritual development—this Divine knowledge, which parallels Maharishi’s description of Transcendental Consciousness experienced during the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique, and to which John gives many different expressions. John first calls it “inteligencia pura” (“pure knowledge”) (S2, 14, 11), “sencilla y pura sabiduría” (“simple and pure wisdom”) (S2, 15, 4). Since the Divine is hidden in the deepest recesses of the soul, direct transcendental experience of the Divine occurs when the attention is focused deep within in “sumo recogimiento” (“deepest recollection”) (C1, 6), and is withdrawn from “todas las cosas criadas” (“all other things”) (N2, 16, 14). John also calls this direct transcendental experience of God “una noticia amorosa general, no distinta ni particular” (“general loving knowledge . . . neither distinct nor particular”) (S2, 14, 2) because it imparts pure wisdom and love to the recipient. The direct transcendental experience of God touches the heart as well as the intellect. It is “sabiduría y noticia amorosa” (“loving wisdom and knowledge”) (L3, 33) in that “la voluntad ama en general sin distinción alguna de cosa particular entendía” (“the love in the will is also understanding”) (L3, 49). It is an ineffable experience because it is so subtle and delicate. God’s very substance is infused into the soul directly: “el mismo Dios es el que allí es sentido y gustado . . . aunque no manifiesta y
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claramente” (“it is God himself who is experienced and tasted there . . . although it] is not manifest and clear” (S2, 26, 5). It is an experience of “quietud y ocio” (“quietude and idleness”) (N1, 10, 1) imparted “en el mayor ocio y descuido del alma” (“while the soul is in [greatest] idleness and unconcern”) (N1, 9, 6).

John’s descriptions of the direct transcendental experience of the Divine bear striking similarities with descriptions of transcendental pure consciousness experienced during Maharishi Transcendental Meditation practice. Maharishi describes pure consciousness as “the absolute state of knowledge which can be described as a state of knowingness” (Bhagavad-Gita 310). During the practice of the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique, the practitioner’s awareness enters “the field of the Transcendent, the state of pure consciousness” (Bhagavad-Gita 437) which “represents the complete infusion of cosmic Being [transcendental pure consciousness] into the individual mind” (Bhagavad-Gita 144). Transcendental Consciousness not only imparts pure knowledge, but is an experience of “infinite joy” (Bhagavad-Gita 425), “pure bliss-consciousness” (Bhagavad-Gita 165).

The practitioner of the Transcendental Meditation technique does not experience “the infusion of Being [the deepest level of the mind] into the nature of the mind” (Science 63), Maharishi explains, because the process “is never on the thinking level of the mind” (Science 62); it takes place rather in the transcendent, and only later through the precious benefits found in activity is any change in the individual noticed. In the experience of pure consciousness the practitioner enters, he says, “a state of no experience because the whole field of relativity has been transcended” (Science 60). Arriving at Transcendental Consciousness “is the result of diminishing activity until the nervous system ceases to function and reaches a state of stillness, a state of restful alertness” (Maharishi, Science 302). In this completely restful state a person is fully alert and fully conscious because Being is consciousness, a field of unbounded pure consciousness. Therefore, in this state the “conscious mind becomes consciousness” (Maharishi, Bhagavad-Gita 422). Scientific research suggests that transcendental pure consciousness experienced during the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique is a fourth major state of consciousness, a state of restful alertness, physio-
logically distinct from waking, dreaming, and sleep states of consciousness. 

John’s direct transcendental experiences of the Divine not only parallel Maharishi’s descriptions of pure consciousness, John also believed, as Maharishi has explained, that transcendence forms the framework for human development, which John saw as the full transformation of the human person in God, an ideal accomplished by the progressively greater infusion of the divine nature into the individual through direct experience (N2, 10, 6). To make this process of human development concrete, John uses an analogy comparing the human person to wood and the direct experience of the Divine to fire. Just as fire transforms wood into itself (N2, 10, 1), the direct experience of the Divine removes imperfection and makes the individual increasingly divine (S2, 5, 3). In Maharishi Vedic Science the goal of human development is achieved when “limited individual life” takes on “the status of unlimited cosmic existence” (Science 28), when Transcendental Consciousness becomes an ever-present feature of the mind and individual perception. This goal is accomplished by alternating the experience of Transcendental Consciousness gained through the Transcendental Meditation technique with a normal routine of activity. With each experience of transcending, practitioners retain something of the unbounded absolute nature of pure consciousness (61) and act in their daily rounds “with a certain degree of Being” (Bhagavad-Gita 344). Eventually, the full infusion of Being becomes permanent, maintained throughout waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states of consciousness (Science 63).

While John of the Cross likens the transformation of the individual into the Divine to wood consumed by fire, Maharishi compares the infusion of Being into the mind to the process of dyeing a cloth. In some places dye is made colorfast by repeatedly dipping a cloth first into a dye and then exposing it to the sun (Bhagavad-Gita 313). Scientific research suggests that the Transcendental Meditation technique “dyes the cloth” of individual awareness in that it develops the full potential of its practitioners by alternating Transcendental Consciousness with daily activity (Alexander 113–120).
Literature and Divine Consciousness

This transformative effect of the Divine into the life of the individual is captured in John of the Cross’s best poetry. Through his three major poems, “Noche oscura” (“The Dark Night”), “Cántico espiritual” (“The Spiritual Canticle”), and “Llama de amor viva” (“The Living Flame of Love”), John of the Cross sought to give some sense of the richness, depth, and bliss of his inner, direct experiences of the Divine. He also wrote prose commentaries to further investigate this direct transcendent experience of the Divine, its evolution and role in human development. Nonetheless, he was keenly aware that language is inadequate to express an inner experience that transcends language; therefore, he urged his readers to aspire to their own experience of the Divine Word beyond language.

During the Renaissance the practitioners of sacred rhetoric pursued “the appropriate expression of the psyche in its attempt to apprehend and articulate transcendence” (Shuger 194). Through their art they inspired their readers “to move from the seen to the unseen . . . to embrace what is invisible under corporeal similitudes” (Shuger 201). According to Maharishi Vedic Science this is the purpose of literature: to lead the reader’s awareness inward, “toward the Self, toward the level of pure consciousness underlying the more active levels of the mind” (Orme-Johnson 353).

John of the Cross believed it worthwhile to speak of transcendent experience because he felt the subtlety of his words would be understood by those readers who experienced divine reality deep within themselves, even if they had never pursued the academic study of theology. This is clear in his dedication of the “Cántico espiritual” to Ana de Jesús, prioress of the Discalced Carmelite convent in Granada: “pues, aunque a V.R. le falte el ejercicio de teología escolástica con que se entienden las verdades divinas, no le falta el de la mística, que se sabe por amor en que, no solamente se saben, mas juntamente se gustan” (“Even though Your Reverence lacks training in scholastic theology, through which the divine truths are understood, you are not wanting in mystical theology, which is known through love and by which these truths are not only known but at the same time enjoyed.”) (C, Prólogo, 3). John assumed that individuals who experience mystical theology, that is knowledge of God gained through the direct experience of the Divine, are able to
overcome the limitations of language and intuit the whole of the experience behind the poetry and its commentary.

Maharishi Vedic Science similarly emphasizes the importance of the experience of consciousness for both writers and readers: “All successful poets have tracked the path of transcending” (“Poetry” 95). Readers will fully appreciate literature that springs from the writer’s experience of transcendence only if they themselves have experienced pure consciousness. Orme-Johnson observes, “Readers who have never experienced pure consciousness, had glimpses of higher states of consciousness, or known of their existence would be unable to understand references to these states and might take them to be merely fanciful or primarily metaphysical speculation” (364).

Sacred Texts and Vedic Science

According to theories of sacred rhetoric in the West, the abilities of both the poet to write and the reader to apprehend the meaning of the text is mediated by the Spirit, the person of the Trinity associated with divine inspiration and the intuition of divine presence. The Spirit transfuses “spiritual efficacy into the dead letter” for the writer and the reader (Shuger 231). According to John of the Cross, it was the Spirit, experienced as a burning love of God, who compelled him to write the verses of the “Cántico espiritual” (C1, Prólogo, 1). Only the Spirit gives inspiration free of error. Rather than relying on theology or personal experience to compose “Subida del Monte Carmelo,” John looked to Sacred Scripture inspired by the Spirit as the only sure guide for its composition (S1, Prólogo, 2). John relied on Sacred Scripture in his commentary on the “Cántico espiritual” to keep his discussion of advanced experiences of transcendence free of error (C, Prólogo, 4). He delayed writing his commentary on the “Llama de amor viva” until he felt sufficient divine inspiration to undertake the task (L1, Prólogo, 1).

The Spirit instructs the soul through the direct experience of divine transcendental reality. John of the Cross intentionally avoids too detailed a commentary on his poetry so that the Spirit might complete the instruction of his readers. He observes in the commentary on the “Cántico espiritual” that “los dichos de amor es mejor declararlos en su anchura, para que cada uno de ellos se aproveche según su modo y caudal de espíritu” (“It is better to explain the utterances of love in their broadest
The reader’s own direct experience of the Divine allows him/her to intuit the transcendental experience that inspired the text. John asserts that the Spirit leads each reader to discern the meaning of the text in the light of that experience.

While theories of sacred rhetoric discuss the role of the Spirit in the writing and appreciation of texts, Maharishi Vedic Science similarly elucidates both on the transforming power of pure consciousness, and the capacity of the human nervous system to experience pure consciousness and integrate it with all forms of activity, including communication through speech and written texts. Transcendental (or pure) consciousness lies at the basis of speech, and therefore, language; speech and language have their source in it. Vedic grammarians, Maharishi explains, characterize speech as ranging from transcendental, unmanifest to most expressed, audible speech. The transcendental stage of speech or language, its subtest level, is the level of Para, in which the speaker, speech, and the process of producing speech are one, even though each of these three aspects of speech can be distinguished conceptually (Orme-Johnson 343).

The purpose of language, Maharishi states, is to transmit the ideas of the speaker to the listener in such a way that they are equally and fully understood by both. If pure consciousness is lively in the awareness of both speaker and listener, “then communication will be most meaningful and effective” (quoted in Orme-Johnson 344). The degree of communication possible ultimately depends upon the degree of expansion of consciousness in both the speaker and listener. Maharishi maintains that the full value of language and communication is available only if the consciousness of the listener and the speaker have “been expanded to the level where it is unbounded or nearly unbounded.” Only then is “the full value of the connection of the sign to its referent” communicated (quoted in Orme-Johnson 344–345). The complete success of communication is assured, then, only when the full value of Transcendental Consciousness is available to both listener and speaker. To those who are “awake” to this fullness of Transcendental Consciousness, language reveals the fullness of its secrets. Maharishi quotes the Rig Veda (I. 164. 39) to emphasize that those who are not awake to

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Transcendental Consciousness are limited in what they can derive from language: “He who does not know Being, for him, what can the hymn accomplish?” (“The Relation, 190”).

Just as John of the Cross sought to communicate his experience of the Divine through his poetry and prose commentaries, the Vedic Rishis also sought to express in spoken language, in the most manifest or vaikhari stage of speech, their cognitions of the Para stage, or transcendental reality. The authors of the Vedic hymns did not seek to demonstrate their creativity or originality through the hymns; they instead sought to make their experience of transcendental reality available to their listeners (Maharishi, “The Relation”).

John of the Cross implies that the reader’s ability to intuit the fullness of the transcendental experience at the basis of his poetry can overcome the limitations of human language. Parallel to the Vedic concept explained by Maharishi, that it is the experience of transcendence common to both speaker and listener that allows for full communication, John trusted that in the shared experience of direct contact with Divine inspiration, which has its source in the Spirit, the transcendental experience described by his poetry could be apprehended fully (C, Prólogo, 3).

**Textual Meaning and the Process of Reading**

Parallels between Maharishi Vedic Science and John of the Cross further exist in the shared acknowledgement that listeners or readers derive different meanings from texts depending on their level of consciousness. The Vedic seers communicated their cognitions with symbolic language that lends itself to many different interpretations. Maharishi correlates different interpretations of language to different states of consciousness: “A word, a sound, will have some meaning, either correct or far from correct. It will have a meaning for every level of consciousness.” He points out that the Vedic word ushas, which literally means dawn, can symbolically represent the end of the night or the dawn of spiritual liberation (“The Relation,” 199–200). The consciousness of the reader is the final determination as to whether the text will yield a profound or superficial meaning.

This notion of texts yielding multiple meanings can also be found in the tradition of sacred rhetoric in the West. The Bible’s words and images function as a complex system of signs not meant to be under-
stood only on the literal level. The idea that the Bible, as an inspired text, has multiple levels of meaning lies behind a method known as the “fourfold interpretation” of biblical texts, a method for reading and studying Scripture practiced in all monasteries in the West during the Middle Ages. This method of interpretation consists of drawing four levels of meaning from any given passage of Scripture: the literal, the moral, the allegorical, and the anagogical (or mystical) (McGinn 15). Shuger observes: “Instead of expanding horizontally through a discursive sequence of words, biblical prose interweaves metaphor, type, allegory, and symbol to create a vertical movement from signifier to multiple levels of signification” (168).

In the context of this tradition of biblical interpretation, John of the Cross acknowledges multiple meanings in his poetry and prose commentaries. Just as the Bible is considered to be inspired by the Spirit, texts which flow from experiences of transcendence are inspired by the Spirit as well (Shuger 236). As noted above, John preferred his commentaries to be open-ended to make allowance for a reader’s varying levels of attainment (C, Prólogo, 2). In his recourse to scriptural guidance to explain his texts, he seldom made use of the literal level of meaning, preferring to draw out the allegorical and anagogical levels, levels which allow for an interpretation of the poetic text in terms of the direct experience of the Divine.

Through these subtler literary levels, John of the Cross achieved the fundamental purpose of his prose commentaries: a complete analysis and description of the direct transcendental experience of the Divine, the prerequisites of this experience, its characteristics, its theological justification, and its role in spiritual development. His two commentaries on the poem “Noche oscura” often seem only remotely related to the poem itself because of John’s de-emphasis of the literal in favor of the allegorical and anagogical. For example, the second book of the “Subida” purports to be a commentary on the second stanza of “Noche oscura.” In the opening stanzas of the poem, the poetic persona leaves the quiet house by a secret ladder in the dark of night. For John of the Cross, the secret ladder refers to a process of interior recollection (“recogimiento interior”), allowing transcendence of all thoughts, images, and feelings, enabling the spiritual seeker to enter into interior darkness to enjoy inner solitude. The quiet house is the stillness of the mind
and body that no longer entertain any thought, image, or feeling (S2, 1, 2). The virtue of faith guides those who seek the Divine in interior darkness to enjoy direct contact with the transcendental being (S2, 1, 1 and S2, 9, 4).

John of the Cross regularly draws on scriptural passages to support his metaphor of finding the Divine in the darkness of faith. Referring to the darkness of faith as he does, he is alluding to the need for interior recollection. In addition to the usual meanings ascribed to faith, such as belief or trust, John gives it a special meaning, pertaining to the direct transcendental experience of the Divine, beyond all thought, image, or feeling about God.

As John defines faith it is more than simple belief, it is a concept analogous to the natural tendency of the mind in Maharishi Vedic Science; it is the inner predisposition necessary for the experience of transcendence. Faith for John is the guide and light which gives the ability to let go of anything that can be understood, felt, or imagined (S2, 4, 2). It is a prerequisite for interior recollection of finer and less familiar levels of mental activity and the very absence of thought. During the Transcendental Meditation technique, the practical technology of Maharishi Vedic Science, it is the mind’s natural tendency to effortlessly experience increasingly finer levels of thought, naturally attracted by the greater bliss available at finer levels of thinking that takes the mind to transcendental Being (Science 55).

John of the Cross characterizes the experience of very subtle mental activity as “dark” because it is highly abstract and barely perceptible (S2, 14, 8). Faith is dark because it is associated with the wholly abstract experience of transcendence (S2, 1, 1). John compares the darkness covering Mount Sinai when Moses climbed it to speak to God to the darkness of faith, dark because the Divine is hidden (unmanifest) during the experience of the transcendent. Just as Moses had to climb up into the cloud on Mount Sinai in order to encounter God, in order to experience the Divine directly, one’s awareness must fathom the inner darkness beyond the mediation of distinct thoughts, images, and feelings (S2, 9, 3). One plunges into that darkness because “debajo de ella está Dios escondido” (“God is hidden under the cloud [of faith]”) (S2, 9, 1).

For John of the Cross, Elijah hiding his face in the presence of God (1Kgs 19.13) represents the blinding of one’s faculties in order to be free
to receive the direct inflow of the Divine (S2,8,4). John explains elsewhere that such blinding is necessary because all thoughts, images, and feelings are finite and thus incapable of giving direct access to the infinite God. Since the wisdom of God “no cabe debajo de imagen ni forma, ni cabe debajo de inteligencia particular” (“has neither mode nor manner, neither does it have limits nor does it pertain to distinct and particular knowledge”), one’s awareness must be “pura y sencilla, no limitada ni atenida a alguna inteligencia particular, ni modificada con algún límite de forma, especie y imagen” (“pure and simple, unlimited and unattached to any particular knowledge, and unmodified by the boundaries of form, species, and image”) (S2, 16, 7) in order to experience it directly in its infinite nature.

According to John of the Cross, Psalm 139 asserts that “the night shall be my light” (Ps, 139, 11) (S2, 3, 6), referring to the dark night of faith that gives the light of divine nature to the soul. Jesus claimed that he came into the world so that those who see might become blind (Jn9 39); John interprets this paradoxical statement as the willingness to blind one’s faculties by embracing the darkness of faith in order to experience God in transcendence (S2, 4, 7). John understands Jesus’s statement about the renouncing of all possessions, the denial of the ego to take up one’s personal cross (Mk 8:34), to be a call to transcend. He believed that the radical self-denial Jesus preached simply meant leaving behind all thought through interior recollection, allowing for the direct experience of the Divine (S2, 7, 8). John of the Cross’s treatment of faith in his prose commentaries is just one of any number of examples that demonstrate his use of the allegorical and anagogical levels of textual interpretation.

**Levels of Language**

In addition to acknowledging literal, more abstract, and finally spiritual levels of meaning in texts, John of the Cross also speaks of a level of language available only in transcendence. He urges his readers not to seek knowledge of the Divine on the gross level of meaning; “porque en la una manera se le comunica sabiduría de una o dos o tres verdades, etc., y en la otra se le comunica toda la Sabiduría de Dios generalmente, que es el Hijo de Dios, que se comunica en fe” (“In the first kind of illumination, wisdom concerning one, two, or three truths, and so on, is communicated; in
the second kind, all God’s Wisdom is communicated in general that is, 
the Son of God, who communicates himself to the soul in faith”) (S2,
29, 6). John describes transcendental experience as the language of the 
Divine and of nature because pure wisdom is communicated directly 
into the individual’s awareness. The direct experience of the Divine is 
“lenguaje de Dios al alma de puro espíritu a espíritu puro” (“the language of 
God to the soul, of Pure Spirit to pure spirit”) (N2, 17, 4); it is communi-
cation that takes place within transcendence.

In ordinary experience, according to John, consciousness and knowl-
edge are separate facets of experience as are consciousness and com-
munication; in the transcendent they are not differentiated. In keeping 
with the traditional understanding of the indivisibility of divine nature, 
consciousness, knowledge, and communication are aspects of one undi-
vided reality in the transcendent. This understanding of pure wisdom 
parallels Maharishi’s three-in-one structure of pure knowledge: Sam-
hita or wholeness as “the collectedness of knower, known, and knowl-
dge in the self-referral state, . . . that all-powerful, immortal, infinite 
dynamism at the unmanifest basis of creation” (Life 27).

Whereas language is generally acknowledged to exist only on the 
spoken and mental levels, we have already seen that the Veda, as 
Maharishi explains, maintains that language also exists on the intui-
tive and absolute levels. Vedic grammarians recognize a transcenden-
tal level as the most subtle of four levels of speech: spoken language 
(Vaikhari), thought or mental speech (Madhyama), pre-verbal feeling 
or intuition (Pashyanti), and transcendental speech (Para) (Maharishi, 
“The Phonology” 205).

Vedic grammarians uphold, Maharishi explains further, that by 
nature the Absolute in its undivided state must possess language and 
consciousness in an inseparable wholeness as the home of all knowl-
edge. The usual process of gaining knowledge, which attends to only 
one part of knowledge at a time, yields only partial knowledge because 
the knower, the means of gaining knowledge, and the object of knowl-
dge are all separated. Vedic cognition, on the other hand, is a perfect 
means of gaining this knowledge because it reveals knowledge com-
pletely in the three-in-one wholeness of Samhita. Maharishi describes 
the level of consciousness capable of perfect and true knowledge as
ritam bhara pragya, a level of perception open only to truth. It gives “the knowledge of anything within the window of our own heart” (Maharishi, “The Relation” 195). Hence, those who desire knowledge but do not have access to the transcendental level of speech are necessarily limited to incomplete knowledge.

Similarly, John of the Cross dismisses those who settle for concepts, images, or feelings about God because they possess only incomplete knowledge of the Divine: “todo lo que de Dios en esta vida se puede conocer, por mucho que sea, no es conocimiento de vero, porque es conocimiento en parte y muy remoto; mas conociéndole esencialmente es conocimiento de veras” (“All the knowledge of God possible in this life, however extensive it may be, is inadequate, for it is only partial knowledge and very remote. Essential knowledge of him is the real knowledge”) (C6, 5). The essential knowledge to which John alludes is the knowledge provided by direct transcendental experience of the Divine. In the poem “Spiritual Canticle” the beloved pleads with her divine lover to send her no more messengers, but instead to present himself directly to her (C6, 5).

John of the Cross recognizes two types of knowledge: the ordinary knowledge gained when the intellect evaluates the information it receives from the senses and pure wisdom infused into human awareness when it is united with divine transcendental reality. John advocates the path of knowledge that does not involve multiplying thoughts, feelings, and images (S2, 7, 8). Finite objects of perception cannot serve as means to unite the seeker with the Divine because “la Sabiduría de Dios, en que se ha de unir el entendimiento, ningún modo ni manera tiene ni cae debajo de algún límite ni inteligencia distinta y particularmente, porque totalmente es pura y sencilla” (“God’s wisdom to which the intellect must be united has neither mode nor manner, neither does it have limits nor does it pertain to distinct and particular knowledge, because it is totally pure and simple”) (S2, 16, 7). Therefore the seeker’s consciousness must be free of all objects of perception: “pura y sencilla, no limitada ni atenida a alguna inteligencia particular, ni modificada con algún límite de forma, especie y imagen; que, pues Dios no cabe debajo de imagen ni forma, ni cabe debajo de inteligencia particular, tampoco el alma, para caer en Dios, he de caer debajo de forma y inteligencia divina” (“The soul must also be pure and simple, unlimited, and unattached to any particular knowledge, and unmodified by the boundaries of form, species, and image. Since
God cannot be encompassed by any image, form, or particular knowledge, in order to be united with Him the soul should not be limited by any particular form or knowledge”) (S2, 16, 7).

Just as John of the Cross insists that thoughts, images, and feelings, no matter how sublime, cannot substitute for the direct experience of the Divine, Maharishi asserts that while intellectual understanding about the nature of absolute Being is important, complete knowledge of Being can only be gained when intellectual understanding is supplemented by the direct experience of Being (Bhagavad-Gita 271). Maharishi explains that Vedic cognition takes place when the Rishi’s awareness is united with Brahman, the supreme transcendental reality. Then alone does it know truth (“The Relation,” 197). Vedic cognition is the self-revelation of reality that the Rishis translate into audible and intelligible words. Maharishi observes, “Vedic hymns are the expression of the intention of the Creator” (“The Relation,” 196–197). When one’s awareness is not established in Transcendental Consciousness, one is limited to the partial knowledge available through the more expressed stages of speech and language, the Madhyama and Vaikhari levels (Orme-Johnson 345).

The Western tradition also makes a distinction between pure knowledge and ordinary knowledge. Following Thomistic psychology, John of the Cross maintains that most human beings are limited to knowledge gained through the mediation of the senses (S2, 12, 4), which is necessarily incomplete. On the other hand, to the fortunate who can transcend all thoughts, images, and feelings, God directly infuses Godself into the awareness bypassing the senses (L3, 46). John considers this to be an experience of pure wisdom not only because it transcends words and differentiated cognitive content but because he identifies the Divine as the source of all knowledge and of the structure of creation.

Both the Vedic and Judeo-Christian traditions conceive of the divine word as transcendental language. In the Hebrew scriptures the divine word is known as dabar, a substantial word uniting speech and event, sound giving rise to form (Ong 113, 182). In the Christian scriptures the divine word is the Logos or Christ. The Logos is the “primary ‘utterance’ of the Father, equally eternal,” the perfect representation of the Divine (Ong 185). The notion of the Logos in the West parallels that of the “A” of Agnimile from the Rig Veda. Maharishi declares that “the
entirety of creation, the wholeness of life” is contained in the first letter of Rig Veda, the “A,”

when the seed of the Absolute starts to sprout, when the unmanifest value of pure Being, or pure existence, or pure intelligence, or pure consciousness starts to express itself, this first sprout contains the totality of the expression of the tree (“The Phonology” 214).

Maharishi explains that all of creation is expression in the form of language as much as in the objects to which language refers. The laws of nature that structure the forms of creation found in their unmanifest state in the Absolute also structure the true names for the forms (“The Phonology” 218). The source of language and the source of the laws of nature are the same: the field of pure consciousness.

John of the Cross draws from the Christian understanding of Logos to characterize the experience of transcendence. He quotes Paul’s letter to the Hebrews that the Word is the splendor of God’s glory and the image of God’s substance (Heb 1:3) (C11, 12). Nothing comes into existence except through the Logos (John 1). Paul teaches that the Logos upholds all of creation through the power inherent in His Word (Heb 1:3). According to John, the direct experience of the Divine unites the seeker’s awareness with the Logos, the hidden and secret Word that inhabits the deepest recesses of the heart (C14, 15–17). This union is described as hearing the transcendental voice of the Divine in silence: “Una palabra habló el Padre, que fue su Hijo, y ésta habla siempre en eterno silencio y en silencio ha de ser oída del alma” (“The Father spoke one Word, which was his Son, and this Word he always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence must it be heard by the soul” (“Avisos” 99, “Sayings” 100).

Knowledge, Wisdom, and Light

The direct apprehension of the Logos is associated with knowledge, wisdom, and light. John of the Cross follows closely the characterization of the Logos found in John the Evangelist’s gospel. He recalls the Evangelist’s assertion that through Christ all things were made (C5, 1). Through the direct experience of the Divine the recipient tastes the wisdom of God (C14–15, 4) and receives “una fuerte y copiosa comunicación de lo que El es en sí” (“a strong and overflowing communication and glimpse of what God is in himself”) (C14–15,5). Spiritual develop-
ment is described as the recipient’s transformation into divine wisdom which is the Logos (C36, 7).

John the Evangelist drew on the concept of wisdom in the Hebrew scriptures to describe the Logos. According to the Hebrew scriptures, Wisdom had a role in creation; she issued forth from the mouth of God and helped to save human beings (Brown 21). By associating the knowledge and wisdom gained through God’s transcendental speech to light, John of the Cross draws on the references to the Logos as light found in John the Evangelist’s gospel. John the Evangelist calls Christ the light of the world (Jn 9:5). John of the Cross maintains that the divine light of God’s being abides deep within the soul (S2, 5, 6). When the awareness goes beyond finite objects of perception in meditation, it is transformed into transcendental light which is “la sencilla y pura sabiduría, que es el Hijo de Dios” (“simple and pure Wisdom, the Son of God”) (S2, 15, 4). The divine spouse of the “Cántico espiritual” is the divine sun whose light overshadows all lesser expressions of light (C22, 3).

A similar association of light, wisdom, and knowledge, is found in the Upanishads from the Vedic tradition. Swetasvatara Upanishad relates the supreme Lord of creation to the light of full knowledge: “The light of thy knowledge shining, / There is nor day nor night” (Upanishads 201). This verse suggests that seers gain complete wisdom, that is “they alone are immortal” because they directly experience the Lord of Creation in their purified hearts (201).

**Divine Communication**

Both Maharishi and John of the Cross express that the transcendental level of existence communicates without mediation to those in direct contact with it. John of the Cross develops the notion of transcendental speech in his commentary on the fourteenth and fifteenth stanzas of the “Cántico espiritual” to indicate the nature of this communication. The beloved addresses these verses to her divine lover:

*Mi amado, las montañas*  
*los valles solitarios nemorosos,*  
*las ínsulas extrañas,*  
*los ríos sonorosos*  
*el silbo de los aires amorosos*
La noche sosegada  
en par de los levantes de la aurora  
là música callada  
là soledad sonora  
là cena que recrea y enamora

My beloved, the mountains, / and lonely wooded valleys, / strange islands, / and resounding rivers, / the whistling of love-stirring breezes, the tranquil night / at the time of the rising dawn, / silent music, / sounding solitude, / the supper that refreshes and deepens

Pure wisdom is imparted through the direct infusion of divine being into the substance of the soul such that Being, consciousness, knowledge, and communication cannot be separated: “Comunica al alma grandes cosas de sí, hermoseándola de grandeza y majestad y arreándola de dones y virtudes y vistiéndola de conocimiento y honra de Dios” (“God communicates to the soul great things about himself, beautifies her with grandeur and majesty, adorns her with gifts and virtues, and clothes her with the knowledge and honor of God”) (C14–15, 2).

These stanzas refer to communication that is not imparted through the senses, but rather to the communication that comes from a divine voice, beyond words, a whistle that imparts knowledge and transforms consciousness: “Y al silbo de estos aires llama una subidísima y sabrosísima inteligencia de Dios y de sus virtudes, la cual redunda en el entendimiento del toque que hacen estas virtudes de Dios en la sustancia del alma” (“This most sublime and delightful knowledge of God and his attributes, which overflow into the intellect from the touch, which produce in the substance of the soul by these attributes of God, is called by the soul the whistling of these breezes”) (C14–15, 12). A hidden or transcendental word, “una palabra escondida,” imparts the very substance of God into the soul (C14–15, 18).

The sound of the rivers is the transcendental voice of the Divine: “es un ruido y voz espiritual que es sobre todo sonido y voz, la cual voz priva toda otra voz, y su sonido excede todos los sonidos del mundo” (“[it] is a spiritual clamor and outcry, louder than any other sound or call. This cry prevails against all other cries and its sound exceeds all the sounds of the world” (C14–15, 9). The sound embodies the divine attributes: “es voz espiritual y no trae esos otros sonidos corporales ni la pena y molestia de ellos, sino grandeza, fuerza, poder y deleite y goloria” (“[it] is a spiritual cry
that does not contain these other material sounds, or their pain and
disturbance, but rather grandeur, strength, power, delight and glory”)
(C14–15, 10). It is an infinite voice that cannot be separated from the
effects it produces in its recipient: “la voz espiritual es el efecto que ella
hace en el alma” (“the spiritual voice is the effect produced in the spirit”)
(C14–15, 10).

The oxymorons “la música callada (“silent music”) and “la soledad
sonora” (“sounding solitude”) express the paradox of communication
within divine oneness, a communication which reveals not only the
divine attributes but also complete knowledge of creation. The partici-
pation of all of creation in divine nature creates a transcendental music
whose harmonies come from the voices of all the beings and laws of
nature. The “música callada” or silenced music provides “inteligencia sos-
egada y quieta” (“tranquil and quiet knowledge”) in the silence of the
transcendent (C14–15, 25). In the sounding solitude one cognizes the
relationship of all creatures to the Creator: “ve que cada una en su manera
grandece a Dios, teniendo en sí a Dios según su capacidad; y así, todas estas
voces hacen una voz de música de grandeza de Dios y sabiduría y ciencia
admirable.” (“She beholds that each in its own way, bearing God within
itself according to its capacity, magnifies God. And thus all these voices
form one voice of music praising the grandeur, wisdom, and wonderful
knowledge of God”) (C14–15, 27). All creatures attest to the greatness
of God because they have some knowledge of God’s voice. John cites
Wisdom 1.7: “este mundo que contiene todas las cosas que él hizo tiene cien-
cia de voz” (“this world which contains all things has knowledge of the
voice”) of God (C14–15, 27).

Knowledge and Language as One
John of the Cross characterizes the pure wisdom of transcendence as
the secret and hidden word of God (C14–15, 15), which the divine
spouse gives freely to the beloved soul. His observations about tran-
scendental speech and sound parallel the insights afforded by Maharishi
Vedic Science. While John of the Cross describes the effects of the
direct experience of the Divine as those of the hidden, secret transcen-
dental word that imparts God’s substance into the soul (C14–15, 18),
Maharishi describes pure awareness experienced during the Transcen-
dental Meditation technique as “the infusion of cosmic Being into the
individual mind” (Bhagavad-Gita 144). Maharishi calls transcendental Being “that basic unmanifest sound” which is the foundation of all words. Maharishi observes further,

The knowledge of the Veda [pure knowledge] is not gained by reading the letters of the Veda . . . [because] the Veda is not knowable on the basis of the words. . . . So the knowledge of the Veda becomes a living reality without having to go through the reading of the words of the Veda, by gaining familiarity with that essential element from which the words of the Veda are made, this transcendental pure consciousness (“The Relation,” 201).

John understands transcendental sound or speech to be one with what it signifies (C14–15, 10). Similarly, the relationship between name and form is central to an understanding of Vedic cognition. According to Maharishi Vedic Science, name and form have a common basis in Being or pure consciousness. The name for any thing (form) that exists is an impulse of energy that emerges from transcendental Being. The form that the name represents “is a more solidified structure of that impulse, and therefore, the name is the more delicate expression of form.” Maharishi says, “The form which is indicated by the name is actually contained in the structure of the name” (“The Relationship” 180).

The Vedic hymns or Vedic expressions are not words created by poets or philosophers, rather they are the exact expressions of the relationship between the Creator and creation that emerge with creation and structure it, Maharishi observes; “Vedic hymns [names] are the expression of the intention of the Creator.” The unmanifest has the intention to become manifest, and then from that intention out sprang the whole creation. Each item came from those syllables. The hymns are not spoken or written; they are cognized. They are cognitions, cognitions of reality or truth. Truth of what? Truth of the mechanics of nature, how creation comes, and how it evolves (“The Relation,” 197).

Maharishi Vedic Science recognizes the intimate relationship between name and form, language and consciousness, and language and knowledge on the cosmic level of existence.

Just as Maharishi Vedic Science understands creation to emerge from the intention of the unmanifest to manifest itself, in John of the
Cross’s tradition, the Word of God is also considered to be God’s revelation of transcendent Godself in texts of the Bible, in the Logos or Christ, and in creation itself. John asserts that divine attributes and the complete knowledge of creation are imparted in the direct experience of the Divine (C14–15, 27). In John’s description of the experience of sound within transcendence (analogous to Maharishi’s depiction of Vedic cognition), the transcendental sound reveals to the beloved that all aspects of creation are grounded in one fundamental transcendental reality and reflect in some measure the glory of the Creator (C14–15, 27).

The theme of God as Word is central to John of the Cross’s discussion of spiritual development through direct experience of the Divine in transcendence. The seeker aspires to transcend human language and unite with the divine Word (C1, 5) in order to hear the hidden voice of God (C14–15, 17). John describes Jesus as God’s only Word—“todo nos lo habló junto y de una vez en esta sola Palabra, y no tiene más que hablar” (“He spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word and he has no more to say”) (S2, 22, 3). The Son speaks this word forever in eternal silence and in silence must be heard (“Avisos” 99, “Sayings” 100).

Just as the Word in the Christian tradition perfectly represents the transcendent Godhead and is responsible for the existence and maintenance of creation, Maharishi maintains that transcendental Being is the basic unmanifest sound which underlies all of creation (“The Relation,” 201). In the first sprout of creation from transcendental Being is contained the totality of the expressed value of creation. When a person’s awareness is awake in Transcendental Consciousness, “then one is the knower of all, the whole field of speech, the whole field of existence” (“The Phonology” 231).

Thus both in Maharishi Vedic Science and in the writings of John of the Cross, the power and efficacy of language is a function of the speaker’s and the listener’s ability to access the transcendental ground of Being and its transcendental speech. Both the Christian tradition of sacred rhetoric of which John of the Cross is a part and the ancient Vedic tradition as brought out by Maharishi Vedic Science, take into account the manifest and unmanifest levels of speech. These parallels between John of the Cross and the Vedic tradition on divine language and the possibility of transcending the limitations of human language,
when elucidated by Maharishi, demonstrate the profundity of John of the Cross’s insights into the relationship between transcendental Being and transcendental speech as well as the link between thought, audible speech, written texts, and the experience of Transcendental Consciousness.

Taken together, John and Maharishi Vedic Science present a new paradigm with which to read and assess literature and linguistic studies. Linguistic-based theories of literature presently in vogue are the product of a fragmented view of human life, a view that does not take into account the transcendental level of existence, in this case in the areas of speech and language. John and Maharishi Vedic Science, on the other hand, have separately asserted that only when the writer and reader “know” the deepest level of language, what Vedic Science calls the para or transcendental level, do they know the wholeness and essence of language. The Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique, the applied value of Maharishi Vedic Science, has now made this experience of the transcendent universally available. By knowing language from this deepest field of life, writers will be able to communicate to readers their most refined thinking. Readers in turn will have the capacity to receive not only all that writers express, but also the transcendental, unexpressed foundation of language. Knowledge of this field for John transforms the literary experience into a spiritual exercise; for Maharishi it transforms it into an act of evolution toward higher states of consciousness. This is the precious contribution that Divine or Transcendental Consciousness brings to literature and language.

Notes

1 In Christian theology, contemplation refers to the direct experience of the Divine, unmediated by thought, image, or feeling. Maharishi uses the term in his Vedic Science to refer to the activity of thinking about a topic. For Maharishi, contemplation means developing an idea or an image on the surface level of the mind in which “one’s attention goes from meaning to meaning, fathoming newer avenues of knowledge” using the mind’s conscious thinking capacity. According to Maharishi, when the mind is contemplating, it is engaged in ordinary thinking and does not transcend to deeper levels. The Transcendental Meditation technique is “a method of experiencing the source of thought, the field of pure
creative intelligence, in an effortless, systematic manner” through the natural and spontaneous refinement of thought until the mind “settles down to a state of no activity, but with full awareness” (The Science of Creative Intelligence, Lesson 3). For John of the Cross, the terms are reversed: contemplation refers to the direct transcendental experience of the Divine, and meditation refers to ideas, feelings, and images about the Divine (which Maharishi would call a kind of contemplation).

2 Protestant thinkers argued that Christians gain salvation through faith in Christ alone, whereas Catholics maintained that while faith is important for salvation, it must be accompanied by works. Consult “The Mental World of Martin Luther” in Steven Ozment, The Age of Reform: 1250–1550.

3 This is the judgement of Jorge Guillen and Damaso Alonso, for example, who are themselves distinguished contemporary poets from Spain (Guillen 79–80, Alonso 176–79).

4 The quotations of John of the Cross’s works are taken from Vida y obras de San Juan de la Cruz. The following abbreviations are used: S = “Subida del Monte Carmelo,” N = “Noche oscura,” C = “Cantico espiritual,” and L = “Llama de amor viva,” followed by the book, chapter, and verse number. The English translations are taken from The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross.

5 Bhagavad-Gita refers to citations from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary with Sanskrit Text. SB refers to citations from Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, The Science of Being and Art of Living.

6 For a review of the relevant scientific research on the validation of Transcendental Consciousness and its effects gained through the Transcendental Meditation technique, see Alexander, Boyer, Alexander 108–112.

7 For a detailed discussion of the parallels between the experience of pure consciousness in the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique and its role in human development with John of the Cross’s understanding about the direct experience of the Divine, see Toft “San Juan de la Cruz.”

8 Maharishi links faith to the process of transcending in the mind in his commentary on Chapter Four, verse 39, of the Bhagavad-Gita: “Meditation is a process which provides increasing charm at every step
on the way to the transcendent. The experience of this charm causes faith to grow” (317). Rather than faith providing confidence in the existence of the transcendent, the experience of the transcendent gives rise to faith. John of the Cross likens the movement of human awareness toward the transcendent (the attractive pull of God on human awareness) to that of a stone falling rapidly toward its center (C12, 1).

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Language, Self-Knowledge, 
and *Maharishi Vedic Science:*

Grasping the Fullness 
of Literary Texts

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ABSTRACT

Literature has always been considered an important source for knowledge of the self and the world. However, scholars have recently raised serious concerns on whether literature is such a reliable source. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur, for example, states that the self cannot be directly experienced and, therefore, self-knowledge is always limited and incomplete. In a theory like Ricoeur’s, literature is useful for unfolding the content of the self but is unable to express the fullness of self-consciousness. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s Vedic Science and its description of reality in all seven states of consciousness, on the other hand, provides important insights into the connection between literature and the development of the author’s and reader’s self-knowledge. The analysis of language and literature found in Maharishi Vedic Science gives the theoretical and practical knowledge needed to restore to literature its proper role in leading readers to fulfillment in life.

Introduction

Authors invest in the writing process innumerable shades of consciousness, and to be able to express these subtleties of consciousness it is essential to be in lively contact with all levels of conscious awareness contained in human nature. The more deeply an author can delve into the field of consciousness, the greater will be the range and profundity of what is expressed. The same is true for the reader: the more the reader’s awareness opens to the pure field of consciousness, the source of all thinking and perceiving, the greater will be the appreciation of any work of literature.

At the end of the twentieth century, we find a crisis in literature, in the function and character of language, in the nature and role of consciousness, and in the production and reliability of meaning. Taking their cue from modern Western science, and especially from behaviorist psychology, a number of literary critics and philosophers have attempted to analyze human nature and the products of human creativity completely from the objective point of view, conceding nothing to inner experience. Contemporary thinkers like Paul Ricoeur and
Jacques Derrida¹ attack those ontological theories which base their knowledge of the wholeness of consciousness—the “presence” of pure, inner awareness—upon direct experience. Since such contemporary theorists find no fixed and directly given referent for words, language is seen as always inadequate to what is expressed; the signification of a word is taken to occur within an arbitrary language system necessarily involving other signs which, in turn, ad infinitum need defining and are to be differentiated from the original word and sign. This fragmented conception of language leaves modern theories in the position of rejecting traditional views concerning language’s ability to communicate what is significant about reality and relationships.

The infinite proliferation of connections between signs, according to modern semioticians, cuts one off from a direct, complete knowledge of any object or universal truth. All knowledge and awareness, then, are taken to be mediated and indirect.

The question of the capacities and limitations of language for setting forth meaning has thus become a major stumbling block for literary critics, philosophers, and psychologists in the last third of the twentieth century. Recent analyses of language and signs have made several assumptions that place significant limitations upon the possibilities allowed to consciousness. For example, twentieth-century anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss claims that signification originates in the unconscious and is reducible to a symbolic function, an idea that imposes “structural laws upon inarticulated elements which originate elsewhere—impulses, emotions, representations, and memories” (cited in Leitch 19). Levi-Strauss thus sees the unconscious at the source of systems of language. Because structuralists such as Levi-Strauss held language to be a system of difference, and because Freud believed the unconscious was not systematically available, such absolutes as reliability, certainty, and truth could never be attained. Any basis for certainty, nay even adequate communication, would have disappeared, having been lost in an unknowable unconscious. With this in mind, this paper will wade into these murky waters of contemporary theory to once again

find some semblance of clarity amidst the interconnected, but often illusive (and allusive), areas of consciousness, language, literature, and textual meaning.

**Consciousness and Self-Knowledge**

Contemporary studies of consciousness, finding empirical evidence impossible, end up excluding any consideration of self-awareness, that field fully open to itself, as the basis of an undistorted knowledge of existence. In spite of this denial by contemporary literary theorists, descriptions of reality based upon direct awareness of the self and of the world are found throughout literature. One need only consider poets like Rumi, Tagore, and John of the Cross to encounter consciousness vibrating in the language of life, in poetry that allows one to feel the power of consciousness and to grasp its infinite possibilities. Such authors give expression to the liveliness of consciousness in the world and in the self, thereby enriching the realm open to the reader’s own awareness. What, then, is needed is a systematic understanding of how authors give expression to more profound levels of consciousness through language and how readers understand and are moved by what has been written.

In recent years, the renowned sage and Vedic scholar Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has developed a systematic account of knowledge and reality called Maharishi Vedic Science, a system that provides a profound explanation for the relationships between existence, consciousness, and language. Maharishi Vedic Science is particularly effective because it is grounded in the direct experience of pure consciousness, the fundamental basis for all knowledge. Vedic Science is a unique marriage of the deepest insights from Western philosophy and science and the four Vedas and other texts that the Vedic tradition holds to be the complete knowledge of all levels of objective nature and subjective consciousness at the basis of the material world. Maharishi Vedic Science, with its practical methodologies the Transcendental Meditation technique and

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the TM-Sidhi program, offers the means of gaining direct access to a level of reality contemporary Western science has just begun to glimpse through quantum physics and unified field theories. Thus, Maharishi Vedic Science is a complete system of knowledge “where the innumerable values of the knower, the known, and the process of knowing are contained in that sea of consciousness” (Maharishi, Life 30).

Maharishi Vedic Science’s insights into the relationship between language and consciousness reveal important connections between the process of writing, the ability to appreciate literature, and the development of the author’s and reader’s self-knowledge. Its theory of language, and its technologies for unfolding higher states of consciousness, give Maharishi Vedic Science a means for reuniting consciousness, language, and meaning. It thereby eliminates the apparently insoluble problems concerning self-knowledge and the understanding of the world’s texts, problems that have continuously plagued contemporary philosophy and literary theory.

Paul Ricoeur and Self-Denial

As stated above, it is impossible to comprehend the mechanics of literary texts without understanding both the nature of the self (that of the author and the reader) and the mechanics of language. The difficulties in understanding the nature and role of the self and the limited solutions to this problem suggested by modern philosophers are exemplified in the work of the contemporary French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who brilliantly analyzes data from ordinary waking state awareness. However, by limiting himself to this state of sensory perception, he cuts himself off from deeper levels of awareness resulting in a partial and distorted view of human nature.

Semiotics, the study of signs, has become an essential part of the study of consciousness and meaning by contemporary philosophy and literary criticism. Ricoeur has given serious attention to this field, questioning how knowledge of the world and the self is connected to meanings and signs. Based on semiotics, he developed a hermeneutic phenomenology, which aimed to give a clear and unbiased description of the structures of the human self and the objects of its awareness; this task he accomplished through an examination of meanings and their relationships to one another. Ricoeur concludes that knowledge of the
self, individual consciousness, is intimately tied to language and the interpretation of texts. He postulates that the self is not given in direct experience and does not exist prior to its activities. He therefore finds the fundamental state of human awareness, what Maharishi calls pure consciousness, to be impossible, a concept to be posited but not directly known.

According to Ricoeur, the self and its actions are inseparable, the appreciation of the self that is found in the Cartesian “I think” is for him a mere feeling that gives a certitude devoid of truth, providing neither knowledge of oneself nor an intuition of a substantial soul. Ricoeur asserts that Immanuel Kant “definitively dissociated reflection from any so-called knowledge of the self” (Freud 44) and argues against rational psychology’s claims that the simple, substantial soul could be given in direct experience.

In order to arrive at a knowledge of the whole range of the self’s being, Ricoeur uses a non-intuitive method of reflection to grasp the self in the variety of its workings. Since the self, or the “I,” is given “neither in a psychological evidence, nor in an intellectual intuition, nor in a mystical vision,” knowledge of the “I” can be had according to Ricoeur only immediately through reflection. Reflection, he explains, is not direct, or immediate, awareness. It requires “something like interpretation” (Freud 42) in order to arrive at the fullness of the self. Ricoeur places hermeneutics, methods of unfolding meanings and seeing connections (interpretation), at the center of this act of reappropriation, which reveals an underlying reality that both manifests itself and hides itself in symbols. Hermeneutics transcends the simple understanding of signs, the symbolic meaning discovered only when the literal sign has been understood and seen to lead beyond itself through the intentional-ity of its own structure: “a first meaning is set up which intends something, but this object in turn refers to something else which is intended only through the first object” (Freud 16–17).

Ricoeur’s denial of immediate intuition of the self allows him to posit the self only in reflection, considered as “the effort to recapture the Ego of the Ego Cogito in the mirror of its objects, its works, its acts.” Such

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3 Intuition is here taken to mean direct or immediate knowledge, insight, or vision. It is opposed to discursive or speculative knowledge of an object, which is an indirect knowledge of the object through analysis of concepts or through demonstrations concerning the object and its qualities. Intuition here is not thought of in the derived meaning of a vague feeling or “hunch.”
a reflective process is “the contrary of a philosophy of the immediate.” The ego can be discovered as a concrete reality only in those “ideas, actions, works, institutions, and movements” that give it objective reality (Freud 43); otherwise it remains only the “abstract and empty” truth of the “I think.” To achieve the kind of “intuitive foundation” of the self that Edmund Husserl’s idealist phenomenology demands would require a “total mediation” (Gadamer’s phrase) which could

sustain its pretension to ultimate foundation only by adopting, in an intuitive rather than a speculative mode, the Hegelian claim to absolute knowledge. But the key hypothesis of hermeneutic philosophy is that interpretation is an open process, which no single vision can conclude. (Ricoeur, Task 109)

Ricoeur believes that only through an analysis of the products of the self—which appear, for him, always in a social context as texts to be read—can the structure of the self begin to be known. Any hermeneutical analysis of a text, as we shall see, is by nature incomplete. But for Ricoeur, who rejects the possibility of total and absolute knowledge, the limitations of hermeneutics are not disturbing.

**The Creation of Meaning**

Paul Ricoeur’s skeptical analysis of the self presents an accurate representation of the current view of the idea of consciousness in the postmodern world. Kant, Husserl, and many other metaphysical philosophers have argued for a pure or transcendental “I,” a transcendent Self based upon intuition and rationality but one that could not be directly experienced in its immediacy. Because of this lack of empirical evidence, materialist philosophers continue to question its very existence and our capacity to ever know it. The debate over the reality of the transcendental ego between these two philosophical poles lies at the heart of current intellectual thinking; closely tied to this debate is the origin of being and the basis of meaning.

Meanings arise in our relationship with the world in which we live, and they are as extensive as the universe open to our consciousness. Such meanings, mediated by texts written in and about the world, involve a continuous process of interpretation. If we do not possess an expanded consciousness that is open to itself and to the world, meaning will constantly escape us. Jonathan Culler, expounding Jacques Der-
Derrida, argues that meaning is always context-bound, while the context is always boundless (132–133). This situation leads to a continual unfolding of meanings: “The play of meaning is the result of what Derrida calls ‘the play of the world,’ in which the general text . . . which has no boundaries . . . always provides further connections, correlations, and contexts” (130, 134). The complete interpretation of any object or text is as far distant as is Charles Sanders Peirce’s ultimate Truth, which is to be converged upon by the community of scientists at some point infinitely distant in the future.

This inability ever to arrive at a complete meaning or ultimate knowledge is what modern philosophers and critical theorists call “the human condition”: our finitude condemns us to existence within a world of infinite meanings that are always beyond our ken but draw us into constantly expanding interpretations of the cloth of meaning that lies between ourselves and the immediate presence of the real. The position that Western thought has generally assumed concerning the limited possibilities open to the human mind results in the conclusion that an endless series of incomplete texts and meanings is the most that we can hope for. In fact, because most people operate solely within the severe limitations of ordinary waking state of consciousness, the question of hope does not any more even arise.

The waking state of consciousness, as experienced by the ordinary person, is simply taken for granted to be the human situation: all that we can know about consciousness is assumed, therefore, to be related to this condition of awareness. Since the division of states of consciousness into waking, dreaming, and deep sleep has generally been accepted as final, it is the structures of these states alone that have been described. The limitations found in these states have thus been seen to belong to the essence of consciousness. When waking state, which functions only in a relative sphere, is taken as the model of consciousness to the exclusion of any “transcendental” or “more inclusive” states, it is not surprising that a crisis exists involving consciousness and language of the sort that denies the possibility of 1) knowing the self, and 2) having access to absolute meaning. The modern world has once again landed in the position of the ancient Sophist Gorgias, who declaimed, “Being cannot exist; if it does exist, it cannot be known; if it is known, it cannot be communicated.”
Higher States of Consciousness

A very different situation arises if we allow for the possibility of transcending our ordinary waking state of consciousness—withdrawning from all experiences of thought, sense, desire, emotion—without a loss of consciousness. Descriptions of this transcendental state of consciousness abound in classical works such as William James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Henri Bergson’s *Two Sources of Religion and Morality*. A more recent and more complete rendering of the subject can be found in the body of work known as Maharishi Vedic Science, which adds to the descriptions of transcendence a systematic method for experiencing it and a framework that places the goal of transcendental experience—higher states of consciousness—in their proper context. The inestimable value of Maharishi’s accounts of transcendence and higher states of consciousness, for the sake of human development as well as a potential source for solving the enormous problems of mankind, must be taken seriously; they must be analyzed carefully both as expressions of the greatness of the human spirit and as a primary subject matter for scientific research.

In order adequately to account for consciousness, the medium through which human beings perceive the world, an understanding of all states of consciousness is required, not simply the rudimentary states of consciousness recognized by modern science. However, this is by no means a simple task. The complexity of ordinary waking state for example—in which incarnate subjects interact with inanimate objects as well as with other selves and their institutions all bound together into a spatial and temporal world—defies adequate description, even though waking state is the most commonly experienced of all the states of consciousness. Fortunately, Maharishi Vedic Science details all seven states of human consciousness, those discovered by modern psychology—sleeping, dreaming and waking—and those described in the vast body of Vedic literature—Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness, and Unity Consciousness.

Waking state is the state of consciousness in which we live our lives. In it one is aware both of oneself as knower and of a world of objects in

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4 The phenomenology of dreaming has been merely touched upon: Henri Ey has done pioneering work in this area; several interesting attempts to deal with dreaming have come out of the British analytic tradition (see Malcolm, Ayer, Hunter).
which one functions. In waking state consciousness, however, awareness of the Self is incomplete. The objective pole of awareness tends to dominate, causing one to fall into the situation Maharishi calls “identification,” in which one loses sight of the Self and identifies with the objects, perceptions, anxieties, worries, pleasures, roles, and other phenomena that make up day-to-day life (cf. Bhagavad Gita 151, 159, 321, 370). In deep sleep, there is no awareness of oneself or of objects, whereas the dream state is identified by its illusory perceptions and a lack of control over events.

A fourth state of consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness, has its own distinct qualities differing from the three just mentioned. In this state the Self has direct Self-knowledge without representation through sensations, thoughts, emotions, etc. The Self is aware only of its own most fundamental nature, the state of unbounded consciousness that is the source of all phenomena, including thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and other modes of being. This state of pure awareness, it turns out, has always been present, but stress and imbalance in the nervous system have prevented the Self from noticing it (Maharishi, SCI Lesson 22). To eradicate this stress, the Transcendental Meditation technique purifies and strengthens the nervous system so that it can permanently sustain Transcendental Consciousness in a fifth state of consciousness Maharishi calls “Cosmic Consciousness.” In this state, the nervous system has acquired the flexibility to maintain two different levels of physiological functioning: the silence of absolute Transcendental Consciousness and the activity of waking, dreaming, and even deep sleep:

the two levels [Maharishi explains] begin to function perfectly at the same time, without inhibiting each other and still maintaining their separate identities. . . . Self-awareness exists as separate from activity. Silence is experienced with activity and yet as separate from it. (Gita 314)

Maharishi describes a sixth state of consciousness, God Consciousness, in which the self is established in the full awareness of its unbounded nature while perceiving the most refined level of the objects of perception (SCI, Lesson 23). This “celestial” perception ultimately leads the self to move beyond these finest limits of the objects and begin to perceive the being of objects as the same infinite pure consciousness.
as its own subjective nature. This fullest state of human development is called Unity Consciousness, of which Maharishi states,

the unbounded perceiver is able to cognize the object in its total reality, cognizing the infinite value of the object, which was hitherto unseen. . . .
In this state, the full value of knowledge has been gained, and we can finally speak of complete knowledge. (SCI, Lesson 23)

The intimate connection between consciousness, knowledge, and language is intensified with the understanding that reality is different in different states of consciousness. As the Self gains higher states of consciousness, perception of objects changes, unveiling subtle characteristics previously hidden. Meanwhile signification of words correspondingly changes since the reality being described is different, a rather confusing state of affairs were we required to accept Ricoeur’s hermeneutical treatment of signs and meaning. Maharishi Vedic Science, fortunately, provides stability by explaining the effect each state of consciousness has on our perception as well as an account of the origin of language and its relationship to meaning.

The Vedic Theory of Language

Based on Maharishi’s “The Phonology of Creation,” Rhoda Orme-Johnson delineates the relationships between levels of conscious awareness and levels of language (see “Unified Field” and Flow of Consciousness). Unlike the single level of language accepted by modern linguistics, the Vedic model Orme-Johnson describes possesses four stages from the unmanifest, transcendental to the most expressed spoken level. At the transcendental para level, “the speaker, speech, and the process of giving rise to speech are one, even though the three aspects of speech can be conceptually differentiated” (“Unified Field” 343). Three additional levels of language with their corresponding levels of the mind also exist. The pashyanti level of speech is located at the junction point where the self-referral state of pure consciousness has become enlivened and is about to manifest into form: “This occurs close to the borderline between the Self and the very finest level of the ego” (344). From here speech develops from the finest impulse to the point of verbalized thinking in madhyama, which “comprises the levels of mind and intellect where memory, thought, and discrimination function.” Finally,
speech manifests on the sensible level, in *vaikhari*, “where it is spoken and can be heard” (344).

The emergence of these levels of speech corresponds to the emergence of concrete objects from the same absolute field of consciousness. In his lecture, “The Phonology of Creation,” Maharishi explains how all realities emerge from the Unified Field of pure consciousness: “Everything, no matter what, in its most fundamental value is an impulse of intelligence or an impulse of consciousness” (209). As this ultimate reality vibrates, the pulsations manifest themselves more expressly, giving rise to the qualities of particular objects. It turns out that the absolute level of these pulsations is identical to the absolute level of the Self—pure consciousness: “The rose at its fundamental value and the experiencer, ‘I,’ consciousness at its fundamental value are the same. Because the reality is the same in both cases, object and subject.” Since the source of physical and mental reality is the same, a person who is established in that source is capable of knowing the impulse of the object as an impulse of consciousness, can comprehend, or “cognize,” the truth of reality in its fullness. Such a person is a Rishi who “sees the truth, the Veda, the inner reality of everyone’s life, . . . pure knowledge, complete knowledge” (*Vedic Knowledge* 2–5). Maharishi explains the relationship between a Rishi’s awareness of an object at the finest level of consciousness and the word that names the object:

> When my consciousness has the same impulse as the consciousness of the rose, at its very fine expression, then I can speak or express the value of the rose in my own consciousness, on the level of my own consciousness. And when my consciousness can vouch for the reality of the rose, if it says, “rose,” it has the same vibration. It is the same impulse, which is lively at its basic value. (“Phonology” 211–212)

Maharishi’s Vedic theory of language, then, closely relates the name and form of objects. There is a “real name” for each object and that name is simply its vibratory impulse, and the object is known in its entirety when the awareness of a perceiver experiences that name on the finest level of consciousness:

> The marvel of Vedic Science is that in the Vedic expressions . . . the sound and the form are the same. The sound and the script, the words in sound and form—that is the hum at the unmanifest basis of creation,
but that hum is so distinctly heard that one could imitate it in speech. (Thirty Years 496–497)

This is not, of course, the ordinary level of sense perception. One is not born with the capacity for cognizing the Veda, although the potential for Vedic cognition exists for anyone with a human nervous system. Should this ability be developed, language would be experienced in its most original and fundamental state.

In Vedic language, the word is the same as an object’s form, which is its name: “the expression of a value is the true story of what that value is; the name of a value is the true story of what that value is, what that form is,” Maharishi says. If it is not a Vedic word, however, “the impulse of the word will not be that quality of the impulses that constitute the form.” Vedic cognition is the expression of the primordial language. At that extremely refined level of awareness, words are not sounds invented by human thinkers; they are rather the very impulses of specific values of the laws of nature. Non-Vedic words, conceived by people at the surface level of existence, do not contain the object’s form. The Vedic word cognized by the Rishi, however, is different; the name is not haphazardly given. It “is the cosmic reality which is expressing itself on its own level” (Maharishi, “Phonology” 223).

Words in other languages will have some varying degree of correspondence with Vedic language depending upon the perceptual clarity of those who originate and evolve a language, as well as such environmental influences as the climate and geography where the language develops. Words, no matter what the language, will be perceived differently at diverse levels of consciousness: “all words, howsoever wild they may be on their gross meaning level, will have that fine, celestial level.” A person of developed consciousness will make full use of any language if experienced at the level of the transcendent, the level of “real all connectedness,” because “the structure of the sound also has levels contained within it, and all these levels tell the story of the beyond” (Maharishi, “Root” 239, 240).

In a non-Vedic language, a lack of agreement between a word’s sound and its meanings exists except at the finest, “celestial” level. For modern

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5 For Maharishi’s comments on the influence of climatic and geographical factors on language, see Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, “Language and Climate,” in The Flow of Consciousness: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on Literature and Language (Fairfield, IA: Maharishi University of Management Press, 2010).
linguists this randomness of meaning occurring on the surface constitutes the very essence of language, and without knowledge of deeper levels of language they are left with only a partial understanding of its nature and power. Vedic linguists, on the other hand, are aware of a perfect connection between sound and meaning at every level:

Perfection of the words in the Rk Veda is that whatever they indicate on the gross level, that quality is present in that object [to which they refer]. Whatever they indicate on the finer level, there is a world corresponding to that in the finer; it indicates that. In any other language, certainly, every finer value of any word in any language will have those celestial qualities, but the surface values may be different. (“Root” 238)

Vedic words, then, do not lose the connection between meaning and sound as they move from subtle to more surface levels (“Phonology” 220–221).

developing the power of language
what we learn from this analysis of language provided by Maharishi Vedic Science is the absolute importance of doing all we can to develop our full capacity for awareness. The ability to utilize the full power of language depends upon just this, as does the ability to comprehend and appreciate the infinite richness of meaning contained in language.

Maharishi Vedic Science unveils all areas of reality to consciousness. It explains that what prevents fully developed awareness is underdeveloped consciousness functioning in an unsettled environment, factors overcome through the practical techniques of Maharishi Vedic Science: the Transcendental Meditation technique and TM-Sidhi programs effortlessly and naturally establish the awareness in the field of pure consciousness, the foundation for all higher states of consciousness.6 When consciousness has attained the condition of being fully awake within itself, its awareness becomes completely self-referential, aware of all the details of its own structure and dynamics.

Maharishi Vedic Science’s “subjective” approach to gaining knowledge is also, as its name suggests, methodically scientific. In the Rishi’s Vedic cognition, the “naming” of Vedic words as it were, language sequentially unfolds from the subtlest laws and impulses of nature at the very point of sprouting, from the pashyanti level of pure being—what

physicists call the level of the “unified field.” Language that originates at this transcendental level, according to Maharishi Vedic Science, expresses the very mechanics of the Laws of Nature. Because language has the ability to take a person from the deepest suffering of ignorance to the bliss of enlightenment, Maharishi says “one word properly known and properly used is enough for all achievements in the world and in heaven” (“The Root Bhu” 237). Such a word is the first word of the Rig Veda, Agnim. In a long and ongoing commentary on this one word, Maharishi explains how its very sounds and structure express the processes of creation, while simultaneously containing the mechanics for the generation of each successive word and chapter of the Rig Veda, the “blueprint of creation.” As the Rig Veda sequentially unfolds, each subsequent word, line, verse, and chapter is an elaboration of what preceded it; moreover, this same pattern of the unfoldment of the language of the text contains the sequential unfoldment of creation itself.

The dynamics of creation are found in the field of pure consciousness, in an eternal condition of self-referral in which the three components of knowledge—knower, known, and process of knowing—are constantly in play. Those Rishis whose awareness has become established on the transcendental \textit{para} level have gained the ability to see all the elements and tendencies of creation emerging into their manifest forms. They are able to see that “the perpetual continuum of the self-referral state of consciousness is known to be responsible for the infinite variety of creation” (Maharishi, \textit{Life} 30).

Expressions of knowledge found in Vedic literature have erroneously been interpreted as religious rather than scientific accounts of the phenomena they describe. Maharishi Vedic Science, however, does not find the Veda to be in conflict with science’s explanation of creation because the Veda itself is scientific. The words of the Vedas are not to be taken as mere symbols that signify objects and processes; they are, according to Vedic Science, the very sounds of Nature, and when perceived on the level of Transcendental Consciousness, as we have discussed, there is no difference between the object’s form and the sound that expresses it. At this level there is no dualism of thing and sign, of signified and signifier—as there is in modern linguistic theory. These distinctions arise only outside the field of unified awareness, a condition that characterizes thought and language in ordinary waking state of consciousness.
Maharishi Vedic Science thus provides a system that reunites consciousness, language, and meaning. It finds language to be an expression of consciousness, a manifestation of the self as it emerges into the realm of diversity. Through the techniques of Maharishi Vedic Science, the wholeness of consciousness, in its infinite unboundedness, is available to human awareness. When one’s awareness is not open to the Unified Field of pure consciousness, the texts of the world and of literature are open to the individual reader to a greater or lesser degree, according to Rig Veda. If the awareness is fully open to the Unified Field of Transcendental Consciousness that makes it possible to perceive the mechanics of nature from its finest to its most surface manifestations, the mechanics whereby words, feelings, ideas, bodies, actions, works, institutions, movements, and the whole range of human life become expressions of the pure Self.

**Fulfilling Ricoeur’s Poetic Use of Language**

Paul Ricoeur’s description of the poetic use of language is fulfilled by Maharishi’s Vedic theory of language, which holds that at the deepest, most creative level of language the individual transcends merely personal interests and experiences reality as it is. From this state the user of language creates using the dynamics of nature itself. Ricoeur finds that the poetic use of language differs from ordinary uses of language in that it does not involve a reference to the objects it wishes to control: “By holding in abeyance this interest and the sphere of meaning it governs, poetic discourse allows our deep-seated insertion in the life-world to emerge, it allows the ontological tie uniting our being to other beings and to Being to be articulated.” The poet can then “redescribe” reality and, by “striking out perception,” can recreate reality “at a higher level of realism” (Ricoeur, “Imagination” 9, 10).

Ricoeur asserts that through the introduction of “genuine transcendence” “a presence which brings about a true revolution in the theory

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7 In “The Quantum Theory of Literature: The Flow of Consciousness Is at the Basis of All Literary Expression” (in *Flow of Consciousness* 63), Maharishi makes an application to the study of literature of what he refers to as the “scientist’s consciousness,” which “is ready at any time to take in what is there in a very relaxed way.” They approach things without any preconceived notions and are not predetermined by their preconceptions to find only what they had expected to find. Thinking from the level of pure consciousness is the basis for this innocent manner of perceiving the world.
of subjectivity, . . . a radically new dimension, the poetic dimension” is achieved (Ricoeur, *Freedom* 486). Maharishi Vedic Science goes further than Ricoeur in recognizing the role of transcendence in the creative process; it is not merely a movement beyond relative structures but an absolute movement beyond all parts and structures. Vedic Science asserts cognition to be more than description, re-description, or interpretation of language. Cognition is the seeing of those impulses that create, an awareness of the laws of nature that structure a person’s own, individual being. In cognition a person perceives the mechanics of creation as the very fiber of individual consciousness.

Maharishi Vedic Science helps us to clarify the wide range of viewpoints from which literature can be appreciated. The creation and the understanding of a work are inseparable from the author’s or reader’s state of consciousness. Great literature speaks from an expanded state of awareness to all levels of consciousness, but is best understood by a reader in a state of consciousness equal to or greater than the writer’s. Maharishi says those expressions embedded in the pure soil of creative intelligence will last the longest; the greater the awareness, the longer the words will survive.

Once written, a work is at the mercy of the awareness the reader brings to it. Level of consciousness determines what one can hear and understand. This is true for all literature but is especially critical for reading Vedic literature. Maharishi points out that if one’s consciousness is not wholly developed, “knowledge must crumble on the hard rocks of ignorance” (“Relation” 200). A limited mind will find only a limited work. As self-knowledge grows, as awareness expands into higher states of consciousness, the ability to comprehend and appreciate a work correspondingly grows. This deepened comprehension, in turn, enhances experience and stimulates literary insights. Only one whose conscious mind possesses unboundedness lively within can read a great work of literature with the level of awareness it deserves. Thus the Transcendental Meditation technique and TM-Sidhi program, methods for developing full awareness, are essential tools for seriously knowing the full range of literature:

a great writer may create a work of literature that presents the dynamics of life and the mechanics of consciousness as they express themselves in
Nature and society, yet the reader may not understand or respond to them as fully as the writer might hope. (R. Orme-Johnson, “Unified” 362)

Maharishi emphasizes the enormous importance of developing the full potential of consciousness. In order to get the most out of a piece of literature, for the highest inspiration and evolution, he says, “it will always be beneficial to the reader if he has a higher level of consciousness than the writer” (“Quantum” 53). When Transcendental Consciousness is permanently established in the awareness, the results can be truly profound. This is that state of enlightenment in which supreme knowledge, Veda, can be known and lived. Maharishi states that merely reading the words of the Veda is not enough to possess its knowledge. Instead, the highest knowledge is achieved by “gaining familiarity with that essential element from which the words of the Veda are made, this transcendental pure consciousness” (“Relation” 201).

The understanding that there are states of consciousness beyond ordinary waking state leads us to conceive of the immense possibilities for further meaning in literature, to conceive of a reality that far exceeds our present intellectual capacity. The author who transcends the boundaries of everyday experience is able to present a world not limited by the prejudices that normally restrict ordinary awareness. Works produced from such a consciousness can make us suddenly perceive the world as if for the first time, awakening us from “our dogmatic slumbers.” We return over and over to such works even though their transcendental content is more or less “beyond us,” that is, beyond the range of the waking state of consciousness; but what is transcendental in them speaks to what is transcendental in each of us.

As individual awareness develops, a reader begins to discover more profound layers of meaning latent in a work of literature. Such a reader may also discover that a method useful for analyzing a work at one level of consciousness is not the most effective for analysis at another. This could well explain the proliferation of methodologies presently used by critics for the study of literature and the other arts. Maharishi Vedic Science makes an enormous contribution to the study of literature by

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8 For an insightful discussion of these literary techniques, see Rhoda Orme-Johnson’s “A Unified Field Theory of Literature,” especially 358–360 and 362–365. Dr. Orme-Johnson’s article presents a comprehensive view of how Maharishi Vedic Science has revitalized and brought to fulfillment the whole field of literature and literary study.
providing a systematic understanding of the full range of both subjective and objective life. In addition, it makes available the technology for gaining those higher states of consciousness that allow one to fully appreciate the transcendental realities expressed in the greatest works.

In recent years, at Maharishi University of Management and many other universities and institutions around the world, research into the neuroscience and physiology of higher states of consciousness has been conducted to verify descriptions of transcendence and higher states of consciousness. This research indicates major improvements in the areas of human consciousness and behavior, leading to a full integration of the human spirit in the individual and society. For literary studies, this means that with the possibility for raising individual consciousness, the world’s great literature can finally do its full work upon us.

**The Expression of Consciousness**

Through Maharishi Vedic Science both writers and readers can gain access to those levels of awareness where language embodies ever more profound aspects of reality. One example of such a profound transcendental reality has been expressed through the expanded awareness of its author, the twentieth-century Spanish poet Pedro Salinas, who shows how consciousness, “a light not known to the sun,” takes a rose, rock, and bird and makes them clearer and better:

They are better: a light
not known to the sun illumines them
with its rays, beyond night,
revealed for ever.
The clarities of Now
shine even more than those of May.

If they were there before, they are here now,
exalted in a greater lucidity.
How natural they seem,
how simple the great miracle!
In this poem-light,

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everything—
from the most nocturnal kiss
to the splendor of the zenith—
everything is clearer.

“El Poema” (Translated by Eugenio Florit)

Salinas sheds light upon a set of ordinary objects of experience, revealing them in their new light of eternity, its rays beyond night reveal them forever. This light—this consciousness—more luminous than the sun, lies at the heart of everyone. The power of the poem can penetrate great dullness to awaken us to beauty. To the extent that we are awake, we enter the world of the poem, and should the inner and the outer intersect, we can then enter a fullness of union, a communication that transcends the limits of the poem's words. The work, expressing the highly developed awareness of its author, gives rise to a fulfillment that spans epochs and cultures to become truly “classical.” As Hans-Georg Gadamer sees it, “the duration of the power of [the] work to speak directly is fundamentally unlimited” (258).

The Appreciation of Consciousness

The power of the work will, however, always be limited by the level of awareness that apprehends it. The value of a text, therefore, is structured in consciousness. Reading literature with an expanded awareness can give insights into the fundamental workings of nature, even into the structure of the Self, for all creation, objective nature and subjective humanity, is the expression of consciousness. Through language, unbounded pure consciousness becomes manifest; entering into boundaries it becomes subject to interpretation, open to unlimited viewpoints by knowers from every state of consciousness.

When applied to literary texts, interpretation can be either subjective or objective, and each of these approaches can ultimately lead to infinity. The objective approach to the truth of a text proceeds in a horizontal manner in an ever-expanding interpretation from an ever-broadening point of view, in ever-widening contexts, finally moving toward a full comprehension of the text at some infinitely distant horizon. The subjective approach proceeds vertically through various levels of the text, potentially to its very source, which being non-relative is a wordless state beyond language. In both approaches the individuality of the
original text is transcended and replaced by infinity. These infinities differ, however, in that, in the objective approach, the possible meanings, interpretations, and implications proliferate to a relative infinity, that is, an intellectual conception of infinity; while, in the subjective approach, the text is left behind and is converted into an infinite, absolute silence, which in its inner fabric contains all texts in seed form. The experience of transcendence through this subjective approach to reading is possible but extremely rare, more an ideal than a reality because the meaning of the text entertains the mind and keeps it from going beyond the words. Herein lies the value of the Transcendental Meditation technique, the practical application of Maharishi Vedic Science that systematically, effortlessly, and quickly allows the mind to transcend language to the state of pure consciousness, the source of all subjective and objective experiences.

Our perception of the world in our ordinary waking state of consciousness is limited to the objective approach, and through this approach it is easy to become lost in an infinity of meanings that expands the awareness but never allows it to gain complete knowledge of the ever-increasing complex maze of objects. Maharishi Vedic Science, on the other hand, by restoring the validity of the subjective approach, gives the means to discover one’s own unbounded nature—the Self that is the source and essence of all objectivity. Repeatedly experiencing this transcendental Self, our awareness expands to higher states of consciousness, which brings both fulfillment and a more reliable picture of reality. For this reason, Maharishi Vedic Science is found to provide an essential framework not only for an adequate and correct appreciation of the world’s great literature but also for gaining comprehensive knowledge of the Self and nature.

To gain a complete knowledge of any text, only an experience of omniscience would suffice; this aside, each person’s nervous system, different from everyone else’s, will produce a different viewing of a text, a different reality of life itself. Similarly, texts in turn vary in truth depending upon the awareness of the author. Nonetheless, texts provide not only a writer’s limited vision, they provide an objective correlative, as Eliot called it, for judging our present state of consciousness. To expand our state of consciousness we must first establish our mind in its source—pure consciousness. Having done that, to perfect our ability
to read texts we must then learn both how to be led by words and how to leave them behind.

Prior to Maharishi Vedic Science, the proper method of using language and reading literature was haphazard and piecemeal. We could be inspired by literature but were unable to understand its full significance. Maharishi Vedic Science teaches us that, to know a text, there are two factors: experience and understanding. By experiencing the source of knowledge, the source of a text, a reader’s awareness expands to be able to more fully appreciate the language and content of a text. As both the awareness of the reader and that of the writer expand, greater communication between writer and reader develops in every way. Because Maharishi Vedic Science now makes available the techniques for gaining higher states of consciousness, and because it has also clearly presented the theoretical knowledge of the structures of reality experienced in these higher states, we are now in a fortunate position unknown in modern history of being able to fully profit from the great literature available. Literature thus, at present, has the opportunity of fulfilling its greatest purpose, a purpose seen only by the most visionary writers, a purpose that fulfills the highest goals of human existence, a purpose of life lived in the eternal bliss of enlightenment.

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Part IV

Consciousness in Student Literature Papers
Remembering How to Fly:
An Exploration of Eugene Ionesco’s *A Stroll in the Air*
as Understood through the
*Transcendental Meditation* and *TM Sidhi Programs*
and *Yogic Flying*  

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses the Maharishi TM-Sidhi program as a model for exploring a work of modern literature, Eugene Ionesco’s A Stroll in the Air, a play whose depiction of human flight has puzzled generations of literary critics. The spontaneous ascent of its central character, Monsieur Bérenger, along with his insistence that flight is a natural, even essential, part of human life, have led scholars to interpret the play as either fantasy or parable. This paper aims to add a new dimension to the study of A Stroll in the Air by exploring Bérenger’s flight as a literal phenomenon. Maharishi Vedic Science states that the ability to fly is inherent in human potential, and scientific research on the TM-Sidhi program and Yogic Flying indicates that human flight is a by-product of a perfectly functioning nervous system. This paper will examine Ionesco’s play by presenting an overview of the Theater of the Absurd, summarizing the TM-Sidhi program and Yogic Flying, and finally using this knowledge as a framework for understanding Ionesco’s theatrical representations of his own experiences of inner bliss and physical lightness.

Introduction

The twentieth century has witnessed enormous changes in the ways humans perceive existence. It has seen the birth of quantum physics with its challenge to the Newtonian world view, the rise and fall of new forms of government around the world, and the innovative, even shocking, experiments of artists like Picasso, Dali and Magritte. It is not surprising, then, that the middle of this century also saw the rise of an entirely new form of theater. This “Theater of the Absurd” emerged as a direct assault on not only the traditional foundations of drama but of existence itself, creating a world in which anything could and did happen. Characters lived in waste bins, became rhinoceroses, and grew multiple noses. Serious ideas of the age dissolved into non-sequiturs while sheer nonsense took on the status of great importance. Audiences watched in states of vacillating alarm and amazement, never knowing what bizarre event would occur next.

Because absurdist plays present a world free from ordinary structure and logic, Theater of the Absurd is commonly seen as pessimistic, even bleak. There is, however, another facet to it deserving far more attention. In many cases, the surprising, boundary-breaking world of absurdist theater is not criticism of life but a celebration, a liberation
of both characters and audiences from the forces that restrict human behavior. This is often true in the work of Eugène Ionesco, the playwright who, along with Samuel Beckett, pioneered the absurdist theater movement.

In his essay “Why Do I Write?” Ionesco explains that the basis of his unusual style is not futility but delight: “I wanted to communicate my dazzlement by the very fact of existence” (p. 18). This and other personal writings show that Ionesco enjoyed moments of transfigured awareness, episodes characterized by such experiences as physical lightness, elevated perception, and a joyous “certainty of being.” In many of Ionesco’s plays, his characters exhibit these same symptoms of heightened awareness. Perhaps the most striking of these occurs in *A Stroll in the Air* in which Monsieur Bérenger, a gentleman enjoying a Sunday stroll, becomes so flooded with elation that he rises from the ground. Ionesco portrays his character’s flight as a natural, even “healthy,” phenomenon and suggests that the ability to fly is inherent in every human being (p. 74).

Its events, compared to those of other Ionesco plays, are particularly noteworthy due to the uniquely personal nature of *A Stroll in the Air*. While the characters in other Ionesco plays tend to be either caricatures or everymen, the hero of *A Stroll in the Air* is a very human middle-aged playwright who enjoys, as Ionesco did, a close relationship with his wife and his young daughter. An early sequence, in which a journalist interviews Bérenger on his reluctance to write more plays, is so realistic as to have been called “uninspired and undramatic” (Hayman, p. 116). Yet Bérenger’s assent into the air, arguably the most inspired and dramatic moment in Ionesco’s theater, reveals more of Ionesco’s inner life than his commentaries on his writing. In Bérenger’s flight, we see a vivid reflection of the lightness and joy that Ionesco called his “most authentic consciousness” (1964, p. 170).

The link between Bérenger’s levitation and Ionesco’s authentic-life epiphanies tends to be overlooked by scholars who view his character’s flight as either metaphor or fantasy. Allan Lewis, for example, sees Bérenger as post-World War II symbol, a man “flying into outer space to defy death and escape the anxiety of this world” (p. 73). Leonard Pronko offers the milder suggestion that “Bérenger’s flight represents his inspiration, his writing” (p. 38). Perhaps the most widely accepted
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view is that of Bérenger as a metaphor for the creative mind or, as Patri-
cia Rigg states, “an embodiment of the Romantic imaginative impulse” (p. 543).

While each of these interpretations is supportable, not one embraces
the literal implications of Bérenger’s flight. In the play, Bérenger
emphasizes that his elation brought on through levitation is not, as his
wife suggests, abstract or fanciful: “On the contrary, it’s all very con-
crete. This happiness is something physical. I can feel it here” (p. 60).
Like Bérenger’s statement, Ionesco’s autobiographical writings are filled
with experiences of physical lightness that surpass mere metaphor or
symbol. Ionesco hardly knew how to describe these buoyant episodes;
it is of little surprise, therefore, that scholars have often misunder-
stood or overlooked their influence on his work. Using the framework of
Maharishi Vedic Science, which elucidates the characteristics of higher
states of consciousness, we can verify Ionesco’s vision of human flight
in its most literal sense.

In his autobiography Present Past Past Present, Ionesco notes that
some individuals in every time have experienced moments of pure exis-
tence when awareness is liberated from all boundaries and the mind
“finds its center again” (p. 154). Drawing upon his own experiences,
Ionesco says,

Once, long ago, I was sometimes overcome by a sort of grace, a eupho-
ria. It was as if, first of all, every motion, every reality was emptied of
its content. After this, it was as if I found myself suddenly at the center
of pure ineffable existence. I became one with the essential reality when
along with an immense serene joy, I was overcome by what I might call
the stupefaction of being, the certainty of being (pp. 150–151).

The similarity between Ionesco’s transcendental experience and those
from various world traditions has captured the attention of drama’s
most perceptive scholars. Rosette Lamont, for example, likens Ionesco
to certain mystical rabbis who, according to Kabbalistic scholar Ger-
shom Scholem, saw the structures of nature dissolve, revealing a state
of “ultimate formlessness” (p. 17). Richard Coe compares the play-
wright’s “certainty of being” to the Buddhists’ “nirvana.” Unlike those
who see Ionesco as a nihilist, Coe believes that Ionesco’s experience
of inner being is the source of his finest work: “In the final analysis, it
is the transmitting of this experience . . . which has given Ionesco the
status of one of the most influential dramatists of the present century” (p. 2). While Coe recognizes the value of the experience that Ionesco “transmitted,” he is unable to articulate that experience and, therefore, is prevented from a more thorough exploration of its role in Ionesco’s work. It is in order to avoid such limitations that this paper utilizes the lucid and systematic framework provided by Maharishi Vedic Science and the literature of the Vedic tradition. By looking at this longest and most detailed tradition of transcendence, we will gain a clearer understanding of Ionesco’s inspiration and how it gave rise to *A Stroll in the Air*.

**The TM-Sidhi Program**

The earliest accounts of Transcendental Consciousness exist in Vedic Literature. These ancient texts describe pure Being or Pure Consciousness—an unbounded field that gives rise to and maintains all existence—a field revealed through the experiences of innumerable *rishis* throughout the ages. More importantly, the Vedic tradition has preserved the technologies used by these ancient seers to access Transcendental Consciousness. This science of transcending, with all its formulas for unfolding full human potential, has been fully revived in this century by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in an extensive body of knowledge of immense value called Maharishi Vedic Science. In his *Science of Being and Art of Living*, Maharishi corrects a long held inaccuracy that the experience of Being is rare and mystical, available only to privileged individuals such as poets and saints. He explains that Being, the source of all creation, can be located by any individual at the subtlest level of awareness. Without regular experience of this level of pure existence, the human nervous system loses the ability to continuously renew and refine itself:

> Those whose hearts and minds are not cultured, whose vision is held by what is gross, see only the surface value of life. They only find qualities of matter and energy. They do not find the innocent, ever-present, omnipresent Being. . . . They do not enjoy almighty Being in Its innocent, never-changing status which lies beyond the obvious phase of the forms and phenomena of matter and energy, mind and individuality (pp. 29–30).

In order to rectify this loss of experience, Maharishi began teaching a simple, effortless, mental technology for enlivening pure con-
consciousness and dissolving stress. Through the regular practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, pure consciousness is not only experienced twice daily but, over time, is integrated into every area of life. Thus, Maharishi explains, “The regular practice of Transcendental Meditation, together with natural, unstrained activity in life, is a shortcut to the creation of a state of consciousness where absolute Being and the relative field of life are lived simultaneously and the one is not a barrier to the other” (p. 62).

In this way, the practice of the Transcendental Meditation program provides a basis for the development of what Maharishi Vedic Science calls “higher states of consciousness.” Through the experience of Transcendental Consciousness, a fourth state distinct from the three ordinary states of consciousness defined by psychology (waking, dreaming, and sleeping), the Transcendental Meditation practitioner grows into Cosmic Consciousness, a fifth state in which pure consciousness always exists in the presence of one of the three phenomenal states of consciousness. On this foundation of Cosmic Consciousness, an individual develops God Consciousness, a sixth state in which pure consciousness not only characterizes inner experience but elevates all values of sensory perception. The two distinct fields of life—subjective and objective—finally and irrevocably become unified in the seventh state of consciousness, Unity Consciousness, a state in which every point in creation is experienced as the expression of one’s own unbounded Self.

In 1977, Maharishi introduced the TM-Sidhi program. This advancement on the Transcendental Meditation technique allowed practitioners to accelerate the development of consciousness by utilizing the most advanced technologies of human evolution, the formulas recorded in Maharishi Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras. The Sanskrit word sidhi literally translates as “perfection,” and the TM-Sidhi program is designed to establish the perfect integration of mind and body that characterizes the highest state of consciousness. When both are established in pure consciousness, the result is a state of perfect coordination of mind and body from which any desire can be instantly fulfilled. While the Transcendental Meditation technique allows every individual to regularly
experience the field of pure consciousness, the TM-Sidhi program adds another dimension: the introduction of *sutras*, a set of specific mental formulas prescribed by Patanjali. Each possesses within it an exact, predicted result that allows practitioners to cultivate a range of defined abilities. Among these abilities are perfected human virtues, refined sensory perception, knowledge of the cosmos, and Yogic Flying, the ability to move unassisted through the air (Gelderloos, p. 376).

**Yogic Flying**

Since earliest recorded history, and consistently throughout the ages, cultures around the world have reported instances of human flight. Native Americans, Australian Aborigines, and many African tribes view human flight as accepted phenomena. The Catholic Church in its long history has recorded the names of more than two hundred saints whose bodies lifted into the air. While some reports are difficult to verify, some contain enough substantiating evidence to have gained the acceptance of historians. The claims in support of St. Joseph’s levitations are thought to be the most convincing. On more than one hundred occasions his flights were witnessed by some of the most reputable figures in Europe: a princess, an admiral, two physicians, three cardinals, and the Pope himself (Thurston).

In spite of these and other records, human flight and its mechanics are no longer accepted by prevailing Western society. Unassisted flight is believed to be impossible, relegated to the realms of fantasy and science fiction. When Maharishi revived the knowledge of Yogic Flying in the late 1970s, he confronted this prevailing disbelief by correcting misconceptions about flying and other so-called supernatural abilities:

The performance of the Sidhis, which in the days of ignorance were termed supernatural powers, is not something superhuman. Everything is within the normal range of man’s ability—to handle the whole of cosmic life is within the range of everyone’s own nature, because it is the same nature. The gardener who handles the sap handles not only the pink of the flower, but the green of the leaf, and the stem and all parts of the flower. So it is by handling our own nature that we handle the nature of anything, of everything. By handling our own nature, we handle almighty nature (1977, p. 385).
Because the TM-Sidhi program cultivates perfect mind-body coordination, no physical capability lies outside the practitioner’s ability. As an individual’s nervous system is freed from stress, the mind gains increasing mastery of its own mechanics and all obstacles to mind-body coordination dissolve accordingly. This growth of coordination is reflected through the three distinct stages of Yogic Flying described in the Yogatattva Upanishad. In the first, the practitioner lifts from the ground only for a moment in short hops: “Just as the frog moves, continually hopping, so does the Yogi, sitting in lotus, move along the ground.” With further perfection of mind-body coordination, the practitioner remains in the air, or “floats,” for a longer time. Finally, when perfect connection between mind and body is fully established, a person “leaving the ground, departs,” actually flying through the air (p. 195).

To the classical physicist, this phenomenon of Yogic Flying contradicts the laws of gravity as postulated by Isaac Newton. The Newtonian paradigm, however, does not include the knowledge of quantum mechanics discovered at the beginning of this century. John Hagelin, a renowned quantum field theorist, proposes that the TM-Sidhi program works because all phenomena in the universe have their origin in one unified field. This field, which gives rise to all forms of energy and matter, can be located at the source of human awareness (Hagelin 1987). Thus, during the practice of the TM-Sidhi program, an individual’s conscious mind is able to act from this unified field, this subtlest, most influential level of creation:

Classical theories of gravitation, theories such as Newtonian gravity and Einstein’s general relativity, cannot explain ‘yogic flying.’ However, quantum gravity can. . . . At this level, space-time geometry is dynamically generated. It is possible, through the generation of a sustained coherent influence at the level of the unified field, to modify the local curvature of space-time geometry described in general relativity in such a way that the body flies up, or to the left, or forward, or in any possible direction. On the basis of currently conceivable ideas in physics, it is only through a technology of the unified field that ‘yogic flying’ is possible (Hagelin, p. 18).
Physiological Effects of the TM-Sidhi Program and Yogic Flying

Three decades of research on the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs have allowed scientists to chart practitioners’ development of mind-body coordination towards higher states of consciousness. Since 1970, when Dr. Robert Keith Wallace published the first study on the Transcendental Meditation technique, physiologists have known that Transcendental Consciousness has distinct physiological correlates (Wallace). During the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, the entire metabolism is found to quiet down, resulting in, among other factors, the slowing or total suspension of breath that occurs periodically throughout the practice (Wallace). This change in breathing demonstrates that the Transcendental Meditation practitioner uses oxygen supply more efficiently. Researcher John Farrow points out the significance of this outcome: “Remarkably, at the end of each breath stoppage, there was no compensatory over breathing. The breath would simply stop at the end of an expiration, and then after a period resume again at the same level. This was a strong indication that the breath stoppage . . . did not involve any oxygen deprivation for the physiology” (p. 170).

Later studies revealed a change in total brain functioning as reflected through electro-encephalograph (EEG) technology. During the Transcendental Meditation technique, the practitioner’s brain wave patterns were found to be distinct from and significantly more coherent than the patterns found in waking, sleeping or dreaming (Banquet). With the regular practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique over time, these coherent patterns become increasingly evident during all levels of activity, even during sleep and dreaming (Travis). For the TM-Sidhi practitioner, this increase in coherence takes place even more rapidly. EEG technology also reflects the unique brain wave synchrony that occurs during Yogic Flying. Throughout the Yogic Flying session, brain wave coherence strikingly increases each time the body lifts from the ground (Orme-Johnson and Gelderloos, 1988a). What these EEG and other findings demonstrate is that the Transcendental Meditation technique and the more advanced TM-Sidhi program lead to a distinct improvement in mind-body coordination. Coherent brain waves, like the coherent light waves of a laser beam, correspond to greater degrees
of energy and efficiency. When all the various impulses of the brain and nervous system function together in a unified, orderly pattern, an individual’s intentions are effortlessly fulfilled.

Research also suggests that, as brain wave coherence grows, an individual’s subjective experiences correspondingly improve. During Yogic Flying, many practitioners describe a phenomenon Maharishi calls “bubbling bliss,” a sense of physical lightness that enlivens the entire physiology. They notice a growth of stable inner joyfulness, a happiness unshakable in the changes of day-to-day life. This fulfillment, unlike a transitory mood of happiness, is not connected to objects or events. Rather, it is the natural product of a nervous system in which obstacles are dissolving and coherence is increasing. As the system is refined even further, the sensory organs become unclouded by stress and capable of detecting subtler qualities of the environment. These subjective experiences, supported by such objective findings of science as metabolic efficiency and brain wave coherence, testify that Yogic Flying cultivates a perfectly functioning nervous system and higher states of consciousness. Establishing Yogic Flying as a viable human possibility serves as an aid to reading Ionesco in a way not previously existent. Knowing that human flight can and does exist allows us to avoid the necessity of metaphor and accept Ionesco’s statements and Monsieur Bérenger’s experiences at their face value.

**A Real Life “Stroll in the Air”**

From the opening moments of *A Stroll in the Air*, anyone familiar with Ionesco’s personal history will recognize the play’s autobiographical origins. The *mise en scène* of the play, with its simulated bright sunlight, gleaming white houses, and “very pure” sky recalls a moment from *Present Past Past Present*. In this memoir, Ionesco relates an incident that transformed his view of existence. He recalls walking through a small provincial village, “beneath a deep, dense sky.”

It was a little street, bordered with little white houses whose immaculate walls shone so brightly that they seemed to want to disappear, to melt together in the intensity of a burning, pervasive, total light that was trying to escape from the forms that contained it. . . . Suddenly I felt as if I had received a blow right in the heart, in the center of my being. . . . “Nothing is true,” I said, “outside of this” — a *this* that I was, of
course, unable to define, since the *this* itself was what escaped definition, because it itself was the beyond, that which went beyond definitions. Perhaps I could translate this feeling and *this* by “a certainty of being” (pp. 154–155).

With his awareness encompassed by this essential, invincible reality, Ionesco felt “lifted up” by “a joy, something more than a joy.” The simple act of raising his hand to his forehead filled him with wonder at his own control over his body: “What is astonishing is being able to want to or not to want to. I can give myself orders, and I can obey myself.” This sense of awe increased moments later when he felt himself on the verge of lifting from the ground:

[The sky] enveloped me, enveloped all the objects, the walls, and was almost palpable, almost velvet, blue; the deeper and denser the blue of the sky became, the more it could be perceived through the sense of touch. . . . My euphoria became enormous, inhuman. I breathed the air and it was as if I were swallowing pieces of blue sky that replaced my lungs, my heart, my liver, my bones with this celestial substance, somewhere between water and air, and this made me so light, lighter and lighter, that I could no longer feel the effort of walking. It was as if I were not walking now, but leaping, dancing. I could have flown, this depended on just a few things; with a simple concentration of will, of energy, I could have risen from the earth as in a dream or as *once upon a time* (p. 156).

This brief passage conveys several characteristics resembling those higher states of consciousness elucidated in Maharishi Vedic Science. One such characteristic is a heightened awareness exemplified in the foregrounding of such basic elements as space and light. Another experience, Ionesco’s description of houses dissolving into an all-pervasive radiance, is matched by a TM-Sidhi practitioner who sees the concreteness of trees and other objects similarly dissipating:

Generally, whenever I put my attention on an object, I become aware of the subtler qualities of the objects around me. For instance, when looking at a tree, I first become aware of the object as it is—a concrete form bound in space and time. But then I perceive finer aspects of the object coexisting along with its concrete expression. On this subtler level, objects are perceived as almost transparent structures of light (unlike
harsher, normal daylight) through which the very essence of life appears to flow (Alexander and Boyer, p. 358).

Like this joyous person, Ionesco’s awareness changes from a duller, surface perception of objects to one dominated by lightness and luminosity. His shift in vision, along with his augmented sense of touch and unbounded joy, suggests a state of refined awareness not uncommon to practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation technique. His perceived change in breathing also corresponds with scientific research demonstrating a refinement of breath during the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs. As with practitioners of these techniques, Ionesco’s whole metabolism seems to function more efficiently, transforming ordinary air into an ultra-nourishing “celestial substance.”

A particularly striking feature of this passage is Ionesco’s experience of mind-body coordination, his awareness that, as he put it, “I can give myself orders, and I can obey myself.” Significantly this realization culminates in a feeling that he could with the right quality of will lift his body into the air. His intuition here parallels the mechanics of Yogic Flying with its use of Patanjali’s mental formulas. Although Ionesco did not possess the specific formulas that would allow him to rise from the ground, he intuited that this ability was possible. Moreover, he seemed to know that the technique of human flight had been available “once upon a time.”

This physical lightness and inner joyfulness was not a singular occurrence in Ionesco’s life. Throughout his adolescence, he recalls being “often overwhelmed by an intense, luminous joy: it was an inexplicable, irrational happiness that mounted from the earth, from my feet, and went up to my knees, to my belly, to my heart, to lay hold of all of me.” As this joy pervaded his entire body, Ionesco writes, “I felt I was in harmony with everything. . . . I had the impression that I was rising” (1971, p. 160).

While occurrences of Being were not uncommon in his early life, the above experience in this provincial village affected Ionesco profoundly. Starting around the age of fifty, he began to routinely refer to it in interviews, in memoirs, and in his creative work. In his 1960 play The Killer, the protagonist, also named Bérenger, actually retells the whole of Ionesco’s memory as his own: his stroll through the country village, his sensation of inhaling sky with each breath. Bérenger concludes by
reflecting, “I’m sure I could have flown away, I’d lost so much weight, I
was lighter than the blue sky I was breathing” (p. 26). Two years later,
_A Stroll in the Air_ brought this experience one step further, for Bérenger
does what his creator could not: he “remembers” how to fly.

**A Stroll in the Air and Yogic Flying**

While Ionesco’s theater is characterized by the unexpected, Bérenger’s
ascent is one of the most surprising moments in all of Ionesco’s work.
Throughout the first half of the play, Bérenger enjoys a Sunday saunter
with his family and engages in typical absurdist activities: a neighbor
girl entertains them by singing mechanical trills, a little boy pulls her
braids to reveal a bald head underneath, and a visitor from the “anti-
world” surfaces momentarily, walks topsey-turvey and smokes an
upside-down pipe. In the midst of these oddities, Bérenger suddenly
becomes overwhelmed with an inexplicable happiness. His elation is of
such magnitude that he can hardly find words to express himself. He
exclaims that his head is “reeling with conviction,” but this conviction
is not localized to any thought or idea. As he explains to his dubious
wife, “Once a conviction’s been limited by definition, it isn’t one any-
more” (p. 61).

While this statement at first appears nonsensical, the playwright’s
real-life stroll in the air provides a clue to its meaning. The indefinable
“this” Ionesco refers to in _Present Past Past Present_ anticipates Bérenger’s
“conviction” in _A Stroll in the Air_. Each dissolves all boundaries and
transcends all definitions. Ionesco could only describe his “this” as “the
beyond, that which went beyond definitions.” While he uses avant-
garde language to describe Bérenger’s and his own experiences, Ionesco’s
sentiments are not limited to absurdism. Rather, his inability to
define the object of his overwhelming conviction recalls similar dif-
ficulties in describing the ineffable by writers across time.

The Victorian Tennyson attempts to describe the ultimate state where
“individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless
being, and this not a confused state but the clearest of the clear, the sur-
est of the sure . . . utterly beyond words” (p. 268). In an earlier example,
the Medieval poet Dante, near the end of the “Paradiso,” laments that
he cannot convey his experience of the ultimate Truth within the con-
fines of words:
For my sight, growing pure, penetrated
  even deeper into the rays
  of the Light which is true in Itself.
From then on, my vision was greater
  than our speech which fails at such a sight (p. 478).

Walt Whitman, the great nineteenth century American Transcendentalist, in “Song of Myself” struggles to define this same essential reality: “I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid, / It is not in any dictionary, utterance, syllable” (p. 84). And the Modernist T. S. Eliot vacillating between assurance and frustration describes this essential reality as a “still point . . . neither flesh nor fleshless; / Neither from nor towards,” and, “I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where” (pp. 15–16). All of these poetic statements seem to exemplify Maharishi’s explanation that pure Being is “beyond the obvious phase of the forms and phenomena of matter and energy, mind and individuality” (1966, pp. 29–30).

Although Ionesco’s “certainty of being” and Bérenger’s “conviction” escape definition, they possess distinct physiological correlates. The most striking of these is Bérenger’s change in breathing: “The air that fills my lungs is more rarefied than air. It gives off vapors that are going to my head” (p. 60). The word “rarefied” indicates the degree of Bérenger’s physical refinement. Similarly, Maharishi Vedic Science states that refined breathing, as verified by research on the Transcendental Meditation and the TM-Sidhi programs, is an indicator of development of higher states of consciousness. Physiological refinement in A Stroll in the Air, moreover, points to perceptual refinement: with the onset of Bérenger’s happiness, flowers become so full of life that one “can almost hear them breathe” (p. 58), and a silver bridge becomes a dazzling display of “those famous particles of light that scientists call ‘photons’” (p. 64).

The most dramatic indication of Bérenger’s improved physiological functioning, of course, is his ability to fly. While Ionesco himself did not possess the mind-body coordination to lift from the ground, his creation magically snaps into a state of perfect functioning in which flying is not only possible but irresistible. The first stage of Bérenger’s flight, like that of Yogic Flying, is a series of short hops. As Bérenger hops, the people around him unconsciously begin to do the same until
everyone on stage is bouncing up and down. This group hopping when found during Yogic Flying is accompanied by a state of synchrony called the Super Radiance effect—a broad coherence that produces positive effects throughout an environment. Violence, economic instability, accident fatalities, even natural disasters decrease during the Super Radiance effect in direct proportion to the number practicing the TM-Sidhi program:

When the individual mind identifies itself with that transcendental basis of all the laws of nature, this is nourishing the whole creation from its very basis. That unmanifest field is a field of all possibilities at the basis of nature’s functioning, and if we enliven that field we enrich all the expressions of natural law everywhere in our environment (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1977, p. 385).

While Bérenger’s onlookers are not unmoved by his defiance of gravity, they are incapable of comprehending its purpose. It bothers them that neither Bérenger’s happiness nor his ability to fly have any practical value. At best they see it as a circus entertainment, at worst a sheer waste of time: “Sitting’s good enough for me,” scoffs John Bull (p. 74). Bérenger insists that “man has a crying need to fly,” to which a watching journalist replies, “Technology has adequately and brilliantly fulfilled that need already” (p. 75). Bérenger senses that flying does have a practical value, but he is unable to articulate it to the satisfaction of his listeners. Not flying, he says, is “like not getting enough exercise. If we don’t fly, it’s because we’re not healthy enough” (p. 75). He sees the loss of this faculty as the downfall of society: “I expect that’s why we all feel so unhappy” (p. 74).

In recent decades, scientific research has verified that Yogic Flying is the most advanced and practical human technology available. The ability to generate waves of coherence through the Super Radiance effect, to alleviate suffering, and to increase harmony and productivity, has been accomplished by no other means than the world’s greatest marvel, the human nervous system:

The brain is a magnificent piece of electronic equipment, more complexly wired than the largest computer. . . . There are, by one estimate, more possible connections in the brain than there are atoms in the universe. But until recently, we have forgotten how to take this magnificent piece of equipment and connect it to its source (Oates p. 28).
On multiple occasions, in diverse locations around the world, when groups of Yogic Flyers have practiced in an area, researchers have documented a decrease in social misfortunes and an increase in favorable trends. In Israel and neighboring Lebanon, for instance, time series analysis revealed a correlation between the number of Yogic Flyers in group practice of the TM-Sidhi program and the reduction of war deaths and accident fatalities (Orme-Johnson, et al, 1988). In Fairfield, Iowa, an assembly of over 7,000 Yogic Flyers corresponded with an increase in the World Stock Index, a decrease in traffic deaths, and a decrease in infectious diseases nationwide (Orme-Johnson, et al., 1984). In Manilla, crime in the Philippines decreased significantly during a three-year stay of 1500 Yogic Flyers and returned to its previous high when the group dispersed (Dillbeck, et al., 1987). These and many other studies demonstrate that, with the right technology, the human physiology can and has become the most powerful instrument the world has ever known.

A “Crying” Need for a Technique

While Bérenger’s flight parallels Yogic Flying in several ways, there is a key difference between his experience and those of TM-Sidhi practitioners: Bérenger, like Ionesco, lacked a systematic procedure to regain his lightness at will. When he is actually in the air, the ability to fly seems so natural that Bérenger wonders, “How could I have forgotten how it’s done? It’s so simple, so childish!” (p. 74). Yet the text suggests that Bérenger has flown before and lost his ability directly afterwards. Because of this, he struggles to systematize his experience. “This time,” he resolves, “I really won’t forget. I’ll be careful, I’ll remember, I’ll jot down all my movements in a notebook, then I can reproduce them whenever I like” (p. 80). When Bérenger finally drifts down to earth, however, it is not due to any forgetfulness of physical movements. Rather, he is paralyzed when his “conviction” is deflated by a fear of annihilation. On one level, Bérenger’s plight reflects Ionesco’s despair at the presence of tyranny in the world. Ultimately, however, both Ionesco’s sadness and Bérenger’s heaviness stem from a loss of internal invincibility. As Ionesco wrote, pure being was a state “over which shadows or nothingness have no hold” (1971, p. 153). The threat of non-being returned to both men only when this experience was lost.
The loss of Bérenger’s buoyancy reflects a tendency in Ionesco’s own life. In contrast to his episodes of physical lightness, the playwright’s body often felt painfully heavy. At such times, his life appeared to have no meaning and he perceived darkness everywhere as though “seeing night mingled with day” (1968, p. 97). Occasionally, however, his awareness became so clear that even a clothesline hanging with wet diapers filled him with delight. “It suddenly seemed to me that those nappies on the washing line had an unexpected beauty . . . [embodying] a brilliant, virgin world” (Bonnefoy, p. 30). As Ionesco grew older, these glorious experiences came less and less frequently. He felt his body growing ever more tired, often becoming “a burden too heavy to bear. . . . I would get up, and after a few minutes, weariness, like a leaden cloak, weighed me down” (1968, p. 96).

Such periods of heaviness frustrated Ionesco all the more because he felt certain clarity and happiness were natural to human life. He saw his episodes of “supernormal wakefulness” as set off by an inner mechanism that could “function in the simplest, most natural way. All one need do is press a button.” He lamented that “it is not always easy to find this button; we fumble about for it in the shadows on one of the walls of an enormous strange house” (1971, p. 157).

In Maharishi’s commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, he similarly uses the analogy of a dark room to represent an unfulfilled state of existence; however, he proposes a “second element” to gain relief from it: “Remove the darkness by introducing light. Take the mind to a field of happiness in order to relieve it of suffering” (p. 90). Unlike Ionesco, who spent his life pining for random moments of illumination, Yogic Flyers possess a technique to routinely experience pure consciousness, to dissolve obstacles that inhibit growth, and to develop coherence, peace, and happiness in their own lives and the world.

**Conclusion**

It is sadly ironic that Ionesco’s plays have become best known as expressions of despair. One of the most famous authorities on Ionesco theater Ronald Hayman notes Ionesco’s achievements paying particular attention to his “striking images of the postwar era”: the “lonely couple” of *The Chairs*, the “expanding corpse” of *Amadée*, the “invisible, chuckling killer” of *The Killer* and the “manic conformism that dehumanizes the
entire population of a town” in *Rhinoceros* (p. 185). What Hayman and others fail to apprehend, however, is that Ionesco considered his experience of joy and lightness to be his “most authentic consciousness” (1964, p. 170). His intermittent glimpses of this unbounded, all-pervading being led him in “Why Do I Write?” to proclaim, “I feel certain I that I was born for eternity, that death does not exist, that all is miraculous. . . . It is to speak of my wonder that I write” (1978, p. 8). The gloom that alternately weighs upon his plays arises, as he often declared, from his characters’ inability to live their human birthright, to maintain the reality of existence at all times. “It is because they have not mapped out a road to follow,” he wrote, “that my characters wander in the dark, the absurd, in incomprehension and anguish” (1978, p. 7).

Because of this darker side of absurdist theater, it has often been called the most fragmented form of literature. However, as seen in the work of Ionesco, even this genre of chaos can contain a vision of harmony and bliss. Like countless others, Ionesco witnessed the source of his own existence and knew, with absolute certainty, that it was life’s ultimate reality. Maharishi Vedic Science, providing a framework for Ionesco’s experiences, allows him to finally be read in an empathetic way. With this knowledge, we can saunter through *A Stroll in the Air* without manipulation, without being forced into seeing it as a cheerless, meaningless fantasy. Maharishi Vedic Science gives us the opportunity to live the freedom Ionesco intuited, to realize the capabilities his plays depict, and to fulfill his timeless vision of human perfection and unbounded joy.

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Most of all, I would like to thank Maharishi Mahesh Yogi for reviving the knowledge of full human potential and providing a simple, universal technique for making this vision a reality.
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This article, “Remembering How To Fly: An Exploration of Eugene Ionesco’s *A Stroll In The Air* as Understood through the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi Program and Yogic Flying,” by Jennie Rothenberg, M.A., reprinted here with permission and revised/updated, was originally published in *Modern Science and Vedic Science*, 9(1) 1999, 103–116.
The Inner Landscape
of Walden Pond

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THE INNER LANDSCAPE OF WALDEN POND

ABSTRACT

A correlation between the principles of intelligence identified in Maharishi Vedic Science and Thoreau’s experiences in Walden offers the reader a deeper understanding of consciousness on both the individual and cosmic level, while revealing the wholeness of Thoreau’s unfurling path of self-discovery.

Nature’s innate qualities of intelligence can be found in a cool, swaying breeze and the touch of a gentle sunrise. These intrinsic qualities of Nature [capitalized in keeping with Thoreau’s usage] blossom in Thoreau’s Walden as the transforming seasons illuminate and correspond to his inner unfolding. The surrounding natural phenomena of Walden Pond serve as a reflection for Thoreau’s development and reveal differing qualities of intelligence that are enlivened throughout these changing seasons. These enlivened qualities give rise to profound insight, offering the reader the opportunity to perceive Thoreau’s inner unfolding while also assisting the reader in following Thoreau’s quest for confronting “the essential facts of life” (Thoreau 59).

In his expansive quest throughout Walden, Thoreau finds unanimity between many of his experiences in Nature and concepts garnered from Vedic literature and philosophy.1 By probing deeper into the text, a more complete understanding is available to the reader when concepts from the Vedic literature are applied to Walden as a whole. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a contemporary exponent of Vedic thought and author of The Science of Being and Art of Living, elucidates many concepts that directly correlate with Thoreau’s inner development and the qualities of intelligence inherent in Nature that he observes. In Maharishi’s lectures on the Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI), he describes specific characteristic qualities of Nature and how each of Nature’s qualities relates to qualities of consciousness. Each season in Walden serves as

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1 Thoreau illuminates various parallels between his growth and Vedic thought throughout the entire text of Walden. For example, Thoreau cites a quotation from the Vedas when speaking of his internal purity, stating, “A command over our passions, and over the external senses of the body, and good acts, are declared by the Ved to be indispensable in mind’s approximation to God” (142). This quote directly brings in Vedic wisdom and applies it to Thoreau's notions of purity. Later in the text, Thoreau exclaims, “In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta . . .” (193). The Bhagavad Gita, a piece of Vedic literature, later expounded upon by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, undoubtedly offered Thoreau greater insight into his experiences at Walden Pond.
a direct reflection of Thoreau’s inner journey and may be more deeply understood when viewed beside the prominent aspects of consciousness or intelligences as outlined by Maharishi in SCI. By applying Maharishi’s perspectives to Thoreau’s deep experiences in *Walden*, the reader gains an understanding of consciousness on both the individual and cosmic level, while also perceiving the wholeness of Thoreau’s unfurling path of self-discovery.

**Summer: Establishing and Expanding**

As the rays from the summer sun percolate the woods in *Walden*, the establishing and expanding qualities of Nature’s innate intelligence become pronounced. These qualities of consciousness result in a sensuous, rich, and active summer experience for Thoreau. It is a season which engages both the senses and the physical body, marking a beginning in Thoreau’s development. In the warm months of his initial arrival, inhabiting his self-created cabin on July 4, 1845, Thoreau establishes his relationship to Walden Pond and the bounty of the phenomenal world. The summer months reveal an expansive growing quality and a deep inner experience of connection to Nature.

One of Thoreau’s most prominent and telling experiences during the season of summer is the cultivation of his bean field. As one probes deeper into the text, the totality of Thoreau’s experience with the beans can be perceived in many layers. The cultivation of the beans serves as a means of establishing a rooted connection with Nature as well as the cultivation of Thoreau’s inner unfolding. He states that the beans “attached me to the earth, so I got strength like Antaeus” (100). Here Thoreau is cultivating the beans not only in a literal sense, but establishing his interconnectedness with Nature. In these ripe moments of summer, Thoreau’s understanding of his relationship to Nature begins to expand. He perceives himself as part of Nature and notes how “all the elements are unusually congenial” to him (84). The sense of oneness he feels becomes obvious as he questions, “Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?”

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2 Maharishi outlines forty prominent qualities of consciousness, of which the quality of “Establishing and Expanding” is a part. Each section of this paper includes discussion of differing corresponding qualities of consciousness with Thoreau’s experience. Refer to the “40 Aspects of Veda and Vedic Literature” chart found in Appendix B to see a listing of these 40 aspects of consciousness.
This quotation illustrates an infusing quality between Nature and Man. In recognizing the intelligence of nature within oneself, an indisputable unity is created. Clearly, Thoreau feels this oneness with the surroundings around Walden Pond. By continuing cultivation of the bean field, Thoreau continues to cultivate his connection to nature.

This expansive sensation of unity with nature extends into other layers that may be seen in correlation with the bean field. In *Walden*, Thoreau expresses his deep sincerity to “know beans” (104). He initially, however, questions why he is raising them—as they are not necessary to sustain him. He questions, “Heaven only knows” why he is cultivating them, which, by his language, opens the door to an element of spiritual significance (100). This spiritual connection suggests that Thoreau’s inner journey of self discovery is synonymous with the nurturing of the beans. He has come to Walden Pond to cultivate himself, to delve and unfold within. The cultivation of beans is a cultivation of the self, a digging beneath the surface of life. It is this digging, this pure process of cultivation that appeals to Thoreau. He conveys little interest in the beans themselves, stating, “[I]t was no longer beans that I hoed, nor that I hoed beans” (103). Instead, the mental exercise of hoeing the beans holds the significance. Thoreau uses cultivation as a means of meditation and withdrawing the mind to silence. Critic Sherman Paul comments that Thoreau labored in his bean field in order to observe his “empirical self” and explains that Thoreau’s “reward of activity, the result of this drama of selves, was self-reflection, insight” (Myerson 63). This constant activity of hoeing the beans assists in many of Thoreau’s insights, giving him a chance to perceive himself and Nature in a more holistic and expansive context.

Other experiences also promote a sense of solitude and silence within Thoreau. He tells the reader, “I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a revery, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang …” (72). This peaceful reverie also demonstrates Thoreau’s meditative experience in the comfortable warmth of summer. These periods of contemplation and surrender at Walden Pond continue to establish Thoreau’s connection with nature, offering him (and the reader) a chance to be one with each passing moment. He exclaims, “God himself culminates in the present moment” (63). Now Thoreau has expanded his connection with
Nature to recognizing this attribute of God. In *The Orient in Transcendentalism*, Arthur Christy explains, “Thoreau considered his main profession to be always on the alert to find God in Nature” (156). The connection between Man, God, and Nature are understandings that aid Thoreau’s inner development and the dawning of a renewed sunrise in his experience at Walden Pond.

The emergence of morning is a prominent image during the summer season in Walden. Thoreau describes morning as a time of renewal, of new beginnings—when the finest qualities of Nature are alive. Morning is when nature thrives and “all memorable events transpire” (58). The season of summer correlates with this morning splendor, a journey of renewal and “learning to reawaken” to the beauty of life (59). Thoreau relates his sentiments towards the brilliance of morning to knowledge presented in the Vedas.³ He directly quotes the Vedas in his text, stating, “All intelligences awake with the morning” (58). The interjection of this Vedic concept creates a broader understanding for Thoreau and aids with establishing a steady foundation for his beliefs.

Further insight can be gained from observing the parallels between Vedic thought and Thoreau’s experience in the sunny rays of summer. In Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s Science of Creative Intelligence series, the sage explains the significance of observations in Nature and their impact upon the individual.⁴ This observation helps one to perceive one’s place not only in Nature but amidst the entire creation. In summation Maharishi explains, “[O]ur observation of the growth and order in the phenomenal world leads us to postulate the existence of intelligence functioning at every level of creation.” In Walden, Thoreau is absorbed in Nature—he himself being a true extension of the pines and hickories. With his constant mode of observation, Thoreau is bringing awareness to the inner life within himself, while realizing the supreme power of the Nature that surrounds him. By integrating his intellectual understanding and his personal experience, Thoreau is uncovering layers of his inner being. Maharishi illuminates how this combination of

³ Before Thoreau introduces the Vedic correlation between the morning and the Vedas he quotes, “All memorable events, I should say, transpire in the morning time and in a morning atmosphere” (58). He then relates this idea of morning to Vedic knowledge—complementing his understanding in the true significance of morning.
⁴ Found in Lecture Four of the series, “Knowledge of Creative Intelligence through Personal Experience.”
both personal experience and intellectual understanding help one verify that Creative Intelligence, the infinite source of life, exists.\(^5\) Thoreau's unity of both his contemplative experiences and his intellectual ideas about creation coalesce to form a newly established foundation and an expansive quality of mind. The establishing and expansive qualities of nature's innate intelligence become pronounced, which is seen as Thoreau's active endeavors under the summer sun result in new beginnings and blossoming inner development.

**Fall: Synthesizing**

Thoreau's quest continues as leaves begin to trickle from the trees, transforming the landscape into the deep shades of autumn. The fall season reflects a synthesizing quality of consciousness in nature, expressing a time of cultivation, gathering, and collecting for Thoreau's inner unfolding. In addition to observing the changing landscapes of the lake, Thoreau spends time fishing at Walden, “a-graping [meaning to pick grapes] to the river meadows” and preparing for the oncoming winter (153).

Perhaps the most integral component to Thoreau's synthesizing experience of fall is Walden Pond itself. The pond not only holds importance for the fall season but also provides a vivid source of imagery and symbolic mode for Thoreau's inner transformation throughout the entire seasonal cycle. The pond is a direct expression of the divine in life, a source of purity that Thoreau finds superior to any other phenomena in Walden. He describes Walden Pond as “a mirror which no stone can crack . . . a mirror which all impurity presented to it sinks” (123.) This pure quality of the lake may be directly correlated to Thoreau's inner being—a pure source of reality, of experience—whereby all life expresses itself. Joseph McElrath explains the pond as an expression of divinity in two ways: “as the medium of the divine expression and as the metaphor which expresses the divinity of the narrator's self” (McElrath 48). The lake symbolically portrays Thoreau's inner development throughout the course of Walden, illuminating his unfolding as

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\(^5\) Maharishi also describes “Creative Intelligence” as integrative, progressive, discriminative, orderly, self-sufficient, holistic, and other innumerable qualities that unify creation. He explains that the pure field of Creative Intelligence is the home of all qualities in Nature. This list of qualities is presented in Lecture 5 of the Science of Creative Intelligence video-taped series titled, “The Qualities of Creative Intelligence.”
the seasons progress. Thoreau states that Walden Pond “is the earth’s eye: looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature” (121).

Walden Pond holds special significance in the fall, as the trees reflect on the still surface and Thoreau probes the surface with his fishing rod. He observes that the “maples turned scarlet across the pond” and further denotes that “gradually from week to week the character of each tree came out” (155). This change of character in the trees undoubtedly represents a change occurring within Thoreau—truly a notable sense of allowing one’s true character to be expressed. This diving within is also metaphorically displayed as Thoreau goes fishing. With the pond serving as a symbol of purity and his inner being, Thoreau’s activity in fishing relates to this probing and penetrating quality beyond the surface of himself. Joseph Allen Boone explains, “For the adult Thoreau, fishing must evolve into a meditative exercise to be meaningful: his fishing line becomes for him an instrument as vital as his spade, shovel, or knife in linking him to the interior reality of things” (Myerson 170). Thoreau is synthesizing his inner development and just beginning to move past the layers of his external character, seeing into the ultimate reality at the root of both Nature and himself.

With the expansion of this inner understanding, Thoreau begins to first inhabit his cabin in the cooling temperatures of fall. When looking deeper into the text of Walden, one can discern the link between the cabin itself and Thoreau’s physical body. The structure of the house is the objective and experiential aspects of Thoreau. Joan Burbick states that Thoreau’s home “reinforces a split between matter and spirit” (64). The cabin emphasizes the external element of life, a structure for what lies within. Apart from this frame, Thoreau explains that the most “vital part of the house” is the chimney (156). He defines it further saying, “The chimney is to some extent an independent structure, standing on the ground and rising through the house to the heavens; even after the house is burned it [the chimney] still stands sometimes, and its importance and independence are apparent” (156). While the house is the material structuring element, the chimney denotes the internal driving force, or “vital heat” (8). The integral element of the vital heat correlates to the source of one’s inner being and the ultimate reality that Thoreau so actively contemplates. The chimney is spirit, a structure reach-
ing up towards the heavens—resuming its place even among burning flames—it stands permanent and eternal. By looking at the body as matter and the chimney as spark or spirit, he defines a clearer picture of the interrelationship between his external and internal processes.

In observing these symbolic elements, we see the synthesizing quality of fall becomes apparent in Thoreau’s efforts to integrate and own the knowledge he has gained. His internal development is reflected in both the observations of the pond and the representation of the cabin as matter and spirit. On a more fundamental level, he seems to be questioning the nature of his inner being. In Henry David Thoreau: A Critical Study, Mark Van Doren refers to this “inner being,” as “Reality.” He states, “Thoreau’s whole life was a search for the embodied Reality” (121). Regardless of which word is used, Thoreau is clearly searching for understanding of an underlying element or foundation for his experiences in Walden.

The reader’s understanding of Thoreau’s contemplation can be deepened once again by looking at the parallels between Thoreau’s experience and Maharishi’s profound knowledge about the essence of inner being. In the Science of Being and Art of Living, Maharishi explains, “All the forms and phenomena and ever-changing states of life in the world have their basis in that eternal life of omnipresent Being” (8). Thoreau brings attention to his quest in understanding this level of Being as described by Maharishi, mentioning Walden Pond as a means of measuring the depths of one’s nature, or Being. Along this line, Thoreau comments on the purity of the pond, which is also mirrored by Maharishi’s explanation of the purity of Being. Maharishi states that Being “has its pure and full status in the transcendent . . . it is, it was, it will be, in the status of its own purity” (8). This parallel between Maharishi and Thoreau may also be extended to Thoreau’s separation of matter and spirit. Maharishi simply explains that “Being lies beyond all relative existence” (8). This perception of Being helps to divide matter, the cabin, as separate from the inner Being, or the chimney, while accepting that both parts of the structure are part of the same underlying reality. In identifying this separation, it is clear that Thoreau was using

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6 “Being” is used with a capitalized “B” to denote its significance as an eternal, infinite, and underlying source of nature. This is the format used in Maharishi’s text, Science of Being and Art of Living.
symbolic themes to illustrate a connection between these two dimensions of his existence. By applying Maharishi’s deep understanding of Being to Thoreau’s synthesizing of experiences and insights, we gain a broader understanding of the inner landscape of fall.

**Winter: Self-Referral**

Within the gray-white layers of winter snow, lie new layers of thinking and new layers of Being. The winter brings forth a reflective quality to the changing seasons, evident as Thoreau moves inward and traces new inner developments. The winter exudes an undeniable element of loneliness where all life is covered and slumbers under the snow. Thoreau spends a great deal of time alone in his cabin, observing his fire and thoughts and experiencing suspended silence. The self-referral quality of nature’s innate intelligence becomes pronounced in the solitude of winter—as Thoreau becomes completely dependent on himself for spiritual stimulation. No life but the fire within exists to propel him through the cold nights of snowy moonlight.

Safely tucked inside his self-created cabin, Thoreau’s main necessity is to maintain vital heat—the source of warmth and inspiration: “I withdrew yet further into my shell, and endeavored to keep a bright fire both within my house and within my breast” (160). The maintenance of this fire is imperative to Thoreau’s survival throughout the winter. This fire may be perceived for its surface value and may also be acknowledged as the fire fueling his spiritual growth and connection to himself, to nature, and to God. McElrath refers to the fire as a source of inspiration and explains that “a spiritually strong self is needed to preserve the fire” (61). Preserving this inner flame is similar to creating a perpetual summer “in the midst of winter” for Thoreau (164). With this summer symbolism, the permanent state of light and internal fire sustain the spiritual flame within. In winter, Thoreau assures the reader that his fire remains strong: “It was I and Fire that lived there” (163). With this statement, we know that his flame has not wavered, despite the coarse qualities of winter. He describes how one may “always see a face in the fire,” and the onlooker “purifies his thoughts” when gazing into it (164). Here, Thoreau has given the reader a clear idea of inner growth. He has spent cold nights in icy contemplation and is cultivating his inner qualities by being self-referral. His solitude increases as
he has fewer visitors, and stillness itself is conveyed as the usually lively hooting of the owl becomes “hushed” (165).

The transformation occurring in Walden Pond itself is also unmistakably significant during the course of the winter. Like Thoreau himself, Walden “closes its eyelids and becomes dormant for three months or more” (182). During winter, Thoreau has retreated to spend time on his inner development. He also explains that there are “new views” from the surface of the “familiar landscape” around Walden Pond (175). These new views are a result of the cultivation of Thoreau's experiences at Walden thus far. With his external, active experiences, and his internal growth, he has begun to perceive the world around him with a fresh and transformed perception. This perception becomes notable when Thoreau explains that “ice is an interesting subject for contemplation” (192). The ice, symbolic of Thoreau's inner being, has enveloped the pond. His contemplations on the nature of the ice and the purity residing below the frozen surface further develops his “fire” within. It serves as the impetus for the moment of truth—when Thoreau breaks through the icy surface of Walden and surveys the depth.

As Thoreau serenely breaks through to the bottom of Walden Pond, a sense of release and exhilaration fill the text. When he witnesses the small pickerel at the bottom of the pond, he remarks, “Ah! The pickerel of Walden . . . they possess a quite dazzling and transcendent beauty... they are Walden all over and through” (183). The pickerel are a mirror image of Walden Pond itself. Within these fish are all the elements of the pond highlighting the breaking of the surface layer. Thoreau's desire to survey the bottom of the pond parallels his craving to understand the depths of his own nature. As Thoreau surveys the bottom of what has been called the bottomless pond, he discovers a bottom and finds a precise measurement—the greatest depth being at one hundred and two feet. Thoreau has penetrated to the depths of his being, breaking through the buried life of the soul and allowing truth to be seen. Boone states, “Looking into Walden, he sees into the spirit that animates all life as he simultaneously gains insight into himself” (Myerson 171). The pond serves as a direct reflection of Thoreau's changing seasons—the winter giving him the opportunity to delve into the depths of his inner unfolding. Critic Sherman Paul supports this view, stating, “Walden was just an account of Thoreau's moral topography . . . the search for the
bottom was conscious exploration” (Myerson 62). The divine quality of this conscious exploration is conveyed in Thoreau’s statement about the water of Walden, “The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges” (193). This reference to the Ganges affirms Thoreau’s connection to the mystical land of the Vedas.

Thoreau has brought in Vedic wisdom once again to establish deeper connections in Walden. In penetrating the ice and reaching to the depths of Walden Pond, Thoreau opens a new gate of awareness and development within. By contacting a deeper level of himself, he experiences what Maharishi refers to as the totality of life—which is composed of three unifying features of life. Maharishi explains that these three aspects make up the life of each and every human being. He states, “Life in its full scope has three aspects, the objective aspect, the subjective aspect, and the transcendental aspect” (Maharishi 47). As Thoreau contacts this deeper level of his inner being, he is gaining a more holistic and total experience of life. Maharishi goes on to explain that “The basis of life is of transcendental nature. It is the field of the essential constituent of life” (Maharishi 47). Walden Pond itself is the representation of this transcendental aspect of life. The pond is infinite being, serving as the reflection of Thoreau’s inner landscape while the seasons unfold. According to Maharishi’s Vedic wisdom, Thoreau has now experienced life with greater wholeness. The snow of winter brings Thoreau a unity of the seasons and unfolds with a more reflective, self-referral quality that brings him closer to the inner reality he contemplates.

**Spring: Offering and Creating**
The glorious arrival of springtime hums with renewal and resounds with new beginnings. Thoreau exclaims that “the coming of spring is like the creation of Cosmos out of Chaos and the realization of the Golden Age” (203). The transformation of spring has an underlying offering quality of nature’s intelligence. This season of revitalization offers Thoreau a chance to be reborn and a chance to look upon the world with revitalized eyes. Spring is a time for creating a new vision of life with no limitation while symbolically expressing the inner developing landscape within Thoreau.

The revitalization of spring is clearly demonstrated in the natural phenomena surrounding Walden Pond. Thoreau’s joyous rebirth is
reflected in the animals, the trees, the landscape, and most notably, the booming pond. In *Thoreau's Alternative History*, Joan Burbick states that spring “is the product of a primary idea that in itself reveals the promise of growth and redemption” (76). This idea of growth is mirrored in Nature as the solid ice of Walden winter begins to soften and dissolve. Thoreau personifies this melting by exclaiming, “[I]t stretched itself and yawned like a waking man with a gradually increasing tumult” (195). The personification of the lake creates a more cohesive link between the changing lake and the changing nature of Thoreau. As the water becomes visible below, a sentiment of perpetual youth and regeneration surges through Thoreau’s observations of Nature. This joyful feeling is expressed as follows: “It is glorious to behold this ribbon of water sparkling in the sun, the bare face of the pond full of glee and youth . . . Walden was dead and is alive again” (201). This resounding renewal of spirit and matter is a central theme in this unfolding of spring. Walter Harding states, “It is a major thesis of *Walden* that the time has come for a spiritual rebirth—a renewal and rededication of our lives to higher things” (Myerson 94).

These higher elements of living are reflected vividly in the season of spring. Thoreau uses the symbol of light to convey a new sense of awakening and revival. He describes how suddenly “an influx of light filled my house…where yesterday was cold gray ice there lay the transparent pond already calm” (201). The house, directly correlated to Thoreau’s physical body, is now diffused with light. The cold, rough quality of winter has been surpassed, and the calm of the pond, his being, is allowed to express itself in contentment. Thoreau goes on to explain the potency of this light, describing how “the river valley and the woods were bathed in so pure and bright a light as would have waked the dead” (205). Within Nature the light of Thoreau’s eternal being is reflected, exuding a quality of light that contains the purity of Walden Pond and maintains the spiritual fire. It is this light which lends itself to the rebirth of spring within Thoreau, filling in the crevices of darkness within him. Spring offers this gift of illumination and an opportunity to experience the fullness of being.

This darkness is also overcome by the dawning of a new sunrise. The light of morning, of awakening, brings insight into the nature of inner being and understanding of life. Thoreau explains, “A return to
goodness produced each day in the tranquil and beneficent breath of morning, one approaches a little the primitive nature of man, as the sprouts of the forest which has been felled” (204). Here, this “primitive nature of man” is an individual at the finest level of being. Thoreau is explaining that as one “returns to goodness”—to this inner state of purity and fulfillment—one may resurrect one’s “forest which has been felled.” The “breath of morning” is the light, the fire, and the means for contacting this infinite level underlying all of nature and all of man. The light creates newfound inner illumination and also forms foundational principles for Thoreau’s life. With a new inner dawning, Thoreau has a revived conception of the universe that lends itself to new ideas about life and its purpose. He states, “We should be blessed if we lived in the present always . . . In a pleasant spring morning all men's sins are forgotten…We loiter in winter when it is already spring” (203). Clearly, Thoreau is receiving a clearer picture of what it really means to be alive and what each day and passing experience has to offer.

Ancient Vedic wisdom easily extrapolates on the purpose or fundamental significance of the unfolding path in life. Maharishi’s knowledge lends itself to many perceptions on the underlying essence of life. He approaches life from the level of Being (as previously discussed) and this parallel creates a cohesive understanding of Thoreau’s new foundation of life. When posed with the question, “What is life?” Maharishi answers, “It is divine. It is the stream of eternal Being, a flow of existence, of intelligence, of creativity, of purity, and of bliss” (Maharishi 45). Thoreau mentions that the depths of one’s nature may be measured in Walden Pond, the essential and prominent image for Thoreau’s inner being. The transforming pond is this “stream of eternal Being” that Maharishi describes, and which serves as a thread between this contemporary Vedic sage and Thoreau. Maharishi emphasizes that the underlying nature of life is pure Being, which exists in a state of total unity. This unity encompasses the individual and nature and the individual and God. Maharishi expands on this idea, stating “Man’s life is meant to be a bridge of abundance between divine intelligence and the whole creation” (49). This perspective sheds lights upon Thoreau’s entire quest in *Walden*. Thoreau is attempting to bridge this gap, to delve into the depths of his Being and create a true unity between himself and creation. Spring has offered this resurgence in
the awareness of inner Being and its infinite existence in the universe. The singing sparrows of spring remind Thoreau that the world is constantly transforming and that he holds the power of creation within himself. The season of spring reveals a holistic quality—creating cohesion among all the seasons. Spring reinforces the experience of creating from the inner level of being, whereby all else unfolds and resides.

Conclusion: The Seasons Coalesce

In tracing the observations of natural phenomena and experiences in Thoreau’s *Walden*, the inextricable link between the transforming seasons and the inner development of Thoreau becomes clearly perceptible. Each season embodies a specific quality of Nature’s innate intelligence, which has been defined by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Maharishi’s commentary serves as an important bridge in expanding and creating a broader understanding of Thoreau’s inner and outer experiences at Walden Pond. Thoreau’s inner development steadily unfolds through the *Establishing and Expanding* nature of summer, into the somber colors of the *Synthesizing* fall, developing into the powerful nights of a *Self-Referral* winter, and bursting into the *Offering and Creating* aspects of spring. He ends *Walden* with inspiration on this continuing path of self-discovery when he exclaims, “There is more day to dawn” (216). As Thoreau prospers along his enlightened path, his inner seasons paint landscapes with the bright, brilliant hues of his inner Being.

Appendix A

Survey of Criticism

The potency and genius of Thoreau’s *Walden* is generally indisputable, yet differing opinions exist regarding attributes of the text itself. Some of these analyses correlate easily while others illustrate different modes of criticism and interpretation.

Critics Matthiessen and Van Doren both agree upon Thoreau’s unique standing as a transcendentalist. Van Doren emphasizes that Thoreau “applied what others preached” and embodied a passion for real experiential knowledge. Thoreau’s unmistakable sense of humor in *Walden* also sets him apart from his fellow transcendentalists—an

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7 In Van Doren’s text, *Henry David Thoreau: A Critical Study*, he states, “Emerson stands and guesses, Thoreau goes and finds.” p. 72
aspect noted by critics Harding and Van Doren but not acknowledged by the harsh columnist of Thoreau’s time, James Russell Lowell.  

One of the most prominent subjects of criticism for *Walden* lies in the structural element of the piece. Some critics claim (Lowell specifically) that the text is arranged on a purely topical basis, having no significant patterning of events. The broader view, however, held particularly by critics Matthiessen, Van Doren, and modern critic, Lauriat Lane Jr., is that Thoreau carefully crafted *Walden* with a formal and effective structural arrangement. This formal structure, it is agreed, lends itself to the cyclical nature and to the carefully crafted dramatic elements of the piece. Matthiessen states that, “The construction of the book involved deliberate rearrangement of material,” an opinion expanded by Lauriat Lane Jr, who describes *Walden* as having both “absolute form” and “narrative movement” (Matthiessen 170, Myerson 70).

Underlying structural form is the question of Thoreau’s intention for his visitation to Walden Pond. Many critics agree that *Walden* contains a foundational spiritual element that is inherent to the piece as a whole. Van Doren and Sherman Paul concur that Thoreau was illustrating an interest in the supreme truth, to fuse himself with the rhythms of Nature. Sherman Paul specifically notes that *Walden* “follows the cycle of a developing consciousness,” making a distinct correlation between each season and Thoreau’s inner development (Myerson 60). Critic Walter Harding also recognizes this underlying spirituality within the text, emphasizing Walden’s overall thematic element of rebirth and renewal. Thoreau’s experiences at Walden Pond resulted in the masterpiece known today, a masterpiece that is embraced by critics old and new.

**Appendix B**

**Forty Aspects of Intelligence**

Appendix B, which follows, lists the forty aspects of intelligence as set forth in Professor Tony Nader’s *Human Physiology—Expression of the Veda and Vedic Literature*. The Netherlands: Maharishi Vedic University, 2000.

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8 James Russell Lowell, a Harvard graduate and professor, was an American critic working during the same time as Thoreau. He is noted as being especially judgmental and harsh towards Thoreau and his writings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rishi</th>
<th>Devatā</th>
<th>Chhandas</th>
<th>Vedas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sāma Veda</td>
<td>Flowing Wakefulness</td>
<td>Yajur-Veda Offering and Creating</td>
<td>Yajur-Veda Offering and Creating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td>Expressing</td>
<td>Kalp Transforming</td>
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<td>Jyotish</td>
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<td>Chhand Measuring and Quantifying</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyāya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vaiśeshik</td>
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<td>Karma Mimāṃsā Analyzing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gandharva Veda</td>
<td>Integrating and Harmonizing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kāshyap Samhitā</td>
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<td>Bhel Samhita Differentiating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charak Samhitā</td>
<td>Balancing—Holding together and supporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhāva-Prakāś Samhitā</td>
<td>Enlightening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upanishad</td>
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<td>Sūta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rk Veda</td>
<td>All-Pervading Wholeness</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sāma Veda</td>
<td>(Pushpa Sūtram) Unmanifesting the Parts but Manifesting the Whole</td>
<td>Krishnā-Yajur-Veda (Tāttirīya) Omnipresent</td>
<td>Atharva Veda (Chaturadhiyāyī) Dissolving</td>
</tr>
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Works Cited


Part V

Heaven on Earth
Chapter 16: Literature

This section is an edited, abridged version of Chapter 16 on literature from the book *Heaven on Earth*
Literature

Excerpt from *Heaven on Earth*

Literature Faculty
of Maharishi University of Management

Under the Direction of
Rhoda Orme-Johnson
ABSTRACT

[Literature can turn any subject matter] into a program or a process of unfolding the full potential of life, developing that pure consciousness, which is a field of all possibilities, the home of all the laws of nature, which is the home of all knowledge, the source of all expressions and all speech. Literature is a very great training in life for living the Absolute. It is a training in every phase of living to give expression to the Absolute in every phase of activity, in every impulse of speech, in every mode of the mind. Literature is a very, very great field for comprehending evolutionary processes on the intellectual level and experiencing them on the level of consciousness. [1] —Maharishi

Introduction

Literature has traditionally been studied in order to provide students with the most excellent models of their language, and thereby to increase their ability to use that language effectively. Traditionally, it has been hoped that the study of literature would delight, instruct, and humanize readers by improving the ability to read, think, and feel; it would form its audience into more responsible and compassionate citizens of the world. Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology provide the means whereby individuals may be freed from the stress that prevents them from fully understanding, appreciating, and learning from the great examples of language and literature. With expanded and flexible consciousness and refined emotions, they will at last be fully able to enjoy and benefit from the meaning and techniques of literature. The study of literature will finally become a means to humanize and evolve its readers.

The field of literary studies is currently experiencing enormous change. Traditional approaches to the study of literature have been expanded by new methods of understanding the language we use and its relation to literary works. Literary theorists are employing the discoveries of linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy to refine their study of writing and are now exploring the ways literature affects readers and society. In their discussions of the nature and purpose of writing, reading, and studying literature, literary theorists have not been able to resolve fundamental questions about language, writers,
readers, or social institutions. Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology adds the missing dimension of consciousness to these discussions, providing both the understanding and, more importantly, the direct experience of the transcendental basis of language, literature, the writing and reading processes, and the structure and dynamics of history and society.

This article on literature surveys the traditional purpose and approach to literature. It then gives a brief overview of the current debate over critical theories and methodologies. The article goes on to discuss the unified field of intelligence in nature and shows how all aspects of literature—its creation, effect, and study—arise sequentially from pure consciousness, the unified field of intelligence in nature. The article continues by describing how Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology brings fulfillment to the field of literature, clarifying issues raised earlier about the purpose, effects, and evaluation of literary works. Part Four also contains the Ṛcīko Akshare Chart for Literature, illustrating how Maharishi’s understanding of this verse from the Ṛk Veda allows one to perceive the most profound structure of any area of knowledge, in this case, the current theories and approaches to literary works. Finally, the article describes the creation of ideal readers and writers through Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology, as indicated by scientific research showing increased intelligence, creativity, self-sufficiency, and numerous other aspects of the learning and maturation processes in practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation technique.

Taken together, knowledge of consciousness from its source in the unified field of intelligence in nature to its expression in literary works allows one to formulate old and new principles of literature and also to present a new unified theory of literature—Maharishi’s Absolute Theory of Literature.
Literature: Fundamental Purpose and Approach
Literature—The Language of Consciousness

Literature expresses and affects consciousness.

The impulse to celebrate life, to express the wholeness of life, and to communicate one’s joy to others comes out spontaneously in speech and writing. Writing that is comprehensive, purposeful, and beautiful deserves the name of literature. Literature is preserved by its culture for as long as it charms each generation with its wisdom and music and inspires its readers to grow towards more fulfilled levels of life, to evolve to higher states of consciousness. Most writers hope to express in their works the deeper significance and purposefulness of life, the real value of life, which Maharishi defines as absolute bliss consciousness. Works written from this level refine their readers’ emotions, intellect, and perception, and even affect the whole environment.

Through the study of literature students learn language skills and critical thinking.

From story-telling to song, from fiction to film, cultures enjoy modes of narrative, drama, and poetry, whether oral or written, and use them in their educational system to develop the values and to culture the speech and writing of their youth. Through the study of orderly, powerful, and beautiful models of writing, students improve their ability to write and speak their language. By studying various modes of discourse, they also learn to analyze the structures and intents of each and to write in various modes themselves. And finally, through discussion and writing, students sharpen skills of critical thinking and analysis, of close reading and discrimination, skills that will serve them in other fields of study and in their professional lives.

Literary study is traditionally organized by historical period or movement.

Through the study of literature, students can experience the intellectual history of their nation and world. Literary study is traditionally organized by centuries or major periods that define a particular era of common concerns and world views. By studying the literature of a par-
ticular period, students come to appreciate the philosophical, political, religious, and ethical principles guiding the collective consciousness of that time and to evaluate its thought and writing in terms of their own values. By studying literature of different cultures, students understand how the laws of nature in each culture structure its literature as well as its society. They appreciate both the diversity of the world’s cultures and the unity of their own vision of life. Consequently, literary studies are frequently organized according to national, ethnic, and time period classifications.

**Literature is also approached in terms of literary forms or genres.**

Since Aristotle, literature has also been approached in terms of genres or literary forms and the conventions that structure each. In his *Poetics* Aristotle describes the major forms of his time, distinguishing them by the mediums through which they imitate human life (e.g., rhythm, movement, language); by the objects they choose to represent (e.g., the types of characters being described, whether better than, worse than, or the same as real individuals); and by their manner, that is, whether they present their material through narration, as in epic poetry, or through the enactment of deeds without a narrator, as in tragedy and comedy. Literary forms have multiplied over time and now are broadly divided into narrative, drama, lyric poetry, and non-fiction, and each broad classification has many subdivisions. Narrative, for example, includes such subtypes as novel, story, romance, science fiction, and myth. The various literary forms reflect basic human impulses to narrate some event, to act something out with gesture and intonation, to express personal feelings in song, and to describe ideas or factual events.

**Literary conventions reflect and express the laws of nature.**

Since literary forms have particular conventions, their writers may either follow or imaginatively play with these conventions, allowing readers to enjoy and evaluate a work according to how it satisfies or surprises their expectations. Literary conventions may not be arbitrary, however. They may be seen to reflect the laws of nature. Through their conventions, literary forms offer readers a wide variety of experiences.
Literary pieces stand before us as a mirror of our own consciousness—they show us the value of our speech, that is, how much refinement of emotions can be generated through what we say and write, as compared to some of the very inspiring models of speech found in literature. [2]—Maharishi

Narrative, for example, fundamentally reflects the evolution of consciousness; it allows its readers to experience the laws of nature that guide life, from simple cause and effect to the workings of the mind.

**Meaning, rhythm, and sound lead the awareness to more holistic levels of the mind.**

Poetry, through its figurative language, rhythm, and harmony of sounds, can suggest levels of meaning that transcend the literal sense of the words, taking readers to subtler, more holistic levels of the mind and eliciting responses from deep within their consciousness. In fact, Maharishi notes, one distinguishing feature of poetry is its ability to swing its readers’ consciousness from concrete to abstract values through the use of contrasting meanings, sounds, and rhythms occurring in very compact structures [1]. Maharishi observes that “all three things come together when consciousness is trained to flow in all these three values, and then that flow is the flow of evolution . . . . When all these beautiful qualities are found together, they inspire every phase of speech, every phase of thinking, every phase of intellect, every phase of perception, every phase of activity” [2].

**Literature is approached through literary and critical theories.**

Most recently, literature is primarily approached not in terms of literary genres, but rather through a wide variety of literary and critical theories. Each literary theory defines the creation, study, and evaluation of literature differently, yet each is attempting to understand the role of literature in human life, language, and society and to investigate how literature may be best studied in an educational system.
Literature affects consciousness, society, and the environment. Literature that is worth reading and studying never merely entertains or simply reflects the surface details of reality—it integrates its readers’ consciousness. “Great” literature, Maharishi says, allows its readers to connect the superficial level of sense experience with the transcendent Self within; “it brings the Self, the unmanifest Self, pure consciousness, unbounded awareness, in flow” with it [1]. Thus it provides their intellect, emotions, and the very language they use. Literature can thereby indirectly affect society and the environment, contributing to the creation of Heaven on Earth (Please see Part Five).

Studying the Autonomous Text: New Criticism to Post-Structuralism

Literature was traditionally believed to delight, instruct, and humanize the reader. Until recently, literature was studied and taught with the belief that “great” works of literature by “great” authors would delight, instruct, and humanize their readers. As readers probed into the meaning and mechanics of a work, they would come to appreciate how an author structured his or her work to provide knowledge of life and nature that was knowable and worth knowing. The Romantic movement in the nineteenth century, which viewed literature as the expression of the emotions and imagination of a great man or woman, added a strong personal dimension to the reading and study of literature.

Formalism or New Criticism has recently been challenged by new developments in literary and critical theory. In response to critical approaches that seemed to be too impressionistic or overly concerned with biography and background, the American New Critics of the 1930s focused on the text itself, eschewing reference to any biographical or contextual implications. Critics such as T. S. Eliot and John Crowe Ransom emphasized the creative interplay between sense and poetic form that leads a poem into unexpected meanings, thus carrying it well beyond the author’s original, and there-
fore irrelevant intentions. Formalism, or the study of literature that centers on the form of the autonomous text, dominated American criticism until challenged recently by several major lines of development in modern critical theories, one stemming from linguistics (or semiotics), which is discussed below, and various other approaches which emphasize the reader or the work’s context. Old assumptions were questioned and a new discussion of fundamental issues occupied the critical arena: the definition and evaluation of literature; the revising and restructuring of the canon, or the collection of “great” works read and studied in schools and colleges; and, perhaps most importantly, the purpose and effect of the study of literature on the reader and society.

**Linguistic research has influenced the study of literary language and forms.**

Linguists observed that modern languages often use different words to refer to the same object or concept, and they conclude that the connection between a word and its object is arbitrary, i.e., without a transcendental basis. They also observe that language, in a sense, “speaks the speaker,” and not the reverse: our perception and understanding of the world is constrained by the language we speak. New words enable us to see aspects of reality we previously failed to notice. Also, the structure of language determines meaning, not words alone. For example, if the order or context of words is changed, meaning will differ.

**Structuralism identifies the structures underlying language.**

Structuralism, which arose from these linguistic discoveries, studies the structures underlying languages and literary forms rather than the meaning of individual texts. Structuralists observe that language contains within it assumptions and world views that may or may not be related to fact. For example, most languages are structured with a split between subject and object. Does this mean that object and subject are forever separate and distinct? Can we hold any other view when we speak a language so structured? One offshoot of structuralism, drawing also upon the findings of anthropology and psychology, is archetypal criticism, which examines the underlying patterns in myth and literature as reflections of the deepest structures of consciousness and reality.
Deconstruction argues for an interacting play of texts rather than one privileged meaning.

Structuralism and archetypal criticism were displaced by deconstruction, founded by Jacques Derrida and developed by Paul de Man and others. Deconstruction argues that the apparently consistent surface meaning of a text must be subverted and undermined until it can be shown to break down and contradict itself, even to the point of denying the values it professes. Since words have no transcendental basis, meaning will always be indeterminate. The absence of a “transcendental signified” extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely [3, p. 280]. That is, readers don’t invent meanings—meaning is always determined by the context of words, and that context is boundless. Therefore, some deconstructionists define the reading of literature as the interacting play of texts, leading to an infinite number of readings.

Some critics view deconstructivism as being “vacuous in theory and counterproductive in practice” [4, p. 277]. As a program of intellectual subversion, it neither contributes to knowledge nor leads to the betterment of society; it rather denies that such a goal is either relevant or attainable. If we are bound by the contradictory structures within our languages and texts, how can we ever “create” anything new? Deconstructivist theory describes the relative nature of waking-state consciousness. It lacks, however, the understanding and experience of the transcendental field of pure consciousness, the field of all possibilities, which is not only the source of the structures of language, literature, and meaning, but of mind and the universe.

Formalist critical theories need to consider how structures of language and meaning differ in the seven states of consciousness described by Maharishi Vedic Science. Since knowledge is different in different states of consciousness, meaning will necessarily remain indeterminate until the reader is established in Unity Consciousness. Similarly, the study of language must include knowledge of the levels of the mind in order to understand the origin and relative nature of waking-state language and communication [5, pp. 341-48]. One must turn to Maharishi Vedic Science to enlarge one’s perspective on the issues of consciousness, language, and literary theory raised here.
Seven States of Consciousness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States of Consciousness</th>
<th>Pure Consciousness</th>
<th>Ordinary Perception</th>
<th>Refined Perception</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sleeping</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Waking</td>
<td>Illusory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dreaming</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transcendental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>5. Cosmic Consciousness</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. God Consciousness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Unity Consciousness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Reality as the Self</td>
<td>Unbounded Pure Consciousness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Each state of consciousness has a different range of perceptual and cognitive abilities. Consequently, knowledge will be understood differently in different states of consciousness.

Balancing Text and Context: The Responsive Reader and the Historical Moment

New Historicists emphasize the necessity of reading a text in its historical context. Spurred by an urgency to improve the quality of life in society, contemporary critics began to voice their dissatisfaction with literary approaches that cut off a text from its history and from its interaction with current readers. The history of ideas has always structured the study of literature. Chronological courses embed the literature of a period within its historical, religious, cultural, and even climatic contexts. Biographical criticism has traditionally studied the lives of authors in order to shed light on the educational, political, and personal factors that may have influenced their work. What is new, then, is a reconsideration of the way in which both authors and readers are shaped by their history. New historicism was spurred partly by Marxist criticism, which emphasizes
economic conditions surrounding literary production and consumption and by feminist studies of literature, which identify stereotypes of men and women in literature and emphasize the full development and expression of both sexes.

**New Historicists view cultural forces as a vast interconnecting web involving both reader and text.**

New historicists view cultural forces as comprising a vast interconnecting web with the text and reader occupying an intersection of its streams at a specific time and place. Political theorists such as Frederic Jameson emphasize the historical context of works, exploring the forces out of which emerge systems of values and beliefs, ideologies perpetuating themselves through literature. History is unknowable to us except in textual form. Therefore, “our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious” [6, p. 35]. New historicists would argue that a work of literature is called great only because society values its ideology, not because it contains some inherent truth or wisdom which might transcend its time, place, and the vested interests of the class or society from which it emerged. Readers should beware of “literature” since it may be promulgating the elitist views of a power structure that may not have readers’ best interests at heart. Students must therefore be taught to be critical of the texts they read, not to reverence them or their authors blindly.

A discontent emerged in the critical community with some of the views of the new historicists. Although knowledge of the social and political context of a work of literature and of the biography of its author is important, such criticism sometimes degenerated to prurient interest in authors’ private lives or to examination of a text as if it were merely a repository of data for historical reconstruction. In focusing intently on the historical context of a work and its relevance to contemporary social issues, critics have sometimes seemed indifferent to either the reader’s response or to the text’s literary values.

Both historical critics and scholars interested in rhetorical approaches to literature, such as phenomenology (see Richo Akshare Chart) and reader-response criticism, need a more comprehensive understanding of the consciousness of the reader than is currently available in Western
psychology to better understand how literature might affect consciousness and society.

**Knowledge of Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology offers a way to enhance the effect of literature upon the reader.**

In offering the understanding and experience of 1) seven states of consciousness and 2) levels of language and existence, Maharishi Vedic Science provides a means to understand how successful literature has the potential to connect the mind of the reader with subtler levels of the self. Along with the Transcendental Meditation technique, which expands, refines, and purifies the mind and heart, reading literature can produce positive changes in its readers. In this way literature can be made relevant both to individuals and society. Those who read literature do so not merely for historical knowledge but because literature charms and inspires them—nourishes and uplifts them, providing glimpses of new ideas and other lives. If literature were not evolutionary and blissful, readers ever in search for what is helpful to their evolution would turn elsewhere.

The current state of society testifies to the fact that literature alone cannot effectively change either the individual or society. Only knowledge and experience of Transcendental Consciousness can purify individuals and render them desirous or capable of creating an ideal society. An understanding of how all aspects of literature arise from the unified field of intelligence in nature, that unbounded self-referral state of consciousness, can revitalize the study of literature and fulfill and balance the critical forces dominant in literary theory today, those emphasizing the text, the context, the author, or the reader.

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> Literature has not only been the mirror of consciousness of any age, but the guiding light of the consciousness of any age. . . . Starting from that gross surface level, successful literature is capable of leading, of giving a new direction to time in any part of the world, in the whole world.”[1] —Maharishi
Levels of Language and Existence

*Vaikhari*  
(Manifest Speech)

*Madhyamā*  
(Mental Speech)

*Pashyantī*  
(Finest Impulse of Speech)

*Parā*  
(Unmanifest Speech)

![Unified Field of Intelligence in Nature](image)

**FIGURE 2.** The fundamental basis of speech is *Parā* or the unmanifest transcendental aspect of speech. When speech begins to rise in impulses on the *Pashyantī* level of speech, name and form coexist as two aspects of the same object. All speech within the mind constitutes the *Madhyamā*, or mental level of speech. Finally, manifest speech that is spoken and heard is called *Vaikhari*. Individuals speak or hear from whatever level of consciousness they are living—knowledge and perception will thus vary greatly.

**The Unified Field as the Source of Literature and Literary Studies**

**The Unified Field of Intelligence in Nature: The Source of Language and Literature**

The unified field of intelligence in nature gives rise to activities, and concerns of the discipline of literary studies. The elements, activities and concerns of the discipline of literature arise from their source in the unified field of intelligence in nature to influence the culture and collective consciousness of every nation. The Unified Field Chart for Literature illustrates how the unified field of consciousness sequentially
gives rise to the various aspects of the discipline of literary studies: Level 1—The Unified Field; Level 2—Artistic Inspiration; Level 3—Writing the Text; Level 4—The Text, Literary Fields, and Scholarly Approaches; and Level 5—Culture: The Influence of Literature on All Areas of Society.

The self-referral state of consciousness is at the basis of all manifest nature.

Level 1 illustrates the unified field of intelligence in nature which Maharishi Vedic Science describes as the fundamental self-referral state of consciousness at the basis, not only of all the more expressed states of consciousness, but of all manifest nature. It is a field of non-change from which all change emerges, the ground on which the infinite variety of nature is continuously emerging, growing, and dissolving. Unified field theories of modern physics have recently glimpsed this fundamental field, which they hypothesize to be the ground state and origin of all manifest physical systems. Its qualities—e.g., self-referral or self-interaction, infinite dynamism, infinite creativity, infinite organizing power, infinite silence—are identical to the qualities of pure consciousness, consciousness experienced at its most silent and profound level. It is this state that gives rise to speech, to the language that forms those most powerful, beautiful, and profound expressions of speech called literature.

Veda is the self-referral language of nature.

Maharishi describes the unified field of intelligence in nature as a field of pure potentiality, a field of pure consciousness that contains within itself all the impulses of natural law that structure the manifest world. These impulses constitute the self-interactive or self-referral language of nature itself, the Veda, comprising the dynamical principles that govern the universe. Familiarity with this language, the language of the Veda, is not achieved by intellectual understanding in the ordinary sense, but as a result of allowing individual awareness to experience the mechanics through which natural law both expresses itself in its own self-referral state and gives rise to all aspects of nature and consciousness.
Altogether, it was not my manner as a poet to strive for the embodiment of something abstract. I received impressions . . . whatever a lively power of imagination offered me; and as a poet I did not have to do anything but round out and form such visions and impressions. [9] —Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Established in the unified field, one can cognize the verses of the Vedas.

Maharishi asserts that the verses of the Veda are the most perfectly realized expressions of the impulses of natural law. They are cognized when an individual’s awareness is completely at one with the unified field of intelligence in nature, the state of pure consciousness. Ṛk Veda cautions: Yastanna veda kim rīchā karishyati ya ittad vidus ta ime samāsate (“He whose awareness is not open to this field, what can the verses accomplish for him? Those who know this level of reality are established in evenness, wholeness of life”). Only one whose consciousness is established in this level can fully appreciate the Vedas as the impulses of natural law. Similarly, only one whose consciousness is enlivened by frequent contact with the unified field of intelligence within can fully appreciate the most comprehensive works of literature.

The unified field is the Saṃhita of Ṛishi, Devatā, and Chhandas. Maharishi describes three aspects of each Vedic cognition: Ṛishi, the knower or quality of consciousness of the one who cognizes; Devatā, the process of knowing or flow of intelligence that organizes the cognition; and Chhandas, the nature of what is known or cognized (refer to Level 1). The unified field of intelligence in nature is known as the Saṃhitā of Ṛishi, Devatā, and Chhandas, the unity of three in one, because it is one unified wholeness that can also be appreciated in its three aspects. The threefold nature of this fundamental reality can also be extended to subsequent strata of nature that emerge from the unified field.
Maharishi Vedic Science investigates the knower and process of knowing as well as the known.

Whereas the Western science and humanities have systematically explored the “known,” they have all but ignored both the knower and the process of knowing. Without an understanding of all three aspects and their interactions, knowledge can only be partial and baseless. Certainly the field of literature, the verbal expression of consciousness, can best be appreciated when the unified field of pure consciousness, its most fundamental component, is directly experienced and understood. Through Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation program, each knower can experience the unified field as the deepest level of his or her own consciousness, the Self (refer to far right hand side of the Unified Field Chart). With this technique every knower can enrich his or her process of knowing, enabling his or her awareness to cognize the subtlest levels of existence. Also, each object can ultimately be known in terms of its fundamental components, the laws of nature themselves.

The levels of the Unified Field Chart for the discipline of literature are organized according to Ṛishi, Devatā, and Chhandas.

The Unified Field Chart for Literature represents each aspect of the discipline of literature on a particular level of the Chart. Level 1 of the Chart illustrates the unified field as the basis of the remaining emergent levels, emphasizing first Ṛishi, then Devatā, then Chhandas. Just as the unified field is described as the Saṃhitā of Ṛishi, Devatā, and Chhandas, so each level of literature can also be understood in terms of the three aspects of knower (on the left), known (on the right), and process of knowing (center). Thus, Level 2 of the Chart emphasizes the initial stage of artistic inspiration when the Ṛishi or experiencer (knower) experiences (knows) the environment (the known). Level 3 emphasizes the Devatā value or process of knowing, in this case, the process of writing the text. This level is divided into the areas of writer (knower), the process of writing itself, and the writer’s experience (known), understood or “textualized” according to that individual’s particular level of consciousness.
CONSCIOUSNESS-BASED EDUCATION AND LITERATURE

The next level in the sequence, Level 4, emphasizes the known: the elements of a text, the body of literature produced by the world’s cultures as it is organized by literary scholars, and the various areas of study or scholarly approaches to literature. Lastly, Level 5 illustrates the level of culture: the collective consciousness of a nation influencing and being influenced by works of literature lively within. Culture then upholds all areas of national life, affecting the ministries of government and especially the head of state (refer to Sections 3.2 and 3.3 for descriptions of Levels 2 through 5 of the Unified Field Chart for Literature.

From Artistic Perception and Inspiration to Writing the Text

Level 2: The knower’s Self, mind, and physiology experience the environment.

The manifest areas of the Unified Field Chart for Literature begin with artistic inspiration, which occurs while the experiencer is experiencing the environment. This process takes place on three levels: the subtlest level (within the unified field), the inner or subtle level, and the outer or grossest level. The knower of Level 2 is the writer as experiencer. The writer optimally experiences the environment through all three levels of existence: Self, mind, and physiology. Through the Transcendental Meditation and Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi programs, knowers have access to the simplest state of their own awareness, the unified field of intelligence in nature, or the Self. Since this aspect of the individual is identical to the Sāṁhitā of Ṛṣhi, Devatā, and Chhandas, it extends below the line that separates the unified field from the discipline’s manifest areas.

A writer’s state of consciousness affects the modes of perception—from sensory perception to cognition of the laws of nature.

The process of knowing, or experiencing, is influenced by the particular state of a writer’s consciousness, which might range from waking state to Unity Consciousness. Since perception and knowledge are different in different states of consciousness, knowers experience their inner and
outer environments (the known) based on how their state of consciousness constrains or enables their sense perceptions, thought, discrimination, and feelings (the modes of experience associated with each level of the self). The writer’s senses perceive details of the inner or outer environments that will later give rise to descriptions in their text-in-progress. The writer’s intellect derives meaning and order from all the data of experience, and the subtle feelings associated with the creative impulse will influence a text’s form, style, and content. In the state of self-referral consciousness, direct cognition of the laws of nature becomes possible. Consequently, the experiential mode of cognition also appears within the unified field. Artistic inspiration, along with the desire to communicate, gives rise to the next stage of the literary process, that of the writing of the text (Level 3).

**Levels 3 and 4: The literary text is written out of the text of personal experience.**

Writing is an epistemic process, that is, a mode of learning or discovery, as well as one involving association, synthesis, and discrimination. Through the process of writing (process of knowing), writers (knowers) come to know their experience (the known—their memories of ideas, sensations, events, and emotions) that their consciousness has interpreted. Since writers are influenced and conditioned by their beliefs, language, and education, as well as by the historical milieu in which they write, what they perceive is formed or “textualized” by the boundaries of their particular consciousness. The known, or the texts they produce (refer to Level 4), is therefore firstly comprised of knower-centered aspects that make up the content of the work—themes, cultural and linguistic codes, and the author’s intention and ideologies.

Each text derives its unique force from the process-centered aspects of style—figurative language, imagery, harmony, tone, rhythm, allusion, and juxtaposition. And every text is composed of the known-centered formal elements of setting, plot, structure, point of view, and character, to name a few.
Consciousness

Transcendental Meditation allows the conscious mind to identify itself with the Unified Field in Pure Consciousness.

Pure Consciousness
Unified Field of all the Laws of Nature
The writing process exhibits the self-referral mechanics of nature. Although writers are invariably affected by their individual experience, they have the potential to transcend their boundaries and experience the source of thought, the Self. The unified field of pure consciousness is potentially accessible between each thought, each word, each syllable. With the creation of a word or phrase, a writer’s consciousness settles down once more in the direction of the Self, and the next wave of creativity arises. If a writer’s consciousness is refined, as by the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, that writer may transcend more profoundly even to the unified field itself. Thus, the writing process exhibits the same mechanics of self-referral found in the creativity of nature.

Each inward stroke brings out a new wave of creativity from the Self that becomes expressed in elements of the text’s form, language, or meaning. Reading begins with aspects of the text, which then connect awareness with the inner self. The outward stroke for the reader is the realization of both self-knowledge and knowledge of the text. Thus, writing and reading employ the self-referral mechanics of nature which affect and integrate an individual’s awareness.

The self-referral mechanics of the reading process can integrate and humanize the reader. Similarly, through the process of reading, readers enjoy parallel waves of self-referral when the elements of the text lead their consciousness to subtler levels. A work may describe the nature of consciousness or the mechanics of creation, thereby purifying the intellect and leading the reader inward. For readers accustomed to transcending, literature’s stylistic devices would produce an even more powerful effect upon their consciousness. Through alternations of sound and silence, through harmony, figurative language, and other stylistic techniques, the reader may be induced to transcend to subtler, more holistic levels of consciousness and feeling, toward Transcendental Consciousness. Also, formal elements, such as plot or point of view, directly reflect the laws of nature governing evolution and may lead to self-referral through the senses,
mind, intellect, or emotions. Thus the enlightened experience of great literature would expand and purify readers’ minds and hearts, foster the integration of their consciousness, and profoundly “humanize” them.

The Unified Field as the Source of Language and Literature

Literature, Scholarship, Culture, and Collective Consciousness

Literature is organized into national, historical, ethnic, or formal groupings. The organization of literature, the various approaches of literary scholarship, and the influence of literature upon culture comprise the upper levels of the Unified Field Chart for Literature. Level 4 illustrates the text as the basic unit of the world’s literature. Literary works may be studied and grouped around a major writer, such as Shakespeare, by nationality, such as English or French, by ethnic classification, such as Hispanic or Native American, by historical period, such as the Middle Ages or the Nineteenth century, by historical movement, such as Romanticism or Symbolism, or by literary forms, such as the novel or lyric poetry. Each literary scholar, as teacher, editor, theorist, commentator, or literary historian, may specialize in a particular grouping or a field of literature that intersects these larger categories, such as the medieval German epic.

Scholarly approaches to the study of literature emphasize either author, text, reader, or context. Literary scholars, like writers, are constrained or enabled by their education, experience, language, and historical milieu; their reading of a work of literature is conditioned by the boundaries of their own state of consciousness. Each scholar may adopt one or more approaches to the study of literature that emphasize the author, the text itself, the context, or the text’s effect on the reader, such as biographical study, rhetorical study, feminist study, post-structuralist study, sociological or political study, formalist studies, history of ideas, genre study, and so forth. Many scholars have a predominant theoretical orientation, such
as formalism or historicism, but most combine several types of study in their teaching and writing.

Four Approaches to the Study of Literature

Figure 3. Scholars may approach literature primarily through their interest in the author, the text (e.g., New Criticism), the reader (e.g., Phenomenology), or the context (e.g., New Historicism). Each element of the literary experience, however, is just an aspect of the same underlying reality—pure consciousness.

Every work of literature or scholarship enters the literary culture of a nation and the world (see Level 5). The study of literature affects all areas of education, especially the teaching of literature, languages, and writing. It also affects many language-oriented fields, such as advertising and publishing, and provides the basis for all the performing arts, from song lyrics to film scripts. The best literature can nourish and enliven the laws of nature in the collective consciousness, giving expression to the most profound meaning of life. Literature can refine the hearts and minds of its audience and, with the practice of the Transcendental Meditation and Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi programs, allow the blissful nature of pure consciousness to be infused into daily existence.

The collective consciousness of society acts as the knower of a culture, greatly influencing the nature of communication on all levels of society, from journalism to theater. That is, the collective consciousness determines which works of literature come to be known in a culture. It influences which particular literature is taught in schools and universities, printed, reprinted, translated, put into libraries, produced and
performed for the people of a nation, or discussed in newspapers and periodicals.

The study of literature is a very, very scientific study, and that study is rising to enlightenment. When we begin to see literature in the fluctuations of consciousness, and we know consciousness to be the home of all the laws of nature, the home of all knowledge, and the field of all possibilities, then we find literature, which is the flow of consciousness, to be a field of all possibilities.[1] —Maharishi

Literature and culture uphold all areas of national life.
A nation’s culture upholds all areas of national life and forms the milieu that subtly influences all activities in society, especially artistic perception and inspiration (Level 2), the writing process (Level 3), and the many areas of literary scholarship (Level 4). Works of literature both express a culture and contribute to it. The literature and culture of each nation are influenced by the literature and culture of other nations as well. With the creation of Heaven on Earth, each nation’s literature will grow in the qualities of beauty, harmony, and profundity. As each nation rises in harmony with natural law, its own literature and culture will be strengthened and its appreciation of other national literatures will become more selective and discriminating. In this way the cross-fertilization of the world’s literary cultures will produce only positive influences.

The study of literature is rising to enlightenment through the Transcendental Meditation and Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi programs.
The far right-hand side of the Unified Field Chart for Literature illustrates the mechanics of the Transcendental Meditation and Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program. This aspect of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology allows individuals to experience directly the unified field of intelligence in nature as their own most settled and simplest state of awareness, the self-referral state of Transcendental Consciousness or the Self, and rise to enlightenment. In this state every individual will enjoy the full blossoming of creativity, the full appreciation of the great cultural traditions of the world, and the bliss of living in Heaven on Earth.
Maharishi Vedic Science as the Basis for a Theory of Literature

The Vedas—the most perfectly realized literature—allow listeners to experience the deepest structures of their own consciousness.

The vital questions raised by literary theorists about the origins, nature, and purpose of literature can be clarified by Maharishi Vedic Science. With understanding and experience of the unified field of intelligence in nature underlying and giving rise to all aspects of literature and literary studies, the reader is better able to define literature and to evaluate its effects upon consciousness and society.

The most perfectly realized works of literature are the Vedas. As the expression of the laws of nature governing the emergence of consciousness into matter, the Vedas are the record of the eternal continuum of the Self expressing Its own nature. Vedic seers are those individuals whose consciousness has become so refined that they are able to hear or cognize the poetry of the Vedas in their own self-referral state of consciousness. Since the Vedas are the expression of the unmanifest transcendental basis of reality, the effect of hearing the Vedas is evolutionary, allowing the audience to experience the deeper structures of their own consciousness, even their own unbounded Self.

Maharishi’s description of the nature of Vedic literature allows us to set standards by which to evaluate other literature. “Literature” may be defined as the writing of highly evolved authors that, through its beauty, order, and profundity, has the power to affect readers’ consciousness in an evolutionary direction. Such writings become models of effective speech. They are not limited to a particular point of view, but, through their universality, have the potential to lead their readers to experience subtler levels of existence and thereby to transform their readers’ awareness. In the words of the English poet Shelley, poetry is “the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds” with the power to “awaken and enlarge the mind” [7, p. 539]. He envisioned poetry leading humanity towards unity: “one harmonious soul of many a soul / Whose nature is its own divine control” [8, p. 563].
By enlivening their own self-referral state of consciousness, writers can produce works that will evolve their readers and inspire them to develop higher states of consciousness. Every reader must raise his state of consciousness in order to understand and appreciate fully what the greatest writers have produced. Walt Whitman challenged his readers to “come to us [poets] on equal terms” [9, p. 418]. Maharishi Vedic Science is the practical program which allows readers access to the subtlest experiences of consciousness available in a text.

**Vedic Cognition**

![Vedic Cognition Diagram]

**Unified Field of Intelligence in Nature**

Figure 4. Vedic cognition takes place when a seer or Rishi has his or her consciousness fully established in the Sarñhitā of the unified field. It is the record of the Self knowing Itself as the Veda.

Literary works express whatever degree of the writer’s transcendental Self has been enlivened and therefore radiate some partial value of natural law. A literary work has an evolutionary effect when it connects the consciousness of its audience to its source in the Sarñhitā of Rishi, Devatā, and Chhandas. Maharishi comments that what causes literary works to last from generation to generation is the purity of their author’s
consciousness, the extent to which that author’s Self expresses Itself in literature [10]. When readers experience the evolutionary qualities of various works of literature they call them “great” and preserve them for future readers. Those works that appeal mainly to topical concerns rarely out-live their initial popularity. The Vedas are the expression of the total potential of natural law recorded by one whose nervous system is completely in tune with the field of intelligence in nature. Hence, the Vedas are eternal.

**Vedic Literature and the Mechanics of Creation**

![Diagram](image)

Figure 5. In the infinite dynamism of the movement from fullness to a point and back lie the verses of the Veda and the laws of nature that give rise to the whole manifest universe. The verses of the Veda are the Sāṁhitā of Rishi, Devatā, and Chhandas describing the mechanics of how creation emerges from the Self.

**Literature can be evaluated by its effect upon the reader’s mind and physiology.**

Maharishi Vedic Science also proposes a holistic theory of language, which is crucial for understanding the power of literature to affect consciousness. Contemporary literary commentators often reduce the experience of literature to mere intellectual interpretation, missing the subtler effects of sound and structure on the reader’s mind and body. A limited understanding and experience of language, however, comes from a restricted experience of the full range of human conscious-
ness. In the unbounded state of self-referral consciousness, Maharishi observes, the name of an object is a faint impulse of the object’s form. As the name reaches the level of expressed speech, it becomes that word of the speaker’s language that represents that concept—arbitrary on the surface level but inseparably linked on the transcendental level [5]. Writers and readers whose awareness is open to the unified nature of language would be able to experience the full impact of name and form in literature and to judge whether a work is creating balance or imbalance in their nervous system.

Maharishi Vedic Science, therefore, gives new meaning to the idea of the “morality” of literature. Moral literature is that which takes the reader’s awareness in an evolutionary direction; immoral literature would be defined as that which leads the reader’s awareness to grosser levels of consciousness, unbalancing the physiology and creating stress. With Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology, writers and readers will be able to create and enjoy literature that will celebrate Heaven on Earth.

Ṛicho Akshare: The Fundamental Structure of Literary Theories

Maharishi’s *Apaurasheya Bhāsya* is his cognition of how the Veda comments upon itself through its own structure.

The uniqueness of Maharishi Vedic Science is its comprehensive insight into the meaning of the Veda and the practicality of its knowledge for daily life. Since the Veda exists in self-referral consciousness, it can be understood or cognized only by a consciousness that is established at that level. On the grossest level words may refer to something concrete, but the deepest level of their meaning lies in their unmanifest source in self-referral consciousness. Thus, the Veda can only be experienced in its totality within the unified field of consciousness. Maharishi shows that the Veda contains its own interpretation within its very structure. His *Apaurasheya Bhāsya* or “uncreated commentary” reveals how Vedic literature both describes and demonstrates within itself the structuring process of natural law.
Richo Akshare describes the sequential unfoldment of creation from the transcendental field.

The ability of the Veda to explain its own mechanics and use is seen in a verse from Rk Veda: Richo akshare parame vyoman yasmin Deva adhi vishve nisheduḥ / Yas tanna veda kim richā karishyati ya ittad vidus ta ime samāsate (1, 164, 39). (The Verses of the Veda exist in the collapse of fullness in the transcendental field in which reside all the devās, the impulses of creative intelligence, the laws of nature responsible for the whole manifest universe. He whose awareness is not open to this field, what can the verses accomplish for him? Those who know this level of reality are established in evenness, wholeness of life.)

Maharishi’s translation and commentary on this hymn is a cognition of the relationship of its sequential structure to the structure of creation. Each phrase of the first line of the verse can be seen as a step in the sequential unfoldment of natural law, from unmanifest to manifest. The second line concerns the human nervous system as the potential knower of natural law. This verse is so significant, Maharishi asserts, that it is a paradigm for reading Vedic literature, as well as for “reading” or understanding the whole universe. The principle that “knowledge is structured in consciousness” can be applied to any field to reveal the deepest structure of that field and the knower’s relationship to that deep structure. When the Richo Akshare paradigm is applied to different approaches of literary criticism, the structures and mechanics of each approach can be located and understood.

Richo Akshare expresses the wholeness and dynamics of the transcendental field.

The first two words, Richo Akshare, describe the wholeness and dynamics of the transcendental field but may be applied to any field. In literary theory this is equivalent to how the source of literature produces a specific text. For example, the first approach, “Classicism,” begins with a description of an ordered cosmos as the source of literature and nature. In the movement from nature to literature one can locate the immutable laws of nature or principles governing both the creations of nature and of literary works. Parame vyoman refers to the transcendental field or the most all-encompassing reality from the vantage point of each literary method. Fur example, New Historicism identifies his-
tory as the all-inclusive web of social forces from which individual texts emerge or in which any individual object is located, while Phenomenology identifies consciousness as that transcendental field.

Yasmin Devā describes the laws of nature or the most abstract organizing principles of the field and Adi vishve nisheduḥ describes the stages of manifestation whereby specific objects, in this case the individual literary texts, are created from the field by these forces or principles. For instance, Romanticism sees the imagination as the unifying and creative power which gives rise to systems of symbols in works of art.

The next two phrases describe the results of a partial or limited reading of literature, one that doesn’t take the insights of that particular theory into account. For instance, new critical readers believe that within the tensions and ambiguities of a work are contained all possible resolutions of its meaning, and that readers who primarily discuss details from its author’s life or intentions or the historical background are failing to illuminate the work as an artistic whole.

The last two phrases describe the best way to read a work using the methodologies of the theory in question. In every case, those critics have anticipated the shortcomings of other methods and have tried to choose a broader point of view. The Structuralist sees the text as the reflection of the impersonal laws of language and literature while the Deconstructionist views the text as open and interactive and not limited in meaning.

Richo Akshare is a paradigm for understanding the structural similarities in all schools of critical theory.

The Richo Akshare verse thus provides a paradigm that allows one to observe profound structural similarities in these critical schools: they all identify a subtle, unbounded basis for the generation and study of literature, and the bases they identify—language, tradition, historical ideologies—all have the field of consciousness as their deeper source; they are all aspects of the same reality. Whether a theory focuses on the author, the reader, the text, or the context of literature, one can appreciate the value of each viewpoint and also see the limitations of any theory of reading which does not take into account the source of literature and critical theories in self-referral consciousness. Maharishi
Vedic Science and Technology allows the reader to apply the insights of any or all of these critical approaches from the largest perspective—from the perspective of Veda, self-referral consciousness.

Creating Heaven on Earth: The Fulfillment of Literature Creating Ideal Readers through the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programs

The more developed the reader's consciousness, the more meaning, enjoyment, and inspiration may be derived from a work of literature.

Literature is the flow of consciousness in language, Maharishi observes; it ranges from concrete imagery to abstract ideas, taking the reader from sensory experience of the environment to the unbounded Self [2]. Since works of literature have their basis in consciousness, in order to appreciate fully the totality of their meaning and their music, readers must develop their own consciousness until it is as pure, as broadly comprehensive, as refined as possible. The more fully developed the reader's consciousness, the more enjoyment, meaning, intellectual satisfaction, and inspiration may be derived from literature. Maharishi notes that in the experience of “that pure state of consciousness is the ability for greatest comprehension—just because that pure consciousness is unbounded awareness . . . [it] contains all possibilities in it. From the all possibilities level any one possibility can be derived in a very, very comfortable, convenient way, in a natural way, without loss of time, without loss of any effort or energy” [2].

Brainwave coherence increases with the practice of the Transcendental Meditation program.

The practice of the Transcendental Meditation program is especially useful for the student of literature, since the experience of pure consciousness produces high brainwave coherence, which is correlated with important cognitive, physiological, and affective variables, such as increased fluency of verbal creativity, increased efficiency of learning
new concepts, more principled moral reasoning, higher verbal IQ, and decreased neuroticism¹ (refer to figure 6).

The Transcendental Meditation program also increases field independence, or the ability to focus attention on specific objects without being distracted by the surrounding environment. Individuals with greater field independence generally display a greater ability to assimilate and structure experience; improved memory; greater creative expression; and more stable standards, attitudes, judgment, and sentiments without continuous reference to external standards. The development of independent judgment has also been observed in other studies on the Transcendental Meditation program, showing increases in inner directedness and self-regard, as well as strength of self-concept, all important for developing critical thinking and the ability to evaluate literature and its effect upon the audience.

Through its meaning, harmony, and rhythms, literature reproduces the evolutionary flow of life. If the reader’s consciousness is stress-free, unbounded, and flexible it will be able to flow with the rising and falling waves of sound and rhythm; it will be able to swing with contrasts between concrete and abstract meanings [1]. The Transcendental Meditation program is particularly relevant for the student of literature since it reduces anxiety and tension and allows the individual to enjoy a more relaxed style of functioning in activity. The ability to transcend, which is cultured by the Transcendental Meditation technique gives the reader an increasing ability to connect with subtler levels of feeling and understanding when the language, rhythm, harmony, and meaning of a text provide opportunities to do so. This, Maharishi says, will actually refine and purify readers’ minds and hearts and inspire them to rise to higher levels of consciousness [2].

[Reading poetry] awakens in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of [things] and of our relations with them.... We feel ourselves to be in contact with the essential nature of those objects . . .and this feeling calms and satisfies us. [13]

—Matthew Arnold

**Optimization of Brain Functioning**

![Diagram showing correlations between EEG coherence and cognitive variables](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creativity</th>
<th>Concept Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$r = 0.71$</td>
<td>$r = 0.50$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Moral Reasoning, IQ, Decreased Neuroticism**

$r = 0.63$

Figure 6. EEG coherence is positively and significantly correlated with such cognitive and affective variables as creativity, concept learning, moral reasoning, IQ, and decreased neuroticism. (D. Orme-Johnson et al. [1981] in Vol. 3)

**Along with the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, the study of literature can aid in the development of higher states of consciousness and increased moral reasoning.**

In Cosmic Consciousness, Maharishi says, “There is the transcendental value, completely abstract, unmanifest, unbounded, ground state of life, pure consciousness, and simultaneously there are rigid boundaries, small pieces of time and space—both together.” Works of literature provide both “small pieces of time and space” as well as abstract values. Thus, along with the practice of the Transcendental Meditation tech-
nique, the proper study of literature would help to develop consciousness, Maharishi notes. This can occur because literary expressions present contrasting values, “and in the comprehension of two contrasting values is the comprehension of all the mechanics of the evolutionary process.” With the experience of pure consciousness available to students, Maharishi says, they will be able to flow with “the flow of the words, with the orderly and rhythmic flow of rhymes, of couplets, [and] they will get refreshed” by their study of literature, not exhausted [2].

Readers’ comprehension must become broad enough both to appreciate the wide swings in meaning that literature contains and to develop their latent evolutionary and ethical nature. Students of literature should be able to use their knowledge of the past to improve present life. Maharishi comments: “The study of literature is to make one wise. Wise means spontaneously capable of right thought, right action, right behavior.

Figure 7. The superior performance of the Transcendental Meditation and the TM-Sidhi groups on percentage of Principled Moral Thinking on Rest’s Defining Issues Test shows that the Transcendental Meditation program improves Moral Reasoning. (Nidich, S.I. et al. [1983], in Vol 3).

“This can only come about by stabilizing Transcendental Consciousness. So Transcendental Meditation comes out to be the basis of the study of literature. We must have that wide comprehension . . . in order to really enjoy literature and make it a process of evolution, make lit-
erature a means of developing that ability whereby we will not violate any law of nature and we will not create a ground for suffering” [2]. The Transcendental Meditation program allows individuals to grow in principled moral reasoning, a quality once thought to be fixed past early adulthood.

Literature by itself cannot change society—only its readers can. Readers will only evolve through their study of literature if they are open to its mechanics and message. When students of literature develop their consciousness, they will become ideal readers, ideal citizens, and their every activity will create a new world; they will hasten the rise of Heaven on Earth.

Creating Enlightened Writers through the
Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programs

Literary expressions that contain the entirety of the evolutionary process give a new direction to time.

Literature can be both the reflection of its time, Maharishi observes, and a guiding light of consciousness for any age. Successful literature not only mirrors common ways of thinking, speaking, and acting, it is also “capable of leading, of giving a new direction to time in any part of the world, in the whole world. The timeless expressions that contain the entirety of the evolutionary process have the ability to give a direction to time” [2].

All writers desire to create works of literature that will inspire and uplift their readers throughout time, just as they were inspired by their literary masters. The qualities we admire in works of literature have their basis in the consciousness of the writer; from a great consciousness come spontaneously comprehensive, orderly, and beautiful expressions capable of inspiring readers on all levels of existence, from the senses to the Self. Maharishi observes: “Every poet incorporates the entirety of the universe within his natural flow, within the rhythmic orderly flow of the poem, and the more meaning he is able to comprehend, the more rhythmic flow he is able to comprehend in his expressions, the greater he will be in the field of literature” [2].

In order to be a great writer, one must first be a great individual, or as Milton said, “a composite and pattern of the best and honorablest things”
One writes one’s consciousness in every word, line, and paragraph of a work. In order to be great, one must be able to tap the field of intelligence in nature and bring its qualities and creative energy out into one’s life and art. Scientific research shows that the regular practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique improves both right and left hemispheric functioning, which results in superior synthetic and holistic thinking [12] as well as improved verbal and analytic thinking. Increased fluid intelligence, increased field independence and improved cognitive ability and style also result from the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, as well as increased creativity [13]. The holistic nature of these benefits indicates that the Transcendental Meditation program enlivens the fundamental source of the intelligence within the individual. Additionally, since the Transcendental Meditation program alleviates stress and anxiety, it removes any blocks that may be obstructing the writer’s free and joyful expression of the Self.

**Increased Creativity**

![Bar chart showing increased creativity](image)

Figure 8. Results on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking show that those practicing the Transcendental Meditation program score significantly higher than controls on figural originality and verbal fluency, (Travis, F. [1979], Vol. 3).
Increased Intelligence

![Graph showing scores on the Raven Progressive Matrices for controls and Transcendental Meditation practitioners, with a p-value of <.001.](image)

Figure 9. Scores on the Raven Progressive Matrices shows that the Transcendental Meditation program increases general intelligence, enabling one to respond to new situations with greater creativity and comprehension. (Schecter, H. [1977], Vol. 1)

A successful work of literature nourishes and integrates all levels of existence because it is the holistic product of a whole and healthy individual. When an individual contacts the nourishing and integrating source of life, holistic growth simultaneously results. Those practicing the Transcendental Meditation program show significant growth toward self-actualization. Psychologists define self-actualized individuals as the most creative and successful members of society. They are exceptionally mature, healthy, fulfilled, and able to transcend deficiencies. They have a clearer, more efficient perception of reality, are more open to experience, show increased spontaneity, expressiveness, and aliveness, as well as the ability to fuse concreteness and abstractness, all qualities that are promoted by the practice of the Transcendental Meditation program and are crucial to the creation of literary works that will last in time and will have an evolutionary effect on their readers.

What makes an expression a literary expression are these values in the consciousness of the writer—a very wide comprehension and the ability to contain the ocean in a drop . . . small expressions containing such a wide range of meaning and so beautiful to listen to. They come as the impulses of the most refined levels of consciousness natural to those great writers whose speech structures literature. [2] —Maharishi
A mind cultured by repeated contact with the transcendent sees the mechanics of evolution operating in all aspects of daily existence.

“Every literary impulse is in tune with the evolutionary process,” Maharishi says, “so when a cultured mind looks at a thing, what he sees is the . . . unmanifest level of the object where all the laws of nature are functioning, and he sees that all the laws of nature are taking existence to a higher level.” That is, when the writer’s mind has been cultured or refined by habitual experience of the unified field of intelligence in nature, then he or she sees that intelligence operating in all aspects of daily experience. “So it is the comprehensive vision of a poet or a literary writer that sees, not the surface structure of [an object], so much as he sees the mechanics involved in its evolution. And that is why, no matter what one sees . . . one sees evolution there, and because evolution is one’s own nature, in everything one sees one’s own nature, and this reference to the self makes everything enjoyable. So the study of literature would even go so far as to develop unity consciousness,” Maharishi adds [2]. When the reader’s consciousness is as cultured as the writer’s, then readers will also be able to see the Self in every aspect of the reading process and derive maximum evolution from the study of literature.

Every writer dreams of improving the quality of life in society by refining readers’ minds and hearts and inspiring them to lead more compassionate and fulfilling lives. If writers have ready access to the transcendental field of all possibilities, then their every impulse will express the orderly, all comprehensive, and evolutionary qualities of their source in spontaneously effective, moral, and nourishing speech and action. Such writers would not violate any law of nature through their speech or behavior and would produce only beneficial effects in their readers and in society. Thus, writers practicing the Transcendental Meditation program would live a life free from suffering, and their work would have only a positive influence on others.

When their transcendental Self is enlivened, writers will stand at the point where time and eternity meet, where finite and infinite values come together. Literature produced from that standpoint, Maharishi predicts, will be a guiding light for generations to come. It will give a new direction to time, both creating and celebrating the rise of a new age of enlightenment—Heaven on Earth.
Old and New Principles in the Field of Literature
In the past, each academic discipline has brought out the knowledge of specific laws of nature for improving life, and individuals acted according to each separate law. Now, through Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology individuals are learning to act from the ground state of all natural law, the pure field of self-referral consciousness. This is why the principles emerging now to create Heaven on Earth are so different from those which prevailed in the age of ignorance.

Old Principles of Literature
*Predominant in the Age of Ignorance*
*Suffering is the basis of creativity.*

- The author does not really originate meaning, language does. The author is a prisoner of language and is trapped within its systems.
- It is impossible to interpret a work of literature with any certainty since language alone gives rise to language and has no transcendental basis. Nor can it refer to anything outside of itself.
- While it is possible to agree on excellence of craftsmanship in writing, there are no absolute standards for evaluating works of literature.
- The most important aspect of reading a work of literature is understanding or interpreting its meaning and analyzing its relevance to society or to the literary tradition.
- Any text can be used to teach critical thinking, and, since students are less able to understand older works, it is just as well to teach anything that interests them and appeals to their taste.
- Literary works that present images of heroism or show inner growth culminating in fulfillment are deluded and romantic. Realistic literature reflects the lack of structure, purpose, and meaning in life.
- Students must develop the ability to think for themselves and not to reverence blindly any author. They must vigilantly analyze every literary work in order to discover its hidden agendas.
- The wide diversity of literary interpretations, including those in complete opposition to accepted meanings, suggest that literary works cannot convey any universal truth to their readers.
• Most critics either believe that studying literature can improve our understanding of social problems or that it can only show us that we are trapped by language that cannot help change us or our society.

New Principles of Literature
Arising to create Heaven on Earth
Consciousness is the basis of creativity.

• Suffering is opposed to creativity. Writers experience moments of joyfulfulness and expansion during the creative process, and this provides relief from their suffering. If writers were free from suffering, they would create more often and with more success.

• While a literary work may have many dimensions of meaning not consciously projected by its author, if an author’s consciousness is sufficiently developed, it can transcend the relative boundaries of culturally determined languages and express the laws of nature at their source.

• As one evolves it becomes increasingly easier to express and understand meaning since language does have a transcendental basis where name and form can be experienced as two aspects of the same reality. Thus language is intimately connected to its referent and can be spoken and understood from its basis in pure consciousness.

• Works of literature can be evaluated not only in terms of their excellence of structure and style, but in terms of their effect upon consciousness. If a work of literature produces an evolutionary effect upon consciousness, it will last from generation to generation and will deserve the name of great literature.

• The most important aspect of the reading experience is the effect it produces in the consciousness of the reader. Literature has the potential to swing its readers’ awareness from concrete to abstract, evolving and integrating their consciousness through rhythm, harmony, and meaning, and allowing readers to realize the unity under the diversity of experience.

• The best works of literature to study are those with the most power to evolve their readers’ awareness and develop their critical thinking. As students learn to transcend, they are affected more pro-
foundly by great literature and are at home with it regardless of its remoteness in time or place.

- The study of the hero is the story of the evolutionary growth to enlightenment, and every human being can live it. Works that embody it well are not only supremely realistic, they inspire their readers to perform right action and to evolve to higher states of consciousness.
- As students practice the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, they spontaneously grow in self-regard and self-sufficiency and will not be overshadowed by anything they read. They come to appreciate and respect authors whose state of consciousness was high enough to produce the most evolutionary literature.
- Interpretations of literature differ because knowledge is different in different states of consciousness. As readers practice the Transcendental Meditation and Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi programs, their comprehension will broaden in the direction of the fullest possible experience and understanding of any work of literature until they can see the universal in the particular, the infinity in the point.
- With the practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, literature can promote readers’ evolution and aid them in developing Unity Consciousness. In this state they will effortlessly improve their society by producing a coherent influence in collective consciousness.

References


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Part VI

Appendices
Modern Science and *Vedic Science*:

An Introduction

Kenneth Chandler, Ph.D.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kenneth Chandler holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin. He served as Head of the Department of the Science of Creative Intelligence at Maharishi International University (today, Maharishi University of Management). Dr. Chandler continues his research into consciousness and is currently at work on a book on descriptions of the experience of transcending and pure consciousness in the mainstream classics of philosophy, science, religion, and the arts. It will be a three-volume set covering from the Vedic tradition to the present.
(The following article served as the Introduction to the inaugural issue of the journal *Modern Science and Vedic Science*.)

**Modern Science and Vedic Science: An Introduction**

This journal (*Modern Science and Vedic Science*) provides a forum for research on the forefront of mankind’s expanding knowledge of the universe. It is devoted to exploration of the unified field of all the laws of nature through the combined approaches of modern science and ancient Vedic science, as brought to light by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The identification of the unified field by modern physics is only the first glimpse of a new area of investigation that underlies all disciplines of knowledge, and which can be explored not only through objective science but through a new technology of consciousness developed by Maharishi.

The unified field is now beginning to be understood through modern physics as the unified source of the entire universe, as a unified state of all the laws of nature from which all force and matter fields sequentially emerge according to exact dynamical principles. As each science and each academic discipline progresses to uncover its own most basic laws and foundational principles, each is beginning to discover that the roots of these laws and principles can be traced to the unified field.

This journal recognizes a new method of gaining knowledge of the unified field that combines the approach of the modern sciences with that of the most ancient of sciences, the ancient tradition of Vedic science. Many thousands of years ago, the seers of the Himalayas discovered, through exploration of their silent levels of awareness, a unified field where all the laws of nature are found together in a state of wholeness. This unity of nature was directly experienced to be a self-referral state of consciousness which is unbounded, all-pervading, unchanging, and the self-sufficient source of all existing things. They experienced and gave expression to the self-interacting dynamics through which this unified field sequentially gives rise to the diversity of all laws of nature. That experience is expressed in the ancient Vedic literature.
In our own time, Maharishi has brought to light the knowledge of this ancient science and integrated it with the modern sciences in such a way that Vedic science and modern science are now seen as complementary methods of gaining knowledge of the same reality—the unified field of all the laws of nature. The knowledge of this ancient science that Maharishi has brought to light is known as Maharishi Vedic Science.

Maharishi Vedic Science is to be understood, first of all, as a reliable method of gaining knowledge, as a science in the most complete sense of the term. It relies upon experience as the sole basis of knowledge, not experience gained through the senses only, but experience gained when the mind, becoming completely quiet, is identified with the unified field. This method, examined in relation to the modern sciences, proves to be an effective means of exploring the unified field of all the laws of nature. On the basis of this method, complete knowledge of the unified field becomes possible. It is possible to know the unified field both subjectively on the level of direct experience through exploration of consciousness and objectively through the investigative methods of modern science. Maharishi Vedic Science gives complete knowledge of consciousness, or the knower, complete knowledge of the object known, and complete knowledge of the process of knowing. In knowing the unified field, all three—knower, known, and process of knowing—are united in a single unified state of knowledge in which the three are one and the same.

Maharishi has developed and made available a technology for the systematic exploration of the unified field. This technology is a means by which anyone can gain access to the unified field and explore it through experience of the simplest and most unified state of consciousness. As this domain of experience becomes universally accessible, the unified field becomes available as a direct experience that is a basis for universal knowledge. The technology for gaining access to the unified field is called the Transcendental Meditation technique and its advanced programs, and the science based on this experience, which links modern science and Maharishi Vedic Science in a single unified body of knowledge, is called the Science of Creative Intelligence.

Maharishi is deeply committed to applying the knowledge and technology of the unified field for the practical benefit of life. He has
developed programs to apply this knowledge to every major area of human concern, including the fields of health, education, rehabilitation, and world peace. These applications of Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness have laid it open to empirical verification and demonstrated its practical benefit to mankind. Hundreds of scientific studies have already established its usefulness. From these results, it is clear that Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness are far more beneficial than technologies based on present day empirical science; they promise to reduce and even eliminate war, terrorism, crime, ill health, and all forms of human suffering.

These technologies, which are the applied value of Maharishi Vedic Science, represent a great advance in methods for gaining knowledge. Past science was based on a limited range of knowledge gained through the senses. This new technology opens to mankind a domain of experience of a deeper and more far-reaching import. It places within our grasp a new source of discovery of laws of nature that far exceeds the methods of modern science, yet remains complementary to these methods.

Modern science and Maharishi Vedic Science, explored together, constitute a radically new frontier of knowledge in the contemporary world, opening out vistas of what it is possible for mankind to know and to achieve, which extend far beyond present conceptions, and which demand a re-evaluation of current paradigms of reality and a reassessment of old conceptions of the sources and limits of human knowledge.

This introductory essay will provide a preliminary understanding of what the unified field is, what Maharishi Vedic Science is, and how Maharishi Vedic Science and modern science are related. It also defines fundamental concepts and terminology that will be frequently used in this journal and surveys the practical applications of this new technology. We begin with a description of the unified field as understood in modern science.

**The Unified Field of Modern Science**

Within the last few years, modern theoretical physics has identified and mathematically described a unified field at the basis of all observable states of physical nature. Einstein’s hope of finding a unified field theory to unite the electromagnetic, gravitational, and other known
force fields has now been virtually realized in the form of unified quantum field theories. Instead of having several irreducible and distinct force fields, physics can now mathematically derive all four known force fields from a single supersymmetric field located at the Planck scale \(10^{-33}\) cm or \(10^{-43}\) sec., the most fundamental time-distance scale in nature. This field constitutes an unbounded continuum of non-changing unity pervading the entire universe. All matter and energy in the universe are now understood to be just excitations of this one, all-pervading field.

Physics now has the capacity to describe accurately the sequence by which the unified field of natural law systematically gives rise, through its own self-interacting dynamics, to the diverse force and matter fields that constitute the universe. With a precision almost undreamed of a few years ago, the modern science of cosmology can now account for the exact sequence of dynamical symmetry breaking by which the unified field, the singularity at the moment of cosmogenesis, sequentially gave rise to the diverse force fields and matter fields. It is now possible to determine the time and sequence in which each force and matter field decoupled from the unified field, often to within a precision of minute fractions of a second. This gives us a clear understanding of how all aspects of the physical universe emerge from the unified field of natural law.

Mathematics, physiology, and other sciences have also located a unified source and basis of all the laws of nature in their respective disciplines. In mathematics, the foundational area of set theory provides an account of the sequential emergence of all of mathematics out of the single concept of a set and the relationship of set membership. The iterative mechanics of set formation at the foundation of set theory directly present the mechanics of an underlying unified field of intelligence that is self-sufficient, self-referral, and infinitely dynamic in its nature. Investigations into the foundations of set theory are ultimately investigations of this unified field of intelligence from which all diversity of the discipline emerge in a rigorous and sequential fashion. In physiology, it is the DNA molecule that contains, either explicitly or implicitly, the information specifying all structures and functions of the individual physiology. In this sense, therefore, it is DNA that unifies the discipline by serving as a unified source to which the diversity of physiological functioning can be traced.
Each of the modern sciences may indeed be said to have glimpsed a unified state of complete knowledge in which all laws of nature are contained in seed form. Each has gained some knowledge of how the unified field of natural law sequentially unfolds into the diverse expressions of natural law constituting its field of study. Modern science is now discovering and exploring the fundamental unity of all laws of nature.

**Maharishi Vedic Science**

Maharishi Vedic Science is based upon the ancient Vedic tradition of gaining knowledge through exploration of consciousness, developed by the great masters in the Himalayas who first expressed this knowledge and passed it on over many thousands of years in what is now the oldest continuous tradition of knowledge in existence. Maharishi’s work in founding Maharishi Vedic Science is very much steeped in that ancient tradition, but his work is also very much imbued with the spirit of modern science and shares its commitment to direct experience and empirical testing as the foundation and criterion of all knowledge. For this reason, and other reasons to be considered below, it is also appropriately called a science. The name “Maharishi Vedic Science” thus indicates both the ancient traditional origins of this body of knowledge and the modern commitment to experience, system, testability, and the demand that knowledge be useful in improving the quality of human life.

The founders of the ancient Vedic tradition discovered the capability of the human mind to settle into a state of deep silence while remaining awake, and therein to experience a completely unified, simple, and unbounded state of awareness, called pure consciousness, which is quite distinct from our ordinary waking, sleeping, or dreaming states of consciousness. In that deep silence, they discovered the capability of the mind to become identified with a boundless, all-pervading, unified field that is experienced as an eternal continuum underlying all existence. They gave expression to the self-sufficient, infinitely dynamic, self-interacting qualities of this unified state of awareness; and they articulated the dynamics by which it sequentially gives rise, through its own self-interacting dynamics, to the field of space-time geometry, and subsequently to all the distinct forms and phenomena that constitute the universe. They perceived the fine fabric of activity, as Maharishi explains it, through which this unity of pure consciousness, in the pro-
cess of knowing itself, gives rise sequentially to the diversity of natural law and ultimately to the whole of nature.

This experience was not, Maharishi asserts, on the level of thinking, or theoretical conjecture, or imagination, but on the level of direct experience, which is more vivid, distinct, clear, and orderly than sensory experience, perhaps much in the same way that Newton or Einstein, when they discovered the laws of universal gravitation or special relativity, enjoyed a vivid experience of sudden understanding or a kind of direct “insight” into these laws. The experience of the unified field of all the laws of nature appears to be a direct experience of this sort, except that it includes all laws of nature at one time as a unified totality at the basis of all existence—an experience obviously far outside the range of average waking state experience.

The ancient Vedic literature, as Maharishi interprets it, expresses, in the sequence of its flow and the structure of its organization, the sequence of the unfoldment of the diversity of all laws of nature out of the unified field of natural law. The Veda is thus to be understood as the sequential flow of this process of the oneness of pure consciousness giving rise to diversity; and Maharishi Vedic Science is to be understood as a body of knowledge based on the direct experience of the sequential unfoldment of the unified field into the diversity of nature. It is an account, according to Maharishi, of the origin of the universe from the unified field of natural law, an account that is open to verification through direct experience, and is thus to be understood as a systematic science.

These ancient seers of the Vedic tradition developed techniques to refine the human physiology so that it can produce this level of experience, techniques that were passed on over many generations, but were eventually lost. Maharishi’s revival and reinterpretation of ancient Vedic science is based on his revival of these techniques which have now been made widely accessible through the training of thousands of teachers of the Transcendental Meditation program. He has thus provided a reliable method of access to this field of direct experience where the oneness of pure consciousness gives rise to the diversity of the laws of nature; and he has also developed applications of this technology that render it open to experimental testing. These applications will be considered below.
Maharishi describes the experience of this unified field of consciousness as an experience of a completely unchanging, unbounded unity of consciousness, silently awake within itself. Gaining intimate familiarity with the silence of pure consciousness, Maharishi holds, one gains the ability to experience within that silence an eternal “fabric” or “blueprint” of all laws of nature that govern the universe, existing at the unmanifest basis of all existence. This unmanifest basis of life, where all laws of nature eternally reside in a collected unity, is experienced as the fabric of the silent field of consciousness itself, which is not in space and time, but lies at the unmanifest basis of all manifest activity in space and time. Through Maharishi’s work, this experience comes to be understood (as we see below) as a normal state of consciousness that arises in the natural course of human development.

Glimpses of this universal domain of experience, where all possibilities reside together in an eternally unified state, have been reported in almost every culture and historical epoch, from Plato to Plotinus and Augustine, and from Leibniz to Hegel and Whitehead. Scientists like Kepler, Descartes, Cantor, and Einstein also appear to have written of it and seemingly drew their insights into the laws of nature from this experience. Descartes (1908) writes, for example, of an experience that he had as a young man of “penetrating to the very heart of the kingdom of knowledge” and there comprehending all the sciences, not in sequence, but “all at once.” Scientists and writers from many traditions have described this experience of unity, which confirms that it is completely universal, and not a product of a particular cultural tradition. Just as the Vedic tradition has been misunderstood, however, so have those descriptions of consciousness found in these different cultural traditions; for without a technique that makes the experience systematically accessible to everyone, the understanding that this is a universal experience of the most fundamental level of nature’s activity has been obscured, and has not before now emerged into the light of universal science.

According to Maharishi Vedic Science, it is not only possible to gain direct experience of the unity of natural law at the basis of the manifest universe, but one can also directly experience the unity of nature sequentially giving rise to the diversity of natural law through its own self-interacting dynamics. Maharishi’s most recent research has
centered on delving deeply into the analysis of these self-interacting dynamics of consciousness.

The Self-Interacting Dynamics of Consciousness

When one gains the capability, through practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, of remaining awake while becoming perfectly settled and still, one gains the ability to experience a completely simple, unified, undifferentiated, self-referral state of pure consciousness, which is called Saṁhitā in the Vedic literature, in which knower, known, and process of knowing are one and the same. Consciousness is simply awake to itself, knowing its own nature as simple, unified pure consciousness. Yet in knowing itself, the state of pure consciousness creates an intellectually conceived distinction between itself as knower, itself as known, and itself as process of knowing. In Vedic literature, this is reflected in the distinction between Rishi (knower), Devatā (process of knowing), and Chhandas (object of knowledge). According to Maharishi, from the various interactions and transformations of these three intellectually conceived values in the unified state of pure consciousness, all diverse forms of knowledge, all diverse laws of nature, and ultimately all diversity in material nature itself sequentially emerge.

The conscious mind, awake at this totally settled and still level of awareness, can witness the mechanics by which this diversification of the many out of the unity of pure consciousness takes place. The mechanics of Rishi, Devatā, and Chhandas transforming themselves into Saṁhitā, Saṁhitā transforming itself into Rishi, Devatā, and Chhandas, and Rishi, Devatā, and Chhandas transforming themselves into each other are the mechanics by which the unity of pure consciousness gives rise to the diversity of natural law. These mechanics are expressed in the sequential unfoldment of Vedic literature. These are the self-interacting dynamics of consciousness knowing itself, which, Maharishi asserts, sequentially give rise to all diversity in nature.

Maharishi (1986) describes this self-referral state of consciousness as the basis of all creative processes in nature:

This self-referral state of consciousness is that one element in nature on the ground of which the infinite variety of creation is continuously emerging, growing, and dissolving. The whole field of change emerges from this field of non-change, from this self-referral, immortal state of
consciousness. The interaction of the different intellectually conceived components of this unified self-referral state of consciousness is that all-powerful activity at the most elementary level of nature. That activity is responsible for the innumerable varieties of life in the world, the innumerable streams of intelligence in creation. (pp. 25–26)

**The Structure of Maharishi Vedic Science**

One of Maharishi’s most important contributions to Vedic scholarship has been his discovery of the *Apaurusheya Bhashyā*, the “uncreated commentary” of the Rk Veda, which brings to light the dynamics by which the Veda emerges sequentially from the self-interacting dynamics of consciousness. According to Maharishi’s analysis, the Veda unfolds through its own commentary on itself, through the sequential unfoldment, in different-sized packets of knowledge, of its own knowledge of itself. All knowledge of the Veda is contained implicitly even in the first syllable “Āk” of the Rk Veda, and each subsequent expression of knowledge elaborates the meaning inherent in that packet of knowledge through an expanded commentary. The phonology of that syllable, as analyzed by Maharishi, expresses the self-interacting dynamics of consciousness knowing itself. As pure consciousness interacts with itself, at every stage of creation a new level of wholeness emerges to express the same self-interacting dynamics of Rishi, Devatā, and Chhandas.

Thus the body of Vedic literature reflects, in its very organization and structure, the sequential emergence of all structures of natural law from the unity of pure consciousness. Each unit of Vedic literature—Rk Veda, Sāma Veda, Yajur-Veda, Atharva Veda, Upanishad, Āraṇyakas, Brāhmaṇa, Vedāṅga, Upānga, Itihās, Purāṇ, Smṛiti, and Upaveda—expresses one aspect or level of the process. As Maharishi (1986) describes it:

The whole of Vedic literature is beautifully organized in its sequential development to present complete knowledge of the reality at the unmanifest basis of creation and complete knowledge of all of its manifest values. (p. 28)

Veda, Maharishi asserts, is the self-interaction of consciousness that ultimately gives rise to the diversity of nature. The diversity of creation sequentially unfolding from the unity of consciousness is the result of
distinctions being created within the wholeness of consciousness, as consciousness knows itself. Thus from the perspective of Maharishi Vedic Science, the entire universe is just an expression of consciousness moving within itself: All activity in nature is just activity within the unchanging continuum of the wholeness of consciousness.

Through the texts of ancient Vedic science, as interpreted by Maharishi, we possess a rich account of the emergence of diversity out of the unity of natural law. On the basis of this account, it becomes feasible to compare the Vedic description of the origin of the universe with that of the modern sciences.

**Modern Science and Maharishi Vedic Science**

When Maharishi heard from major scientists of the recent advances of unified field theory in physics, he asserted that modern science had glimpsed the unified field described in ancient Vedic science. “The knowledge of the unified field,” he said (1986, p. 29), “has been discovered by modern science during just the last few years, but the complete knowledge of the unified field has always been available in the Vedic literature.” Modern science, he proposed, had now arrived at the edge of comprehending, through unified quantum field theories, what Vedic science had described on the basis of exploration of the least excited state of consciousness since ancient times: that all diversity in nature sequentially emerges from a unified source through a precise self-interacting dynamics. Modern experimental science and Maharishi Vedic Science could now be seen as two diverse yet mutually complementary approaches to knowing the same underlying reality—one through the empirical method, the other through the exploration of the least excited state of consciousness. Through Maharishi’s inspiration, this has become a major research program that has engaged the attention of many scientists and that has yielded very rich results.

Over the past decade, Maharishi has participated in numerous symposia with major scientists on the theme of exploring modern science and Vedic science to discover detailed structural similarities in their descriptions of the unified field. These symposia have attracted eminent unified field theorists, mathematicians, and physiologists, including a number of Nobel laureates, as well as many of the most highly recognized Pandits of the Vedic tradition. Out of these interactions has come
a meeting of two traditions, East and West, on the ground of their common theme: the investigation of the unified field. Those who have followed these symposia have recognized a deep and impressive structure of knowledge common to both traditions. Both identify a boundless, all-pervading field underlying all states of matter and energy in the universe; both locate it on the most fundamental time-distance scale of nature; both assign to it the same properties of self-sufficiency, self-interaction, infinite dynamism, unboundedness, and unity, among many other common attributes; both identify a threefold structure at the basis of all nature; and both describe a dynamics by which the diversity of nature sequentially emerges from this unified field according to precise laws. The result of these symposia has been that many scientists, following Maharishi’s lead, now feel confident to assert that the unified field described by physics and the unified field of consciousness described by Vedic science are one and the same.

In the first issue of Modern Science and Vedic Science, the lead article by John Hagelin explored many of the deep connections between contemporary unified field theory in physics and Maharishi Vedic Science from the standpoint of an active field theorist. His work brought these two diverse methods of inquiry into close relation, drawing upon both the latest developments of unified field theories and the direct experience of the unified field.

Dr. Hagelin presented evidence for Maharishi’s assertion that the unified field of consciousness and the unified field of physics are the same. His main empirical evidence for this new paradigm was drawn from experimental research in the social sciences on the “Maharishi Effect”—the measurable effects on society resulting from the practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying. As further evidence for the identity of consciousness and the unified field, he cited deep parallels between the descriptions of the unified field found in physics and Maharishi Vedic Science. These strikingly similar descriptions support the conclusion that modern science and Maharishi Vedic Science are two complementary methods of approach to the same underlying unity of nature.
The New Paradigm of the Unity of Nature

It is a common belief that the unified field of physics is an objective reality of nature and that consciousness is a subjective experience, and that the two belong, consequently, to different categories of existence. According to this understanding, one is purely material, the other is purely mental, and the two cannot, therefore, be equated.

Through the experience of pure consciousness described in Maharishi Vedic Science, that unified level of intelligence is experienced, not as a mere subjective and localized phenomenon of thought or sensation, but as a non-changing, unbounded field of Being, pervading all forms and phenomena in the universe on a non-active, silent, unmanifest level. Objective and subjective aspects of nature are seen as but two manifest modes of this unified field at the unmanifest basis of existence. A thorough examination of the nature of the unified field in physics and the descriptions of unbounded consciousness brought to light by Maharishi support the thesis that they are but two complementary modes of apprehending a single underlying reality.

The view of nature as consisting of billiard-ball-type objects, each separate, discrete, and isolated from the other, belongs to the old classical Newtonian view of the world. Quantum field theory in modern physics no longer views nature in this way, but provides a new understanding in which the primary reality is that of quantum fields. All forms of matter and energy are understood to be excitations of these underlying fields. In the last year and a half, the apparently different fields of gravity, electromagnetism, and the weak and strong interactions have been theoretically unified as different levels of expression of one single underlying field. All forms and phenomena in the universe are just modes of vibratory excitation of this one all-pervading unified field.

Today, the success of modern physics in unifying our understanding of physical nature is mirrored in the success of Maharishi Vedic Science in unifying our understanding of consciousness. When the unbounded level of pure consciousness is gained as a direct experience, all activity in nature is experienced as an excited state of that one all-pervading field. Since quantum field theory also describes all activity in the universe as excitations of one underlying field, the simplest interpretation is that there is a single unified field which can be known both
through direct experience and through the objective sciences. In this new understanding of the unity of nature, mind and matter cease to be viewed as ultimately different and come to be seen as expressions of a deeper unity of unbounded consciousness.

The unity of nature is not merely a hypothetical unity, nor a unity of intellectual understanding or interpretation. It is a unity of direct experience that has been described in almost every tradition and every historical epoch. Maharishi Vedic Science only brings to light what has been the experience of many of the greatest minds throughout history. What is radically new is that Maharishi has provided a systematic and reliable method by which anyone can gain access to this level of experience. This method of access is the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying.

The Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Programs, including Yogic Flying

The Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying, have been introduced by Maharishi as an effective means for opening the unified field to all as a direct experience. In this way, the unified field becomes universally accessible to systematic exploration.

The key component of these programs is the Transcendental Meditation technique, which provides a systematic procedure by which the mind is allowed to settle naturally into a state of restful alertness, the self-referral state of pure consciousness, in which the mind is completely silent and yet awake. In this way, the state of pure consciousness, which has been the subject of philosophical speculation throughout the centuries, can now be investigated on the basis of direct experience. Maharishi’s immensely important contribution to the clarification and elucidation of this experience of pure consciousness will be a theme for analysis in future issues of this journal.

This quiet, still level of consciousness has rarely been experienced in the past because no systematic and effective technique has been available for providing that experience. The Transcendental Meditation technique is a simple, natural, and effortless procedure for allowing the awareness to settle into a state of deep silence while remaining awake. It has proved to be uniquely effective in making this level of experience widely accessible. Through the deep rest gained during the
practice of the technique, balance is systematically created on all levels of physiological functioning, and the nervous system is habituated to a more settled, coherent, and alert style of functioning. In time, a state of completely integrated functioning is gained, in which pure consciousness is spontaneously and permanently maintained. Once this state is established, the silent, self-referral field of awareness is always present as a stable, non-changing ground underlying all changing states of awareness. This integrated state of consciousness, Maharishi holds, is the basis of all excellence in life and provides the foundation for the further development of higher states of consciousness through the practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying.

**Maharishi’s Programs for the Development of Higher States of Consciousness**

The ultimate purpose of all aspects of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying, and Vedic Science is the development of consciousness, the unfoldment of the full human potential to live life in enlightenment. Enlightenment is that fully developed state of life in which one enjoys complete knowledge and lives in total fulfillment. In this state, one lives in harmony with all the laws of nature, enjoying the full support of natural law to achieve any desire without making mistakes.

Maharishi has identified a specific sequence of higher states of consciousness, each distinct from waking, dreaming, and sleeping, which, he asserts, arise in the normal full course of human development. Each state of consciousness unfolds on the basis of a concrete shift in the mode of the individual’s neurophysiological functioning. These states can be distinguished from waking, dreaming, and sleeping on the basis of their distinct physiological correlates. The higher states of consciousness that arise in this developmental sequence are, Maharishi asserts, a source of greater joy, knowledge, and fulfillment than ordinary waking state life.

The attainment of these higher states of consciousness is the basis for fully understanding and applying the theoretical assertions of Maharishi Vedic Science. Maharishi Vedic Science is just the exposition of the full range of direct experience that unfolds during the course of the natural
development of human consciousness. These states of consciousness are universal stages of human development accessible to everyone through the practice of Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness. What before was shrouded in the veil of mysticism is now scientifically understood as a normal, natural stage of human life available to anyone.

An article in the first issue of *Modern Science and Vedic Science*, by Dr. Charles Alexander and others (1987) examined the empirical evidence, drawn from behavioral and neurophysiological research, for the existence of these higher stages of human development. This article unfolded the scientific basis for understanding and verifying higher states of consciousness from the standpoint of a developmental psychologist, and laid the basis for a new paradigm of human development.

**Research on the Relation between Modern Science and Maharishi Vedic Science**

Each individual nervous system, when refined through Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness, is an instrument through which the silent field of pure unbounded consciousness becomes accessible as a field of inquiry. Since the unified field is all-pervading and everywhere the same, a nervous system finely enough attuned in its functioning can gain the ability, according to Maharishi, to experience and identify itself with that unbounded, undifferentiated, and unified field underlying all activity in nature. By taking one’s awareness from the gross level of sensory objects to perception of finer levels of activity, one gains the ability to experience that level of nature’s functioning at which the unity of pure consciousness gives rise to diversity. Gaining this unified state of consciousness is the means by which anyone can experience and confirm the structure of knowledge and reality described in Maharishi Vedic Science. This is partly what makes Maharishi Vedic Science a precise, verifiable science: All theoretical structures of the science can be verified through a reliable, systematic, effective technology. Other foundational aspects of this science will be considered below.

Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness become, in the modern world, a method for the investigation of the unified field and the most refined level of nature’s activity through direct experience. Modern physics, through its objective method of inquiry, has glimpsed a unified field underlying all of nature, but physics has reached a fundamental
impasse in its ability to experimentally investigate the unified field, because the energies required to probe these finer scales exceed those attainable by any conceivable particle accelerator technology. When physics can go no further, Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness, facilitate inquiry beyond the limitations of the objective approach by providing an effective means of exploring the unified field on the level of direct experience.

This exploration of the unified field through the subjective experience of consciousness is a well-structured program of research. It is guided by the knowledge of Maharishi Vedic Science set forth by Maharishi in conjunction with the modern sciences. When descriptions of the unified field from the standpoint of modern science, of Maharishi Vedic Science, and of direct experience coalesce, the three together provide a basis for complete knowledge. This program of research is based on Maharishi’s exposition of the Vedic literature as a complete and detailed expression of the unified field.

According to Maharishi’s exposition of the Veda, the sequential emergence of the diverse laws of nature from the unified field can be directly experienced in the field of consciousness as a sequence of sounds; these are presented in the sequential emergence of phonological structures of the Vedic texts. Veda is just the structure of the self-interacting dynamics through which the unified field gives rise to the diverse expressions of natural law. Fundamental theoretical concepts in physics and other disciplines, insofar as they are valid descriptions of nature, should therefore correspond to different aspects of Vedic literature that describe these realities from the standpoint of direct experience.

The basic program of research of modern science and Maharishi Vedic Science, as conceived by Maharishi, thus has three major goals: (1) to develop an integrated structure of knowledge by fathoming the depth of correspondence between the principles of modern science and Vedic Science; (2) to provide, from Maharishi Vedic Science, a foundation in direct experience for the most profound theoretical concepts of modern science; and (3) to resolve the impasse faced by the objective approach of modern science through the addition of the subjective approach of Maharishi Vedic Science, which provides complete knowledge of nature on the basis of the complete development of the knower.
In another issue of *Modern Science and Vedic Science* [see Vol. 5, Pt. 1 of this series], Dr. M.H. Weinless (1987) explored set theory and other foundational areas of modern mathematics in relation to Maharishi Vedic Science. In a proposed issue, Drs. R.K. Wallace, D.S. Pasco, and J.B. Fagan (1988) explore the fundamental relationship between Maharishi Vedic Science and the foundational areas of modern physiology, such as molecular biology. Their paper also discusses the extent to which fundamental principles of Maharishi Vedic Science can be used to further investigation of DNA structure and function.

The discovery of deep structures of knowledge and principles common to Maharishi Vedic Science and modern science represents such a profound contribution to our understanding of nature that this journal was founded to foster continued scholarly investigation of the interrelations between these complementary methods of gaining knowledge. Knowledge gained by direct experience of the fine fabrics of nature’s activity, and knowledge gained by the experimental methods of modern science coalesce in a new integrated method of inquiry that offers both the fundamental principles of modern science and the expressions of direct experience in Maharishi Vedic Science as two facets of one reality of nature’s functioning.

Maharishi (1986) sums up the relation between Maharishi Vedic Science, modern science, and his technologies of consciousness:

> Maharishi Vedic Science is applied through the Technology of the Unified Field. We speak of the unified field in connection with Maharishi Vedic Science because of the similarity of what has been discovered by physics and what exists in the self-referral state of human consciousness. The Technology of the Unified Field [That is, Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying—Eds.]. is a purely scientific procedure for the total development of the human psyche, the total development of the race. This is a time when objective, science-based progress in the world is being enriched by the possibility of total development of human life on earth, and this is the reason why we anticipate the creation of a unified field-based civilization. (p. 35)

On the basis of the universal availability of this domain of experience, an empirical science of consciousness becomes possible for the first time.
The *Science of Creative Intelligence:* Foundations of a New Science of Consciousness

The unified science that links the objective method of modern science and the subjective method of Maharishi Vedic Science, while preserving the integrity of each, is called the Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI). Maharishi himself has laid the foundations of this new science by showing, first, how a precise subjective science of consciousness is established on the basis of the direct experience of consciousness in its pure form; and second, how the experimental method can be used to test empirically the assertions of the subjective science. Through Maharishi’s work, for the first time in history, the full potential of human consciousness can be investigated both through direct experience and through the objective methods of modern science. The foundations of this new science linking the subjective and objective method will now be considered.

Experiential Foundations

Prior to Maharishi’s work, the term *consciousness* was considered too vague and indefinite to be allowed into scientific discussion. It was excluded from science as a metaphysical term because consciousness was not objectively observable, and therefore apparently not amenable to scientific investigation. Through Maharishi’s work, the concept of consciousness has been given a precise, well-defined meaning on the basis of direct experience, and its relation to the objective framework of science has been precisely specified.

The experience of pure consciousness, available to anyone through regular practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, is a basis for precise experiential knowledge of consciousness in its simplest, most fundamental, and most unified state. Even though consciousness can never be an object of experience, when the conscious mind becomes completely settled in a wakeful state, it experiences its own nature as pure wakefulness, pure consciousness, without any activity or objective content. Through the repeatable, systematic experience of this silent but wakeful state of mind, the concept of pure consciousness, which has been subject to conjecture and debate throughout the centuries, is now available to direct experience.
Having laid the basis for introducing consciousness into science as a precise concept, it remained for Maharishi to develop a program of applied research to test theoretical predictions of Maharishi Vedic Science. Identifying consciousness with the unified field provides a precise understanding of where consciousness is located in the framework of the sciences. To create an empirical science of consciousness, however, it was also necessary to account for how consciousness could be investigated through experimental research.

**Empirical Foundations**

Maharishi’s work has laid the foundation for an experimental investigation of consciousness. He has led the way in drawing out predictions of Vedic science that are open to testing, translating discussions of consciousness, derived from experience of higher states of consciousness, into predictions of experimentally observable phenomena. Three examples will illustrate this principle.

Pure consciousness, as was noted above, is experienced during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique as a state of pure restful alertness. This purely subjective experience does not, however, establish objectively whether it is in fact a state of deep rest and alertness, or only seems to be. If a person is in a deep state of rest and alertness, Maharishi has asserted, then physiological evidence of deep rest and alertness should be observable. Reduced levels of oxygen consumption, reduced breath rate, and other measures of more refined physiological activity would be predicted. Patterns of EEG coherence in the alpha range, indicative of restful alertness, should also be observed. Early pioneering research by Dr. R.K. Wallace (1986) found that these changes do indeed occur. In this way, statements about the subjective experience of consciousness were translated into empirically verifiable assertions. The basis of this correlation between consciousness and physiology is a principle, fundamental to Maharishi’s thinking, that for every state of consciousness there is a corresponding state of physiological functioning. The range of physiological correlates of the experience of pure consciousness is a subject of continuing research.

Consider a second example. Pure consciousness is understood in Maharishi Vedic Science as a clear and settled state of awareness. Anyone who gains this state is said to have a mind like a placid lake, unrippled
by waves, and thus able to reflect the world in a precise, non-agitated manner. Maharishi drew from this several predictions. One is that a person growing in the ability to experience pure consciousness would experience more stable and orderly physiological functioning. This can be translated into the testable prediction that subjects regularly practicing the Transcendental Meditation program display increased stability of the autonomic nervous system. Another prediction is that the practice of the Transcendental Meditation program will produce greater perceptual clarity and greater orderliness of thinking. Translated into specific terms, this leads to the prediction that practicing the Transcendental Meditation program will produce measurable increases on such scales as auditory discrimination, brain wave coherence, and problem solving ability. Research has been designed, carried out, and reported in the literature which measures the growth of these parameters in groups practicing the Transcendental Meditation program by comparison to control groups, thus providing objective verification of the predicted correlates of the subjective experience of pure consciousness.

A third example of how assertions of Maharishi Vedic Science can be translated into testable form is found in the sociological experiments on the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying. The hypothesis is that a group of people practicing this technology in one place, by bringing their awareness to the level of perfect orderliness in the unified field, will enliven qualities of harmony and orderliness in collective consciousness, thus producing measurable positive changes in the quality of societal life. Many experiments have been designed by Maharishi and carried out, demonstrating the power of this technology to produce significant changes in the level of coherence, positivity, balance, and stability in society, even on a global scale. (See Experimental Research, below.) The results of these experiments strongly support Maharishi’s assertion that consciousness is identical with the unified field.

**Experimental Research**

Over 600 hundred experimental studies in the areas of physiology, psychology, and sociology provide substantial confirmation of many basic assertions of Maharishi Vedic Science in the arena of empirical science. Many of these studies, now published in major scientific jour-
nals throughout the world, have been collected in the volumes called *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation Programme: Collected Papers, Vols. 1–6* (1977–1991). This research provides experimental validation of the efficacy of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying. Because this research—from over 600 scientific studies at over 300 universities and research institutions in 33 countries, published in more than 100 scientific journals—is too extensive to summarize here, the reader is referred to the *Collected Papers* for articles cited in this and other professional journals. Overall, this research probably represents the most concerted, well-designed research program on a potential means to benefit mankind ever conceived. Its present standing is that, taken together as a body of research, it is one of the most impressive confirmations of a theory of human potential ever executed.

Although it is beyond the scope of this introduction to go into the details of this research, it is worthwhile to mention some of the broad categories of scientific investigation that have evolved to guide the research program of the Science of Creative Intelligence. The main areas of research include studies on the individual and society. Research on benefits to the individual may be further subdivided into studies of physiological changes (both during and after the practice); cognitive, psychological, and behavioral changes; benefits to health and social behavior; and benefits to athletic performance, performance in business, and academic performance. Research on social benefits through collective practice may be further grouped into research on families, city populations, national populations, and global population. These research studies fall into the categories of crime prevention, accident prevention, benefits to economy, health, violence reduction, and world peace.

On the basis of this research, basic assertions of Maharishi Vedic Science become verifiable through empirical science. There is, moreover, a unity of theory underlying these diverse predictions and tests. These studies, taken as a whole, constitute a coherent research program that tests the prediction that repeated experience of the unified field results in greater orderliness, coherence, and positivity, in both individual and social life. Research on these changes not only tests fundamental theory, but demonstrates the practical benefits of this new
technology. Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness become open to experimental testing precisely because they have significant practical applications in improving every area of human life.

**Practical Applications**

of the *Transcendental Meditation* and *TM-Sidhi Programs*,
including *Yogic Flying*

Maharishi has frequently asserted that the purpose of Maharishi Vedic Science is to benefit life, not merely to give knowledge for its own sake. Knowledge, he holds, is for action, action for achievement, and achievement for fulfillment. The ultimate purpose of Maharishi Vedic Science and its applied technology is, therefore, to bring human life to fulfillment.

Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness bring fulfillment to individual life by unfolding the full potential of consciousness. When higher states of consciousness are realized, Maharishi emphasized, life is lived in “twenty-four-hour bliss.” Gaining contact with the unified field, one enjoys spontaneous right action, lives life in total accord with all the laws of nature, and accomplishes any life-supporting desire. Violations of natural law cease, and all suffering, which is caused by violation of natural law, comes to an end. Life is lived free from mistakes, in inner and outer fulfillment. Such is the fundamental purpose of the technologies Maharishi has created.

**Perfect Health**

Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness have important practical applications in the area of health. According to Maharishi, sickness arises from imbalance. Perfect health means wholeness, balance on all levels of life. When individual life is established in the unified field of all the laws of nature, all actions are spontaneously in accord with natural law. In terms of physiological functioning, this means perfect integration and balance, from the biochemical and molecular levels to the macroscopic, organismic levels.

Maharishi Ayurveda is an integral part of Maharishi Vedic Science. It is a revitalized form of the ancient ayurvedic science of life and health, restored to its original purity and effectiveness by Maharishi.
According to Maharishi, the cornerstone of Ayurveda is the development of consciousness. Perfect health in mind, body, and behavior is the result of perfect balance in consciousness and physiology. This develops through the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying, when the mind identifies itself with the unified field, the field of perfect balance and wholeness.

Maharishi Ayurveda combines Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness with specific procedures to treat and prevent illness and promote longevity. Maharishi Ayurveda Medical Centers have been established in many countries to eliminate the basis of sickness, create perfect health, and reverse the aging process. Over the last fifteen years, research into the effects of Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness, on health have been carried out at research institutions all over the world, and Maharishi’s recent emphasis on Ayurveda provides many new research opportunities for investigating the applications of Vedic Science in the area of health.

Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness also include technologies to accomplish specific goals of individual and social life. The TM-Sidhi program has been founded by Maharishi to utilize the knowledge and the organizing power of the unified field for improving achievements in every area of human endeavor.

Unfolding Full Human Potential through the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs

When one gains the level of experience of the self-interacting dynamics of consciousness, Maharishi holds, one gains command over all the laws of nature. Stationed at the source of all the laws of nature, at the “central switchboard” of nature’s activity, human consciousness can command all the laws of nature to create any desirable effect in the material world. Maharishi has brought forth a program for gaining mastery over all the laws of nature, based on the formulations found in the ancient Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali, one of the principal books of Vedic literature. This is the TM-Sidhi program, in which the mind gains the ability to function from the level of the self-interacting dynamics of the unified field. Once established in pure self-referral awareness through the practice of the Transcendental Meditation program, an individual
gains the ability to draw upon the organizing power of the unified field to accomplish anything. Since the unified field is the source of all existence, its organizing power is infinite, and one who functions from this level has unlimited organizing ability. Established in that unified field of all possibilities on the unmanifest level of existence before consciousness assumes the form of matter, all possibilities open to one’s awareness and one can govern the expressions of the unified field as it transforms itself into matter. As Maharishi (1986) expresses it:

In this program, human awareness identifies itself with that most powerful level of nature’s functioning and starts to function from there. The purpose of the TM-Sidhi program is to consciously create activity from that level from where nature performs. (p. 74)

Through the practice of the TM-Sidhi program, Maharishi predicts, it will become possible to achieve levels of body-mind coordination hitherto deemed impossible. It will be possible, he asserts, to realize the ancient dream of flying through the air, and to develop highly enhanced powers of hearing, seeing, and intuition that extend the senses far beyond the limits currently conceived to be possible. In the Yogic Flying technique, which Maharishi developed from the Yoga Sūtras, the silent state of self-referral consciousness is integrated most fully with outer activity as the body lifts in spontaneous hops, generating inner bliss and maximum coherence in brain functioning. Other Vedic texts describe the ability to move through the air at will as a result of perfection of this Yogic Flying technique. By activating laws of nature that are now hidden to ordinary methods of scientific investigation, the TM-Sidhi program provides a research methodology to explore what is possible for mankind to achieve on the basis of functioning from that level where the conscious mind has become identified with the unified field. This is the basis of a technological revolution more powerful and beneficial to life than any conceived through empirical science.

The Maharishi Effect

The TM-Sidhi program, when practiced in groups, is even more powerful than the TM-Sidhi program practiced alone. The collective practice of the TM-Sidhi program can produce an influence that affects the entire world in measurable ways. This global influence of coherence
generated through the group practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying, has been called the “Maharishi Effect.”

As early as 1960, Maharishi predicted that when individuals practice the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs in sufficiently large groups, a measurable increase in orderliness, coherence, and positive trends would be observed in society. By enlivening the life-supporting and evolutionary qualities of the unified field, such as perfect orderliness, infinite dynamism, and self-sufficiency, Maharishi held, these qualities would be enlivened in collective consciousness and this would have positive, measurable effects on a wide social scale.

Over the years, social scientists developed formulas for predicting the size of the group necessary to create a “phase transition” in society to a measurably higher quality of life. These formulas, calculated on the basis of analogous phase transitions, from disorder to orderliness, studied in physics, came out to be approximately one percent of a population practicing the Transcendental Meditation program, and a much smaller percentage, on the order of the square root of one percent, practicing the TM-Sidhi program.

Since 1978, many experimental studies have been performed to measure the effect of large groups practicing the TM-Sidhi program. Experimental confirmation of the principle has been the consistent result. The Maharishi Effect is now as well documented as any principle of modern social science. In creating this technology, Maharishi has provided an effective method of social change that operates from the silent, harmonizing level of the unified field to produce a transformation in the quality of collective consciousness, thereby effortlessly creating coherence on a global scale. Maharishi (1986) describes how this effect is produced:

The transcendental level of nature’s functioning is the level of infinite correlation. When the group awareness is brought in attunement with that level, then a very intensified influence of coherence radiates, and a great richness is created. Infinite correlation is a quality of the transcendental level of nature’s functioning from where orderliness governs the universe. (p. 75)

D. W. Orme-Johnson and M. C. Dillbeck (1987) have summarized the empirical research on the Maharishi Effect. They surveyed
experimental studies documenting the sociological improvements resulting from the group practice of the TM-Sidhi program. Based on these results Maharishi asserts that the collective practice of the TM-Sidhi program in groups of 8000 (the square root of one percent of the world’s population) would produce coherence in the collective consciousness of the entire world. Statistically significant reductions in crime, accidents, fatalities, and disease, and other positive benefits on a global scale observed during experimental periods have established this as an effective means of changing collective consciousness and thereby changing the quality of life in the world—simply by enlivening the source of order and coherence at the basis of nature, from the level of the unified field.

Maharishi’s Program to Create World Peace

The most dramatic application of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying, is Maharishi’s program to create world peace through the creation of a permanent group of 8000 collectively practicing Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness. These technologies are a basis for eliminating negativity and destructive tendencies throughout the world. Large groups of experts in the TM-Sidhi program, creating coherence, during experimental periods, have provided ample opportunity for scientific research. During these experimental periods, conflict and violence have been reduced in war-torn areas and negative trends have been reversed. Over thirty studies have established the efficacy of this technology to eliminate conflict and promote life-supporting, positive trends throughout the world.

Maharishi clearly lays out the basis of his program to create world peace. Stress, he holds, is the basic cause of all negativity, violence, terrorism, and national and international conflicts. Stress generated by the violation of natural law causes strained trends and tendencies in the environment. Through the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying, human intelligence can be identified with the unified field, and violations of natural law will cease. “Reinforcement of evolutionary power in world consciousness is the only effective way,” Maharishi holds, “to neutralize all kinds of negative
trends in the world and maintain world consciousness on a high level of purity” (Maharishi’s Program to Create World Peace, 1986, p. 7).

The global applications of this new science and technology are almost beyond present levels of imagination. Yet scientific research has found measurable reductions in levels of violence, crime, and other indications of negativity during the practice of the TM-Sidhi program in sufficiently large groups during experimental trial periods. Here for the first time in history is a scientific basis for creating world peace, ending terrorism, and reducing the negative trends of society.

On the basis of these studies, Maharishi holds that world peace can be guaranteed now, within a few years, through the establishment of groups of 8000; he holds that perfect health and unlimited longevity can be achieved for individual life, and that balance, coherence and health in society can be established in our generation. War, crime, poverty, and all problems that bring unhappiness to the family of man can be entirely eliminated. Life, he holds, can be lived in absolute abundance and fulfillment. Maharishi has called upon every significant individual in the world to act now to adopt this program for world peace by creating groups of 8000 collectively practicing the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying, to establish world peace and guarantee its perpetuation.

The practical benefits that Maharishi foresees through these new technologies are far greater than those achieved by the technology based on present science. As science has investigated deeper levels of nature, from microbes to molecules to atoms, new technologies have emerged which apply the knowledge in areas such as medicine and nuclear power. In drawing upon the deepest and most powerful level of natural law, the level of the unified field, Maharishi Vedic Science lays the basis for much more powerful technologies still. Where modern medicine has been able to eliminate some diseases by drawing upon microscopic levels, Maharishi Vedic Science lays the basis for the elimination of all disease, and more importantly, for the creation of perfect health and reversal of aging. While modern science has produced nuclear technology but no technology for peaceful resolution of conflict, Maharishi Vedic Science draws upon the infinite organizing power of the unified field at the basis of nature to create social harmony.
and world peace while preserving cultural integrity and stimulating prosperity and progress.

Maharishi’s Technologies of Consciousness as a New Method of Gaining Knowledge

The bold assertions about what is practically possible through the application of Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness must be understood in the context of the new method of gaining knowledge that Maharishi has founded. The history of science testifies that as new methods of gaining knowledge of deeper and more unified levels of natural law become available, more powerful and useful technologies become available. Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness are based on the deepest and most unified level of knowledge of nature. It should not be surprising, therefore, that this technology provides a radically new source of organizing power to fulfill the highest goals of mankind.

These technologies of consciousness offer a fundamentally new approach to knowledge that has not been available before. In asserting that it is possible for one individual to know all the laws of nature and the entirety of the universe within his or her own consciousness, Maharishi is well aware that he is introducing an account of human potential that goes well beyond the concept of the limits of knowledge that has dominated in the scientific era. This new paradigm of knowledge must be examined in a new light.

It is a widespread belief in the modern age that the only valid method of gaining knowledge is by moving outward through the senses, that is, through the methods of the empirical sciences. It is, however, only the historical failure of subjective approaches that has led to this belief. It cannot be thought that the senses are the only way of gaining knowledge, and those who cling to the belief that it is, only allow old habits to stand in the way of exploring new possible sources of knowledge.

Subjective approaches to knowledge in the past failed to bear fruit because they failed to provide an effective and reliable method of access to an invariant and universal domain of direct experience. They thus failed to establish independent standards of knowledge, they failed to produce methods of distinguishing truth from error, they failed to produce consensus even among those practicing the same method, and
they failed to produce practical technological benefits through the practice of the method.

Maharishi’s technologies of consciousness are different from subjective approaches in the past, and must therefore be considered on separate grounds. They provide an effective, reliable method of opening the mind to an invariant and universal level of nature which is everywhere, and yet not ordinarily open to experience because the mind usually functions on more active levels. By providing a technology to make this non-active level of nature available as a direct experience, Maharishi has made this domain available to all as a new field of inquiry; and, where there is a new source of experience of something universal, unchanging, and objectively verifiable, a new source of knowledge is available.

The Science of Creative Intelligence gives a new account of how complete knowledge is possible. When the mind becomes completely settled and still, according to this account, it gains the ability to perceive on the most refined levels of nature’s functioning—the all-pervading unified field where all laws reside in a collective totality. It not only experiences this unified field, it becomes identified with it; it is the unified field and thus knows the unified field as its own universal Self. On this level of knowledge, there is no separation of knower from the known. Nothing lies outside the range of the knower. All laws of nature and everything in the universe can be known as intimately as one’s own Self. Mind and body cease to be seen as separate realities. Maharishi (1986) says:

In reality our self-referral state of consciousness is the unified field—not an object of knowledge as a rose is when we say, “I see that rose.” The unified field is not an object in this way; it is the subject itself. The unified field is a self-referral state of awareness that knows itself, and in knowing it is the knower and the known, both together. (p. 96)

On this account, there is no distinction between the knower and the reality that it knows. Since it is the Self that knows itself, there is nothing ultimately outside the consciousness of the knower, and there are therefore no limits on what can be known. [This unbounded value of the Self is written with an uppercase “S” to distinguish it from the ordinary, localized self we typically experience.] If true, this account of knowledge provides a fundamentally new source of discovery of the
laws of nature, like the empirical sciences, in that it relies on experience as a source of knowledge, but distinct from these sciences in that it draws upon a wider range of experience. As a new source of discovery, it extends the power of scientific investigation; yet it remains within the scope of empirical science by being subject to procedures of objective verification.

**Maharishi University of Management**

Maharishi University of Management, formerly Maharishi International University, was founded by Maharishi in 1971, based on the principles of the Science of Creative Intelligence. One of the major functions of this University is to show how each discipline and each level of natural law arises from the unified field of pure consciousness. The specialty of Maharishi University of Management is the knowledge of the unified field of pure consciousness from the standpoint of each academic discipline. At Maharishi University of Management, each modern discipline traces the diversity of laws back to a unified source in the unified field of pure consciousness and shows how the diversity of laws emerge from this unified field through the self-interacting dynamics of consciousness. Just as physics and mathematics have discovered increasingly unified levels of natural law at the basis of their discipline, thus tracing the diversity of its laws to their source in the unified field, so every academic discipline can ultimately show how its laws derive sequentially from the unified field. This project of unification of knowledge, a long sought goal throughout Western intellectual history, is now being systematically pursued and completed at Maharishi University of Management.

This enterprise includes developing charts to show how each modern discipline arises from the unified field of pure consciousness. For each discipline, a Unified Field Chart has been constructed to show how the discipline sequentially emerges from the unified field through the self-interacting dynamics of knower, known, and process of knowing. These Unified Field Charts constitute a major unification of knowledge, showing at a glance how all the diversity of knowledge emerges from a unified source.

Since the unified field is understood as a field of consciousness, and consciousness is the most fundamental level of each student’s own Self,
the study of the unified field at Maharishi University of Management constitutes a method of systematically relating all knowledge to the student’s Self. The success of Maharishi University of Management’s Consciousness-Based education is due in part to this program of relating all knowledge to the unified field and the unified field to the Self. Because all students and faculty at Maharishi University of Management collectively practice the Transcendental Meditation technique, regularly gaining the direct experience of the unified field of pure consciousness, this unified field increasingly becomes a living reality. This unified field ceases to be an abstract concept and becomes as intimate as the Self. The experience of faculty and students has been that learning and inquiry is joyful and most fulfilling in this environment of Consciousness-Based education.

[The reader is referred to other issues of the journal Modern Science and Vedic Science as well as to other volumes in this book series Consciousness-Based Education: A Foundation for Teaching and Learning in the Academic Disciplines for articles illustrating how Maharishi Vedic Science is transforming our understanding of modern academic disciplines. —Eds.]

**Maharishi’s Work in Historical Perspective:**

**An Appreciation**

Maharishi has created a major watershed in world intellectual history. He has laid the foundation for a fundamental change both in intellectual history and in the history of technology and civilization itself. His work has created a new paradigm of the unity of human knowledge, and, we may expect, will unify the sciences and humanities in a more integrated way than ever before. He has, moreover, brought to an end the old notion that man is born to suffer and that life is a struggle. The practical programs he has founded provide a scientifically validated basis for reducing and even eliminating crime, war, terrorism, poverty, and other problems that beset mankind; more importantly, his discoveries make it possible to live life in the fulfillment of pure knowledge and permanent bliss consciousness and to achieve the highest goals of human endeavor. He has laid the basis for a new civilization, founded on new principles of complete, reliable, useful, fulfilling knowledge—
the knowledge of the unified field of pure consciousness as the perfectly orderly, unified source of nature.

Maharishi is unique in the world today. He has not offered conjectures and hypotheses about reality and human potential, nor does he set himself up as a final authority on matters of knowledge when he speaks rather of experience as the ultimate basis of knowledge. The experience of which he has spoken is derived from a new source, from the level of fully developed human life gained when one’s awareness is open to the unified field of pure consciousness. Maharishi’s life is an example of that which he taught. Unlike those whose teaching is based solely on the personal authority of the individual, Maharishi has founded universities, sciences, technologies, and other institutions based on universal principles through which any individual can gain the direct experience of the fully unfolded nature of life and validate the truth of what is described in the science. Because of this, Maharishi is held in highest esteem by millions of people around the world.

Maharishi has provided the means of unfolding the dormant creative genius within everyone, and he has established institutions through which the knowledge of how to unfold this potential will be perpetuated generation after generation. He has, moreover, used this knowledge to found programs to create perfect health, progress, prosperity, and permanent peace for the world—programs to end suffering and allow life to be lived in spontaneous accord with natural law. These institutions are not just ideals, but functioning institutions whose practical achievements are now well documented and available for all to examine.

Everyone now has the ability, with the availability of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, including Yogic Flying, to engage in this great experiment of identifying one’s awareness with the total potential of natural law and to spontaneously live in accord with all the laws of nature while established in the awareness of the unified field of pure consciousness. The experience of approximately three million people who have learned the Transcendental Meditation technique testifies to its practicality and its effortlessness and ease of practice. Experimental studies have shown that its benefits are real and concrete. On this basis, Maharishi has foreseen the creation of a new era of civilization—Heaven on Earth—in which life will be lived
in fullness and abundance without suffering. Maharishi’s work eliminates the very basis of stress and suffering and lays the ground for a new civilization, a unified field-based, ideal civilization that draws on the infinite organizing power of the unified field of pure consciousness to bring human life to fulfillment.

References
Maharishi’s program to create world peace: Removing the basis of terrorism and war. (1986). Washington, DC: Age of Enlightenment Press.
Wallace, R. K., Orme-Johnson, D. W., & Dillbeck, M. C. (Eds.).


Kenneth Chandler’s “Modern Science Vedic Science: An Introduction,” here revised/updated, was originally published in *Modern Science and Vedic Science, 1(2)*, p. v-xxvi. It is reprinted with permission of the publisher.
RESOURCES

Electronic Resources and Publications

LINKS

Education

Maharishi University of Management: www.mum.edu
Maharishi School of the Age of Enlightenment:
  www.maharishischooliowa.org
Maharishi’s Consciousness-Based Education: www.CBEprograms.org
International Foundation of Consciousness-Based Education:
  www.CBEfoundation@ifcbe.org
David Lynch Foundation for Consciousness-Based Education and
World Peace: www.davidlynchfoundation.org

Transcendental Meditation Program

Maharishi’s Technologies of Consciousness: www.tm.org
Maharishi Channel: www.maharishichannel.in
Maharishi Lectures and Interviews (film clips): www.tm.org/maharishi
Invincible America Assembly: www.invincibleamerica.org
Global Country of World Peace: www.globalcountry.org
Global Good News Site: www.globalgoodnews.com
Fortune Creating Homes: www.FortuneCreatingHomes.com
Sthapatya Veda: www.sthapathyaveda.com

Research

Center for Brain, Consciousness, and Cognition: www.drfredtravis.com
Truth about TM: www.truthabouttm.org

PHONE NUMBERS

1-888-LEARN TM (1-888-532-7686)
Maharishi University of Management (1-641-472-7000)
PUBLICATIONS

These publications are available from Maharishi University of Management Press: http://mumpress.com and at the MUM Bookstore.

Books by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

*Science of Being and Art of Living*

*Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary, Chapters 1–6*

*Celebrating Perfection of Education*

*Celebrating Perfection in Administration*

*Vedic Knowledge for Everyone*

*Inaugurating Maharishi Vedic University*

Consciousness-Based Books Imprint from MUM Press

The series *Consciousness-Based Education: A Foundation for Teaching and Learning in the Academic Disciplines* contains 12 volumes, available in 2011.

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Each volume includes a paper introducing the Consciousness-Based understanding of the discipline and a Unified Field Chart that conceptually maps all branches of the discipline, illustrating how the discipline emerges from the field of pure consciousness, the Self of every individual. These charts connect the “parts” of knowledge to the “wholeness” of knowledge and the wholeness of knowledge to the Self of the student.

Subsequent papers show how a Consciousness-Based approach may be applied in various branches of the discipline; these papers include occasional examples of student work. Each volume ends with an appendix describing Maharishi Vedic Science and Technologies of Consciousness in detail.