
About the Author



John Flodstrom is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Honors Program at the University of Louisville. Dr. Flodstrom received his B.A. degree from Loyola University, Chicago and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in philosophy from Northwestern University. He has taught at the University of Louisville since 1965 and has been Visiting Lecturer at Maharishi University of Management (formerly Maharishi International University) on several occasions.

Address correspondence to: Department of Literature
Maharishi University of Management, Fairfield, IA 52557
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Language, Self-Knowledge, and Maharishi Vedic Science: Grasping the Fullness of Literary Texts

John Flodstrom

University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.

Abstract

Literature has long been considered an important source for knowledge about the self and the world. However, scholars have lately raised serious concerns about whether it is after all 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 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.

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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 what Maharishi Mahesh Yogi calls the field of pure 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, cut 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 Lévi-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, p. 19). Lévi-Strauss thus sees the unconscious at the source of systems of language. Because structuralists, such as Lévi-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 what Maharishi sometimes refers to as 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 he calls Maharishi Vedic ScienceSM, a system that provides a profound explanation for the relationships between existence, consciousness, and language.² Maharishi Vedic Science is particularly effective because it is grounded in the direct experience of pure consciousness, the fundamental basis for all knowledge. Vedic ScienceSM 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. Vedic Science, with its practical methodologies of the Transcendental Meditation[®] technique (TM[®]) and the TM-Sidhi[®] programs, 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 Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 30).

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, a certitude devoid of truth, providing neither knowledge of oneself nor an intuition of a substantial soul.³ Ricoeur (1970) asserts that Immanuel Kant “definitively dissociated reflection from any so-called knowledge of the self” (p. 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 mediately through reflection. Reflection, he explains, is not direct, or immediate awareness. It requires “something like interpretation” (p. 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 intentionality 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” (pp. 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 a reflective process is “the contrary of a philosophy of the immediate.” The “I” or ego can be discovered as a concrete reality only in those “ideas, actions, works, institutions, and movements” that give it objective reality (p. 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, 1981, p.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 hermenutics 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 post-modern 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 (1982), expounding Jacques Derrida, argues that meaning is always context-bound, while the context is always boundless (pp. 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" (pp. 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—withdrawing 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.⁴ 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.⁵

Waking state is the state of consciousness in which we live our lives. Maharishi has made it clear that this state is a state of duality in which our awareness is constantly

divided. In waking state one is aware both of one's self as knower and of a world of objects in which one functions; however, in this state full awareness of the Self is incomplete. The objective pole of awareness tends to dominate, causing one to fall into the situation Maharishi (1967) 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 (pp. 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.

Maharishi has identified a fourth state of consciousness, Transcendental Consciousness, that 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 1972, 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 (1967) 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 says] 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. (p. 314)

Maharishi (1972) 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 (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 (1972) 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. (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

Maharishi's lecture "The Phonology of Creation," (1972a) delineates the relationships between levels of conscious awareness and levels of language. Unlike the single level of language accepted by modern linguistics, the Vedic model possesses four stages from the unmanifest, transcendental to the most expressed spoken level. At the transcendental *Parā* 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" (R. Orme-Johnson, 1987, p. 343). Three additional levels of language with their corresponding levels of the mind also exist. The *Pashyantī* 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" (R. Orme-Johnson, 1987, p. 344). From here speech develops from the finest impulse to the point of verbalized thinking in *Madhyamā*, which "comprises the levels of mind and intellect where memory, thought, and discrimination function." Finally, speech manifests on the sensible level, in *Baikhari*, "where it is spoken and can be heard" (R. Orme-Johnson, 1987, p. 344).

The emergence of these levels of speech correspond to the emergence of concrete objects from the same absolute field of consciousness. Maharishi (1972a) 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." 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 *Āishi* who "sees the truth, the Veda, the inner reality of everyone's life; . . . pure knowledge, complete knowledge" (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1994, pp. 2–5). Maharishi (1972a) explains the relationship between a *Āishi*'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 on 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's the same vibration. It's the same impulse, which is lively at its basic value.

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 expe-

riences 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. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986, pp. 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 name of a value is the true story of what that value is; what that form is,” Maharishi (1972a) says. If it is not a Vedic word, however, “the impulse of the word will not be that quality of the impulses which 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 *Āi*shi, however, is different; the name is not haphazardly given; “it’s the cosmic reality which is expressing itself on its own level” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1972a).

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.⁶ Words, no matter what the language, will be perceived differently at diverse levels of consciousness: “all the words, howsoever wild they may be on their gross meaning level, they will have that fine, celestial level” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1972b). 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 Mahesh Yogi, 1972b).

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 linguists this randomness of meaning occurring on the surface constitutes the very essence of language, and without a 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:

The perfection of the words in *Rik Veda* is that on the gross level, whatever they indicate, that quality is present in that object. Whatever they indicate on the finer level, there is a word corresponding to that in the finer. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1972b)

Vedic words, then, do not lose the connection between meaning and sound as they move from subtle to more surface levels (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1972a).

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 from simply existing on its own is an ignorance of its own supreme nature, a factor overcome through the practical techniques of Vedic Science: the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs effortlessly and naturally establish the awareness in the field of pure consciousness, the foundation for all higher states of consciousness.⁷ Maharishi explains, 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.

Vedic Science's "subjective" approach to gaining knowledge is also as its name suggests methodically scientific. In the *Āishī*'s Vedic cognition, the "naming" of Vedic words, as it were, language sequentially unfolds from the subtlest laws and impulses of Nature at their very point of sprouting, from the *Pashyantī* 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 (1972b) says "one word properly known and properly used is enough for all achievements in the world and in heaven." Such a word is AGNIM, the first word of the *Āk Veda*. In a long and ongoing commentary on this single 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 *Āk Veda*,⁸ the "blueprint of creation." As the *Āk Veda* sequentially unfolds, each subsequent word, line, verse, and chapter is an elaboration of what preceded them; 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 *Āishīs* whose awareness has become established on the transcendental *Parā* 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 Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 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 it itself is scientific. The words of the Vedas are not to be taken as mere symbols which 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 which 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 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 hidden, to a greater or lesser degree, according to *Âk Veda*.⁹ It is awareness 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.¹⁰ Ricoeur (1978) 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 "re-describe" reality and, by "striking out perception," can recreate reality "at a higher level of realism" (pp. 9, 10).

Ricoeur (1966) asserts that through the introduction of "genuine transcendence" "a *presence* which brings about a true revolution in the theory of subjectivity, . . . a radically new dimension, the *poetic* dimension" is achieved (p. 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 (1971) points out that if one's consciousness is not wholly developed, "knowledge must crumble on the hard rocks of ignorance." 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 the 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, 1987, p. 362).

Maharishi (1976) emphasizes the enormous importance of developing the full potential of consciousness. He states that in order to get the most out of a piece of literature, for the highest inspiration and evolution: "It is always beneficial to the reader if he has a higher level of consciousness than the writer, because then he will derive greater inspiration, he will derive greater charm and greater meaning, he will drive inspired evolution through whatever he reads." When Transcendental Consciousness is permanently established in the awareness, the results can be truly precious. Maharishi (1971) states that this is that state of enlightenment in which supreme knowledge, Veda, can be known and lived. He says 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 Vedas are made, this transcendental Pure Consciousness."

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.¹¹ Maharishi Vedic Science

makes an enormous contribution to the study of literature by 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.¹² 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,
everything—
from the most nocturnal kiss
to the splendor of the zenith—
everything is clearer.

El Poema (Translated by Eugenio Florit)¹³

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 which 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 (1988) sees it, "the duration of the power of [the] work to speak directly is fundamentally unlimited" (p. 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, as Maharishi says of knowledge itself, 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. This is 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 the most 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 every one 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, Maharishi states, 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 the writer expands, 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 presently 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.

Notes

¹See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, translated by David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 40–44, 138–140. For Paul Ricoeur, see discussion below.

²The fundamental principles of Maharishi Vedic Science can be found in such works of his as *The Science of Being and Art of Living* (London: International SRM Publications, 1963 (1966)), *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary, Chapters 1–6* (Baltimore: Penguin/Arkana, 1967), and *Life Supported by Natural Law: Lectures by His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi* (Fairfield, IA: Maharishi International University Press, 1986). Also see, Robert Keith Wallace, *The Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field: The Neurophysiology of Enlightenment* (Fairfield, IA: MIU Neuroscience Press, 1986) and Robert Keith Wallace, *The Physiology of Consciousness* (Fairfield, IA: Maharishi International University Press, 1993).

³Intuition 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.”

⁴The 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).

⁵For a more complete description of these higher states of consciousness and the mechanics of their development, see Robert Keith Wallace, *The Physiology of Consciousness*, Chapter One. Rhoda Orme-Johnson’s “A Unified Field Theory of Literature” (pp. 331–341) gives a lucid description of Maharishi’s account of the higher states and gives numerous examples from works of literature of experiences of the different higher states of consciousness.

⁶For Maharishi’s comments on the influence of climatic and geographical factors on language, see Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *Language and Climate*, [Videotaped lecture, 16 January, 1975, Viznau, Switzerland].

⁷See Robert Keith Wallace, *The Physiology of Consciousness*, especially pp. 27–30.

⁸See *Maharishi International University Catalogue 1974–75* (Los Angeles: MIU Press, 1974), pp. 197–8. Chapter Fourteen of Robert Keith Wallace’s *The Physiology of Consciousness* outlines the mechanics of this sequential unfoldment and shows the connection and practical benefits of the pure knowledge found therein to each individual person.

⁹ऋचो अक्षरे परवमे व्योमवचनम्
 Richo akshare parame vyoman
 यरुस्मन् दवेवा अधि हवचवे कनषवेदुः
 Yasmin deva adhi vishve nisheduh
 यस्तन्न वेदव किर्माचा करिष्यतिव
 Yastanna veda kim richa karishyati
 यै तद तद विदुस्तै चमे समासते
 Ya it tad vidus ta ime samasate.

Âk Veda (I.164.39)

“The verses of the Veda exist in the collapse of fullness (the *kshar* of “A”) in the transcendental field, self-referral consciousness, the Self. / In which reside all the devas, 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, quoted in Robert Keith Wallace, *The Physiology of Consciousness*, p. 262. Maharishi’s translation of this verse can also be found in the *Maharishi International University Catalogue 1974–75*, p. xi.)

¹⁰In his lecture, *The Quantum Theory of Literature*, Maharishi refers to the “scientist’s consciousness,” which he says, “is ready at any time to take in what is there, in a very relaxed way.” Scientists approach things, he explains, 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.

¹¹For an insightful discussion of these literary techniques, see Rhoda Orme-Johnson's "A Unified Field Theory of Literature" (pp. 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 literary study.

¹²See, for example, Robert Keith Wallace, *The Maharishi Technology of the Unified Field: The Neurophysiology of Enlightenment* and Orme-Johnson, D.W. and Farrow, J.T., Eds., *Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation Programme: Collected Papers, Volumes I–V* (Rheinweiler, W. Germany: Maharishi European Research University Press, 1977).

¹³Pedro Salinas, *El Poema*. In *The Poem Itself*, edited with an introduction by Stanley Burnshaw (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1960), p. 209.

I have quoted Eugenio Florit's translation of lines 13–27. The complete poem, in the original, follows:

Y ahora, aquí está frente a mí.
Tantas luchas que ha costado,
tantos afanes en vela,
tantos bordes de fracaso
junto a este esplendor sereno
ya son nada, se olvidaron.
El queda, y en él, el mundo,
la rosa, la piedra, el pájaro,
aquellos, los del principio,
de este final asombrados.
¡Tan claros que se veían,
y aun se podía aclararlos!
Están mejor; una luz
que el sol no sabe, unos rayos
los iluminan, sin noche,
para siempre revelados.
Las claridades de ahora
lucen más que las de mayo.
Si allí estaban, ahora aquí;
a más transparencia alzados.
¡Que naturales parecen,
que sencillo el gran milagro!
En esta luz del poema,
todo,
desde el más nocturno beso
al cenito esplendor,
todo está mucho más claro.

(*Todo más claro y otros poemas*. 1949)

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