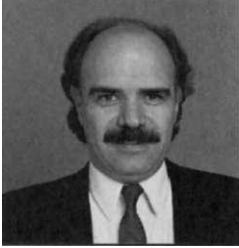


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# Deconstruction and Maharishi Vedic Science

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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 difference." 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.*

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**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)

**I**n 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 knowledge. 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, *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 *differance* (spelled with an "a"). As we shall see, *differance* 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 *differance*, 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 (see Figure 1).

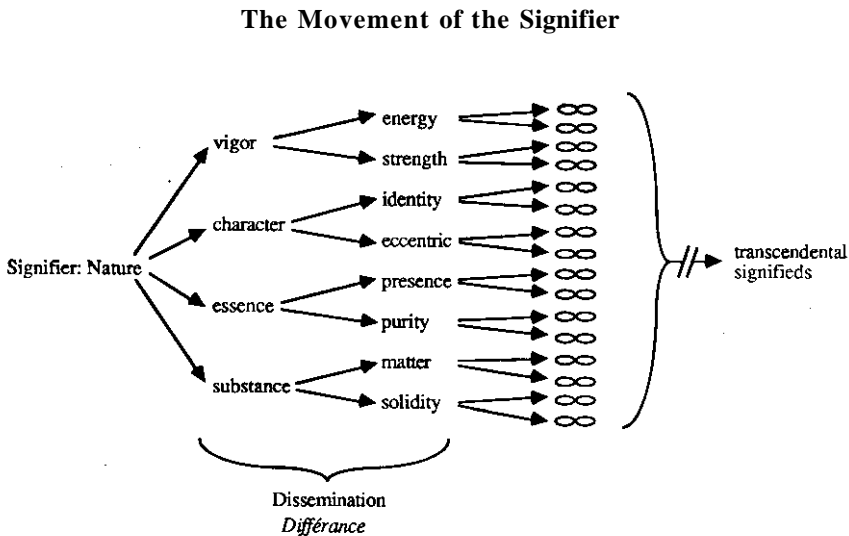


Figure 1. Through dissemination or *differance*, the movement of the signifier, the transcendental signified is infinitely deferred.

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 *differance* 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 (see 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).

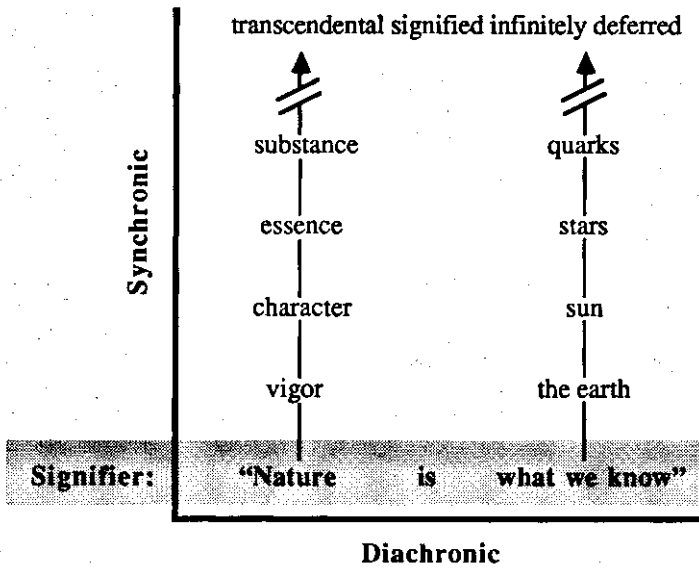
"Nature" is what we see —  
 The Hill — the Afternoon —  
 Squirrel — Eclipse — the Bumble bee —  
 Nay — Nature is Heaven —  
 Nature is what we hear —  
 The Bobolink — the Sea —

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 transcendental signified or absolute meaning. Thus the signifier "Simplicity" loses any natural connection to a transcendental signified and expands through an infinite

**Synchronic and Diachronic Play of Language**



**Figure 2.** Each sign in a sentence along a diachronic (temporal) plane generates a chain of signifiers along a synchronic (spatial) plane, which interact in seemingly contradictory ways. Derrida would say that because we cannot know the sun, stars, and quarks in essence through sensory experience, these signifiers on the synchronic plane do not connect the signifier "Nature" to a natural referent or absolute signified.

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 transcendental 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 transcendental 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 Science 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 physical universe. As Hagelin explained in a recent interview ("Research Begun," 1988):

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 which 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 (refer to Alexander & Boyer, 1989, in this issue) — 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 TM 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 transcendental 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 *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 transcendental state of consciousness to be fully apprehended. Because meaning in *para* and *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).

### 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 *differance* 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 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 differential 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 structurally" (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 (see Figure 1), 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 *differance*, 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 *differance*.

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 *differance*.

As Derrida defines it in *Differance*, "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 (Figure 1), 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 *differance* 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 *differance*," 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, *differance*, 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 *pashyanti* 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 *pashyanti* 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 *differance* 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 difference, 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 *differance* 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 *differance* 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 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 difference itself as a transcendental phenomenon. Because the trace or the movement of *differance* is older or more originary than unification, Derrida offers it as a form of the absolute. In his later *Speech and Phenomena* (1967/1973a, 1967/1973b), however, he decides that this formulation is incoherent (see Dews, 1987, p. 19). Here he speaks of *differance* as a "primordial nonself-presence" (1967/1973a, p. 81). Derrida

asserts that the movement of *differance* does not occur within the transcendental subject; rather *differance* 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 *differance* — 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 difference 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 difference, 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 difference 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 difference, 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-aparadh*. 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 difference 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 *Upa-Angas*, 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 *differance* 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.

### **The Self-Referral of Language**

As argued above, even though deconstruction would make the self or reader a relative product of difference 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 *differance* 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 (see Gelderloos, 1989, this issue). 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 pragya*, "that awareness which knows only truth," or *Jyotish mati pragya*, "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 difference exists not only in the *vaikhari* and *madhyama* levels but also in *pashyanti* and *para*, and that difference can indeed be transcendental as he tentatively asserted in *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry* and later retracted. In the movement of *differance*, 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 *differance*, the movement of differing and deferring responsible for the production of meaning. In his notions of *differance*, 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, difference 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 experience 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" (see Figure 2) 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 neurophysiological 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 *differance*. 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 *differance*, 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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