About the Authors

Geoffrey Wells is chairperson of the Department of the Science of Creative Intelligence, director of the doctoral program in the Science of Creative Intelligence, and dean of the College of the Science of Creative Intelligence at Maharishi International University. He received his B.A. in 1970 and his Ph.D. in the area of philosophy of science and social science in 1984, from the University of Adelaide, Australia. For the last ten years Dr. Wells has been closely associated with the international program of establishing and accrediting Maharishi's Science of Creative Intelligence as a formal academic discipline. He was the founding director of undergraduate and graduate programs in the Science of Creative Intelligence at Maharishi International University in 1985, and the co-founder of Modern Science and Vedic Science. He has supervised and edited several interdisciplinary research publications at Maharishi International University, and has received a number of teaching awards, including the 1990 Sears-Roebuck Award for Excellence in Teaching and Campus Leadership. He has lectured on the Science of Creative Intelligence and its associated educational technologies throughout the United States, and in the United Kingdom and Australia. He is currently completing a book entitled The Logical Foundations of Maharishi's Science of Creative Intelligence.

Samuel Boothby is assistant professor of the Science of Creative Intelligence and Education and associate chair of the Department of the Science of Creative Intelligence at Maharishi International University. He received his B.A. in English Literature from Kalamazoo College in 1971, his M.A. in Education from Maharishi International University in 1982 and his Ed.D. in Teaching, Curriculum and Learning Environments from Harvard University in 1988. With this issue, Dr. Boothby completes a five-year tenure as executive editor of Modern Science and Vedic Science. He is currently completing an article on free will and determinism in the Jyotish Vedanga of Maharishi's Vedic Science.
Abstract

In his commentary on the conversation between Arjuna and Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi presents principles that govern the most evolutionary, and therefore ideal, individual and collective life in society. Maharishi derives these principles from an analysis of the role that the field of pure consciousness—the unified field of natural law, the total potential of natural law—plays in structuring the evolution of the universe, including human life. Maharishi describes the mechanics of how natural law governs evolution through the instrument of dharma—the cosmic force of evolution that keeps life progressive. In addition, Maharishi describes how natural law structures the diversity of evolutionary paths through family dharmas that uphold the most evolutionary lifestyles for different individuals with different psychological and physiological characteristics. Based on these principles, Maharishi explains that individual suffering and collective catastrophes like war result when individuals use their free will to violate natural law, deviating from the evolutionary process structured by cosmic and family dharmas. Thus, all problems in society ultimately stem from individual thought and action, and an ideal society can only be structured by teaching individuals how to spontaneously think and act in accord with natural law. Maharishi’s Vedic Science makes available technologies for promoting individual growth to higher states of consciousness, in which all thought and action is spontaneously in accord with dharma, the total potential of natural law. Maharishi predicts that societies of such enlightened individuals will create a perfect civilization—Heaven on Earth.
MODERN SCIENCE AND VEDIC SCIENCE

Introduction

In his Vedic Science, His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has brought to light the complete science of consciousness available in the Vedic literature. The essential insight of Maharishi’s Vedic Science is that the entire universe is the expression of a fundamental field of pure intelligence, of pure consciousness. The Vedic literature itself, Maharishi (1986a) explains, embodies the eternal self-interacting dynamics of the field of pure consciousness. These self-interacting dynamics give rise to all the laws of nature that structure creation and guide its evolution (pp. 24–49; please also refer to Dillbeck, 1989).

Maharishi (1972) teaches that for human life, evolution expresses itself in the development of higher states of consciousness, in which the experience of pure consciousness is increasingly integrated into daily life. Maharishi (1978, 1986a) has demonstrated that each branch of the Vedic literature contains systematic knowledge of these higher states of consciousness as well as specific technologies for developing them. Maharishi (1978, 1986a) has brought to light many of these technologies in his Vedic Science, including, most fundamentally, his Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program whose practice has been shown to systematically develop higher states of consciousness.

On the basis of the knowledge and technologies brought to light from the Vedic literature in his Vedic Science, Maharishi (1991) has created a comprehensive program for reconstructing human life on earth. For individuals, the implementation of these programs can quickly give rise to the highest state of consciousness, which Maharishi (1978) terms enlightenment. For society, Maharishi’s programs can create an ideal structure composed of enlightened individuals, who spontaneously act in accord with natural law and thus continuously enhance the evolution of the entire environment. Such a perfected state of collective life is described in the Vedic literature, and Maharishi (1991) terms it Heaven on Earth.

In the vast body of the Vedic literature, Maharishi has given the Bhagavad-Gita a place of special importance with regard to the knowledge and technologies for perfecting individual and collective life. Introducing his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita he explains:

The Bhagavad-Gita presents the science of life and the art of living. It teaches how to be, how to think and how to do. Its technique of glorifying every aspect of life through contact with inner Being is like watering the root and making the whole tree green. It surpasses any practical wisdom of life ever cherished by human society. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 19)

The term “Being” here signifies the field of pure consciousness referred to above. Maharishi (1963) explains that it is a field of pure existence, hence a field of Being (pp. 26–30).

The Bhagavad-Gita has immense practical value, Maharishi (1980) points out, because of the comprehensive range of knowledge it presents; its knowledge is, in essence, that which is found in the Vedic literature as a whole. Thus, the Bhagavad-Gita provides knowledge of the complete range of natural law; and this knowledge is compe-
MODERN SCIENCE AND VEDIC SCIENCE

Introduction

In his Vedic Science, His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has brought to light the complete science of consciousness available in the Vedic literature. The essential insight of Maharishi's Vedic Science is that the entire universe is the expression of a fundamental field of pure intelligence, of pure consciousness. The Vedic literature itself, Maharishi (1986a) explains, embodies the eternal self-interacting dynamics of the field of pure consciousness. These self-interacting dynamics give rise to all the laws of nature that structure creation and guide its evolution (pp. 24-49; please also refer to Dillbeck, 1989).

Maharishi (1972) teaches that for human life, evolution expresses itself in the development of higher states of consciousness, in which the experience of pure consciousness is increasingly integrated into daily life. Maharishi (1978, 1986a) has demonstrated that each branch of the Vedic literature contains systematic knowledge of these higher states of consciousness as well as specific technologies for developing them. Maharishi (1978, 1986a) has brought to light many of these technologies in his Vedic Science, including, most fundamentally, his Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program whose practice has been shown to systematically develop higher states of consciousness.

On the basis of the knowledge and technologies brought to light from the Vedic literature in his Vedic Science, Maharishi (1991) has created a comprehensive program for reconstructing human life on earth. For individuals, the implementation of these programs can quickly give rise to the highest state of consciousness, which Maharishi (1978) terms enlightenment. For society, Maharishi's programs can create an ideal structure composed of enlightened individuals, who spontaneously act in accord with natural law and thus continuously enhance the evolution of the entire environment. Such a perfected state of collective life is described in the Vedic literature, and Maharishi (1991) terms it Heaven on Earth.

In the vast body of the Vedic literature, Maharishi has given the Bhagavad-Gita a place of special importance with regard to the knowledge and technologies for perfecting individual and collective life. Introducing his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita he explains:

The Bhagavad-Gita presents the science of life and the art of living. It teaches how to be, how to think and how to do. Its technique of glorifying every aspect of life through contact with inner Being is like watering the root and making the whole tree green. It surpasses any practical wisdom of life ever cherished by human society. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 19)

The term "Being" here signifies the field of pure consciousness referred to above. Maharishi (1963) explains that it is a field of pure existence, hence a field of Being (pp. 26–30).

The Bhagavad-Gita has immense practical value, Maharishi (1980) points out, because of the comprehensive range of knowledge it presents; its knowledge is, in essence, that which is found in the Vedic literature as a whole. Thus, the Bhagavad-Gita provides knowledge of the complete range of natural law; and this knowledge is compe-
tent to transform human life at any level, individual or collective, from suffering to enlightenment:

It may not be necessary for everyone to go through the entire Vedic literature, but the seven hundred verses of the Bhagavad-Gita, in the light of personal experiences, should be good enough to elevate one’s awareness to the totality of natural law and enable one to live life completely according to natural law. (p. 20)

Historically it is clear that more comprehensive knowledge contributes significantly to quality of life in a society: Newtonian physics, for example, underpinned the industrial revolution; quantum physics the electronic age. Maharishi (1967) emphasizes this role of knowledge in providing a foundation for the quality of life in the preface to his commentary on the first six chapters of the Bhagavad-Gita. He presents the Bhagavad-Gita as that universal knowledge, on the basis of which alone, society can be properly organized to provide for the unrestricted development of its citizens and for the fulfillment of its collective purpose. Maharishi explains that over time this knowledge has been lost and revived many times, but that the result of this loss for society at large has been catastrophic. This paper reviews the principles that comprise this knowledge of society—absolute principles, in that they derive from an understanding of the absolute basis of life, the field of pure intelligence—as given in the Bhagavad-Gita and as commented upon by Maharishi.

Maharishi’s commentary is presented from the perspective of the highest state of consciousness—unity consciousness—and includes commentary on each of the other major states of consciousness as well. Maharishi (1972) has explained that in higher states of consciousness perception is more refined and comprehension unbounded (pp. 9-3, 9-4). In the highest state, perception is faultless and completely comprehensive (1972, Lesson 32). Maharishi’s commentary therefore provides the most complete explanation of the universal principles of society. For this reason, throughout this paper we rely on Maharishi’s commentary to illuminate and explain fully the dialogue between Arjuna and Lord Krishna.

Viewed as a narrative, the Bhagavad-Gita is an account of the conversation between Arjuna and Lord Krishna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Although many commentators have portrayed Arjuna as weak and confused, Maharishi (e.g., 1967, p. 77) emphasizes repeatedly in his commentary that Arjuna is a highly developed man: His natural field of concern embraces the society as a whole, which he considers at a profound level. In the course of their conversation, Arjuna petitions Lord Krishna with an ultimate dilemma. Maharishi (1967) summarizes Arjuna’s petition on behalf of humanity as: “... even though we try our best to live a life of righteousness, suffering does not appear to leave us. The demand is: give us a life free from suffering” (p. 25).

Lord Krishna’s teaching on society is revealed in response to this petition. Maharishi (1967) points out that in the Bhagavad-Gita, Lord Krishna is the embodiment of the absolute value of life, the field of pure consciousness itself, responding to a petition of Arjuna, the representative of humanity. Maharishi emphasizes that this teaching, emerging as it does from the embodiment of the total potential of natural law, is universal in its scope and application: The principles it offers are not limited to a particular time and place, but are absolute.
These absolute principles of society are elaborated primarily in Maharishi’s commentary on the first chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita. Maharishi (1967) notes that “This chapter presents the mechanics of nature and reveals the fundamentals of life and society” (p. 26). This presentation actually occurs before the main body of Lord Krishna’s teaching to Arjuna, which begins in Chapter II. However, Maharishi explains, the first chapter lays the ground for that teaching, in that:

... it presents the basic problems of life and gives Lord Krishna the chance to propound the philosophy and practice which enable man to live his life free from suffering. It is of great value for its contribution to the science of living. (p. 25)

Reflecting on Arjuna’s profound concerns gives Maharishi the opportunity to describe the absolute principles that govern life at every level, both individual and collective.

The elucidation of the principles given here by Maharishi belong to the early phase of his teaching. Over the 25 years since their first publication in his Bhagavad-Gita commentary, Maharishi has continued to elaborate on them. Yet, since they are absolute principles of Vedic knowledge, they have remained consistent over this time. The new elaborations of this knowledge that have emerged have their seeds, therefore, in the earlier discussions. To maintain continuity with more current formulations of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology, from time to time this article will also refer to Maharishi’s later expressions of these principles.

**Dharma as the Absolute Basis of Society**

The absolute basis of the principles of society is brought out by Maharishi in his commentary on the first verse of Chapter I. The verse, in Sanskrit and in Maharishi’s translation, is as follows:

DHITARāŚTRA UvāCA.
DHARMa-KSHTRE KURU-KSHTRE SAMAVETĀ YUYUTSAVĀH.
MAMAKAḥ PĀÑDAVĀŚEVA KIM KUKUṆAṬ SAŅJAYA.

_Dhritarāṣṭra said:_

Assembled on the field of Dharma,
On the field of the Kurus, eager to fight, what did
My people and the Pandavas do? (I.1)

Commenting on this verse, Maharishi (1967) singles out the term “dharma,” and provides a precise definition of it:

“Dharma” is that invincible power of nature which upholds existence. It maintains evolution and forms the very basis of cosmic life. It supports all that is helpful for evolution and discourages all that is opposed to it.
Dharma is that which promotes worldly prosperity and spiritual freedom. (pp. 26–27)

As Maharishi’s commentary progresses, it becomes evident that this definition is fundamental to the entire teaching of the Bhagavad-Gita. Maharishi identifies dharma with “nature,” “cosmic life,” and “existence.” Dharma is thus to be found everywhere in creation, as an essential attribute of cosmic life. It forms the unified “basis” of life, and operates from there: It is, in other words, one with the universal field of pure intelligence.

In addition, dharma is the “invincible power” of nature: It is an active principle, or what Maharishi (1972) has elsewhere termed “creative intelligence.” Its role is to “uphold” existence by maintaining “evolution.” The term evolution is here used by Maharishi in a technical sense that is different from modern usage: It refers to the dynamics, implicit in the design of life, through which life rises to its highest value. Dharma upholds evolution in a direction that we would uniformly recognize as good: It “promotes worldly prosperity and spiritual freedom” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, pp. 26–27).

Maharishi (1967) explains that dharma conducts the process of evolution in two ways, by lending “support” to elements that are “helpful” to evolution, and by “discouraging” things that are “opposed to it.” In this it is invincible because, being the essential nature of life itself, nothing could lie outside its sway.

Maharishi (1967) goes on to describe in detail the mechanics of evolution for which dharma is responsible. He notes first that the movement of the evolutionary process is composed of two elements that are opposite in character:

When life evolves from one state to another, the first state is dissolved and the second brought into existence. In other words, the process of evolution is carried out under the influence of two opposing forces—one to destroy the first state and the other to give rise to a second state. (p. 27)

The role of dharma, he goes on, is to coordinate the functioning of these two elements so that they work together in a perfectly integrated fashion:

These creative and destructive forces working in harmony with one another maintain life and spin the wheel of evolution. Dharma maintains equilibrium between them. By maintaining equilibrium between opposing cosmic forces, dharma safeguards existence and upholds the path of evolution, the path of righteousness. (p. 27)

In the more recent formal presentation of his Vedic Science, Maharishi (1986a) describes this process in terms of the laws of nature that have their basis in the unified field of all the laws of nature, the field of pure intelligence, and are always self-referral in their functioning:

From the most quiet, transcendental level, nature performs, and it performs within itself. It is the self-referral activity of natural law that is responsible for absolute order in creation. . . . It is the most refined level of quantum-mechanical activity of nature, from where absolute orderliness controls, commands, and governs all affairs of the universe. . . . Natural law is always powerful, and every natural law has two sides to it, creative and destructive. In balancing the two processes of creation and destruction, natural law promotes evolution. The promotion of evolution requires a balanced state of creative activity; nature does this spontaneously by self-referral functioning. (pp. 75–76)
Here again Maharishi identifies the central elements and relationships of the basic functioning of nature: the creative and destructive aspects of natural law, whose balanced state (equivalent to "equilibrium" above) is linked to evolution. Evolution in turn is connected to "self-referral functioning"; that is, to the way in which the parts are continually connected, or referred, to the whole, in such a way that "absolute order" is maintained (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986a, pp. 109–110). The concept of the self-referral functioning of natural law and its role in maintaining balance in nature is discussed in more detail below.

In his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, Maharishi (1967) applies this understanding of dharma and evolution to both individual and collective human life. He affirms, firstly, the existence of free will for mankind: "Man's life is so highly evolved that he enjoys freedom of action in nature. This enables him to live in any way he desires, either for good or for evil" (p. 27).

The results of action, Maharishi goes on to explain, are determined by the quality of that action: "As he behaves, so he receives" (p. 27). Dharma operates according to this principle in a completely set and automatic way, like a machine, its output determined by its input. Maharishi (1967) describes this process of action and reaction in terms of a principle of equilibrium:

When the good increases in life and the positive forces tend to overbalance the normal state of existence, then the process of dharma, restoring equilibrium, results in feelings of happiness in the heart and satisfaction in the mind. In the same way, when evil increases in life and the negative forces predominate, the power of dharma, restoring the balance, produces sensations of pain and suffering. (p. 27)

Here Maharishi seems to refer to the relationship between action and its effects as unbalanced until the cycle is completed: Until one reaps the fruit of one's actions, the relationship is in a state of disequilibrium.

Maharishi emphasizes that the increase of good or of evil is brought about solely by human action. Knowingly or unknowingly, individuals give support either to the creative or to the destructive (positive or negative) aspects of natural law. In the following passage Maharishi (1967) refers to a different kind of equilibrium, one that distinguishes between the results of positive, as against negative, thoughts and actions:

Life is as we want it—either suffering or joy. When we allow the positive and negative forces to remain in their normal state of equilibrium, we live through normal periods of life. Assisting the growth of negative forces results in suffering; when we help the positive forces to increase we share the joy of life. "As you sow, so shall you reap," expresses the role of dharma in practical life. (p. 27)

It appears that Maharishi is using the term "normal" here to describe a relatively static state of life, one where evolution proceeds at a slow pace, as he describes more fully elsewhere:

The life current or stream flows constantly, carrying all life along with it spontaneously. We are all floating along with it, and that is the way most people are evolving. However, human beings, having been given free will, can modify this in two ways. We can deliberately and consciously begin to swim with the current and thereby progress faster. . . . Or we
can try to be different, asserting our little ego, and swim against the current. And that means incessant struggle and sure failure. This last causes only struggle. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986b, p. 576)

Here Maharishi indicates that normal life involves a slower process of evolution, indicated by the metaphor of floating in the stream of life. In his Gita commentary, Maharishi (1967) describes the effects of the acceleration of one's evolution that the force of dharma produces from accumulation of positive thoughts and actions:

... a high degree of concentration of positive forces fails to maintain life in its normal state. The life of an individual under the influence of increasing positive forces enters into a field of increasing happiness and is eventually transformed into bliss-consciousness, in which state it gains the status of cosmic existence, eternal life. (p. 27)

This last statement contains a principle of the greatest significance for the structuring of human society. It establishes an absolute standard for the conduct of human life. It locates an ultimate goal for the life of all human beings: “bliss-consciousness, in which state it gains the status of cosmic existence, eternal life.” As explained later in the Bhagavad-Gita, this is the full development of human life, achieved through the regular practice of Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation technique (please refer to p. 25–26), in which the individual conscious mind finds itself to be in reality universal. The term “bliss-consciousness” refers to the nature of the direct experience of the field of pure consciousness through Transcendental Meditation. A life established in bliss-consciousness, Maharishi (1967) teaches, is spontaneously lived without mistakes: It is a life of complete fulfillment, and infinitely nourishing to all aspects of creation (p. 449).

Speaking more recently in terms of his Vedic Science, Maharishi (1986a) explains the essential principle governing the possibility of gaining such a state of life. He describes the field of self-referral consciousness as “... that all-powerful activity at the most elementary level of nature.” Continuing, he notes that:

If this state of consciousness, or this state of nature’s activity, could be brought on the level of daily life, then life would naturally be as orderly and as full of all possibilities as is the nature of this self-referral state of consciousness. (p. 26)

This is individual life in enlightenment, where one is able to reflect and embody the universal value of life, able to spontaneously think and act in accord with natural law, and able “to accomplish anything and to spontaneously live life free from mistakes” (World Parliament of the Age of Enlightenment, cited in Dillbeck & Dillbeck, 1987, p. 398).

We note further that Maharishi (1967), in the Gita commentary, describes the nature of the path by which enlightenment is achieved: It is “a field of increasing happiness” (p. 27). Unhappiness or suffering are not held to be aspects of this path. On the contrary, as we have seen, they arise in the context of the increase of the destructive value of natural law returning the results of negative, or nonevolutionary, actions to the doer. Maharishi does not associate the necessity for suffering, the concept of gain from suffering, or of learning from mistakes, with the path of evolution. He emphasizes that the path of evolution is a path of happiness; and it is, in fact, a path of increasing, rather than fixed, happiness. This increase accords with Maharishi’s definition of evolution as always progressive.
In describing Maharishi’s unique contributions to the understanding of the role of dharma in the growth to enlightenment, it is worth noting the difficulties other translators have found in dealing with the notion of dharma. It has been variously translated, for example, as “righteousness” (Radhakrishnan, 1948), “Truth” (Mascaro, 1962), or “virtue” (Sargeant, 1984). As Maharishi’s commentary makes clear, while all these ideas are implicit in the notion of dharma, none of them does justice to its range and significance, to its role in supporting the path of natural evolution. The essence of Arjuna’s dilemma—how even the righteous cannot seem to live a life free from suffering—and the answer to it rests on the full understanding of the nature of dharma, as applied to practical life. It is therefore evident that the value of such translations and commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita as those quoted above must be limited.

In summary, Maharishi’s commentary on this verse presents a fundamental and comprehensive account of the inner mechanics of nature’s functioning, and of the nature and goal of human life. These are absolute principles: They are true for all times and all places, regardless of historical period or of cultural or geographic context. As Maharishi (1967) remarks later, “Here is a great teaching of vital importance which has been missed for centuries. It sets a standard for any society.” (p. 69). These principles arise from Maharishi’s direct investigation into the unified basis of nature’s intelligence on its own level, the field of pure consciousness, through the subjective techniques of the Vedic tradition (described below). A theory of society based on these principles will have the same absolute status in its explanation of the nature of society, of the causes of social dysfunction, of the goal of social life, and of the best strategy of social advancement. This is the absolute theory of society presented in Maharishi’s commentary on the rest of Chapter I of the Bhagavad-Gita.

Dharma and Society

From a consideration of the absolute basis of dharma, Maharishi moves to a consideration of its applied, practical value in human life. Maharishi first comments upon the fact that the Bhagavad-Gita speaks of “dharmas,” in the plural, as well as in the singular, as Arjuna considers the possible consequences of allowing the destruction of his kinsfolk to take place:

कुलप्रशस्तिकुलधर्मः समात्मा: ।
धर्मेन नर्ये कुलकृत्तमधयमोऽस्मिपत्तुत ॥४०॥

kula-kshaye pranasyanti kula-dharmāḥ sanātanāḥ.
dharme nashte kulam kṛitnam adharmo 'bhībhavaty uta.

The age-old family dharmas are lost in the destruction of a family. Its dharma lost, adharma overtakes the entire family. (I.40)

This diversification of dharma Maharishi (1967) connects to the emergence of diverse paths of evolution, all of which are expressions of the one universal field of dharma already discussed:
“Dharmas,” the plural of dharma, signifies the different powers of nature upholding different avenues of the way of evolution. They take expression as specific modes of activity or different ways of righteousness, which keep the whole stream of life in harmony—every aspect of life being properly balanced with every other aspect—and moving in the direction of evolution. (p. 64)

Maharishi locates two steps of diversification, moving from abstract to concrete. The first is related to the “different powers of nature” and “different avenues of evolution”; that is, the different values of natural law that arise at the level of the unified field of all the laws of nature. The second is related to “different modes of activity” that are governed by each of these elements of natural law. Maharishi (1967) then identifies a third stage of the process: the formation of these modes of activities into traditions, on which the structure of society is based:

As these specific modes of activity are passed on from generation to generation, they form what we call traditions. It is these traditions which are referred to here as family dharmas. (p. 64)

Maharishi points out that the description of dharmic traditions as “age-old” has a special significance. The term translated is sanātana which has been held to have the meaning of eternal, everlasting, or ancient (Monier-Williams, Leumann, & Cappler, 1979, p. 1141); but Maharishi (1967) brings out the more explicit sense of age after age, generation after generation, in other words, the continuity of human experience:

Arjuna uses the word “age-old” because the ideals of life that have withstood the test of time represent the genuine path of evolution, the upward current in nature. Nothing that is against evolution lasts long. Therefore the tradition which has survived the ages has certainly proved itself to be the right one, the one nearest to the Truth, which is Life Eternal. (p. 65)

“Life Eternal” refers to the immortal status of the unified field of natural law, the field of pure consciousness.

Maharishi therefore defines genuine traditions in society, embodying the different dharmas, as those which, being in accord with natural law, meet the criteria of having lasted over a long period of time. He also identifies these traditions with families: They are practiced, preserved, and passed on within families. In this sense the family is the structural basis of the society.

In his commentary on a later verse (I.44), Maharishi (1967) explains the practical value of this traditional structure for the growth of higher states of consciousness in the whole population:

“Family dharma” is an established tradition where people born in a particular family engage in the profession of that family. Because of their parental heritage they work efficiently, produce better material for society and improve in their profession. Working with all ease and comfort in their profession, they do not exhaust themselves in work and find time to be regular in their practice for spiritual unfoldment, which is the basis of all success in life. This is how family dharmas and traditions help both the individual and society. (p. 69)
What is most significant in this analysis is the criteria by which the ideal structures of society are to be measured: their ability to support the growth to higher states of consciousness of their citizenry. Here Maharishi indicates the effect of family dharmas is in two directions. First, they prevent exhaustion, and the stress on body and mind that it produces. Psychophysiological stress of this kind, Maharishi (1972) emphasizes, is the main impediment to the natural enjoyment of higher states of consciousness (p. 2-3). Second, they bring the highest level of efficiency to one’s work, thus allowing establishment of the proper balance of life, with its priority in the development of consciousness (“time to be regular in their practice for spiritual unfoldment”). Ideal social structures are thus shown to be rooted in the practical and balanced daily routine through which life is raised to enlightenment.

Each individual in the society, therefore, Maharishi (1967) teaches, has a particular dharma, a particular path of action within a tradition, that is most conducive for his or her evolution. This principle is referred to later in the Bhagavad-Gita by the following injunction:

\[ \text{नियतं कुरु कर्म तवं} \]

\[ niyatam kuru karma tvam. \]

Do your allotted duty. (p. 191)

Here the adjective “niyatam,” which Maharishi translates as “allotted,” derives from the root “yam,” to sustain, hold up, support. As we have seen, Maharishi’s principal definition of dharma centers on that which upholds, maintains, and supports life (1967, p. 26). Hence that action (karma) which is allotted (niyatam) is action according to dharma. Maharishi comments:

“Allotted duty” is that which it is natural for one to do, that for which one was born—natural action in accordance with the laws of nature, action according to one’s own dharma, action which is in line with the natural stream of evolution.... (p. 191)

Maharishi goes on to emphasize again the damaging effects on mind and body of engaging in action that is not in accord with one’s dharma:

An important aspect of natural duty is that it is imperative for a man; if he does not perform his allotted duty, he will be engaging in actions which lie outside the path of his own evolution....

It is equally essential to understand that action which is not natural will inevitably produce strain and tension both in the doer and in the atmosphere around him. If the process of action is strained, it interferes with the harmony between the doer and his work, the subject and the object; this in turn hinders the infusion of the divine nature into the field of activity, and resistance is created to the development of cosmic consciousness. That is why the Lord particularly mentions “allotted duty.” (p. 191)

Again Maharishi emphasizes that the main effect of such strained action will be to hinder the development of higher states of consciousness through the increase of stress and tension (cosmic consciousness being, Maharishi explains, such a higher state, the fifth state of consciousness, 1967, p. 173). Moreover, the effect is not limited to the individ-
ual alone: It has its wider effect on the environment at large. This is a point we will come back to later in this article.

It is for all these reasons, Maharishi (1967) emphasizes, that the best advice is for each individual to remain within his own tradition, within his own dharma:

All beings, under the tremendous influence of the mighty force of nature, are held fast in the current of evolution. Each has his own specific course to follow. If a man deviates from his own natural course, his own dharma, then it is like changing boats in a fast current. He has to struggle hard to maintain life—a struggle which is experienced as sorrow and suffering and which gives rise to all problems on the path of evolution. (p. 66)

As we saw in Maharishi’s commentary to I.1, life conducted according to the constructive capability of the absolute level of dharma—in full accord with natural law—is “a field of increasing happiness” (1967, p. 27). Conversely, action not in accord with dharma, not in accord with natural law, “ends in passivity or extinction of life” (p. 28). Here Maharishi applies this insight into the mechanics of evolution at their source to the practical experience of the quality of daily life.

Maharishi (1967) illustrates and extends the notions of dharmas and their role in society in his commentary on I.43, through the analogy of the laws that govern the functioning of different levels of the body:

The laws maintaining the well-being of the whole body consist of a collection of the laws maintaining its different parts, together with others added to coordinate different limbs.

The laws of the evolution of the body likewise are the sum total of those governing the evolution of different limbs, along with those coordinating them. (p. 68)

Here the analogous term to dharma is “law,” in the sense of “laws of nature” or “scientific laws”; “law” is in fact commonly held to be a primary meaning of dharma (Monier-Williams et al., 1979, p. 510). Maharishi notes that there are different laws governing the functioning and coordination of the different levels of the body; here he mentions “parts” and “limbs,” which we may infer stand for all the different levels of physiological functioning known to science, such as cells, tissues, organs, and systems (Wallace, Fagan, & Pasco, 1988). These laws are analogous to the different dharmas, expressed in the traditions preserved in families, that structure the society. Further, Maharishi notes, one speaks of the law of the whole body, expressed in the laws that govern its different parts; in the same way dharma, considered in its absolute status, upholds life at all levels in the evolutionary direction through the different dharmas appropriate to each level.

Maharishi (1967) extends this analysis to the understanding of society in terms of the different levels of social life—the individual, as the unit of the society, the family, and the community—and in terms of the society as a whole:

In a similar way, there are dharmas governing individual evolution and there are dharmas which connect and coordinate different individuals. These latter are said primarily to govern the evolution of the society or caste. In verse 40 Arjuna was thinking in terms of the dharma of the family. In this verse he is considering the dharma of the caste, that is, a collection of families upholding similar dharmas. (p. 68)
Here, then, the notion of different dharmas is extended from individual life and family traditions, to the traditions that govern larger units of the society, in this case the caste. It is important to note that Maharishi defines caste not in the conventional terms of an hereditary class of Hindu society, but in terms of family and of dharma: “a collection of families upholding similar dharmas.” Again it should be emphasized that Maharishi is not describing the principles that govern a particular society in a particular geographic area at a particular time in history, but the universal principles which, when able to function in their completeness, give rise to an ideal state of individual and social life. Here, Maharishi reconstructs the meaning of such an apparently culture-specific term as “caste,” making it generally applicable to all human societies, in terms of its basis in the absolute principle of dharma.

With the different levels of dharma described, we may now understand Maharishi’s analysis of Arjuna’s fundamental dilemma, which is how to avoid killing his kinsmen in a battle which he knows intellectually to be righteous (1.36-1.39). Maharishi’s (1967) conclusion is that what may be action according to the dharma of one level may not be in accord with the dharma of another level:

Arjuna, although his consciousness is pure, has not yet fathomed the absolute Being which is the field of the cosmic law. This is why he fails to see that he is living in an atmosphere saturated with evil influence, in which it is not possible for virtue to survive for long. Arjuna is trying to refrain from fighting out of consideration for family and caste dharmas; he is not aware of the absolute state of dharma whose power is leading him to fight. (p. 64)

The “absolute state of dharma” is here equated with “the absolute Being,” “the field of cosmic law”—pure consciousness—the law of the whole, in other words, rather than the law of the parts. Family and caste dharmas, Maharishi explains, have their own validity on their own level. Love of one’s kinsfolk, or pride in one’s community, are entirely appropriate for that level, and confer real value on family and community life; yet there are higher principles, involving higher duties, that may appear to contradict these more localized considerations. This principle might be understood, by way of example, in the punishment administered by a parent to a child. This punishment may appear to go against the fundamental duty of the parent to protect and nourish the child; yet, if carried out in the spirit of love, according to a more comprehensive consideration of what is best for the child’s evolution, it is action in accord with natural law and helps to fulfill the very purpose of parenthood. So it is with the wider fields of human concern. Maharishi explains that action motivated from the absolute level of dharma may appear in its surface manifestation to be quite different from the action expected at more localized levels. However, such dharmaic action always nourishes, enriches, and fulfills the dharmas of all areas and levels of life. Thus the ideal structure of society would be such that each level is fully able to carry out its own dharma which, though different from the dharma of another level, is always coordinated with it from its source, the absolute field of dharma, the field of pure consciousness. When individual thought and action is supported by the level of absolute dharma, its expressions in various relative dharmas are always perfectly integrated with and fully nourishing to each other.
ABSOLUTE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIETY

Social Relationships and Social Behavior

The foregoing consideration of dharma and society primarily addresses the question of the ideal structure of society. As we have seen, Maharishi derives this structure from a consideration of the inner mechanics of the absolute basis of life and its evolution. At the same time, Maharishi provides unique insight into the nature and structure of the social relationships, and the behavior that flows from them, which constitute the actual reality of ideal life in society. These principles will be the focus of this section.

Maharishi begins by observing that all social relationships are based on love. He explains this principle in the context of the commentary on verse 1.25:

bhishma-drona-pramukhatah sarvesham cha mahikshitam.
uvachā pārtha pasyātān samavetān kurūn iti.

Before Bhishma and Drona and all the rulers of the earth, Lord Krishna said:
Partha (Arjuna)! behold these Kurus gathered together. (1.25)

With great delicacy of understanding, Maharishi (1967) singles out the word “Partha” for special attention, and from it develops a fundamental principle of social life:

Lord Krishna addresses Arjuna as “Partha,” the son of Pritha. With this expression He reminds Arjuna of his mother and thereby creates a warm wave of love in his heart, the warmth of love that connects son and mother. It is this tender bond of love that develops into all family and social relationships, that maintains a family, a society, a nation and a world. (p. 47)

There is great psychological insight in Maharishi’s understanding of the effect of this one word on Arjuna; and his reflection on it, expressed in the second sentence of the above quotation, enunciates a principle of great power. Maharishi unequivocally applies it to social life at every level, from its elemental form in the family, to the wider society, and ultimately to the global society, conceived of as a whole. Maharishi is here speaking of social life in its ideal form; or, to put it another way, whatever is worthy of the name of social life. Relationships that are exploitative or damaging, or in some way negative, are not worthy of the name “relationship,” except in the technical sense of interaction between two or more people. Thus, when Maharishi (1967) speaks of relationships, he emphasizes the nourishing, evolutionary aspect of what people can bring to each other. The principle is amplified as follows:

Having created this wave of love in Arjuna’s heart, Lord Krishna desires to strengthen it; and for this He says: “Behold these Kurus gathered together.” This quickens all the ways of the heart, where different relationships are held in different shades of love.” (p. 47)

In the last clause Maharishi more precisely explains the relationship between love and society: The different social relationships—those constituting family, society,
nation, and world—are seen as “different shades of love.” Love is the essential content of society: It flows throughout, directed in different ways to different objects at different levels, and creates the different contexts in which social relationships arise. Maharishi in fact seems to use the term “love” to refer to the same absolute value of life described in I.1, here denoted in its subjective character. Love is thus far more than the localized personal phenomenon we usually associate with the term; Maharishi locates its universal character. Elsewhere Maharishi (1973) expounds:

Love is the sweet expression of life, it is the supreme content of life. Love is the force of life, powerful and sublime. . . .

Love is the supreme blessing of life; love as love is universal. Personal love is concentrated universal love. (pp. 13, 19)

There is thus, Maharishi (1967) teaches, an intimate relationship between dharmas in society and social relationships. The one structures, or finds expression in, the other:

“Family dharmas” are the powers of different principles which uphold the coordination between different members of a family, at the same time enabling every member, consciously or unconsciously, to help every other member on his path of evolution. Such family dharmas are, for example, those that go to make the relationship of a mother with her son or daughter, or of a brother with his brother or sister, and so on. (p. 68)

The term translated as “family” here is kula which has the sense of an “assemblage,” inclusive of all kinds of social relationship, including community, caste, and so on, with “family” the primary meaning (Monier-Williams et al., 1979, p. 294). The principle enunciated therefore carries the inference of being applicable to every level of society and social life. Again we may note the practical nature of Maharishi’s commentary: Social relationships have their value in the assistance each member of the relationship brings the other in accelerating the pace of their evolution, of their growth to higher states of consciousness.

Maharishi (1967) re-emphasizes this point later in the Bhagavad-Gita (II.33) from the perspective of the moral code of the society, which, he observes, comprises all the varieties of relationship that structure the society, just as the absolute field of dharma comprises all the varieties of dharma:

It may be mentioned that the moral code of conduct in any society has dharma at its basis, whether or not the people in that society are aware of the inner workings of nature guided by the invincible force of dharma. The fundamentals of social behavior in every society on earth are based on this principle which governs the laws of evolution. (p. 110)

It is interesting here to note the qualification “whether or not the people in that society are aware of the inner workings of nature.” Maharishi is pointing out that the absolute field of dharma, the field of pure intelligence, is an objective reality of nature, transcending the level of thought and feeling that constitutes the normal daily level of human awareness, and governing life—including the ideal structure of social relationships—from that level. In a similar way, one may not be aware of the existence of the electromagnetic or gravitational field, yet the laws pertaining to these fields govern the phenomena of their respective domains, and constantly impinge upon the material
domain of everyday life.

Finally, Maharishi repeatedly makes the point, particularly in his commentary on Chapter I, that a mark of developed consciousness is the natural flow of compassion for others. Love, he teaches, is the impulse of giving; a relationship thrives only when each person gives to the other (1963, pp. 180–182). Arjuna’s dilemma, he points out, is brought about by the greatness of his heart and mind—the fullness of his feeling for his kinsfolk and for the whole society, and the strength and clarity of his insight into his duty to others. A lesser man, surrendering to one or other impulse, might have launched himself into action without further reflection. Arjuna’s status is different, Maharishi (1967) remarks:

This brings to light the greatness of Arjuna’s heart and mind. His vision is clear; he views the situation with a serene and deep insight. His logic is profound. His thought is balanced and noble. His feeling is for others: when he thinks, it is in terms of others; if he wants to fight and gain sovereignty, it is for the sake of others; if he wants to amass enjoyments and pleasures, it is for the sake of others; if he wants to live, it is for others. Such is his developed consciousness, devoid of any thought of self-interest. This is the status of truly great men—living, they live for others; dying, they die for others. (p. 57)

At the highest level of human development, in the state of enlightenment, Maharishi (1967) teaches, this principle takes on a new reality of a universal value:

सक्ता: कर्मश्चिद्वांसो यथा कृत्वति भारत।
कृयाहीद्वांसतः सक्तिः कीर्तिकीर्तकसंग्रहम्।२५१।

saktah karmany avidvānṣo yathā kurvanti bhārata.
kuryād vidvāns tathā 'saktash chikirshur loka-sangraham.

As the unwise act out of their attachment to action, O Bharata, so should the wise act, but without any attachment, desiring the welfare of the world. (III.25)

Maharishi (1967) comments:

The effects of the enlightened man’s actions spread out in the world and everything benefits from them. . . . His actions are in response to the needs of the time; they fulfil the demands of their surroundings. The wise are tools in the hands of the Divine; they innocently carry out the divine plan. Their actions arise from their desire for “the welfare of the world.” (p. 218)

Here the field of social relationships has expanded to embrace the whole of humanity, the ideal of what Maharishi identifies as vasudhaiva kutumbakam (Maha Upanishad, 6.17) and translates as “the world is my family” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1987, p. 9).

The Causes of Social Disintegration and War

Maharishi’s analysis of the absolute principles of society encompasses not only those that structure an ideal society but also those that account for social disintegration and
disharmony. From the most expanded perspective, Maharishi (1967, 1986a) teaches, the fundamental cause of social disharmony of any kind, and of its most extreme manifestation—war—is to be found in the loss of the complete knowledge of life that is restored by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita:

When the philosophy of integrated life restored by Lord Krishna was lost from view, the idea grew that everything which life can offer is present on the obvious levels of existence, and that it would therefore be useless to aspire to anything that might lie deeper than external appearances. Society became dominated by this superficial outlook, insight into Reality was lost, the right sense of values forgotten and the stability of life destroyed. (1967, p. 10)

Here Maharishi makes it clear that underlying the “obvious levels of existence” is an absolute field, which, as we have seen, is the field of pure consciousness. This absolute field is “Reality”: It is the essential content of life. The more superficial, relative levels are the different expressions, or modes, of that Reality. Elsewhere Maharishi (1980) speaks of this structure in terms of the analogy of a plant:

There is a level of the sap, which is not green, not white, but completely unmanifest. . . . Reverberating within itself it comes to express itself in different modes—in terms of green leaf, green stem, white petal. It is reverberating in different terms, in different tones. (p. 9)

Complete knowledge thus includes Absolute, or unmanifest and relative, or manifest levels of life. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, e.g., pp. 105–106, 442). Knowledge of the surface values alone, without knowledge of their source, is partial knowledge, unreliable and misleading at best. Action based on such inadequate knowledge must give rise to mistakes and its attendant suffering. The condition of a society based on such action is clearly depicted by Maharishi: “Tension, confusion, superstition, unhappiness and fear. . .” (p. 10).

The inner mechanics of this phenomenon are explained by Maharishi (1967) in terms of the loss of dharma, loss of the path of evolution. The mistakes made by people in their daily life through lack of complete knowledge produce a cumulative effect in the society:

Calamities, crises and catastrophes in a community or country are caused by the increase of negative forces resulting from the evil deeds of a majority of their people. A high degree of concentration of negative forces, without positive forces to balance them, ends in suffering and destruction of life. (p. 27)

The chain of cause and effect is here traced from “evil deeds of a majority of the people,” to the “increase of negative forces,” to “a high degree of concentration of negative forces,” and finally to “suffering and destruction in life.” An evil deed is defined as an action that violates natural law: It deviates from the path of evolution, which is, as we have seen, identified by Maharishi as the path of righteousness. Such an action, it is explained here, creates a negative influence: It enlivens the destructive values of natural law. Many such actions accumulate and concentrate that destructive quality in the society at large. Eventually it breaks out in some form of suffering, which is described as being opposed to life.

Maharishi elaborates on the nature of this breaking point in his commentary on I.13,
(which also refers to verse I.12):

तस्य संजनयनहर्ष कुरवृद्धः पितामहः ।
सिंहनादं विनयोढ़िः श्रज्ञ दध्यो प्रतापवान् । इ २ ।

tasya sanjanayan harsham kuru-vriddhah pitamahah.
sinha-nadam vinadyochchhaih shankham dadhmau pratapavan.

The aged Kuru, the glorious grandsire
(Bhishma), gave a loud roar like a
lion and blew his conch, gladdening
the heart of Duryodhana. (I.12)

ततः श्रध्वश्च भेर्यश्च पशावनकगोमुखः ।
सहसौवायन्यतं स शब्दस्तुमुलोभवत् । इ ३ ।
tath shankhash cha bheryash cha panavanka-gomukhah.
sahasaiabhyahanyanta sa shabdas tumulo 'bhavat.

Then quite suddenly conches,
horns, kettledrums, tabors and
drums blared forth, and the sound
was tumultuous. (I.13)

Maharishi (1967) comments:

"Quite suddenly" gives expression to the way in which nature functions. Nature ensures great
flexibility for the growth of good or evil in the atmosphere. But when an influence grows
beyond elastic limits, nature will no longer sustain it; suddenly the breaking-point is reached.
The sudden burst of the lion roar of Bhishma and the tumultuous noise produced by the
whole army symbolized the great cry of nature announcing the breaking-point of
the immeasurable evil that Duryodhana and his supporters had accumulated for themselves. (p. 35)

The first point we notice in this description is the "great flexibility" attributed to
nature in the growth of good or evil. The ideal path of evolution, as we have seen, is one
of progress. When imbalance in the quality of thoughts and actions—in this case pre-
dominantly negative—arises, some environmental influence is produced, as described
above; if the imbalance continues, the influence continues to grow, as the previous
verse states. Here Maharishi explains that such growth can continue without a cata-
stroyic impact on life for some time, and the opportunity to restore balance continues
to be available. This is the "flexibility" of nature. There comes a point, however, when
the limits of this flexibility are reached, and the accumulated influence suddenly breaks.
The image evoked by the term "elastic limits" is clear. As it breaks, Maharishi (1967)
emphasizes, it does so according to the principle of "As you sow, so shall you reap"
which, as explained in Maharishi's commentary cited above, also "expresses the role of
dharma in practical life" (p. 27). Those who have created the negative influence must
bear its effects, just as those who create a positive influence reap its rewards.

A second point to notice is that the influence is created in the "atmosphere." It would
seem that Maharishi is using this term in the everyday sense according to which we
might say “They met in an atmosphere of goodwill” or “The atmosphere was strained.” From this perspective, the idea of accumulation of such an influence in the atmosphere becomes easier to comprehend.

In the later developments of his teaching on this principle, Maharishi has framed his explanation of the societal effects of negative or positive thoughts and actions in terms of the concept of “collective consciousness.” Maharishi (1978) defines the collective consciousness of a social grouping of any size as the sum of the consciousness of the individuals comprising the group: “When we talk of community consciousness, we merely put together the consciousness of all the individuals who make up the community, or the nation” (p. 87).

The effect created by individuals in the atmosphere described above, could be restated as an effect on the quality of collective consciousness. In particular, Maharishi (1986a) speaks of the degree of “coherence” of collective consciousness as a measure of the degree to which the collective thought and action of society is in alliance with the evolutionary value of natural law (p. 162). A higher degree of coherence in collective consciousness is reflected in the rise of positivity in the society; a lower degree of coherence with the rise of negativity.

Maharishi (1967) extends the analysis of the particular historical situation portrayed in the Bhagavad-Gita to a general principle applicable to all wars, whenever and wherever they have occurred:

Wars in history have resulted from the cumulative effect of aggression on the innocent; individuals continue to oppress others, not knowing that aggression is growing in the atmosphere eventually to break upon them as their own disaster. One reaps the consequences of one's own actions. (p. 36)

Maharishi seems to single out of various conceivable “evil deeds,” or actions in violation of natural law, those which “oppress others,” which have the quality of aggression, as creating the influence that eventually breaks out as war.

Maharishi (1967) also describes the limit of individual action in a society unbalanced by the negative thoughts and actions of its members:

When the collective karma (action) threatens national destruction, it is beyond the power of the individual to check it; this is even more true when it has reached the ultimate limit and is about to break into catastrophe. (p. 44)

This growing inability to contain the results of collective negative action relates to Maharishi's description of nature’s flexibility, as cited above. Maharishi indicates that at a certain point it is beyond the power of any one individual to neutralize the negative influence in the environment due to the collective violation of natural law by the greater society. Once the breaking point of negativity in collective consciousness is reached, the only possible outcome is the outbreak of some catastrophe, such as war.

Although at this extreme point it may be beyond the power of any one individual, no matter how well motivated, to neutralize the collective negativity of society, it is important to place this principle in the context of another great theme in the theory and practice of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology. In the past two decades research has
repeatedly demonstrated that extreme negativity in collective consciousness can be reversed by groups of individuals creating a strong enough countervailing influence (Orme-Johnson, Dillbeck, Bousquet, & Alexander, 1989; Orme-Johnson, Alexander, Davies, Chandler, & Larimore, 1988). This positive influence is created by individuals who, through practicing the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program in groups twice daily:

... enliven pure consciousness, the ground state of natural law, the basic level of all creation, and thereby produce a positive evolutionary influence that permeates all levels of life in the environment. . . .

The result is that tension and negativity are automatically eliminated from the collective consciousness of the local community. The natural law of the land is enlivened. The tendencies of the people begin to be more evolutionary. Violation of natural law declines. Consequently, the accumulation of stress in collective consciousness diminishes. Orderliness and coherence grow in collective consciousness. (International Association for the Advancement of the Science of Creative Intelligence, 1978, p. 5)

By enlivening the total potential of natural law through the group practice of Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program, coherence creating groups have averted war in areas where it is about to erupt, and diminished or even eliminated war in areas where it is already in progress (Orme-Johnson et al., 1988; Orme-Johnson et al., 1989).

In his Vedic Science, Maharishi has thus introduced powerful technologies for collective action at the level of the unified field of natural law to neutralize negativity in society. Nevertheless, in his Gita commentary Maharishi (1967) derives from his analysis of dharma highly practical and timely advice concerning the prevention of war at its basis:

Therefore it is wise for people of every generation to be cautious and not to tolerate an increase of wrong-doing in their surroundings, but to nip it in the bud. For it is the cumulative influence of these small wrongs done by individuals in their own little spheres of activity that produces national and international tensions and leads to catastrophe. (p. 44)

We may notice here Maharishi’s phrasing: “small wrongs done by individuals in their own little spheres of activity” (our italics). To use the language of the modern social sciences, the macrosocial is rooted in the microsocial, through the collective, cumulative influence created in the whole social and physical environment by every individual action, however small.

As to the nature of those individual acts, those “small wrongs,” we have seen their basis: Actions that violate the evolutionary value of natural law, Maharishi (1967) points out, are those that are not in accord with dharma. Wherever such actions occur, a negative influence is created in the environment. For example, we saw, deviating from one’s own dharma produces “a struggle which is experienced as sorrow and suffering . . .” (p. 66). Even more damaging is the loss of family dharmas, since, as we have seen, these dharmas are the basic structural unit of the society:

If the family traditions are broken, people living together do not know how to live in such a manner that their way of life naturally helps each of them to evolve. The result is the loss of the path of evolution and the increase of disorder and chaos in the family. Life in such a
family is a life in hell, and those fallen into such a degenerate pattern of life remain off the path of evolution and continue to mould their destinies in wretchedness. (pp. 68–69)

Speaking generally, Maharishi makes it clear that any action which is "wrong"—that is, not in accord with laws of nature that uphold the path of evolution—must create a negative influence in the society and ultimately lay the basis for war or other social calamities. More recently, Maharishi (1986a) has analyzed this phenomenon in greater detail. He points out that violation of natural law need not be—indeed, usually is not—a voluntary act:

Thoughts and action arise spontaneously. No one wants to suffer. No one wants to be disharmonious. No one wants to do harm to anyone. But somehow, one finds oneself in that difficult situation where one can't avoid doing wrong. (p. 98)

Maharishi teaches, in other words, that when one's awareness is not grounded in the total potential of natural law—the field of dharma, inevitably and spontaneously thoughts and actions violate some law of nature that structures evolution and hence create a negative influence in society. The only solution is to open one's awareness to the experience of pure consciousness, to the level of the total potential of natural law, and think and act from that level. Thought from this level, Maharishi (1986a) teaches, spontaneously takes into account and nourishes all aspects of life (p. 98).

It is the system of education in the society, Maharishi (1986a) points out, that bears the responsibility for making this state of life normal for everyone:

That is why the best education will cultivate a habit of working from that totality of natural law, that field which is our own transcendental consciousness, our own unbounded awareness. When we are developing a habit of spontaneously functioning according to natural law, then we are naturally getting out of that old habit where some negativity could arise. All difficulties, suffering and failures in life belong to violation of the laws of nature. Life according to natural law will always be orderly, evolutionary, and nourishing to everyone. (p. 98)

The field of pure consciousness is described here as "transcendental consciousness" in that it lies beyond the thinking process (please refer to pp. 24–25), and as "unbounded awareness" in that it is beyond—indeed, the source of—space and time.

Although it hardly needs to be emphasized, one may note that the true reality of war is clearly recognized by Maharishi. In his commentary on I.47, Maharishi (1967) remarks:

Arjuna, as a great archer, was aware of the pathetic records of bloodstained conquests in history. He could foresee great damage to the civilization of his time. He could picture in his mind ruins of war everywhere; he could hear within himself the cries of children and lamentations of women, tales of calamity and oppression. Arjuna, a hero with a good human heart, would do anything to hold back from the situation that seems imminent. (p. 82)

There is nothing here of the glory of war. It is seen in its stark reality for what it has always been: a catastrophe for human life in every generation. From the universal perspective, as Maharishi (1967) teaches, war may have its place in the path of evolution: "The event of war is a natural phenomenon. It is a process of restoring the balance
between the negative and positive forces of nature” (p. 108). It remains, nevertheless, a path of disaster for those on whom it falls. Hence there is wisdom in following the advice given by Maharishi to prevent the growth of the influence of negativity at its source—to “nip it in the bud.” The greatness of the knowledge given by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita, Maharishi emphasizes, is that it provides a simple and practical means to effect such prevention, while simultaneously promoting all that is good in society in the direction of its ideal.

Fulfillment of Society

It is abundantly clear from Maharishi’s analysis of the absolute principles of society that the key to the prevention of national and international calamities, the preservation of social harmony, and the maintenance of social progress is life according to dharma—life in full accord with the total evolutionary potential of natural law. Indeed, these attributes of society, it may be inferred, are intimately connected to each other. They are different facets of the same one thing: the degree to which the life of the society as a whole is in accord with the total potential of natural law, expressed in the force of dharma. When dharma flourishes in the lives of the people, Maharishi explains, society flourishes and suffering disappears; when its opposite, adharma—violation of natural law—is the rule, social disasters, and ultimately war, are the inevitable result.

Moreover, we have seen that Maharishi (1967) places the responsibility for the state of the society squarely on the individuals that comprise it: Their “small wrongs” accumulate in the environment and eventually lead to “catastrophe” (p. 44). Thus government, administration, leadership, policy, and planning, in the final analysis, all take second place in importance to the kind of lives the people of the society are living. In his subsequent teaching, Maharishi (1976) has extended this principle in the domain of government as his Absolute Theory of Government:

National consciousness governs the activity of every nation in the same way that the consciousness of the individual governs the activity of the individual. Since national consciousness is the collective consciousness of all the individuals of the nation, it is ultimately the consciousness of the individual which is the prime mover of the nation and shapes its destiny. Every decision of government is the expression of national consciousness. Government is the pure and innocent mirror of the nation, faithfully reflecting whatever is presented to it. (p. 122)

Here Maharishi presents a principle that many governmental leaders have experienced: Governmental decisions and actions reflect the coherence or incoherence of national consciousness, which is simply the collective value of the consciousness, thoughts and actions of each individual in society.

The formula for creating an ideal society, Maharishi (1967, 1976) teaches, must therefore be one which creates ideal individuals. This, he further points out, is precisely the purpose of the Bhagavad-Gita:

The whole discourse of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita is designed to give the wisdom of life and the technique of living which enable man to live all the good qualities of life
with full coordination of heart and mind. By this wisdom and this technique the individual is raised to a high level of consciousness where he gains eternal contentment within himself. He lives a life in fulfillment, useful to himself and society. Such a life supports surrounding nature; all becomes harmonious, resulting in ideal relationships with others. (1967, pp. 49-50)

This marvelously concentrated statement is worthy of detailed attention. Here, in a single paragraph, Maharishi provides the fundamentals for perfection of individual and collective life. We note that Lord Krishna’s discourse provides “the wisdom of life.” The knowledge given in the Bhagavad-Gita, Maharishi explains, is complete knowledge, knowledge of the totality of life, manifest and unmanifest. “Wisdom” refers in this context to intellectual knowledge, to understanding the fundamental principles that govern life, both individual and collective, everywhere. Such understanding alone is not enough, however; it must be supplemented by “the technique of living”: the practical method of making this knowledge a natural reality of daily life. This technique is Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation program. Maharishi (1967) explains:

The technique may be defined as turning the attention inwards towards the subtler levels of a thought until the mind transcends the experience of the subtlest state of the thought and arrives at the source of thought. This expands the conscious mind and at the same time brings it in contact with the creative intelligence that gives rise to every thought. (p. 470)

What is described here as “creative intelligence,” Maharishi (1967, 1972) has explained, is the field of pure intelligence: pure consciousness or transcendental consciousness, the total potential of natural law. More recently, in the context of his Vedic Science, Maharishi (1986a) has emphasized that at this level, awareness is open not to any objects of perception, but only to itself.

When consciousness is flowing out into the field of thoughts and activity, it identifies itself with many things, and this is how experience takes place. Consciousness coming back onto itself gains an integrated state, because consciousness in itself is completely integrated. This is pure consciousness, or transcendental consciousness. (p. 25)

Maharishi has always emphasized the simplicity and naturalness of the Transcendental Meditation technique in systematically bringing about this experience, in contrast to other forms of meditation that have been taught from time to time:

It should be noted that Transcendental Meditation is neither a matter of contemplation nor of concentration. The process of contemplation and concentration both hold the mind on the conscious thinking level, whereas Transcendental Meditation systematically takes the mind to the source of thought, the pure field of creative intelligence. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 471)

The significance of this experience, Maharishi (1967) teaches, is that the individual conscious mind now has direct access to the field of pure consciousness, which is the total potential of natural law. In higher states of consciousness, when thought and action are spontaneously grounded at this level, no violation of natural law is possible, and no mistakes are made. The invincible evolutionary power of natural law is available to the
individual, leading to all success and accomplishment in life:

When the mind comes out from the field of Being, the plane of cosmic law, into the relative field of activity, which is under the influence of innumerable laws of nature, it automatically enjoys the support of the cosmic law, and this makes possible the accomplishment of any aspiration and the ultimate fulfillment of life.

This is how the life of a man who has risen to cosmic consciousness is eternally established on the level of cosmic law and receives spontaneous support from all the laws of nature. (p. 472)

When the wisdom of life and the technique of living—understanding and experience of the nature of pure consciousness—come together, Maharishi goes on, they give rise to an ideal quality of individual life. One is enabled "to live all the good qualities of life"; giving support in one's life, in other words, to values of life that structure evolution. This is life according to natural law. One naturally lives "full coordination of heart and mind" since the source of both and the source of the laws of nature that structure their coordination—the field of pure consciousness—is being enlivened in one's awareness.

Scientific research on the Transcendental Meditation program over the past two decades has amply confirmed this description. The regular practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique has been associated with, among other things, greater creativity (Travis, 1979), improved memory (Dillbeck, 1982), and better problem-solving ability (Dillbeck, Orme-Johnson, & Wallace, 1981; Dillbeck, 1982). Field independence, a measure of greater cognitive integration, consistently increases (Pelletier, 1974). Intelligence itself systematically expands, even in people in agegroups that habitually see it decline (Shecter, 1978; Tjoa, 1975). Systematic growth of higher moral reasoning (Nidich, 1975), and balance and integration of personality (Nidich, Seeman & Dreskin, 1973; Alexander, Rainforth, & Gelderloos, 1991) have also been documented. These effects are underpinned by profound effects on physiological functioning, including a deep level of physiological rest during the practice (Wallace, Benson, & Wilson, 1971; Dillbeck & Orme-Johnson, 1987); reduced levels of physiological stress, as indicated by reduced hypertension (Wallace, Silver, Mills, Dillbeck, & Wagoner, 1983; Cooper & Aygen, 1979) and greater immunity to stress (Orme-Johnson, 1973; Brooks & Scarano, 1985); and better levels of health, as indicated by more healthy behavior and lifestyle (Monahan, 1977; Shafii, Lavely, & Jaffe, 1975) and as reflected in lower rates of hospitalization and medical treatment (Orme-Johnson, 1987). In consequence, practitioners of Transcendental Meditation have been shown to interact better with those around them, for instance in the workplace, with better relationships with supervisors and co-workers (Frew, 1974), and in the family (Aron & Aron, 1982; Suarez, 1976).

Taken together these findings indicate, coming back to the language of Maharishi's commentary, that an individual who practices the Transcendental Meditation technique begins to live "a high level of consciousness." A life of higher states of consciousness is characterized by "eternal contentment": It is "life in fulfillment." It is, moreover, life that is "useful to himself and society," just by virtue of its existence: Such a life enlivens all life from its foundations, nourishing "surrounding nature," the creation at large. As all things are enlivened from their source, they are integrated and become
"harmonious." This is particularly true of the social environment, the harmony of which is reflected in "ideal relationships with others." On this basis alone, Maharishi teaches, society is able to advance to its ideal, an ideal which is relevant to all cultures and historical periods, however varied they may appear to be on the surface.

The intrinsic interconnectedness of all members of a society on the level of consciousness is emphasized by Maharishi (1967) in his commentary on the notion of fame (II.34): "The underlying principle of good fame in society is that when a man constantly does good he becomes a center of harmonious vibrations which, enjoyed by the people around him, naturally create warmth and love in their hearts" (p. 111). We may note the word "constantly"; the implication here is that the level of consciousness being lived is such that good actions are natural to the individual. The "harmonious vibrations" are thus those produced by the awareness being to some degree open to the field of pure consciousness. In the case of someone practicing Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation technique, where the conscious mind is identified with this field regularly and systematically, the effect is correspondingly greater: "The contentment and serenity gained through this action of meditation produce harmonious and life-supporting influences for the whole world" (p. 214).

In the state of enlightenment, Maharishi teaches, as we have seen, the experience of pure consciousness is an all-time reality. The universal nourishing effect produced by the enlightened from the level of the unified field of natural law is continuous and unrestricted. Maharishi (1967) characterizes enlightenment as:

... the height of realization, which is to realize the supreme oneness of life in terms of one's own Self. No diversity of life is able to detract from this state of supreme Unity. One who has reached It is the supporter of all and everything, for he is life eternal. (p. 449)

More recently, as we have noted, Maharishi (1978, 1986a) has emphasized that even a small group of individuals practicing the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program can produce a powerful, nourishing effect and influence the whole society in an evolutionary direction. Scientific research has repeatedly demonstrated that as little as 1% of a society practicing the Transcendental Meditation program, or the square root of 1% practicing the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program in a group, creates this effect, which is known as the Maharishi Effect (please refer to Orme-Johnson & Dillbeck, 1987). The Maharishi Effect is expressed in the total quality of life of the society, as measured by such parameters as declines in crime rates, accident rates, sickness, and violence, and the increasing strength of the economy and comprehensive quality of life indices (Orme-Johnson & Dillbeck, 1987; Cavanaugh, King, & Titus, 1990). Maharishi (1978) explains:

Whenever one per cent of the people in any community practise Transcendental Meditation, balance in nature increases, accidents become less, and all the collective values, which we call social values of society, become more positive.

Individuals become incapable of thinking wrong things. Their thinking changes in favour of society. (p. 163)

Most significantly, research has demonstrated the ability of the Maharishi Effect to reduce violence even in war, and to eliminate, for example, the tensions that formerly
Maharishi has described the mechanisms underlying the Maharishi Effect in some detail, and in terms that are entirely recognizable from the earlier perspective of his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita. The function of his Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program, Maharishi (1986a) explains,

... is to enliven the evolutionary power of natural law and let it radiate wherever it can radiate.

How do these radiations go far and wide in the universe? How do they travel? They travel through the same channels used by the evolutionary power of nature. From the most quiet, transcendental level, nature performs, and it performs within itself. . . . This transcendental level of nature's functioning is the level of infinite correlation. When the group awareness is brought in attunement with that level, then a very intensified influence of coherence radiates and a great richness is created. (p. 75)

The ultimate state of the society in which the individuals have attained higher states of consciousness, Maharishi explains (e.g. 1976, 1978), is a completely different order of life than that to which we are accustomed. The term "ideal" indicates perfection of life on both the individual and the collective level. In his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, Maharishi (1967) refers to this state of life as "the Kingdom of God on earth" (p. 70). The field of pure consciousness is the level from which creation arises, is maintained and governed; when, through the practice of Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program, this field becomes available in the daily life of the people, the transcendental, absolute value of life and the concrete, relative value of life have come together. All human life, on every level—individual, family, community, nation, and world—is in accord with its dharma, in accord with the total potential of natural law, flourishing in its own right and integrated with every other level:

. . . the establishment of righteousness, the Kingdom of God on earth, is a cooperative enterprise. All men have to play their part in it, and this can be done only when family and caste dharmas are properly maintained by the individuals firmly established in their individual dharma. (p. 70)

Maharishi notes that in the hierarchy of dharmas the individual has the priority and the responsibility: It is only through individuals that the greatest possibilities of social life are realized. He emphasizes, however, that the process is a "cooperative" one: Every individual is necessarily involved in it, since every individual thought and action contributes, for better or worse, to the quality of the collective consciousness of the society. The highest goal is reached only when the people of a society collectively recognize their responsibility to practice the Transcendental Meditation technique and gain higher states of consciousness. In such a situation every individual benefits from the growing higher states of consciousness of every other individual in the society. The result, Maharishi (1972) teaches, is a wholeness that is more than the sum of the parts:

Existence, life, thrives in growth, in progress. So the purpose of existing together is evolving together, progressing together, and the goal of this growth is fulfillment. Therefore growing together is for enjoying fulfillment together.

One man's fulfillment is one's own fulfillment, but the fulfillment of two men together
is more than the fulfillment of each. Something more gets created. For that something, togetherness is important. There is a saying, "A house is more than a collection of bricks." Keep on putting bricks together and what comes out is a house. A fulfilled society is something more than a collection of fulfilled individuals. And gaining that greater fulfillment is an inspiration to be together. (p. 11-4).

This greater fulfillment, Maharishi teaches, is the possibility that his Vedic Science and Technology opens to the world. Every society, no matter of what culture, of what political or economic system, can develop a state of ideal civilization, which Maharishi (1991) terms Heaven on Earth:

What awaits the world from Vedic Science is a profound civilization, a civilization where all aspects of life will be ideally lived. Governments will be ideal, industry will be ideal, the economy will be ideal, and the behavior of the people will be ideal. By ideal we mean good for the individual, good for his environment, good for his country, and good for his world. By ideal we mean good today, tomorrow, the next day, the next year, and the next century. The future of life on earth will be ideal, and that means good for everyone. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986a, pp. 22-25)

References


Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. (1986b). *Thirty years around the world: Dawn of the age of enlightenment.* Vlodrop, the Netherlands: Maharishi Vedic University Press.


29
MODERN SCIENCE AND VEDIC SCIENCE


