

Consciousness and Literary Studies

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Abstract

At this present juncture in the history of literature, many critics fear the literary word has been devalued by the twin forces of electronic technology and critical theory. Even so, the field of literature is not without resources to revivify itself as the emergence of new holistic approaches to literature testify. The interdisciplinary influence of the sciences, for instance, opens a window for the humanities. Alternative models to understanding existence, such as quantum, chaos, and system theories which acknowledge an ordering principle, have emerged to challenge current views of life as entropic, random, and based on difference. Nonlinear dynamical feedback systems create patterns in an open-ended manner, folding back on themselves. Like the mechanics of quantum fields, they describe the movements of both difference and unity in nature. Some critics see such theories as paradigms for cultural production, for human art is believed by many to use the same creative mechanics as nature itself, to even become an interactive partner in the evolutionary play of nature. This new move to describe life in terms of unity instead of difference is not a nostalgic return to the logocentric past, but rather a new scientific spirit that promises to mend the old split between the opposing views of existence as: 1) an offshoot of nature and 2) life as a by-product of culture.

For the past 25 years the Department of Literature and Languages at Maharishi University of Management has addressed this gap between nature and culture by applying the techniques for developing higher states of consciousness taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to the study of language and literature. As a result, students gain a deep understanding of the full potential of language in both its vertical and horizontal play of meaning while expanding their awareness and discovering themselves in the literary texts they read. Such a method of studying literature is intimate, practical, and fulfilling to the individual. More importantly, it seems especially urgent at this time, for the sake of world and eco peace, to train students to experience themselves and their culture as part of the unity in the cosmos as well as part of its diversity. This paper addresses the importance of consciousness in historical and theoretical issues of literary study in Part I and presents the practical application of a Consciousness-Based literature program in Part II.

Introduction: Literary Study in Crisis

European literature as a cultural influence peaked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a position that has been on the wane ever since. Historically literature has always assumed a foremost place in intellectual endeavors. The well-rounded ancient Greek was balanced in the arts as well as philosophy and mathematics. The Renaissance

flourished both under the development of science and also the arts. However, by the nineteenth century the arts and sciences began to eye each other uneasily. Knowledge and control of the arts had long been the possession of the landed nobility. A sign of rank included dress, speech, and knowledge of literature. As part of a lady's or gentleman's education, one read the literary classics and then toured the continent to see first-hand the great specimens of European art. Conversely, science and technology were developments of the rising middle class which, to a great degree, served the aristocracy. As late as the middle of the nineteenth century, for example, physicians were looked on by the gentry as little more than highly skilled mechanics. The rise of science and technology, however, was perceived as a real threat to literature. In such cautionary tales as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter," the scientist was depicted as an egoistic villain whose careless actions potentially undermined the very core of human existence.

By the end of the nineteenth century, as the middle class became the ruling class, the scientist along with the industrialist gained grudging acceptance by the Victorian and *fin-de-siècle* sages such as Carlyle, Mill, and Nietzsche. In the new century, in the figure of Albert Einstein, the scientist emerged as social hero. In the universities, science's ascendancy created a curriculum balanced in the objective and subjective fields of knowledge. Unfortunately for the arts, the rise and triumph of science was not complete. Beginning with the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century which carried on into the next century, science and technology became intrinsically connected to enormous economic growth. With the huge increases in an urban middle class, and the decline in influence of agriculture, the need for new professions became essential. Universities, hence, became professional training institutions, and the sciences, engineering, business, and other so-called practical professions were financially supported by federal governments. Not surprisingly, literature and the humanities began to decrease both in percentage of enrollment and influence.

Fighting for their existence, literary professionals searched for ways to make literature more practical and influential. One strategy in the early decades of the twentieth century was an attempt to make literature as scientific as the sciences. To do this the *structuralists* began to switch the emphasis of literary studies away from "belle lettres," the fine literature of the academies, towards an emphasis on language which could be categorized, theorized, and measured. Although these scientific approaches have not stuck, the initial efforts of the structuralists did send literature on a new course, which has spawned a number of new limbs of literary studies, including linguistic, rhetorical, cultural, and theoretical wings of the discipline. Relying on the placement of language as the perceived basis of all human thought and communication, literature has tried to position itself at the center of all human endeavors. This belief in the centrality of language has led to a battle over the "word." Whoever controls the word, and who is capable of controlling the word, have become essential issues in the literary discipline, especially in gender, culture, political, philosophical, psychological, epistemological, and ontological debates within the field.

This emphasis on language has caused a shift in literary studies away from the traditional approach to literature as artistic expression. Many professionals in the field are dismayed with this change and long for a return to the old-style, idealistic humanism that literature previously represented and away from the rational approach to literature that

currently dominates the field. For most, this would be a return to an impractical, elitist, and philosophically indefensible position that was incapable of sustaining the dynamism and growth of literature. Thus literature finds itself split both within the discipline and within the larger bodies of academia and culture itself. Because of the decline of the arts in favor of the sciences, literature has been scrambling for over a half a century to reestablish its influence in society.

It is a discipline that is out of balance. Literature, prior to its present position, had always been important to social vitality because the poet, the dramatist, and prose artist had been able to both see and render the failures and successes of human existence in a way more convincing than anyone else. The best could even see what was needed to restore balance to both the individual and the societies they inhabited, could visualize the fundamental demand for a spiritual source beyond the ever-changing arena of ordinary existence. However, what these visionaries lacked was a practical method for annexing such a source as a means for upholding life. If a literature curriculum could supply such a methodology, it would restore both balance to the individual and the discipline. It would fulfill the highest goals of the idealist and the most stringent demands of the pragmatist. Such a curriculum would restore literature to its rightful place in society; it could in fact set the stage for a blossoming in literature beyond the achievements of any age including those of Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare because of its universal and repeatable experience of the source of literature in pure consciousness.

The foundation for such a curriculum was established two and one half decades ago at Maharishi University of Management. It is a curriculum based upon traditional approaches to knowledge in such academic fields as literature and supported by the development of the individual's full inner, mental potential, a development that allows for knowledge to be fully appreciated and employed in life. The foundation of this curriculum is Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's exposition of *consciousness* and the techniques for developing it.

In the following sections we will discuss issues central to the field of literature today, how the split between nature and culture has arisen as a threat to the very health of the planet, whether technology is a boon or a bane to the study of literature, how holistic approaches promise to repair the damage to literature caused by a century of fragmentation, how literary theory, particularly post-modern theories, have failed to fulfill the highest ideals of literature, and, in the final analysis, how Maharishi's exposition on consciousness restores the fundamental purpose of literature.

Part I

Consciousness and Maharishi University of Management

Maharishi explains that "Consciousness is that which is conscious of itself" (1994, p. 53).

All speech, action and behaviour are fluctuations of consciousness. All life emerges from and is sustained in consciousness. The whole universe is the expression of consciousness. The reality of the universe is one unbounded ocean of consciousness in motion.

Since consciousness is the most basic element of everyone's life, knowledge of consciousness is the most basic requirement for everyone to exist consciously and intelligently and enjoy full, unbounded creative potential of life, with maximum success in all fields of personal and professional life.

This most vital element of consciousness has unfortunately been out of the main stream of education (1994, pp. 67–68).

Consciousness, or what Maharishi most often calls *pure consciousness*, is the deepest, most powerful, most intelligent level of all existence. It is *Ātmā*, the unbounded, eternal aspect of one's own self. Ignorance of pure consciousness, Maharishi points out, is the cause of all problems and human suffering in life (1986, pp. 97–98). Because of humanity's long history of suffering, Maharishi developed programs with the goal of elevating human life to the full value of consciousness (1995, pp. 74–79, 119–122). Maharishi, therefore, set out to create an institution of higher learning that not only expanded the objective value of knowledge, that is information, but also the subjective value of knowledge, the growth of consciousness. Addressing the need for a cogent understanding of the full value of subjectivity in all academia and in the very conditions of living, he began an academic program for the study and development of consciousness.

Maharishi University of Management (formerly Maharishi International University), therefore, opened its doors 25 years ago in Santa Barbara, California, only to soon establish itself at its permanent campus in Fairfield, Iowa. This noble experiment in education has proven to be both fruitful and fulfilling for the university's students who, while acquiring traditional educations in the standard disciplines, have simultaneously realized unparalleled holistic growth in every area of human existence, documented by scientific research (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1981, pp. 108–121). The result is an exciting and ongoing investigation into knowledge by both teachers and students who pursue traditional academic content while simultaneously developing individual awareness.

Maharishi University of Management does not simply perpetuate the old patterns of formal education, the forcing of students to be filled, like so many water jugs, with an ever-increasing body of information. Although academic excellence is a primary objective, it is accomplished within the overall program of developing the students themselves. This emphasis on subjective growth is a training urgently needed by our future cultural producers to balance off the objective, technological advances that are growing in leaps and bounds, threatening to annihilate the humanistic values of culture.

With such advances in communication as the VCR, cable television, the sound bite, satellite feeds, fiber optics, the personal computer, a multitude of software programs, CD-ROM, and the information highway, the student today needs an equal expansion of consciousness to not only cope with cultural and communication developments, but to find a way to harness them for spiritual good. Maharishi envisioned a university for managing consciousness, for managing individual human potential, and in so doing provide the means to solve the planetary crises of war, poverty, disease, and the failure of culture which all are founded in human failures, in violation of Natural Law. Such violations, moreover, fall within the range of the humanities as well as the sciences, for violation of Natural Law can also be explained as a failure of communication—a failure to perfectly communicate with each other and with the environment that supports our existence.

Maharishi's exposition of the full possibilities for human subjectivity has been systematized in his *Vedic Science*SM, which he calls “the science of consciousness” (1994, pp. 156–157), and in an even more comprehensive statement “the science of everything” (1994, p. 157) because it includes subjectivity, objectivity, the means of trans-formation,

the nature of reality, and the methodology for fully utilizing consciousness. Unique to his Vedic Science is his exposition on the full range of human life which he expounds as the seven states of human consciousness—the ordinary states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping recognized by modern science, and then four higher states, transcendental consciousness, cosmic consciousness, God consciousness, and unity consciousness that lead to the full development of subjectivity experienced in such attributes as broad vision, enhanced flexibility and adaptability, equanimity, and stability (Alexander, Boyer, & Alexander 1987, pp. 94–96). To achieve these higher states, Maharishi Vedic ScienceSM includes the technologies of consciousness—the Transcendental Meditation[®] technique and the TM-Sidhi[®] program—to create enlightenment, the perfect functioning of the human nervous system and the ability to fulfill all desires in life (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1995, pp. 174–189). Enlightenment, Maharishi notes, is the birthright of everyone; it is only blocked by the stress of ordinary life lived in the ignorance of one’s full human potential (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 37).

Maharishi represents the Vedic tradition—the oldest continuously preserved tradition on earth—containing the ancient knowledge of enlightenment. The adjective Vedic comes from the noun Veda which Maharishi translates as *knowledge*, not the knowledge of a specific time or a specific group, but rather “pure knowledge” (1994, p. 3) the knowledge of Nature’s full creative intelligence found in the omnipresent field of pure consciousness.

Maharishi explains that pure consciousness is found in the mind of the individual subject when it experiences its simplest state of awareness. Pure consciousness or transcendental consciousness is a fourth state of consciousness beyond waking, dreaming, and sleeping which, when experienced regularly, is infused into activity and leads progressively to the full awakened potential of human existence in the higher states previously mentioned.¹ It is an experience qualitatively different from waking state which is a state of consciousness focused outwardly through the five senses. Describing this transcendental state, Maharishi notes, “Consciousness coming back on itself gains an integrated state, because consciousness in itself is completely integrated. This is pure consciousness, or transcendental consciousness” (1986, p. 25). When the individual becomes identified with this state through the regular practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, that person gains the quality of integration inherent in that state.

Pure consciousness, then, is the most fundamental state of Nature’s intelligence—the total potential of Natural Law or what Maharishi calls “nature’s evolutionary power” (1986, p. 2)—and can be experienced by human awareness during the practice of the Maharishi Transcendental MeditationSM and TM-Sidhi programs. Maharishi calls pure consciousness “self-referral” because it is consciousness awake only to the unbounded potential of itself. Self-referral consciousness is the source of both human and Nature’s creativity: “The self-referral state of consciousness is that one element in nature on the ground of which the infinite variety of creation is continuously emerging, growing, and

¹For a complete discussion of higher states of consciousness see Alexander, Boyer, and Alexander, “Higher States of Consciousness in the Vedic Psychology of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: A Theoretical Introduction and Research Review,” *Modern Science and Vedic Science*, 1, no. 1. 1987 (89–126) and R. Orme-Johnson’s “A Unified Field Theory of Literature,” *Modern Science Vedic Science*, 1, no. 3. 1987 (331–341).

dissolving. The whole field of change emerges from this field of non-change.” (1986, p. 25).

Maharishi Vedic Science bears his name to authenticate it as the formulation of Vedic knowledge made available in a scientific, verifiable, nonreligious context for anyone. Although this knowledge has been preserved in an oral tradition for thousands of years in India, one cannot, Maharishi explains, say that the Veda belongs to any particular culture nor can it be associated with any ideology, for it is simply the fundamental knowledge of Nature available in transcendental, pure consciousness (1994, pp. 240–249). In that state, consciousness is experienced as a state of pure potentiality. The full range of subjectivity described by Maharishi Vedic Science is enormously important for cultural studies—the study of individual cultures. The experience of pure consciousness makes it clear that Nature and what we think of as culture—individual societies as well as the characteristics that express them—are not totally unrelated entities but rather different manifestations of the same underlying field. The study of culture, then, when subjectivity in its most expanded form is identified with the source of Nature’s intelligence, becomes a study of the same Laws of Nature that structure life on the planet. This expanded study of culture allows us to see ourselves as part of an ordered and dynamic cosmos.

Culture and Natural Law

Cultural studies and the meaning of culture has become one of the central issues of literary studies in the university today. As the world shrinks through technology, communication, fast methods of travel, and a loss of natural resources, the importance for maintaining cultural integrity and for recognizing cultural sovereignty has never been greater. It has become a literary issue because literature has chosen to enter into the great debates of the time, and because language has become recognized as not only a means of communication between cultures but as a means for one culture to subjugate another. Also, more than any other art form, literature is representational; poetry, drama, and especially fiction personify culture through language whether the mode is romantic, realistic, expressionistic, or surrealist.

The topic of culture—its origin, function, and relationship to individual life—currently dominates discussions within humanities programs such as literary studies, because culture itself has become complex and problematic, and it has left us with a number of fundamental questions about the relationship between individuals and the environments they inhabit: Has the purity of the older cultures broken down leaving us with fragments of a once whole life? Should we try to rescue ancient cultures from technological contamination? Have we graduated from local cultures to the global village? Is cultural identity divisive or necessary for individual and collective well-being? How does culture define itself in what has come to be called the post-colonial era? These are common questions for cultural studies today.

Raymond Williams asserts in *Culture and Society* that the modern concept of culture, not as life itself but as a secondary expression of life, evolved as a response to the urbanization, isolation, and dehumanizing effects of the Industrial Revolution. During the nineteenth century “culture,” as we currently think of it, became dissociated from the activity of industrial society and became a thing in itself, apart, experienced privately and possessed by a new elite (Williams, p. xvi). Victorian Matthew Arnold promoted this view of culture as *sweetness and light* capable of refining life. By educating the populace

with great literature and great art he argued that “the best that has been said and thought in the world” could cultivate the broad thinking necessary for a great civilization. His idea, reduced to the “great book” formula, has fallen into disfavor since World War II, when it became known that many atrocities were conducted by misguided leaders well versed in the great books of their cultures. These leaders believed in the sanctity of their own culture, but not in anyone else’s. It was not what Arnold had in mind for culture and literature, but his ideas now appear naive.

James Clifford charges that in present society we can no longer justify ideas about culture like those of Arnold’s objectively. “Geopolitical questions” he says must be asked of every scheme, of every construct. In discussions of culture he asks, “Whose reality?” are we considering (Clifford, p. 6). He describes the predicament of the modern cultural scholar as

the pervasive condition of off-centeredness in a world of distinct meaning systems, a state of being in culture while looking at culture, a form of personal and collective self-fashioning. This predicament . . . responds to the twentieth-century’s unprece-dented overlay of traditions. (p. 9)

Observers, he points out, cannot look at another culture or even their own objectively because the boundaries of cultures are all blurred and conditioned by preconceptions. He says the postmodern tends to see culture as a textual code, divorced from nature, and “There is no master narrative that can reconcile the tragic and comic plots of global cultural history” (p. 15).

Clifford’s question “whose reality” factors in the importance of subjectivity into any consideration of culture. Every viewpoint, he emphasizes, produces its own reality, its own narrative. This viewpoint of culture that Clifford highlights, however, belongs only to a limited view of existence. Is there an unlimited all inclusive viewpoint that exists outside the endless individual viewpoints of culture? Maharishi’s higher states of consciousness arguably offer such an unlimited viewpoint that integrate an objective perspective from within subjectivity (Alexander, Boyer, & Alexander, 1987, p. 91).

Maharishi explains that by experiencing pure consciousness regularly, a person begins to cultivate a state of awareness that is simultaneously within and outside the limitations of culture—the state of cosmic consciousness. Permanently established in the field of pure consciousness, the perceiver remains both a silent witness and an active participant in his/her activities, maintaining an unshakable stability even while engaging in the ever fluctuating events of human life. Established in pure con-sciousness, the universal field of all cultures, a person naturally and spontaneously feels an empathy for another person’s culture, even while recognizing the differences from one’s own. Thus, Maharishi’s higher states of human consciousness provide not a personal or elite perspective, but rather a universal viewpoint common to every individual of every culture. From the vantage point of higher states of consciousness, humans and their cultures are not isolated, but participants in one cosmic process that includes all people, all things, all life. Yet at the same time, in what Maharishi refers to as “cultural integrity,” the individual characteristics that define a specific culture, remains intact.

The experience of pure consciousness, then, offers a solution to the most fundamental problem in cultural studies and relations—the relationship of unity to diversity.² Cultural

²Diversity is the field of time and change in which one gets lost to one’s own undivided state. Unity is the state of existence in which one is fully reawakened to one’s Self. Maharishi explains how this unity comes about:

diversity is hailed today as one of the great virtues of modern existence. But images of social fragmentation and ethnic cleansing remind us of the dangers inherent within cultural diversity. While it is essential for each culture to maintain its own separate integrity, it must also operate and communicate in a larger cultural realm. Because of the present valorization of cultural diversity, unity is amazingly looked on as a form of limitation and dominance, a form of hegemony. But societies by their very nature are a form of unity, an agreement to live together for mutual gain. Moreover, societies must also participate in the larger family of cultures that make up a city, a state, a nation, and the world in order to grow and prosper, a lesson England had to learn before joining the Common Market, and a lesson that Israel and the Arab states are learning in their precious pursuit of peace. Hence, the opposite values of unity and diversity are equally essential for cultural existence.

Maharishi explains that from the perspective of higher states of consciousness, diversity exists as the grossest level of creation, the unstable and objective world that Clifford describes. Yet simultaneously a unity underlies all phenomena and all cultures, and that unity can be experienced inside of one's own self as the field of pure consciousness, the source of all cultures that expresses itself as cultural variety. This personal experience of pure consciousness is the pervasive underlying unity of Nature. Thus, from the viewpoint of one of the higher states of consciousness, every culture can be appreciated, not as another social fragment, but as another wholeness, deriving from and reflecting another face of cosmic existence. Because all individuals and all cultures are expressions of the same infinite, eternal wholeness, Maharishi explains there is no need to promote one culture over another. He states that the greatness of consciousness is that it expresses itself in the glory of diversity without ever losing the dignity of unity:

Nature loves variety. World harmony is not based on the fusion of different cultures. It depends on the ability of each culture to maintain its own integrity on the basis of the infinite adaptability that characterizes life lived in accord with the laws of nature. (1977, p. 319)

Culture, Maharishi explains, is the manifestation of Natural Law (1982, p. 10), the Laws of Nature that create and govern all phenomenal existence as well as the laws that culture a particular region. In his exposition of the origin of culture Maharishi notes, "Creativity is the source of all culture. The infinite potential of creativity lies in the state of pure intelligence—unmanifest, unbounded, absolute" (1977, p. 317). The infinite potential of creativity exists in the structuring mechanics of Natural Law found in pure consciousness. When Natural Law is fully awake in the consciousness of an individual or collectively as a group, the health and prosperity of that entity ensues. Thus, if the individuals that make up a culture are experiencing the source of Nature's creativity in their own awareness, the result, Maharishi states, is a healthy culture: "When national life is in accordance with Natural Law, the culture flourishes" (1982, p. 10).

Maharishi points out there are two levels of Natural Law that uphold culture—the local level and the universal level:

The regular practice of transcendental meditation is the direct way of rising to the state of transcendental Being and stabilizing it in the very nature of the mind, so that irrespective of the mind's engagements in the conflicts inherent in the diversities of life, the structure of Unity in eternal freedom is naturally maintained and life is not lost to itself. (1967, p. 137)

Heraclitus declares: "To God all things are fair and good and right . . . but men hold some things wrong and some right" (quoted in Campbell, p. 44).

The relationship between the universal aspect of Natural Law and the local, specific aspects of Natural Law may be understood from the perspective of quantum mechanics in modern physics. The quantum-mechanical level of reality represents the universal value of Natural Law, in which all the laws of nature are lively. This quantum-mechanical level becomes expressed on the classical level, in which certain specific aspects of Natural Law are manifest. Because the quantum mechanical level is the basis of the classical, operating at the quantum-mechanical level automatically produces the desired effect at both levels. In the same way, enlivening the universal value of Natural Law enlivens all the specific values of Natural Law, bringing all cultural values in perfect alliance with the totality of Natural Law. (1982 p. 10)

The unmanifest creative intelligence of the universe thus expresses itself through every culture, irrespective of philosophy, religion, or artistic expression. The Laws of Nature at their most fundamental, not unlike their grosser expressions of gravity or electromagnetism, are all-pervasive and produce general patterns and effects throughout manifest life. Though these laws—such as the law of evolution—that govern the existence of both humans and nature are universal, they will appear in different forms and values on the local level. These particular local values of Natural Law are the more manifest laws studied by the physicist, biologist, or ecologist on the physical level and by literature on the level of cultural studies.

“Multiculturalism”—the acceptance, teaching and valuing of all cultures side by side—is held by the advocates of cultural diversity to be a primary solution to such problems as cultural imperialism, colonialism, and cultural disintegration. Although it promotes a certain tolerance on the intellectual level, multiculturalism does not promote true cultural integrity or inner growth of culture. Maharishi explains that true cultural integrity is promoted with the “knowledge and experience of pure consciousness,” that is, it comes from within the very nature and structure of culture itself, so that a culture “naturally upholds its most cherished cultural traditions while embracing all that enriches national life and promotes progress” (1977, p. 317). If a culture is not maintained from within the consciousness of its citizens, then nothing outside of it will have any lasting effect, for culture is subtle and not amenable to crude manipulation, anymore than Nature.

Maharishi does not define culture as opposed to Nature, but as an expression of Natural Law. If a culture wishes to be successful, it must be in harmony with Nature:

Cultural integration means life according to natural law. What is natural law? . . . Natural law means all those influences in nature which create and promote life, which are responsible for its evolution or dissolution, and which give life direction. (1978, p. 90)

Living according to Nature does not mean living in the woods without electricity. Maharishi explains it means acting from the level of pure consciousness, the source of Natural Law, in an effortless and spontaneous manner. Maharishi’s use of the term “Natural Law” should be distinguished from Darwin’s “survival of the fittest” on the one hand, and Jefferson’s moral law of reason on the other. Maharishi explains, “By ‘nature’ we mean that intelligence which conducts all activity in creation: cosmic intelligence” (1972a, 18.11). “Intelligence” and “existence” are two words describing the same fundamental value of life itself (1972a, 8.3), pure consciousness, which is neither matter nor energy but a field of intelligence that gives rise to both.

Nature and Culture as a Unified Text

But what has pure consciousness and Natural Law to do with literature and the act of reading? The development of consciousness may at first seem irrelevant to the current

issues of literary study; however, reading is both an act of personal growth and an act of social responsibility. If one construes the human subject as isolated from the forces that shape the rest of the universe and the local ecosystem, one is attempting to read in a vacuum without an appreciation of either shared or cultural differences. David Orr points out that our present society has reinforced the sort of restricted thinking that produces the current disastrous industrial civilization now threatening life on earth. He believes it is urgent that the liberal arts focus on knowledge of how nature actually operates to ensure the survival of the planet (Orr, p. 89–93).

Frederick Turner defines literature as part of nature's larger evolutionary drama:

The new scientific view of the universe is that it is a *living* machine: an organic mechanism which generates and is nurtured by freedom, creativity, and self-transcendence—and which may, as we do, have a wholeness that is greater than the sum of its parts, a Soul which has been the inner goal of all religions. If this is so, we—all the higher intelligences of the universe, whatever and wherever we are—are the nervous system of God's world-body . . . the ancient forms, genres, and traditions of the arts, which are culturally universal and tuned to the human nervous system, derive from and help to continue the deep feedback loop between human biology and human culture, as well as making us aware of the relationship itself and thus able to direct it to some degree. . . . A constructive postmodernism would instead recognize the autonomy and self-organizing creativity of both nature and art, and see their deep kinship as indeed a continuity. (1991, pp. xii–xiv).

Turner finds art not only inspired by nature but part of the performance of natural law. He speaks of nature as a quantum body of which all beings are a part. Science and ancient tradition begin to meet here. If culture and nature can be understood to be connected, then there is once more a basis for moral values and for reading. Moreover, it suggests a favorable climate for an even deeper connection between culture and nature, that connection found in pure consciousness.

Maharishi Vedic Science describes pure consciousness as the basis of Natural Law, what critical theorists might call the seat of Nature's primordial text. It is the Veda inscribed in every point of creation and in every human consciousness. The recent discovery of the precise correlation of the parts of human physiology, Nature's physiology, and the divisions of the Vedic texts by physiologist Tony Nader, working with Maharishi, presents an expanded and unified field model of the text that has important implications in current literary debates on textuality. Although the expanded text under current postmodern theory that includes the permutations and interplay of all cultural and linguistic codes is illuminating, it does not go far enough to explain the production of texts. The human being as the Veda takes the concept of text beyond anything presently conceived in literary theory, although its origins are not new. Arguably the human text falls within the larger Romantic text of nature, and is a recreation and intimate reflection of its mechanics. Whitman's "Song of the Rolling Earth" implies the existence of such a text:

Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright lines? those curves, angles, dots?
No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in the ground and sea,
They are in the air, they are in you...
Human bodies are words....
Air, soil, fire—those are words,
I myself am a word with them....
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not so conceal'd either,
They are calm, subtle, untransmissable by print,
They are imbued through all things conveying themselves willingly....
Underneath the ostensible sounds.....words that never fail...
The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail and reflection does not fail.... (pp. 161–62).

The true words, Whitman suggests, are underneath the more manifest words constituting the elements, the earth, and human bodies; they are identified with the unmanifest laws of nature upholding the earth without fail. Whitman's song celebrates the living text or tissue of earth, and is not unlike what Turner refers to as the "nervous system" of "the world body" in the passage above. Whitman says there could not be human speech, "upright lines . . . curves, angles, dots," or the living words comprising people and earth without the "true words" underneath all of them—silent, unfailing, and "imbued through all things." The tradition of a primordial silent speech at the source of all manifest language and creation is ancient and common to many cultures. Could there be any objective verification of this idea of the unmanifest all-pervading language of nature?

Tony Nader, an M.D. and Ph.D., has announced in *Human Physiology: Expression of Veda and the Vedic Literature*, the discovery that modern objective science and ancient subjective science together can demonstrate the precision of the universal language of Nature structuring the world, our bodies, our intelligence. Nader comments, "It is possible to see the dynamics of the physiology in the sounds of Veda and the Vedic Literature, because human speech is the expression of the human physiology, which in its pure nature is Veda" (p. 18). This discovery identifies the creative unfoldment of the one text of Nature as Veda, or the structure of pure consciousness, which is found inscribed everywhere. He begins his application of Maharishi Vedic Science to physiology with the explanation that all structures arise from the Unified Field of pure consciousness: "There is nothing beyond one grand field of consciousness, which holds: body is mind—matter is intelligence—physiology is consciousness. This discovery brings to light physiology in terms of its inner intelligence, whose impulses are available in the form of sounds of the Veda and Vedic Literature" (1995, p. xiii).

Nader (1995, p. 13) explains that human physiology, including the ability to speak, is a characteristic of Nature and therefore reflects the inherent creative qualities of Nature. The human nervous system has the ability to be conscious and to know itself, he states; it can experience pure consciousness. Its "self-referral" consciousness is the most fundamental aspect of human physiology (1995, p. 13).

Modern science glimpses Nature's self-referral functioning in quantum theories, which describe the unified field of natural law. In an ancient subjective science, the science of consciousness, this field of unchanging law is called Veda (1995, p. 13). Veda is a structure of primordial frequencies or sounds, unfolded sequentially in the Vedic Literature, heard in the pure consciousness of Vedic rishis, though not created by any single human being, and not ultimately the representations we find written on paper. Maharishi describes these unmanifest frequencies of Nature, explaining how they are found in silent self-referral consciousness and constitute the structure of everything—matter and intelligence:

Basically this mechanics of transformation of self-referral intelligence into the ever-expanding material universe is available to us in countable stages in the structure of **Rk** Veda. All the material and non-material expressions of creation have specific frequencies (sounds). These fundamental frequencies, non-material values, are the sounds of the Vedic Literature: the intellect, the hum of intellect, and with the hum, the flow and stop of it in sequence. The expression of melody, forming the whole Vedic Literature, gives us the entire process of the basic mechanics of transformation within the self-referral state of consciousness.

In its momentum of transformation, the interplay (self-referral dynamism) of Rishi, Devatā, Chhandas continues to create sound from sound—from one form of sound to the second more evolved from of sound to

the next (third) more evolved form of sound (specific alphabets—vowels and consonants). The evolution of material form commences from the frequencies (vowels and consonants)—speech, through its structured forms, progresses to generate different frequencies and their corresponding material forms. (1994, pp. 65–67)

Because of its all inclusive character, Maharishi calls Rk Veda “The Constitution of the Universe”:

The holistic expression of all the mechanics of transformation, the Laws of Nature, inherent in the unmanifest, unbounded, non-changing structure of Saṁhitā (of Ṛishi, Devatā, Chhandas) in the eternally silent, self-sufficient, self-referral state of Transcendental Consciousness—the Home of all the Laws of Nature, the Transcendental Reality, the Ultimate Reality, intimately personal to everyone. (1994, pp. 80–82)

Veda is the pattern of Natural Law expressed in Nature, in the physiology, in human intelligence. Since Veda is present and elaborated throughout creation, every part of creation may be read as a more manifest and elaborated expression of Veda, containing the whole pattern, while at the same time retaining its specificity. Maharishi calls the Veda “the Constitution of the Universe,” because it is “the home of all the laws that govern the universe. The entire field of intelligence is the home of all the laws that blossom in the material universe.” (1994, p. 207) It is the blueprint of creation, just as national constitutions are the blueprints for their nations, containing the laws that govern the nation. The Veda is also the blueprint of the human nervous system.

Dr. Nader demonstrates throughout *Human Physiology: Expression of Veda and the Vedic Literature* the exact mathematical and functional correlations between the Vedic texts and the human anatomy. These correlations, part for part, and whole for whole, are an exciting and literal verification of such expressions from the Vedic Literature as “Aham Vishvam” (My universe is my Self—Taittiriya Upanishad 3.10); “Aham Brahmāsmi” (I am totality—I am singularity—I am self-referral consciousness—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10); “Vedoham” (I am Veda) (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1994, pp. 34, 57).

Veda is the primordial text of Nature, but contrary to postmodern fears, it is not a rigid or fixed meaning system, a tyrannical closure of textual play; it is, rather, the precondition of textual play. Veda is the unmanifest text that produces both culture and Nature as manifestations of its own unbounded, self-referral activity, leading to a condition of all possibilities and infinite variety while simultaneously organizing everything into a coherent pattern of unity. In this textual model, unity is structured in the variety of creation, as opposed to the endless fragmentation of the postmodern text. Thus, whatever texts a reader reads, whether literary texts or the world as text, from the text of Nature to the postmodern novel, if the reader reads from the same unbounded self-referral field that produces the text, that reader will read his/her own unbounded creative nature in the text. This is the freedom and joy of reading in the highest state of consciousness—unity consciousness—in which one is not subsumed in the consciousness of another, not lost in one's actions or the world one perceives; rather one reads one's own Self in everything. This is not the projection of the ego into a personal pattern, distorting life to fit its individual notions; it is the clear witnessing of one's own creative nature discovered to be the all-inclusive, universal, creative Nature that produces and supports all creation.

The current postmodern notion of the text, especially as expounded by Jacques Derrida, has been as revolutionary to the discipline of literature as quantum field theories have been to physics. Just as reality can now be described as fields of energy instead of

separate particles of matter, so "textuality" as a field of cultural language codes takes us far beyond the old notion of the text as a separate entity, an inert "work" devoured by an individual reader. Textuality as a field of signification implies an interactive dynamic between an open-ended reader and an open-ended text, neither finished, both swimming in the same soup of socially constructed meaning. The difference between the open-endedness of the postmodern text and the text of *The Constitution of the Universe* is in the dynamics of the play. Unlike postmodern textual play that creates an endless chain of signification, creating an unstable melange of meaning, thereby rendering all systems of communication ultimately meaningless, the play of the Veda in its self-interacting dynamics, or "the three-in-one structure of the self-referral state of consciousness," provides an unchanging foundation for meaning, both theoretically and literally (1986, p. 29).

Consciousness in its pure state, fully open to itself alone, experiences itself as this self-interacting reality of nature. This is the field of pure knowledge, where consciousness knows itself to be the knower, the known, and the process of gaining knowledge—all three values simultaneously in one. Veda is a clear script of this self-referral state of pure consciousness, the togetherness of observer (Ṛishi), observation (Devatā), and observed (Chhandas). The whole of Vedic literature is dedicated to bringing out the details of the three-in-one structure of pure knowledge. Rig Veda is the totality of all knowledge—the knowledge of the three-in-one. Sama Veda is basically attributed to the value of Ṛishi, Yajur Veda to Devatā, and Atharva Veda to Chhandas. All the other aspects of Vedic literature expound these three values, connecting them to man in terms of the Self, the mind, and the body, and detailing the perpetually self-referral transformation through steps of sequential development by which consciousness, the Self, gets into the value of matter, the body. (1986, pp. 40–41)

In terms of reading or producing literature, the three interacting components of any text are the same as the components of the primordial text of Nature. In a work of art, one could say that the Ṛishi—knower, the Devatā—process of knowing, and the Chhandas—the known, become increasingly unified in the creative moment of reading or writing. This intimate process of knowing something produces more bliss for reader and writer as it approaches the experience of self-referral pure consciousness, the intelligence of Nature's text or Veda where the three-in-one dynamic play eternally takes place. In the state of complete togetherness or "Samhita" of Ṛishi, Devatā, and Chhandas, the subject and object become unified in the process of knowing. What is it that is known?

In a literary text, some specific character of life gets recorded in its words, but what is simultaneously recorded is the infinite play of Nature's text that underlies and gives rise to a literary text. This joy in finding Nature reflected in human language is apparent to any sensitive reader who reads a master of language like Shakespeare. It is not only his thought we rejoice in but the fitness of each word placed with seeming perfection and without effort for all time, as though written by Nature itself. Emerson expresses this idea of literature as primary unmanifest text in his essay "The Poet":

For poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings, and attempt to write them down, but we lose ever and anon a word, or a verse, and substitute something of our own, and thus miswrite the poem. The men of more delicate ear write down these cadences more faithfully, and these transcripts, though imperfect, become the songs of the nations. For nature is as truly beautiful as it is good, or as it is reasonable, and must as much appear, as it must be done, or be known. Words and deeds are quite indifferent modes of the divine energy. Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words. (1979; 1844, p. 760)

In the act of reading or writing, Emerson suggests that one becomes resonant with, participates in, the creativity of nature. As readers, we become part of the dynamism of the text that is nature itself.

It is not really possible to know the full play of signification until one knows the self-interacting dynamics of pure consciousness, the Laws of Nature structuring the unified text of Nature, culture, and the Self. When readers or writers are cultured in the experience of pure consciousness their awareness is fully awake to the dynamic togetherness of all three values forming the text at its inception, an origin perceived in the subtlest values of language to be larger than the individual who gave it birth (see levels of language in Part II). This unity of the three structured by the unbounded creative moment inherent and set free in the language by a skilled author is what gives a piece of literature its power in the first place. This power can be recreated in the reading process if the awareness is flexible enough to experience that unbounded unity through the words. The ways the full range of language and the full range of textual play are enlivened for students on a practical level are discussed in the second part of the paper.

Before then, it will be productive to look at the impact of other issues on cultural production, like technology. Many believe that the electronic text is the new textual paradigm for literary studies. Is the e-text the next evolution of literature or its decline?

Literature and Technology

“Books are relics of a slowly vanishing culture of the word,” says Benjamin Barber (p. 118). Literary study finds itself today in the middle of the electronic revolution and the on-line text. Experts point out that the brain processes the electronic and written word differently and caution us that our thinking is changing. Michael Heim states, “Information erodes our capacity for significance. With mind-set fixed on information, our attention span shortens. We collect fragments. We become mentally poorer in overall meaning” (1993, p. 10). In the current metamorphosis of culture towards electronic communication, what will happen to literary study? In *The Gutenberg Elegies* Sven Birkerts addresses “the reading wars” between the book and computer cultures. He warns,

As the world hurtles on toward its mysterious rendezvous, the old act of slowly reading a serious book becomes an elegiac exercise. As we ponder that fact, profound questions must arise about our avowedly humanistic values, about spiritual versus material concerns, and about subjectivity itself. (1994, p.6)

Birkerts raises important questions. We thought a few years ago it might be enough to add computer labs to old literature programs. But we didn't anticipate the shift to a virtual culture. Does hypertext unify or does it fragment? While Alvin Toffler sees information as the future base of power in the world, Heim worries about the “mindless productivity” of the computer culture, noting instant information is not wisdom (pp. 5–10). Information has to be put into perspective to be useful. Perspective has everything to do with the nature of human subjectivity which, it is proposed, must be taken up as a key to the future of cultural studies.

There is no lack of popular prophesy about whether electronic culture is a loss or gain. Robert Bly worries that generations of media children are losing the ability to think because they are losing the subtleties of language: “Children need an elaborated language in order for brain development to occur. . . . Language deprivation can affect the brain as vitamin deprivation affects the body” (pp. 134–5). Neil Postman claims there is a serious “symbol drain,” a trivialization of cultural symbols caused by a surrendering to technology (pp. 64–5). As every professor of literature has noticed in the last twenty years, it has become increasingly difficult to teach literature in such a climate of the

devalued word. More importantly, Benjamin Barber feels that democracy itself is threatened because "Democracy, like a good book, takes time. . . . Television and computers are fast . . . and thus by definition hostile to the ponderous pace of careful deliberation upon which all public conversation and decision making on behalf of the common good is premised" (p. 118).

Yet doors have opened. The omnipresence and speed of technology have furthered goals for world peace, as evidenced by the demise of political tyrannies which thrived behind opaque walls. Even technology's critics see in it great hope, see in the current vacancy of culture a generation poised for a possible new beginning. Sven Birkerts comments, "I see the possibility of a genuine resurgence of the arts, of literature in particular . . . [f]or literature remains the unexcelled means of interior exploration and connection-making. The whole art—fiction, poetry, and drama—is fundamentally pledged to coherence, not just in terms of contents, but in forms as well (p. 197)." From whence could come this resurgence of coherence? Birkerts seems to imply the impulse of literature is deeper than changing technologies, that it is some fundamental impulse of human nature, and that it is not chaotic but orderly and unifying.

Thomas McFarland describes the current situation as a breakdown of the "forms" of culture into unrelated and fragmented "shapes," creating a crisis in knowledge (p. 30). In these years of great expectation during the transition to a new millennium, literature departments ask themselves, how can our programs move towards the future, preparing students to fill what appears to be a cultural void? As Birkerts notes, the changes in technology merely highlight an issue that has been growing throughout this present century—the nature of human subjectivity. As the study of literature has become more self-reflective, as reader-response theories and an emphasis on individual reading have burgeoned, a competent understanding of reader and writer subjectivity has become essential in anticipating the future of how literature will be both taught and comprehended, to a great extent will determine what direction culture as a whole will take. A clear explanation of the full range of human consciousness as found in Maharishi Vedic Science [see next section] could serve as a metatheory capable of reviving the goals of literary education by demonstrating that literature and technology, or culture and science, are not at odds but part of the same creative mechanics of Nature.

The Decline of Literary Humanism and the Emergence of Maharishi Vedic Science as a Metatheory

Historically, literary study has always been the core curriculum in the educational systems of world cultures, in both oral and written traditions, shaping the leaders and thinkers of every age. Today, the excitement over the electronic textual paradigm has sometimes beguiled us away from, sometimes highlighted for us, a major problem within literary studies, namely the divisive nature of contemporary literary theory which has undercut humanist values. Harold Bloom, noting the decline in literature programs since the dominance of politically oriented theory, calls it "a flight from the aesthetic." Because of theory he forecasts,

many of the best students will abandon us for other disciplines and professions, an abandonment already well under way. They are justified in doing so, because we could not protect them against our profession's loss of intellectual and aesthetic standards of accomplishment and value. (p. 18)

Many would also agree with Richard Lanham's view of literary technology in *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts* that the electronic text is a

physical validation of postmodern theories (pp. 129–30), but without Lanham's enthusiasm. For indeed, the on-line text more and more appears to onlookers like Bloom's flight from the aesthetic—a mechanical idiom lacking in standards of quality. Whether the electronic word is really postmodern is still open to debate, but many of its characteristics, like the authorless wall-to-wall text, imitate and fuel deconstructionist theories.

Perhaps due to the forced march of technology and literary theory, the discipline of literature has become distracted, mesmerized by the postmodern, deconstructed subject. As a result, it has lost sight of and failed to promote the kind of traditional, humanistic outcome expected of it—the personal and social maturation of the student, a maturation based on reflective reading. The current lack of faith in the authority of the author or in the moral training of cultural leaders through reading has mounted steadily since World War II. Many scholars, duly chastened by the scandal of a humanism which in the last fifty years has been increasingly unmasked as a European hegemony, nevertheless would like to return to a more enlightened version of humanism, one that could truly do justice to the values of all world cultures and the biosphere without collapsing into the inauthentic eclecticism that is the current fashion.

Harold Bloom sounds a little reactionary to some when he claims we have to go back to educating a cultural elite, for only a few, he says, can appreciate literature deeply and aesthetically: "Pragmatically aesthetic value can be recognized or experienced, but it cannot be conveyed to those who are incapable of grasping its sensations and perceptions" (p. 17). This might be true if it were impossible to increase one's mental potential and raise one's level of awareness, but as we have seen, Maharishi's technologies of consciousness have the ability to do just that. One of the earliest set of responses teachers receive from new practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation technique is that their thinking is clearer, and their joy and appreciation of nature and art is enhanced, even in the first few days of using the technique.

The experience of pure consciousness, which underlies all aesthetic experience, through the Transcendental Meditation technique spontaneously enlivens a person's ability to perceive subtle connections and patterns of aesthetic perception. Thus, in opposition to Bloom's well-meaning statement, aesthetic receptivity to refined nuance can be cultivated. With this in mind, Consciousness-BasedSM curriculum, with its expanded and scientific understanding of subjectivity, its means of unifying human, cultural, and natural intelligence into one cooperative creative force, and its technologies for developing creativity and consciousness, has the potential to revitalize and recast the moral goals of humanism into an eco-centric education appropriate for the twenty-first century.

In spite of the current coronation of postmodernism, in the last twenty years an underground current of alternative holistic approaches to literature and the arts has emerged, a spillover in part from the areas of health and science into the humanities. These approaches all have in common the tendency to find meaning through a unified understanding of Nature and culture. Kathleen Hayles, a leading exponent of science and literature, for example, applies to the readings of texts the latest concepts from quantum theories, thereby placing literature in a more *universe*-al context (1984). Quantum field theories, chaos, and systems theories, furthermore, provide a neutral vocabulary to

explain the deep processes of an open-ended and basically free intelligence at work in both nature and art.³

Also, archetypal quest readings—the search for myths that transcend culture—have arisen as popular self-help medicine, an indication of what many want from literary interpretation: knowledge of how the mind can be made whole, how it fits into the cosmic scheme. Joseph Campbell, as the popularizer of this approach, synthesizes Jung, Freud, Vedanta, myth, and the literary classics to suggest that the structures of the mind are the primordial structures of nature. He says,

the mythological figures that have come down to us, we must understand that they are not only symptoms of the unconscious (as indeed are all human thoughts and acts) but also controlled and intended statements of certain spiritual principles, which have remained as constant throughout the course of human history as the form and nervous structure of the human physique itself. Briefly formulated, the universal doctrine teaches that all the visible structures of the world—all things and beings—are the effects of a ubiquitous power out of which they rise, which supports and fills them during the period of their manifestation, and back into which they must ultimately dissolve. (p. 237)

Campbell's vision of mythology elevates literature far beyond most modern political and psychological approaches. For Campbell, great literature contains the archetypal structures of a culture within it, and the spirit of human redemption and liberation in its essence.

Another entry into the new wave of holistic approaches is ecocriticism which investigates texts for the subjective biases of humans towards nature. David Orr, a prominent advocate of eco-education, and much read in Environmental Literature courses, believes we need to revamp our educational system which is now set up to create compartmentalized thinking: "The great ecological issues of our time have to do . . . with our failure to see things in their entirety. That failure occurs when minds are taught to think in boxes and not taught to transcend those boxes or to question overly much how they fit with other boxes" (p. 95). He maintains that good environmental design can only be done by people "who understand harmony, patterns, and systems" (p. 106). He further claims the liberal arts are not liberal enough, that they are divorced from the practical and have abandoned ethical foundations for a belief in relative value (p. 109). Orr insists we should rank institutions for their contributions to a sustainable culture, asking, "Are they part of the larger ecological enlightenment that must occur as the basis for any kind of sustainable society, or are they part of the rear guard of a vandal economy?" (p. 92). Mitchell Thomashow adds that environmental activism is not enough, that we must educate people to achieve "a state of mind, a way of being, an approach to life experience, and a philosophy of learning. The challenge is to experience ecological identity everywhere. . . . we are really in nature all of the time" (p. 179). The new anthologies of ecologically minded literature reflect the consciousness of human beings in tune with their environment, inspirations for what it might mean for whole societies to live in harmony with Natural Law.

What does the emergence of these alternative approaches tell us? They attempt to find once again the primary connections between nature and culture, between art and science, between economic pragmatism and spiritual necessity, to suggest a direction for

³See J. Briggs, *Fractals the patterns of chaos: Discovering a new aesthetic of art, science, and nature* and Frederic Turner, *Natural classicism: Essays on literature and science* in the list of references.

broaching the seemingly irreparable schism in Western thinking, the abyss between the objective and the subjective. As we have already seen, in the eternal structure of pure consciousness itself, in its unification of knower, known, and process of knowing, as the primary experience, beyond cultural philosophies, can encompass and validate the objective and subjective approaches to knowledge at the same time. Maharishi defines his Vedic Science, based on the experience of pure consciousness, as a science that is both objective and subjective, doing justice to both (1994, p. 157). Because of its comprehensive nature in describing Nature's intelligence in all its transformations and the full range of human consciousness (1994, pp. 160–1), Maharishi Vedic Science seems the most promising candidate for a "metatheory" for the study of literature, most able to restore the link between Nature and culture, both practically and theoretically.

Each new theory in its way attempts to be a metatheory, a theory which can mend the faults of its predecessors and elucidate the field as a means to understand the human condition and the nature of being. However, ultimately each new claimant for metatheory is based on a limited intellectual explanation or interpretation, merely leaving us with another system in the long line of competing constructs and theories, each adding useful insights into the value and nature of literature, but none able to encompass all other metatheory candidates, validate them, or finally even fulfill its own heroic intentions.

Maharishi's exposition of consciousness as the Unified Field of both Nature and human intelligence unifies Nature and culture and succeeds in a way that most metatheories cannot, because it is an explanation that exists itself in the very field of consciousness from which all creation arises—subjective and objective. It also succeeds both theoretically and pragmatically, as any fully encompassing explanation of human existence must. Maharishi Vedic Science offers a scientifically tested and proven technology for the development of consciousness in the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs for personal verification of this unity. His exposition of the structuring dynamics of consciousness draws on more than 25 years of rigorous scientific research (Wallace, 1986, pp. 52–95 and 134–153), the personal experience of millions of practitioners of his technologies for the development of consciousness, his unparalleled expertise as a teacher, a Maha-Rishi (1994, p. 2) of Vedic wisdom, and the ancient Vedic texts and records (1977, pp. 74–85; 1986a; 1994 pp. 25–55, 363). Consciousness and the nature of consciousness have to be examined as the most subtle and inclusive ground for literature and its production, giving rise to the other "fields" posited by other theories: language, history, or even *différance*. Maharishi has explained the unified field of literature in this way:

This theory of literature, the quantum theory of literature, would consider letters on the level of consciousness that is unmanifest. The quantum state deals with the vacuum state, the ground state of matter. Just because literature is a composite of the fluctuations of consciousness, and consciousness is already as unmanifest as the vacuum state, so when we consider the flow of consciousness at the basis of all literary expressions, we find the quantum theory of literature. And this is literature which brings the Self, the unmanifest Self, pure consciousness, unbounded awareness into flow. So literature is a path in which Pure Consciousness flows, and it flows on both levels, sound and meaning, comprehending the entirety of life. (1976)

The knowledge of pure consciousness, and ultimately higher states of consciousness, would align writers and readers with the deepest level of their own creativity, that universal field from which all texts spring. This knowledge would also be a boon to scholars, allowing them to simultaneously appreciate opposing but valid insights into human existence, such as Marxism, Feminism, Ecocriticism, or Deconstruction, as

different hues of the human mind, that center of intelligence which possesses the capacity to reflect the full value of consciousness, allowing it to maintain its wholeness even while immersed in a dazzling array of philosophical possibilities. Each intellectual construct, therefore, can be enjoyed as one facet of the infinite possibilities of a person's own intelligence.

In the literature department at Maharishi University of Management, all established critical theories are found to be useful, each seen as adding to human knowledge and evolution, each expressing some (but not all) understanding of reality, and all finally grounded in the same field of absolute truth—the field of absolute pure consciousness. Students thus enjoy the range of critical theories simply as different expressions of knowledge, just as an apple tree is an expression of nature but not the totality of nature, and therefore do not feel they have to enter into an intellectual theory war.

Deconstruction, for instance, can be appreciated for its groundbreaking move towards field explanations of language: "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" (Haney p. 427). But as Haney demonstrates, deconstruction's undermining of the truth value of meaning comes from its critique of the limitations of waking state consciousness. In the quantum reality available in higher states of consciousness, the absolute meaning in language is found to be not a rigid system of meaning, but the unbounded flow of pure consciousness on the subtlest level of language (see levels of language below). This does not undermine the validity of deconstruction, but it shows that it is an accurate description of meaning only from one state of human consciousness.

The positive rather than the negative aspects of any theory can be located when the scholar or student views it within a unified context, from a vantage point that transcends any relative or partial view. This total viewpoint is not "totalizing" in the sense of making any one theory dominant, but an actual experience from the all-inclusive foundation of consciousness. From this level, any individual contribution, any theory, can be appreciated and examined, not as an end in itself, but for its evolutionary value. By placing all theory in this universal context, located within the student's own consciousness, the usefulness of all approaches can be honored.

Having been formulated as a science of consciousness, Maharishi Vedic Science contains a precise and culturally neutral vocabulary to explain the effects and movements of consciousness on every level and in every mode. This can be applied to the production and reading of texts (see *The Unified Text of Nature and Culture* above). At the same time it provides an absolute ground (the pure consciousness of Nature) for explaining and appreciating values, those specific values arising from Natural Law in specific places, and those values universal to every culture, such as the desire to grow, evolve, or be more creative.

Maharishi has applied to pure consciousness such qualities as blissful, unbounded, and orderly. He has described it as the home of all knowledge, the creative field of all possibilities, the source of change, and the home of all the Laws of Nature (1981, p.13). These are not objectively prescribed values, but qualities that inherently exist within Nature's own mode of functioning. In great detail, Maharishi Vedic Science explains the connection between the source of knowledge—pure consciousness—and the expressions

of knowledge, as well as the means for the individual to live the full value of knowledge established in his/her own consciousness. Because of the enormity of its scope, when applied to the reading of literary texts, Maharishi Vedic Science becomes a holistic critical window unrivaled by any other theory or philosophy. Based upon the self-referral experience of pure consciousness, it naturally elevates reading to an understanding of unity in diversity, first inside the reader's own awareness, then outside as the reader recognizes the patterns of consciousness in every manifest text, in every corner of the universe.

Finally, Maharishi Vedic Science can be understood as a metatheory, but one aimed not merely at intellectual understanding. Its aim is the complete regeneration of every individual and every society, an aim that fulfills the old humanist hope that the study of letters will make a qualitative difference in life, will train good citizens and lead to happiness and wisdom. By training students and scholars of literature to establish themselves in pure consciousness, that field Maharishi calls "the home of all the Laws of Nature," prior to the act of reading, we can ensure that the wisdom in literature is not lost. Maharishi points out that when the mind is established in pure consciousness, the highest goal of life is accomplished:

When human awareness identifies itself with that value governing the entire cosmos, then the individual is universal. This is the highest achievement of all the beautiful philosophies which have developed in different parts of the world. This is Vedic Science—a universal science of life, of existence, and progress. (1994, p. 115)

Différance and a New Vision of Unity

For many literary professionals, words like unity, transcendence, spirituality, and consciousness have become an embarrassment. They are perceived as the polished remnants of a corrupt, moneyed oligarchy that held the majority of Europeans under its collective thumb for centuries. To a new generation brought up in literature programs since the revolutionary 1960s, these words have become so repugnant they have been replaced by a different set—*presence, totalizing, logocentricism*—each with a completely negative connotation. What has happened to literature and the concept of aesthetics is that it has become convicted by association. Because the arts were controlled by a self-serving aristocracy they have come to be seen as tainted. Literature has not, of course, been completely abandoned as a result of this perceived corruption, but the traditional humanist way of perceiving literature has been overthrown. The Arnoldian idea that literature can refine consciousness inherited by the Leavises, T.S. Eliot, and the New Critics, that it has a moral and spiritual purpose, was replaced by a predominantly political view of literature. For many who love literature for its art, for its depth of sentiment, for itself, it feels like literature has lost its purpose.

For others this humanistic purpose of literature has always been a distortion and an illusion, just as a didactic purpose for literature or authorial intention had seemed a distortion to the Moderns. And yet, one cannot help feeling somewhat melancholy for the loss of power and influence that literature was at least believed to have possessed, although for W. H. Auden this too was part of the illusion of literature. He had earlier voiced his doubt about the power of literature to exert any influence whatsoever when he stated, "it's perfectly all right to be an engagé writer as long as you don't think you're changing things. Art is our chief means of breaking bread with the dead" (1971). Auden's

literary scepticism might as well have been written in the last three decades and adroitly defended through such critical theories as deconstruction. In his most famous article, the most famous of the French critics, Jacques Derrida, thoroughly and single-handedly undermined the belief in literature to unify and refine with his treatises on *logocentrism* and *différance*.

Différance is an argument meant to demonstrate the relative and fragmented character of language, and by association, literature. In the early part of the century the structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure divided the word into the two parts of the linguistic sign—the *signifier* and the *signified*. The signifier is the sound value or "sound-image" of the word, the signified is the intellectual concept or what most of us would call meaning (Hawkes, p. 25). Derrida improved upon this model by not only loosening the relationship between word and meaning as the structuralists had, but by further dividing the relationship between the signifier and the signified. He explained that words lack stability because language is associative; that is, words have more than one meaning. White, for instance, might be defined in the dictionary as the lack of color, but we also might think of its pleasant value associated with vanilla ice cream or its negative value when we think of apartheid. The point is that every signifier looks for an absolute signified, but what it receives instead is not one but many signifieds, which in turn become signifiers looking for their own absolute signifieds. The result, according to this scheme, is that meaning is never absolute; it is always deferred (Sarup, pp. 33–34). If one accepts this theory, and all major literature departments throughout the English and French speaking universe have at least to some degree, what the world is reduced to is intellectual anarchy. Anything resembling absolute communication is impossible, because one can never be sure the person to whom we are speaking is using words the same way. More than this, our own understanding of words will vary from moment to moment as long as our minds are not established in the absolute field of pure consciousness.

Maharishi binds together the fragmented word prised apart by the structuralists in his discussion of the full range of language. He explains that a word possesses both a horizontal meaning and sound value that is superficial, as contemporary theorists have noted, as well as a vertical, and ultimately absolute, meaning and sound value identified in the Vedic Literature (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1972b) (See *Levels of Language* in next section). This means that literature can have an absolute value and that absolute truth can be expressed through language.

However, ignorance of the vertical world of language continues to present a real danger to life, as evidenced by the field of critical theory. Contemporary theorists have turned the relationship between language and consciousness upside down. Critical theories like *différance* have first of all rendered language impotent by making complete human discourse ultimately impossible, but have simultaneously and ambiguously elevated language by placing it anterior to consciousness. Critical theory holds that nothing in creation can be understood until the mind first processes it through language. Catherine Belsey, points out that post-structuralists including "Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser and Jacques Derrida have all from various positions questioned the humanist assumption that subjectivity, the individual mind or inner being, is the source of meaning and action" (p. 3).

By making language the source of all discourse, rather than the absolute field of consciousness, critical theorists have rendered language (*langue* and/or semiotics),

through which all discourse takes place, not only limited but anti-progressive. Because thought precedes human action, a belief in language as the source of thought is not only limiting, it will produce only inadequate consequences throughout every avenue of society. This is one of the predictions of postmodern futility. Although not everyone accepts postmodern reality, that it is anything more than an intellectual invention, growing acceptance of postmodern and post-structuralist theories such as deconstruction, fragmentation, and *différance* will only lead to increased meaninglessness, hopelessness, and isolation.

Maharishi, unlike the post-modernists, holds for literature not only the highest of hopes but also the highest of purposes. He states that the purpose of literature in general, and poetry in particular, is to connect the surface of life with its greatest depth, a connection that has fundamentally been missing in life for untold centuries, resulting in universal suffering and a general erosion of the quality of life. He says that the study of literature, in conjunction with the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs, actually has the capability for the highest purpose imaginable, as “a very great training in life for living the Absolute.” And a little further he goes on to say, “so the study of literature would even go so far as to develop unity consciousness” (1976), the full unfoldment of human potential.

Robert Bly would agree that literature should take us to the depth of life. He has recently, however, bemoaned our loss of “vertical thinking” in our technological society, which poetry and myth traditionally provided for us (1996, pp. 208–218). The importance of vertical thinking is that it connects the individual with deeper creative forces. Suzi Gablik, one of many voices calling for a “reenchantment of art,” treats the vertical and horizontal—the inner and outer—as a continuum. Her position is to reassert the “visionary self—the form of consciousness that has been discredited and suppressed in modern society.” It is this form of consciousness she notes that can perceive the unity and dance of life (1991, p. 55). This unified view of human existence, once an essential element in most world traditions, has been lost because such an ideal cannot be sustained simply on the level of intellectual thinking, especially in the face of twentieth-century stress.

Maharishi accounts for this loss of unity by explaining that a unified vision can only be maintained in unity consciousness. With this in mind, the technologies of consciousness practiced at Maharishi University of Management form the experiential basis for the appreciation of the vertical dimension of literature. For as Harold Bloom rightly notes, one cannot intellectually pass on this depth to others. It must be cultured in each individual.

The reappearance of unity as a theme in literary criticism is an indication that unity is at least as basic to human experience as postmodern *différance*. This search for unity would be helped by a unified theory of language. Maharishi Vedic Science, for example, presents a complete range of subtle effects that are missed in postmodern theories that tend to focus on the single characteristic of difference. The perception that language differs from itself (*différance*) is not the whole story; language also can catch up with itself, mean what it says, and change the world. However, it takes an expanded awareness of the complete dynamics of language to understand that the elements of language can simultaneously both differ and unify.

The foregrounding of subjectivity, in all its various modes, is the place where a Consciousness-Based literary study must begin. Maharishi Vedic Science teaches that consciousness itself is the primary substance out of which literature arises as a creative experience; it is the basic element from which interdisciplinary studies arise and make sense; it is the “ground state” for any holistic theory of literature. Unless we know the basis of and the full potential of our own “I,” consciousness manifested as our own individual selves, unless we know first who and what is involved in “I am,” how meaningful is a literary program in which one merely takes a side in some theoretical or critical reading war?

Part II

Consciousness as the Basis of Interdisciplinary and Holistic Approaches to Knowledge

Knowledge Is Structured in Consciousness

Maharishi's motto for the university that bears his name—Maharishi University of Management—is “knowledge is structured in consciousness,”⁴ an aphorism that thematically states the school's Consciousness-Based learning strategy. Knowledge, Maharishi has explained, cannot be greater than its container. The mind as the container of knowledge, therefore, must be expanded for intellectual growth to reach its potential. This expansion of the mind, moreover, must not only be quantitative but qualitative, so that it is not simply a receptacle of facts but rather a fountainhead of wisdom and creativity. For the artist, creativity is the essence, and there can never be a surplus of it. However, if there is not enough, where, we ask ourselves, can one purchase more? Creativity, like intellectual clarity, skillful analysis, heightened perception, increased memory, or any other mental function, Maharishi explains, is a matter of expanded consciousness.

Maharishi notes that consciousness is infinite, eternal, and omnipresent, but in spite of its greatness it remains hidden because of a lack of reliable education and the technologies to experience it (1995, pp. 108–112). The result is suffering.⁵ Specific to the arts, it means a dearth of creativity, so that what often passes for art is simply an expression of human stress and unhappiness. What is needed then, Maharishi points out, is a reopening of the natural connection between the individual expression of consciousness—individual human life—and its source in pure consciousness. The result of rediscovering this eternal highway between one's own individual self and the cosmos is an access to infinite creativity, not only as a form of artistic expression, but also as the means to solve creatively the entire range of problems in life born of human limitation. The Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique is the foundation for training in the

⁴A Main Point from Lesson 9 of the Science of Creative Intelligence course.

⁵Maharishi demonstrates in the Bhagavad-Gita that the source of suffering is division—“*Dvitiyad vai bhayam bhavati*: Certainly fear is born of duality.’ Whenever and wherever there is a sense of two, fear or suffering can exist” (1967, p. 50). Knowledge of pure consciousness, the undivided source of life, repairs the division that exists between individual life and cosmic life in the state of ignorance.

arts at this university because it is the most proven scientific methodology for reestablishing the connection between individuals and their infinite, eternal source⁶ (see Education articles and Psychology articles in this issue).

Maharishi Vedic Science teaches that language, interestingly enough, (if a person's awareness is sufficiently open to the deeper levels of language), can also connect us to Nature and the deeper levels of life. It can do what poets say it can do. Matthew Arnold claimed that the purpose of poetry is “to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of [things] . . . and of our relations with them.” In this way we feel ourselves

in contact with the essential nature of those objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them; and this feeling calms and satisfies us.

Poetic language, he says, can put us in contact with the reality of things.

This “essentialist” view of language, contrary to structuralist and post-structuralist theories, means that language possesses a vertical as well as a horizontal dimension of play, where human consciousness can meet the essence of the object through language. This has traditionally been part of the correspondence theory of language in which the name of the object contains the essence of its form. This theory is validated by the experience of pure consciousness and in the development of higher states of consciousness when the full range of sound and meaning become available to a person's awareness elucidated in Maharishi's exposition of Vedic language.

Maharishi describes the continuum of Nature embodied in language, from its most abstract unified field level of functioning to the most concrete and classical. Each level of language corresponds to the experience of a refined level of thought. It takes a flexible consciousness to experience the full range of language, the full range of Natural Law. Maharishi has commented on the Vedic division of speech into four stages of experience, or levels of language, from most gross to most subtle. The following paraphrase delineates the position and quality of these levels of speech:

- **Baikhari:** language experienced by the senses; spoken speech. The grossest level of language.
- **Madhyamā:** mental or intellectual speech; duality of speaker separated from the object described. Because there exists a gap between subject and object, the name a subject gives to an object is arbitrary.
- **Pashyanti:** the finest impulse of speech. The intuitional wholeness behind speech without the rigidly defined intellectual meaning. This is the finest feeling level of language where felt unity exists between word and the experience described.
- **Parā:** the vibrant silent source of language not yet spoken. There is no subject-object duality at this level of unbounded consciousness. To experience language on this level, says Maharishi, is to experience the faint impulse of the word and all the qualities contained in their potential form within one's own unbounded awareness.

⁶Maharishi's *The Science of Being and Art of Living* is structured to demonstrate how the establishment of Being [pure consciousness] is the foundation for the art of successfully living every area of life, including the arts [humanities] (213–214).

This level of speechless speech is the transcendental Self which lies beyond all objective phenomena (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1972).

The presence or essence of language, thought by postmodernists to be an illusion, is experienced primarily on the *Pashyanti* and *Parā* levels. The *Madhyamā* and *Baikhari* levels represent the grosser historical context of speech containing a gap between signifier and signified as the word takes its concrete shape in the grammar of the speaker's culture. "Modern linguistics is thus partially correct when it describes the arbitrary functioning of language, but only as it applies to waking state consciousness: a condition that is historically determined and always changing" (R. Orme-Johnson, p. 345; and Haney, p. 26). In more subtle, unified states of awareness, however, as poets and writers have always intuitively known, this is not the case; language has its "timeless" aspect as well.

Thus, Maharishi points out that the range of a word is the whole range of life (1972d). The language of literature, in particular, has the ability to document the creative ride of consciousness from its most interior silent state to its most exterior expressed value. Unfortunately, if the reader or writer is not open to the entire range of language, then much of the textual play of literature will be lost.

Knowledge Is Different in Different States of Consciousness

The explanation for the varieties of truth in life—"knowledge is structured in consciousness"—Maharishi also expresses as "knowledge is different in different states of consciousness (1994, p. 160)." And as we have seen, without recourse to the source of life, pure consciousness, knowledge and creativity are restricted. Now we find that the value of consciousness itself is variable. Maharishi explains that in waking state of consciousness, for example, when one is tired the world is dull; when one is well rested the world is brighter. William Blake provides a suitable example for this principle when he says,

The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way . . . some scarce see Nature at all. But to the eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is so he Sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its powers. (1966, p. 793)

"As a man is so he Sees," or in other words, we see what we actually are. In Blake's observation, he makes clear that reality, the tree, is dependent upon the quality of personal vision, and by seeing that connection as a process of Nature, vision (imagination) becomes much more than egotism. Blake understands the imagination of the individual and the imagination of nature to be the same creative process. This parallels Maharishi's explanation that individual consciousness is just the expression of universal, pure consciousness. The contemporary poet A. R. Ammons emphasizes this universal consciousness in his account of his own creative experience when he finds himself, "not so much looking for the shape / as being available / to any shape that may be / summoning itself / through me / from the self not mine but ours" (1972, p. 199). His plural "ours" makes "the self," the source of creativity, not personal but general.

What We See We Become

Maharishi presents a variation of the expression “we see what we are” as “what we see we become.” He explains this phenomenon in terms of attention:

Attention is the link between subject and object; when it goes towards objects, consciousness takes on the form of the object. Attention identifies an object by transplanting it onto the consciousness of the subject. (1976, p. 152)

One way to elucidate “we see what we are” is to see it as a means for developing one’s level of consciousness, to become enlightened. Experiencing pure consciousness, or what Maharishi calls Being in his *The Science of Being and Art of Living*, through the aid of the Transcendental Meditation technique the mind *becomes* increasingly acquainted with Being until the mind and Being are nondifferentiated:

When the conscious mind transcends and attains the state of Being, it becomes Being completely. The mind loses its individuality and becomes cosmic mind; it becomes omnipresent and gains pure, eternal existence. In the state of the Transcendent it has no capacity for experience. Here the mind does not exist, it becomes existence. (1963, p. 54)

This familiarity with the unbounded, eternal state of pure consciousness develops unboundedness and eternity within us. Or to put it another way, we become reacquainted or reunited with the deepest level of our own nature.

“What we see we become” also is an educational principle used in the literature classroom at Maharishi University of Management that aids students to find unity through reading and in the world they inhabit. As we have seen, in critical theory unity is perceived as both elitist and arbitrary; at this university unity is based upon the inclusive and repeatable experience of transcendental consciousness, but not as an intellectual concept, thereby eliminating any sense of elitism or arbitrariness. Having experienced wholeness in their own consciousness, the basis for the most comprehensive state of consciousness—unity consciousness—literature students naturally gravitate towards a deeper reading of texts that includes evidence of consciousness, order, and unity in the texts they read. An example of such a reading might be found in Wallace Stevens’s “The Idea of Order at Key West”:

Ramon Fernandez, tell me if you know,
Why when the singing ended and we turned
Toward the town, tell why the glassy lights,
The lights in the fishing boats at anchor there,
As the night descended, tilting in the air,
Mastered the night and portioned out the sea,
Fixing emblazoned zones and fiery poles,
Arranging, deepening, enchanting night.

Oh! Blessed rage for order, pale Ramon,
The maker's rage to order words of the sea,
Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred,
And of ourselves and of our origins,
In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds. (pp. 128–130)

Stevens’ poem suggests for the discriminating reader that there exists an underlying intelligence which the poet experiences in the creative act that orders all disparate forms of existence together: the night, the sea, the light, the sounds, and “ourselves.” The persona who is speaking these lines, like the discriminating reader, sees that universal orderliness which Ramon Fernandez apparently does not. Through their own research into consciousness, by way of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs,

Maharishi University of Management students discover a wholeness, a unity, a universal orderliness in their own selves, and through transfer of learning they begin to see that in the world around them, in Nature, and in the literature texts they read. Such holistic reading is, of course, not limited to someone who practices the Transcendental Meditation technique, but for someone who has experienced a state of perfect orderliness within, it gives a familiarity to experiences that are transcendental in nature, often confusing to students who have not learned the Transcendental Meditation technique.

Maharishi explains that what one puts one's attention on gets transformed by the degree of intelligence and state of consciousness of the perceiver. Hence, what gets created in the literature classroom is the opposite of the vicious circle, what we might call the supporting circle. As one experiences transcendental consciousness, one naturally desires experiences that are orderly and holistic. Finding such experiences in the process of reading, the student finds the world to be a validation of their practice of Transcendental Meditation. Literature, therefore, becomes more than entertainment, even more than intellectual rigor. Maharishi states that for the student who regularly experiences pure consciousness, the reading of literature assists in the development of higher states of consciousness (1976). Because writers such as Stevens, Blake, Ammons, Wordsworth, Emily Dickinson, and countless others, have imbued their works with wholeness and other qualities of higher states of consciousness, the job of finding wholeness in activity is made all the easier for the student of literature.

Even though many of the texts they will read will not specifically be about the subject of wholeness or unity, students nevertheless learn to appreciate unity in the coherent structure of forms. They come to realize from their own experiences that both unity and diversity constitute the mechanics of creativity. Unity for itself is not necessarily valorized over diversity as deconstructionists fear; it's that the wonder and magnificence of variety find their completion in the dynamics of unity, as any close reader of Gerard Manley Hopkins, who saw God expressed as the infinite variety of nature, knows. Thus, the point is not the choice of unity over diversity, but to realize their interdependence. Maharishi points out in his Vedic Science that the unified state of pure consciousness is the basis of diversity, and for the glory of diversity to be appreciated, it needs to be connected to that unified source. Walt Whitman's words suggest the opposite conditions of this connectedness and unconnectedness: "I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who shall be complete, / The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who remains jagged and broken" ("Song of Rolling Earth," 164).

The wholeness found in consciousness that, as Whitman says, makes a person complete is gratifyingly found not outside of one's self, but as Ralph Waldo Emerson understood, as the essence of the self.

Literature and Self-Referral

In "The American Scholar" Emerson demands that readers read with expanded consciousness; it is not enough that readers know their culture by rote. Unless readers can read creatively, culture will be of little use. He says creative readers find in literature their own selves: "the best books . . . impress us with the conviction that one nature wrote and the same reads." He believes that readers must be more than collectors of information; therefore, he charges them to imbibe "all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future . . . be an university of knowledge . . . in yourself" (1971, p. 56).

Emerson's plea to become a university within yourself is in keeping with the basic tenets of Maharishi University of Management. For the last quarter of a century, literary study at this university has emphasized the practice of "self-referral" (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 27) [See Introduction]. The full expansion of self-referral consciousness Maharishi has referred to as "all knowledge in one brain" (1994, pp. 10–14). By this he means students have to learn more than the content of other peoples' thoughts; they must raise their own individual consciousness to the level of universal pure consciousness, which is the source of all knowledge. While traditional knowledge such as science, mathematics, history, and the classics are vital to each generation, what is more vital is the ability to be self-sufficient, to own in one's own awareness the source of creativity in order to solve any problem that life may offer. Past cultural success must not be abandoned any more than Emerson wanted to abandon all European influence on American students, but true greatness comes not from imbibing other people's ideas; it comes from developing one's own inner resources.

Literature today is unfortunately often studied as a mere social and political phenomenon, and for whatever its merit, the social use of language, as Maharishi has explained, conveys only a small percentage of the value of language. Every day of our lives we are ominously reminded that we are not making sufficient use of our natural resources for the betterment of life. We can make the same assertion for language, for in ordinary communication, in the media, in creative writing, in academia, anywhere language is employed, only a fraction of its potential is being used, and it will continue to remain unused without the experience of self-referral consciousness. In the field of literary studies, expansion of consciousness alone can empower language.

In response to a comment by Professor Peter Malekin, Maharishi gives a vision of what literary study can be:

Malekin: Literature can pick upon virtually any kind of subject matter and turn it into a product of interest, even profundity.

Maharishi: Yes, turn it into a program or a process for unfolding the full potential of life, developing pure consciousness, the home of all the Laws of Nature, which is the home of all knowledge, the source of all expressions and all speech. Literature is a very great training for living the Absolute. It is a training in every phase of living to give expression to the Absolute in every phase of activity, in every impulse of speech, in every mode of the mind. Literature is a very, very great field for comprehending the evolutionary processes on the intellectual level and experiencing them on the level of consciousness. (1976)

By "Absolute" Maharishi means the unchanging nature of pure consciousness at the basis of the changing states of consciousness—waking, dreaming, and sleeping. It is this absolute pure consciousness that is the source of creativity available to both the author during the process of writing and the reader during the process of creative assimilation. Maharishi notes that literature is consciousness expressed, and existing within its pages are the evolutionary rhythms of Nature (1976). Understanding literature in this way, along with the performance of techniques that develop self-referral consciousness, allows the study of literature to become a force for personal, cultural, and environmental evolution.

Conclusion

The Contribution of a *Consciousness-Based Literature Program*

For the Department of Literature at Maharishi University of Management, after two and a half decades of examining issues in the discipline, collaborating with colleagues from other institutions, and most importantly, drawing upon Maharishi's Vedic wisdom, it has become much clearer what this program's primary contribution is to the field of literary study:

- The Consciousness-Based literature program is a holistic study which answers the current, disturbing problems of fragmentation rampant within the field. It accepts and unifies all literary theories on non-dogmatic grounds, on the foundation of one's own unifying pure consciousness.
- It allows students to see the benefits of each literary approach—formal, humanistic, political, psychological, sociological, feminist, deconstructive, archetypal—by finding their common basis and avoiding the endless, labyrinthine conflict of having to choose one view of literature to the exclusion of all the rest. All intellectual theories are, therefore, found to be different values of truth, flavors of one's own consciousness.
- It establishes an absolute ground for the study of literature, a way to evaluate texts without “totalizing,” because this absolute value is not an intellectual construct, it is structured in empirically validated consciousness.
- As a unified field theory of literature, this program is grounded in direct experience, not in a scheme of thought, nor is it a tyranny which closes the play of the text. Instead it makes it the reader's responsibility to be as open to the text as possible. It does not depend upon outside arbiters. It is a “non-elitist” approach that gives each reader the same opportunity to develop broader consciousness⁷.
- Finally, it fulfills today's demand for interdisciplinary knowledge essential to the survival of the planet. It explains the creative process in the humanities in the context of nature's creativity. It gives to literature a source from which to develop itself, a source that is natural rather than arbitrary, and one that is the same vibrant Self for all creation.

The Consciousness-Based literature program succeeds in a way that no other literature program that does not develop the consciousness of its students can. By developing the intelligence, creativity, and fulfillment of its students, by reconnecting them to their deepest Self, a Consciousness-Based curriculum satisfies not only the needs of the individual, it fulfills the highest aims of all literature and humanities departments, all educational institutions, and all cultural organizations. It restores the purpose and prestige of literature programs by raising the process of reading to that of an evolutionary act,⁸ and it restores the balance between the humanities and the sciences by creating wholeness in the individual, the unit of society, a wholeness that naturally includes an equanimity

⁷For further discussion on the relationship between the field of Literature and Maharishi Vedic Science see Orme-Johnson, R. “A unified field theory of literature.” *Modern Science and Vedic Science* 1 (1987): 323–373, Haney, William II. “The theory of deconstruction and Maharishi Vedic Science.” *Modern Science and Vedic Science* 2. (1989): 415–441, Setzer, Susan, “Whitman, Transcendentalism and the American Dream: Alliance with Nature's Government through Language.” *Modern Science and Vedic Science* [in press], Fairchild, Terry, “Time, Eternity, and Imortality in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*.” *Modern Science and Vedic Science* [in press].

⁸Maharishi explains, “the value of the study of literature is great, and that greatness is in the same direction, the direction of culturing awareness brought about through Transcendental Meditation and the knowledge of the Science of Creative Intelligence” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1974).

between objective science and subjective art. It once again places culture into the context of Nature, in alignment with Natural Law, the subtlest and most powerful force of Nature, that orders and presides over every facet of creation.

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