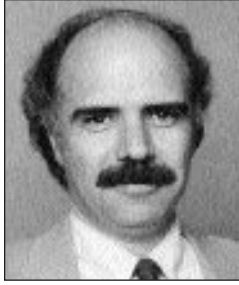

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A Vedic Science Based Poetics: Toward a New Theory of Literature

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Abstract

This introduction to this special issue of Modern Science and Vedic Science, as well as the articles here within, draw parallels between Hispanic literature, contemporary literary theory, and the concept of consciousness expounded by Maharishi Vedic Science. To bring things into perspective, this introduction presents a history of literary theory in this century from new criticism through deconstruction. The emphasis of this introduction is on deconstruction, a creation of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida and an essential element of the La Chispa conference.

Deconstruction is based upon such ideas as différance, and positions itself in opposition to such Derrida coinages as “logocentricism” and “phonocentricism.” Deconstruction as a theory of reading as well as a theory of existence is derived from the linguistic formulations of Ferdinand de Saussure. It places language anterior to consciousness, is relativistic, and leans towards anarchy. By comparing deconstruction to Maharishi Vedic Science, it is easy to see how deconstruction, although not completely inaccurate, is limited to waking state of consciousness only. Through an explanation of the full range of consciousness, including the higher states of consciousness, and subtler levels of language, Maharishi Vedic Science not only demonstrates the deficiencies of deconstruction, it simultaneously fulfills its vision.

Similarly, each type of literary criticism is also in its own way incomplete. Formalism, for example, focuses on the text, reader response criticism emphasizes the reader, and new historicism is concerned with history. Each of these and other forms of criticism offer an inadequate picture of knowledge. Whereas Maharishi Vedic Science contains Saṁhitā, the wholeness of knowledge, along with its three fundamental component parts: Ṛishi, the knower; Devatā, the process of knowledge; and Chhandas, the known or object of knowledge. Hence, it is the completeness of Maharishi Vedic Science that fulfills all specialized forms of knowledge, including those that form the basis of literary theory.

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The essays collected in this special issue of *Modern Science and Vedic Science* began as presentations for a panel on “Deconstruction, Consciousness, and Hispanic Literature” at the La Chispa Conference in Baton Rouge. Authors for this special issue draw upon the Vedic ScienceSM of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to demonstrate how literary studies treat experiences of higher consciousness, and how these experiences underlie the notion of fullness that defines enlightenment. As Maharishi (1972a) states, “any understanding comes on the level of one’s consciousness. If consciousness is full, understanding will be full, complete. That means it will contain all the values contained in the expression[s]” of literature. By way of introduction, I will summarize the basic elements of the relation between aesthetic experience and enlightenment as formulated by Maharishi. To highlight the practical benefits of a poetics based on Maharishi Vedic ScienceSM, I will compare it briefly to four approaches of literary interpretation: formalism or new criticism, reader response criticism, deconstruction, and new historicism.

As a scholar steeped in the Vedic tradition of ancient India, Maharishi expounds on language and consciousness in relation to literary interpretation. A key element of Maharishi Vedic Science is the relation between consciousness and four distinct levels of language, which is first mentioned in the Ṛk Veda. Other Vedic texts significant to literary interpretation include the Upanishads and the Itihasas, which consist of the well-known epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the latter of which includes the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The Vedic texts distinguish between several states of consciousness not considered in Western philosophy. As Maharishi explains there are seven states of consciousness. In addition to the three ordinary states of deep sleep (*sushupti chetna*), dreaming (*swapna chetna*), and waking (*jagrat chetna*) are the fourth state of pure or Transcendental Consciousness (*turiya chetna* or *savikalpa samadhi*, Transcendental Consciousness with breaks), Cosmic Consciousness (*turyateet chetna* or *nirvikalpa samadhi*, the fourth state established permanently without breaks), God Consciousness (refinement of the level of perception), and Unity Consciousness (the highest state of development).¹

Maharishi (1977) describes the fourth state of consciousness as Transcendental Consciousness, “a state of inner wakefulness with no object of thought or perception, just pure consciousness, aware of its own unbounded nature. It is wholeness, aware of itself, devoid of difference, beyond the division of subject and object—Transcendental Consciousness” (p. 123). Each state of consciousness corresponds to a unique style of physiological functioning, as demonstrated by scientists such as David Orme-Johnson and C. T. Hayes in terms of the effects of the Maharishi Transcendental MeditationSM (TM)[®] and TM-Sidhi[®] programs.

Logocentrism and *Différance*

In contrast to a Vedic Science based poetics, postmodern or poststructuralist theories, which are anti-idealist, only acknowledge the three ordinary states of consciousness. In fact, poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jean Francois Lyotard, and Richard Rorty try to undermine the existence of Transcendental Consciousness and the notion of absolute truth, claiming that these concepts have been illusions throughout the history of Western metaphysics. Deconstruction, founded by Derrida, rejects the notions of “presence” and unity, such as the self-presence of a unified consciousness, in favor of the notions of difference and absence. Unity and presence belong to the immediacy of speech, which is taken to be centered in individual consciousness. Difference and absence, on the other hand, characterize writing as a secondary form of representation, a representation that is “decentered,” that cannot be found in any single location. Derrida (1978) calls the historical repression of the difference of writing and the privileging of speech by the terms “logocentrism” or “phonocentrism.” (pp. 278–82) Thus logocentrism identifies the *logos* or self-present word with the presence of the human voice. In dispensing with presence and unity, Derrida proceeds by undermining the hidden hierarchy of binary oppositions such as speech/writing, presence/absence, inside/outside, in which the left side of the opposition (speech, presence, inside, in these examples) is classically privileged over the right. (Privileged means socially or politically preferred, culturally biased rather than inherently superior.) Derrida argues that because the boundaries between (metaphysical) oppositions are unstable and arbitrary, the implied values they represent are questionable, and all meaning is therefore undecidable or indeterminate.

Deconstruction and the Indeterminacy of Meaning

Deconstruction elaborates upon the notions of language developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist and founder of semiology, the science of sign systems. Saussure holds that language is such a sign system, and a word is actually a sign that consists of a signifier (sound) and a signified (concept) which exist in arbitrary opposition to each other. The linguistic sign furthermore bears a conventional relationship (one not inherent but created by society) to the world outside of language rather than a natural one. Because of its inherent arbitrariness, Saussure (1966) held language to be not a unified system but a system of differences (pp. 67–8). Derrida extends

Saussure's division between the sign and the world to include a division within the sign itself, between its signifier and signified, sound and meaning. To do this, he creates what he calls the play of *différance* (pp. 129–60), a pun on the meaning of two French words, “to defer” (temporally) and “to differ” (spatially). Through the movement of *différance*, meaning is infinitely deferred in time through the process of reading. Meaning is always forthcoming in the next word, sentence, paragraph, etc.

Meaning is also rendered separate from itself in space. Saussure believed that the relationship between signifier and signified was arbitrary but ultimately formed a bond. Derrida found that when looking up a signifier in a dictionary to find an appropriate signified (definition), he found not one but several; hence he argues that there is no one-to-one unifying bond between signifier and signified. Moreover, he deduced that these dictionary signifieds were actually signifiers themselves in search of their own signifieds. Hence the signified becoming the signifier gets displaced in an infinite chain of signifiers, one meaning suggesting another, *ad infinitum*. A sign or word thus derives and confers meaning not in any definite sense, but only through its “trace” (pp. 154–58), like the ultimate cat burglar who leaves clues but is never caught. An absolute meaning or “transcendental signified” of a word therefore cannot exist. The resulting indeterminacy of meaning finally leads to the logic of paradox, an “aporia” or conceptual impasse. With its temporal and spatial gap between sound and meaning, the movement of *différance* clearly applies to our experience of language in the state of ordinary waking consciousness.

Toward a Vedic Science Based Poetics

Deconstruction or poststructuralism then privileges the ordinary waking state because it believes this state of consciousness is subject to empirical evidence, while Transcendental Consciousness is apparently not. However, a Vedic Science based poetics holds that this misunderstanding of Transcendental Consciousness—the association between reason and enlightenment to the exclusion of intuition—results from a lack of both a direct experience and a full understanding of the fourth state, Transcendental Consciousness. This fuller understanding of consciousness is frequently suggested by and can be glimpsed through literature. As the authors of this volume suggest, literature can expand the reader's awareness from the temporal field of ordinary waking consciousness toward the experience of Transcendental Consciousness. Transcending conceptual boundaries in the experience of aesthetic unity hinges on going beyond the temporal boundaries of language and consciousness. This experience is accompanied by heightened enjoyment and fulfillment. Yet just as scientific rationalism cannot render the experience of pure consciousness, so a literary theory that excludes higher levels of language and consciousness cannot explain the full range of aesthetic experience.

Levels of Language

In describing how we experience literature, Maharishi Vedic Science (1972) analyzes the relation between consciousness and the four levels of language. In brief, these

four levels are outward speech, inward speech or thought, the unity of language, and the absolute unity of language (*Baikhari*, *Madhyamā*, *Pashyantī*, and *Parā*, respectively). These four levels of language in turn form two stages, a grosser and a subtler. The grosser or surface stage, inward and outward speech, corresponds to ordinary waking consciousness, while the subtler stage corresponds to Transcendental Consciousness. More specifically on the subtler level, the unity of language (*Pashyanti*) occurs at the junction point between ordinary waking and Transcendental Consciousness. At this point sound and meaning are united but still display the impulse toward manifestation. The absolute unity of language (*Parā*) occurs in Transcendental Consciousness itself where the unity of sound and meaning is without impulse toward manifestation, though one would fully experience this unity only when transcendental consciousness becomes established in Cosmic Consciousness. Maharishi describes the four levels of speech in terms of the practice of the Transcendental Meditation® technique as moving from

gross speech, to subtle speech, mental repetition, from where we start to meditate, *Madhyamā*. And then it becomes finer. When the thought or the mantra starts to be finer, it is *Pashyanti*. As long as the finest mantra is there it's *Pashyanti*. When we transcend it's called *Parā*. So *Parā*, *Pashyantī*, *Madhyama*, *Baikhari*, four stages of the development of speech. That means that the four stages of the development of the name are exactly [the same as] in the whole creation. Finest, and then the grosser, and the grosser, and the grosser, *Parā*, *Pashyantī*, *Madhyamā*, *Baikhari*. Four stages of the development of creation, and four stages of the development of speech. (1972)

The key difference between contemporary literary theory and a Vedic Science based poetics centers on the distinction between subtler and grosser levels of language, consciousness, and meaning. By acknowledging this distinction in both theory and practice, a poetics based on Vedic Science has an advantage over contemporary theory in describing aesthetic experience because it can better account for the aesthetic integration of opposites such as rationality and intuition. Although deconstruction in theory denies the existence of Transcendental Consciousness and absolute meaning (the transcendental signified), in practice deconstructive criticism belies its own theory by impelling the reader's awareness from the finite text to an infinite field of indeterminacy, from the concrete to the abstract (Haney, 1993, pp. 1–31). This move in effect points the reader's awareness away from ordinary waking consciousness and the grosser levels of language toward the juncture with Transcendental Consciousness where language becomes more subtle. This direction is the obverse of *aporia* or the logical impasse reached through the play of *différance*. In describing the unity of sound and meaning, name and form in language, Maharishi states that, "The form and the name have a common basis in Being," or pure consciousness. He goes on to say,

Being is unmanifest, non-active. The name is an impulse. The form is a more solidified structure of that impulse, and therefore, the name is the more delicate expression of the form. The form is a more precipitated, more manifest value of name. The name and the form are like the seed and the tree. All the value of the tree can be located in the seed, and the seed contains everything of the tree in it. Like that, the name contains everything of the form in it. (1971)

In elucidating a Vedic Science based poetics, Rhoda Orme-Johnson (1987) writes “that the sign (the signifier ‘rose,’ for example, with its signified meaning) and its referent (the real flower) are both present in their unmanifest seed form within the unified field of consciousness” (p.143). The *Parā* level of language thus constitutes a real transcendental signified, not a conceptual closure belonging to ordinary waking consciousness such as that undermined by deconstruction.

Swings of Awareness

The ability of literature to point the reader beyond the expressed boundaries of the text underlies the notions of aesthetic rapture (*rasa*) and suggestion (*dhvani*) in classical Sanskrit poetics (Ramachandran, 1980, p. 111). In a Vedic Science based poetics, aesthetic fulfillment (*bliss*) and the power of suggestion might be described in terms of the swing of the reader’s awareness from the concrete to the abstract, from the expressed levels of speech toward the unity of language, from the ordinary waking state of consciousness toward Transcendental Consciousness. The basis of language and thus literature, Transcendental Consciousness, is described throughout the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Maharishi, 1969). For example, in Chapter II, verse 45, Krishna tells Arjuna to be “freed from duality, ever / firm in purity, independent of possessions, / possessed of the Self” (p. 126). As Maharishi comments, Arjuna is told “that there are two aspects of life, perishable and imperishable. The perishable is relative existence, and the imperishable is absolute Being. . . . Arjuna should bring his attention from the gross planes of experience, through the subtle planes and thus to the subtlest plane of existence; transcending even that subtlest plane . . . [to arrive] at the state of pure consciousness” (pp. 128–29). Literature aesthetically points the reader toward this transcendental state, glimpsed either through an innocent response, or, as suggested here, through the activity of deconstruction. However, although literature may swing the awareness from the concrete to the abstract, it does not do so as quickly and certainly not as thoroughly as does the Transcendental Meditation technique.

Literature and Enlightenment

With an understanding of higher states of consciousness and subtler levels of language provided by Maharishi Vedic Science, the authors in this special issue of *Modern Science and Vedic Science* suggest how the term enlightenment in contemporary literary studies is a misnomer, not because it represents one tradition over another, but rather because it is a conceptual phenomenon that has not been integrated with direct experience. Since the Enlightenment or the Age of Reason in the eighteenth century, enlightenment has been understood in terms of the ideal of rationality and demonstrable evidence as opposed to developed intuition and the experience of wholeness. The actual experience of literature, however, suggests that enlightenment is not merely a rational concept but rather a direct experience involving all levels of the mind, from the intellect to intuition. For Maharishi Vedic Science, true enlightenment is ultimately the stable

and established experience of higher states of consciousness. Without the experience of pure consciousness at the basis of thought, the ideal of rationality and demonstrable evidence would yield only a localized or relative knowledge devoid of universal value. Although relative knowledge has its value, a Vedic Science based poetics and its analysis of aesthetic experience demonstrates that such knowledge constitutes only part of the story of language and literature.

As deconstruction indicates, the opposition between reason and intuition, science and literature, is arbitrary and never complete or mutually exclusive; science and literature both involve a mixture of rationality and intuition. Moreover, in today's so-called "legitimation crisis," postmodernists have called into question the ability of science and literature to accurately describe the objective world (Habermas, 1975, pp. 68–75). Instead of representing the world itself, which seems to be inaccessible, they only represent our experiences of the world. They are interpretive strategies that cannot describe the thing-in-itself because of the mediation of language, which is highly figurative. Being a function of metaphor, all narrative yields only a sense of difference and indeterminacy as opposed to a knowledge of wholeness and universal truth. In addition, Jean-François Lyotard (1984) regards science as a master narrative that subverts the truths of literary narratives only to substitute its own hidden absolutes (pp. 34–5). This postmodernist view of language, consciousness, and meaning, while a dominant paradigm in literary studies, represents a tradition whose understanding of enlightenment accounts neither for the full potential of the mind nor for the full range of human experience, whether conceptual or aesthetic.

In its fullest sense, enlightenment is a function not of rationality as employed by science, but of rationality integrated with all aspects of the mind, including intuition, as conveyed through literature. As the essays in this volume illustrate, the experience of universality and wholeness in literature involves the movement of the awareness beyond the intellect and the field of difference. Although difference exists on the surface of language, the form and context of literature represent a coexistence of opposites that has the effect of taking the reader's awareness toward subtler, more integrated levels of language and more expanded states of consciousness.

New Criticism and the Limitations of Theory

Since the effectiveness of a literary theory in explaining aesthetic experience depends on its depth and scope in dealing with the basic features of literature, it follows that any critical approach can be enhanced by including an extended view of language and consciousness. As it stands, each type of literary criticism tends to emphasize certain aspects of literature and to ignore others: formalism or new criticism focuses on the text, reader response criticism on the reader, deconstruction on the play of language, new historicism on history as a text, and so forth. In contrast, a Vedic Science based poetics would see all aspects of a work as being interconnected; the suggested world, figurative language, and consciousness in both their relative and transcendental aspects all interconnect and contribute to the wholeness of the work, which is actualized by the reader. From a Vedic perspective, any critical approach can open itself to all levels of literature, from the temporal to the transcendental, and still retain its integrity. All

aspects of literature, though separate on the surface, coexist at deeper levels of experience and language. By analyzing the work alone and not the reader or the author, new criticism attempts to find the complexity of the work, its tropes, irony, paradox, and ambiguity, and out of this complexity to discover the unity of the work as a verbal icon. In terms of a Vedic Science based poetics, however, the unity of a work cannot be isolated from the author and the reader, that is, from the consciousness that gives rise to the work or the consciousness that responds to it, because the text itself—even as a timeless verbal object—contains consciousness within it.

While new criticism, reader response criticism, and deconstruction tend to focus on what appear to be isolated components—text, reception, and production—from a Vedic perspective these components at a more basic level constitute a coexistence of opposites. Text, production, and reception each include the other two in a three-in-one structure that integrates all levels of consciousness and language. To look at the components of literature in isolation is another example of excluding the full range of aesthetic experience. As we have seen, language and consciousness consist of two basic levels, the ordinary and the transcendental—the field of difference and the field of unity. In terms of consciousness, Maharishi (1988) describes the ultimate coexistence as a unity (Samhitā) of knower (Ṛishi), process of knowing (Devatā), and known (Chhandas). “The knower, the known, and the process of knowing which connects the knower with the known—when these three aspects of knowledge are seated one within the other [in pure consciousness], that is called Samhitā” (pp. 26–27). A Vedic Science based poetics would hold that all elements of literature are interconnected through the three-in-one structure of the knower, the known, and the process of knowing. Because the levels of language and consciousness are linked, and because the collectedness of pure consciousness underlies the coexistence of sound and meaning, at a certain level the language of a text cannot truly be separated from the consciousness of the author or the reader. If, as Jacques Derrida (1976) says, “*Il n’y a pas de hors-texte*” (“There is nothing outside the text”) (p. 158), then language and consciousness together comprise the whole of literary studies. In this intertextual world, every feature of a literary work embodies the coexistence of knower (consciousness), known (literary technique and thematics), and process of knowing (aesthetic discourse). This is tantamount to saying that the essence of literary studies is Transcendental Consciousness.

Phenomenology

In reaction to the textual focus of new criticism—which from a Vedic perspective does not really exclude consciousness—phenomenology, reception theory, and reader response criticism try to recenter the consciousness of the author and the reader. Phenomenology, the philosophical method developed by Edmund Husserl, holds that all consciousness is consciousness of something. Husserl contends that because consciousness is transcendental, the something that it posits or intends by bracketing off everything else is known in its wholeness as a pure phenomenon or universal essence (Eagleton, 1983, pp. 55–56). Phenomenology and its transcendental subject comprise a transcendental mode of inquiry that seems to reveal the very structure of both consciousness and the thing itself. Husserl held that the phenomenological knowledge of

the world is absolutely certain because it is intuitive. The object impinges itself on consciousness without the need for interpretation.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Geneva school of criticism applied the phenomenological method to an immanent reading of literary works that ignored their historical context. This phenomenological criticism, a precursor to reader response criticism, brackets off the author, readership, and production in order to give a wholly immanent reading of a text as an expression of the author's consciousness. But Husserl's intentional theory of consciousness has been faulted for being intuitive, ahistorical, and authoritarian. In striving for complete objectivity, the reader is forced into the role of being a passive recipient of the text. In penetrating the interior of the writer's consciousness, the reader merely accepts the expression of an inner meaning that seems to pre-date language. The implication that meaning comes before language in phenomenological criticism puts it at odds with the "linguistic revolution" of the 20th century that began with Ferdinand de Saussure and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Contemporary literary criticism does not understand meaning to be reflected in language, as Husserl seems to suggest, but rather produced by language as a system of differences.

Husserl was aware of this difficulty and tried to conceive of a language that would be expressive of consciousness, but his idea of language was doomed to appear solipsistic. It lacked the understanding provided by Maharishi Vedic Science of the relation between the levels of language and consciousness that would open text to the levels of language (*Pashyanti* and *Parā*) that constitute a coexistence of opposite values, the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the transcendental. For a Vedic Science based poetics, all language is an expression of a particular level of consciousness. The expression of pure consciousness would not pre-date language but rather subsume the full range of language. Theorists who fault phenomenology for being intuitive, ahistorical, and authoritarian themselves lack the direct experience of pure consciousness, which leads them to reduce phenomenological criticism to a mere conceptualization of consciousness and the world around it. While pure consciousness itself constitutes a coexistence of opposite values such as rationality/intuition, history/timelessness, and authority/freedom, the mere *concept* of pure consciousness could not fathom the paradox of this coexistence. If pure consciousness were indeed available to phenomenological critics, then the coexistence of opposites would be available on all levels of perception, subjective as well as objective. Maharishi (1966) explains this as living

in the complete freedom of the fullness of Being. . . . In a state where Being is fully maintained the process of experience becomes powerful, and the experience of the object becomes deeper and fuller than before. This art of being on the level of experience is natural in a fully integrated life where one is able to live all values of the transcendental, absolute bliss-consciousness of Being together with experiences of the various aspects of relative creation. (p. 119)

Reader Response Theories

The shift from phenomenology toward reader response theory is prefigured by Martin Heidegger's rejection of Husserl's (1959) objective view of consciousness. Heidegger holds that the most distinctive feature of human consciousness is its givenness or being-in-the-world (*Dasein*). Whereas Husserl posits a transcendental subject

through which reality can be fully objectified, Heidegger decenters the subject, arguing that while on the one hand consciousness projects the world we live in, on the other hand consciousness is also subjected to the world. With Heidegger, we find ourselves in an historical context complete with a language that pre-exists us. Because our thinking is partially determined by this pre-existing language, thought is always historical rather than a detached form of contemplation. Against the Western metaphysical tradition that sees consciousness as an objective Being, Heidegger seeks a pre-Socratic understanding of Being that encompasses both subject and object. For him the subject exists within an objective historical context, never transcendently. Thus, unlike phenomenological criticism, consciousness is never separate from but always merged with its object of awareness. Knowledge is always a matter of subjective interpretation, not an objective phenomenon. Hans-Georg Gadamer applied Heidegger's situational approach to literary theory by arguing that a literary work does not have a transcendental source in the author's consciousness, but rather derives its meaning from the historical context of the interpreter. This view led to reception theory, as developed by Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss. Timothy Ambrose in this collection relates Heidegger to Juan Ramon Jimenez, pre-Socratic philosophy, and Maharishi Vedic Science.

According to reception theorists, because reality encompasses both subject and object, a reader cannot experience the essence of the author's meaning or consciousness. Yet while the notion of being-in-the-world is intended to undermine metaphysics, it does not from a Vedic perspective contradict the experience of higher levels of consciousness and meaning. On the one hand, in the ordinary waking state of consciousness, the object is experienced in terms of the subject. On the other hand, for a reader established in cosmic consciousness—the Samhitā or the collectedness of the knower, known, and process of knowing—the object is also experienced in terms of the subject, but this time it is the unbounded object experienced in terms of the unbounded subject. As Maharishi (1980) notes,

We can say in terms of the self-referral state of pure awareness that the unbounded objectivity of consciousness is imprinted on the unbounded subjectivity of consciousness. We can divide unbounded awareness into its two phases—subjective and objective. There the object of observation is the subject of observation, it is observing itself. It is completely, absolutely self-referral. (p. 74)

Whereas poststructuralists claim that the subject as reader cannot experience the consciousness of an author through a text because of the mediation of language as a system of differences and because of the subject being locked into an historical context, a Vedic Science based poetics holds that this situation is true *only* for the superficial levels of language and consciousness. For a person established in pure consciousness and functioning on the unified level of language, the aesthetic experience of the reader reflects to a much greater degree the suggested meaning posited by the author.

Interpretive Communities

The reader response criticism of Stanley Fish (1989) sees readers as belonging to “interpretive communities” that share basic critical assumptions or “interpretive strate-

gies” about the act of reading. These “strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around” (p. 115). Because readers within an interpretive community generally apply the same strategies in all their reading, they end up reading different works as the “same text,” that is, as having similar interpretations. While a community may contain different interpretive subgroups, Fish argues that it is not the text or the reader but the different interpretive strategies of a community that ultimately determine the style and meaning of a work. As a result, the question of the distinction between subject and object posed by phenomenology and reception theory disappears, and with it the possibility of interpretations that deviate from the norm.

In deconstruction, for example, every text is considered to contradict itself. That is, all texts self-deconstruct by making one truth claim on the referential plane of verisimilitude, while undermining this claim on the metaphorical plane through the movement of *différance*—the essentially indeterminate associational meaning of words. According to their opponents, deconstructionists read every text as an infinitized freeplay, a rhetorical open-endedness that replaces truth claims with indeterminacy (Norris, 1990, pp. 54–67). Thus for a deconstructive interpretive community all texts are the same in their undecidability. In terms of Maharishi Vedic Science, the notion of an interpretive community corresponds to the fact that “Life is appreciated differently at each different level of consciousness” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1969, p. 316)—whether collective or individual. What a community considers to be the “true” depends on the collective consciousness of that community. Different readers in a community produce the “same text” because they share a collective consciousness—defined as the intuitive side of the rational assumptions that Fish calls interpretive strategies. For a Vedic Science based poetics, since all meaning has its source in pure consciousness at the unified level of language, the closer to this source the individuals of a community come, the more the collective consciousness of that community will share in the interpretation of texts. These texts in turn take a reader’s awareness toward the source of language and consciousness through the swing of awareness induced by figurative language, that is, by the metaphorical yoking together of unlike things that move the awareness from the concrete to the abstract, from the finite to the infinite. The possibility of an interpretive community based on higher states of consciousness and functioning at deeper levels of language is suggested by the “Maharishi Effect,” (Wallace, 1993) defined as the coherence produced in the collective consciousness of a society when 1% of its population practices the Transcendental Meditation technique (TM) and the TM-Sidhi program (pp. 157–59).

What a Vedic Science based poetics and deconstructive interpretive communities have in common are strategies that allow the reader to break through the boundaries of language and consciousness. There is, however, a major difference. On the one hand, deconstruction in theory operates on the more superficial levels of language and consciousness, and thus the experience of infinity it provides seems to expand conceptual boundaries without transcending conceptuality itself. On the other hand, a Vedic Science based poetics operates on the deepest levels of language and consciousness and thereby transcends the boundaries of space, time, and causality altogether. Vedic poet-

ics, moreover, defines the deepest level of meaning in terms of the openness of pure consciousness and the unity of language, while deconstruction defines it (the transcendental signified) as a conceptual closure that can only be avoided through the infinite freeplay of the signifier, a function of the more superficial level of language. Still, as I have argued elsewhere, deconstruction in practice seems to go beyond its theoretical limitations by taking the reader to the threshold of pure consciousness through the movement of *différance*, the very strategy through which it attempts to undermine the transcendental experience (see Haney, pp. 1–30).

New Historicism

New historicism has been influenced by poststructuralists such as Derrida in its attempt to find the interconnection between literature and culture at large. New historicism disputes the older historicism before the 1960s in several ways. To begin with, New Historicists no longer consider history to be the events of the past or a story about these events. They view history rather as a subjective narrative, a representation of the past which itself is never available in its pure state. As a result there is no longer a single, authoritative version of an historical period but only opposing, contradictory versions. Moreover, historians, like readers in the Fishian reader-response approach, are not detached observers of the past but are themselves immersed in an historical context which, like an interpretive community, determines their readings of the past. History is thus no longer the stable background of literature, but, like literature itself, a subjective foreground. Like literature, historical texts tell stories about the past by using other texts to create an intertextual fabric that substitutes for an absent reality, and may not even bear any relation to a basic reality, becoming instead its own reality.

Maharishi Vedic Science accounts for the experience of the interconnection between reality and speech, as that in new historicism, by locating the origin of language in the speaker's awareness. Commenting on Maharishi's theory of language, Susan Setzer says, "speech is more than the words: . . . when we study speech, we actually study the manifestation of the Self; the unboundedness of the Self gets quantified as sounds, as letters of the alphabet. Speech is therefore as intimate as our own Self (Maharishi, 1975). When new historicists argue that history is not a background to literature (speech) but coterminous, they suggest what Maharishi (1972) makes clear: "Speech, the growth of speech is parallel to the growth of creation, the growth of form. The word 'speech' itself is an expression. Speech is expression. Whether it's the expression of name or the expression of form, it's expression, and even from this word 'expression,' name and form have the same significance." Literature and history, name and form are not separate but connected. While this connection may appear tenuous on the more superficial levels of language and consciousness, it becomes a reality by transcending to subtler levels. The practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique prepares the basis for the more profound aesthetic experience being suggested here.

Vedic Science and Hispanic Literature

The essays in this collection each apply certain aspects of a Vedic Science based poetics to Western philosophy or Hispanic literature. In “Language, Self-Knowledge, and Maharishi Vedic Science: Grasping the Fullness of Literary Texts,” John Flodstrom examines the relation between language and consciousness in order to show how literature provides us with knowledge of the self and creation. He looks at the views of Paul Ricoeur, a contemporary philosopher who denies the experience of pure self-awareness. Ricoeur believes that knowledge of the self could be had only through the mediation of reflection, not directly through intuition. In refutation of Ricoeur’s claim that the self can be known only through its relative products, Flodstrom points out that philosophers continue to speculate on the existence of a pure self and our capacity to experience it.

He further indicates how in the ordinary waking state of consciousness the infinity of possible meanings in a work of literature seems to undermine our ability to experience the wholeness of the self or the meaning of a text. A solution to these problems is provided by Maharishi Vedic Science and its technologies for unfolding higher states of consciousness and thereby uniting consciousness with deeper levels of language and meaning. Flodstrom notes that “Maharishi Vedic Science unveils all areas of reality to consciousness.” His essay concludes by suggesting how literature enlivens the experience of consciousness in the reader, and leads to both the objective and subjective experience of infinity.

In “Tracking the Path of Transcending: The Source of Creativity in Lope de Vega’s *El ganso de oro*,” Frederick de Armas notes that “if literature emerges from that ‘source’ or unified field that can be contacted deep within the self, then it would seem that many literary texts would be intent on understanding and describing such a process” of contacting the self. In the light of a Vedic Science based poetics, he shows how de Vega’s *comedia* demonstrates the mechanics of creativity and the power of transformation evinced by the process of transcending conceptual and rhetorical boundaries. Analyzing the interrelation between language and consciousness, he shows how the play debunks the shepherds who are “intent on imitation to change others rather than being themselves, to sham rather than express their truest feelings.”

In his paper, de Armas shows how the Arcadia in *El ganso de oro* is an ironic inversion of the Golden Age and its ideal conditions. Whereas Edenic societies are often portrayed as having a language where truth and sincerity reigned and where there was a unity of sound and meaning, this play represents a dystopia where people use words to manipulate, mislead, and confuse. Nevertheless, Belardo, the archetypal hero of the play, descends to the underworld and thus symbolically contacts the field of Being. In this realm Belardo is transformed and acquires deeper insights into the nature of language and natural law. He then emerges from his Orphic *catabasis* as someone who can, as Joseph Campbell (1968) states, bestow boons on his fellow men (p. 172). As de Armas concludes, this play, by tracking the path of transcending, probes the dynamics of creativity and shows how its source, pure consciousness, can transform an ordinary person into a hero.

In “Transcendental Speech and Poetic Expression in John of the Cross,” Evelyn Toft

analyzes three major poems by John of the Cross, who excelled in poetry and mystical literature. These poems, “The Dark Night,” “The Spiritual Canticle,” and “The Living Flame of Love,” are blissful expressions of his love of the divine. This essay compares John of the Cross, and by extension the tradition of sacred rhetoric in the West, with theories on the nature of language and divine or transcendental speech as elucidated by Maharishi Vedic Science.

Just as the Christian tradition asserts that the Word perfectly represents the transcendent Godhead and is responsible for the existence and maintenance of creation, so Maharishi Vedic Science equates the *Parā* level of language with Brahman. Speech expresses itself in creation. The contemplative John of the Cross, while not using a form of Vedic meditation such as the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique, nevertheless intuits the self-disclosure of every creature and its relationship to the creator in Transcendental Consciousness.

In “Juan Ramón Jiménez, Martin Heidegger, and Maharishi Vedic Science: The Experience of Being,” Timothy Ambrose interprets a poem by the Spanish Nobel Laureate and an essay by the famous German philosopher in light of the Vedic Science of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The essay also treats briefly a parallel between Heidegger’s reading of the pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander and Maharishi Vedic Science. The focus of analysis and interpretation in the essay is the experience of pure consciousness as it has been expounded by Maharishi.

The presence of transcendence in the above mentioned works and the theme of this experience is brought out as a factor of primary importance for understanding the broader and more complete meanings of the texts. Heidegger’s questioning of Being in terms of the lexicon of the ancient Greek language, Jiménez’s poetic utterances of living eternity within an instant of time, and Anaximander’s statements concerning the nature of an ultimate unbounded, nonmaterial source of all things are all found to converge on the experience of pure consciousness. The different but parallel ways in which these separate texts manifest this theme of higher consciousness is the central topic of discussion.

In applying a Vedic Science based poetics to Hispanic literature and Western philosophy, the authors of this collection have taken an important step toward developing a new theory of literature that would consider the full range of language and consciousness, which extends from the temporal to the transcendental. The practical aspect of this theory hinges on the actual experience of higher states of consciousness, as suggested by aesthetic experience. Theory and practice thus involve a coexistence of opposites that forms a coherent whole rather than undermining wholeness through a play of difference. While deconstruction stops with a paradox, the logical impasse of undecidability, the new theory proposed here on the basis of Maharishi Vedic Science begins with a paradox, the binary opposites of finite/infinite, rational/intuitive, name/form, manifest/unmanifest, and leads to an understanding of their coexistence through an experience of higher consciousness. While poststructuralism seeks to replace unity with diversity, a Vedic Science based poetics shows how unity and diversity coexist rather than contradict, how name and form, seed and tree are just two sides of the same reality. To appreciate this coexistence, the reader’s awareness needs to go beyond the difference of poststructuralism. It needs to expand through the direct experience of Transcendental

Consciousness toward Sam̐hitā, the unity of the knower, the known, and the process of knowing, now universally possible through the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation technique. As the authors in this volume suggest, literature provides a taste of this experience through aesthetic images and the swing of awareness. As Maharishi emphasizes, “when we know literature to be the flow of consciousness, the flow of life, the flow of nature, the flow of infinity, totality, then we have to study it on the ground of that infinite, unbounded, total value of consciousness” (1976).

Notes

¹For an exposition on higher states of consciousness, see *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita: A New Translation and Commentary Chapters 1–6* (Chapters 2–6); Wallace’s *Physiology* (pp. 27–30); and R. Orme-Johnson’s “A Unified Field Theory of Literature” (pp. 331–41).

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