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Thomas Traherne’s Concept of Felicity, the “Highest Bliss,” and the Higher States of Consciousness of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s Vedic Science and Technology

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Abstract

Thomas Traherne, a seventeenth-century poet and religious writer, has both enchanted and baffled readers since the discovery of his unpublished manuscripts at the turn of this century. He has been praised for the utter simplicity and originality of his “poems of Felicity” and his prose meditations, titled Centuries of Meditations. However, the basis of the coherent wholeness that some literary critics have sensed his works possess has not been adequately explained, and, as a result, his achievement has not been fully valued.

What has been missing from Traherne studies is a proper understanding of the all-important role that his conception of Felicity plays in his works. Felicity is an experience of “Highest Bliss,” according to Traherne, essential to a life of excellence. His aim is to impress upon his reader the soul’s transcendent power and beauty through recounting his own “Entrance and Progress” in Felicity, complemented by his reflections upon the transforming nature of the experience.

Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology, the most comprehensive science of consciousness available today, makes possible a new and more complete reading of Traherne. Traherne’s detailed descriptions of Felicity suggest parallels with the higher states of consciousness identified and explained by Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology. Seen in this light, Traherne’s texts take on new clarity and order.
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Introduction: Thomas Traherne and Higher States of Consciousness

Sweet Infancy!
O fire of Heaven! O Sacred Light!
How Fair and Bright!
How Great am I,
Whom all the World doth magnify!
O Heavenly Joy!
O Great and Sacred Blessedness,
Which I possess!
So great a Joy
Who did into my Arms convey!
From GOD above
Being sent, the Heavens me enflame (sic),
To praise his Name.
The Stars do move!
The Burning Sun doth show his Love.
O how Divine
Am I! To all this Sacred Wealth,
This Life and Health,
Who raised? Who mine
Did make the same? What Hand Divine!
("The Rapture")

Thomas Traherne (1637–74), a relatively obscure Anglican divine of the mid-seventeenth century, is best known for writing the radiant, blissful prose “meditations” and poems that were discovered in a London bookstall in 1895 and subsequently published in separate editions in 1903 (the so-called Dobell folio of poems1, Traherne, 1958) and

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1 Named in honor of Bertram Dobell, who identified Traherne as the author of the anonymous, hand-written manuscripts (Traherne, 1903, 1908). H. M. Margoliouth, the editor of the standard two-volume edition of Traherne’s works, Thomas Traherne: Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings (Traherne, 1958), printed the poems from the Dobell folio, which constitute a unified sequence, along with additional Traherne poems contained in still another Traherne manuscript, the “Burney Manuscript,” which was found among the books in the Burney collection at the British Museum. These poems were first published in 1910 by H. I. Bell as The Poems of Felicity (Traherne, 1910). Bell’s edition comprises many poems Traherne did not include in the sequence contained in the Dobell folio, and which had been badly edited and revised by Philip Traherne, Thomas’s brother.

I have used as my source for Traherne’s poems and Centuries of Meditations Margoliouth’s edition. He explains the contents of his edition on pp. ix–x of Volume I. Throughout the essay I have modernized Traherne’s spelling.
The Rapture exemplifies the sweet, child-like quality with which he is associated. It expresses, in simple and charming terms, his deep and abiding sense of the wonder and the sweet fullness of his infancy, when all the world seemed to honor him, and the “Hand Divine,” which created the heavens that “enflamed” him with love and gratitude, filled him with “Life and Health.” But Traherne aspired to do more than merely sing the glories of his childhood. The ostensible goal that links both of his most widely read works is to “utter Things that have been Kept Secret from the foundation of the World” (Centuries of Meditations, I. 3). These timeless hidden secrets are the “Pure and Virgin Apprehensions” of Felicity which are “unattainable by Book, and therefore I will teach them by Experience” (III. 1). Felicity, “the Temple of Bliss,” is the vital core of Traherne’s “bafflingly simple” (Drake, 1970, p. 493) poetry and prose. It presides over his playful but passionate exposition, denoting both a profoundly enlivening experience and a practical set of interrelated abstract principles.

Traherne’s experiences have remained a stumbling block to a full critical evaluation of his importance as a writer for, as one exasperated critic has noted, after the initial excitement at the discovery of the Traherne manuscripts had worn off, “most critics seemed at a loss what to do with him” (Jordan, 1972, p. 3)2 His conception of Felicity was summarily labeled “mystical,” though some critics charged that it lacked “the profound effort and suffering”3 which they mistakenly believed to be a prerequisite for attaining higher states of consciousness. It was further alleged in a major literary history that “Neither as Christian nor as philosopher does Traherne seem quite mature [for] a large element of facile, expansive, emotional optimism [mars his writing],” and, additionally, that his work is characterized by an “incoherent diffuseness” (Bush, 1962, p. 158).

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s Vedic Science, which includes comprehensive and systematic technologies for investigating consciousness, can contribute significantly to current scholarship on Traherne by providing a scientific approach for interpreting his accounts of the state of Felicity. Maharishi (1972) identifies four higher states of consciousness, distinct from the familiar waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states. They are transcendental consciousness (TC), cosmic consciousness (CC), refined cosmic consciousness or God consciousness (GC), and unity consciousness (UC) (pp. 23-3 to 23-10). These more developed states of consciousness, which unfold through the regular practice of Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation technique and the more advanced TM-Sidhi program, exhibit the following psycho-physiological characteristics.

Transcendental consciousness, a fourth state of consciousness, is described by Maharishi (1967):

When the mind transcends during transcendental meditation, the metabolism reaches its lowest point; so does the process of breathing, and the nervous system gains a state of restful alertness, which, on the physical level, corresponds to the state of bliss-consciousness, or transcendent Being. (p. 173)

2See Day (1982, preface) for a summary of Traherne’s changing reputation. See also Drake (1970), who in “Thomas Traherne’s Songs of Innocence” calls out for a book that will make Traherne readable (p. 492).

Scientific research has shown this state of restful alertness to be a unique state of consciousness (Wallace, 1986, pp. 56-72). Transcendental consciousness results when, during the practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique, the attention turns “inwards toward the subtler levels of a thought until the mind transcends the experience of the subtlest state of the thought and arrives at the source of thought” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 470). In Maharishi’s terms, the source of thought is a state of transcendental “pure” consciousness—also known as the state of “unbounded awareness” (1972, p. 6-4), “the least excitation of consciousness” (1980, p. 5), “Self-consciousness,” samadhi (1967, p. 144)—which Maharishi (1986) identifies as the direct experience of the “self-referral,” self-interacting field of transcendental consciousness, which is the home of all the laws of nature, the basis not only of individual life, but of everything in the outer, objective world (p. 31). In transcendental consciousness, the mind identifies with this “self-referral state of consciousness,” which “while remaining uninvolved with the creative process in nature, is an infinitely dynamic, inexhaustible source of energy, and creativity” (p. 30), a field of infinite bliss (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, pp. 424-425).

Maharishi (1967) explains that pure consciousness grows in the awareness through the regular practice of Transcendental Meditation, alternated with dynamic activity. When this infusion is fully developed, cosmic consciousness, a fifth state of consciousness, is naturally gained (p. 173). As Maharishi describes:

This gradual and systematic culture of the physical nervous system creates a physiological situation in which the two states of consciousness exist together simultaneously. It is well known that there exist in the nervous system many autonomous levels of function, between which a system of coordination also exists. In the state of cosmic consciousness, two different levels of organization in the nervous system function simultaneously while maintaining their separate identities. By virtue of this anatomical separation of function, it becomes possible for transcendental consciousness to coexist with the waking state of consciousness and with the dreaming and sleeping states of consciousness. (p. 314)

In the state of cosmic consciousness, “. . . the mind has been transformed into bliss-consciousness . . .” (p. 150). Bliss is experienced throughout all activities, even sleeping and dreaming. Maharishi clarifies that in this state of twenty-four hours of bliss each day, in which transcendental consciousness naturally coexists with the waking state, the individual becomes aware of his or her Self as “separate from activity” (p. 307):

Because in this state the mind has become transformed into bliss-consciousness, Being [pure consciousness] is permanently lived as separate from activity. Then a man realizes that his Self is different from the mind which is engaged with thoughts and desires. It is now his experience that the mind, which had been identified with desires, is mainly identified with the Self [pure consciousness]. (pp. 150-151)

This state of “separation” from activity, called “witnessing” (p. 350) in which a gap exists between the knower and the objects of knowledge, is resolved through a profound enhancement of the perceptual and cognitive processes. The nervous system, Maharishi (1967) elaborates,

needs to be cultured further so that these two levels, which function independently, come to function in an integrated manner. This will give rise to a state of consciousness in which .
the sense of separation between the Self and activity is dissolved . . . (p. 315)

The bridging of the gulf between the Self and activity “is a natural process, free from effort” (p. 210) and is brought about “on the physiological level . . . by a mental activity of ultimate refinement” (p. 315), which is “the activity of devotion” (p. 211). The sixth state of consciousness, refined cosmic consciousness, begins to grow as the heart, which has become established in unbounded joy in the state of cosmic consciousness,

begins to draw everything together and eliminate the gulf of separation between the Self and activity . . . . The intensity of this Union cultures man’s consciousness, which begins to find everything inseparable from the Self; and this is how, in the most natural manner, the Self, which held Its identity as separate from all activity in the state of cosmic consciousness, finds everything in Itself. This happens on the way to God-consciousness, which in its completeness absorbs even the Self, containing all things. (p. 307)

In this glorified state of consciousness, characterized by the most refined appreciation of objects of perception, the duality of Self and activity finds itself pervaded by universal love (pp. 213-214).

In the seventh state of consciousness, unity consciousness, the individual, whose nervous system is now at its optimal level of functioning, spontaneously experiences all objects of perception as expressions of the Self. Maharishi (1972) states that the seventh state of consciousness could be called “the unified state of consciousness,” because in this state,

the ultimate value of the object, infinite and unmanifest, is made lively when the conscious mind, being lively in the unbounded value of awareness, falls on the object . . . .

In this unified state of consciousness, the experiencer and the object of experience have both been brought to the same level of infinite value and this encompasses the entire phenomenon of perception and action as well. (p. 23-9)

This is a state of full enlightenment in which “all the diversified structures of knowledge and all the activities, performances, behavior, interchanges, and exchanges” are “all lively in one unity consciousness” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 34). In this most all-encompassing state, everything within one’s field of perception is experienced in its fullest possible value as nothing other than one’s own Self.

Maharishi (1967) emphasizes that the higher states of consciousness, which are made accessible to any individual through the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program, are natural states of human development (p. 133). Correspondingly, Alexander, Boyer, and Alexander (1987) propose “that the sequence of higher states of consciousness described in Maharishi’s Vedic Psychology represents the natural continuation of human development beyond the stage of adult formal operations.” They note that

These exalted states are not mystical in the sense of being momentary experiences which are inherently ineffable or incomprehensible, but may reflect a developmental level of subtlety and comprehensiveness that goes beyond the level which can be readily appreciated within the boundaries of ordinary adult thought. (p. 91)

Their proposal is founded upon the impressive body of scientific research, surveyed in
the article, which has been conducted on Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program and the development of higher states of consciousness over the last twenty years. (For more information, see below on pp. 147-148.)

Literature from around the world suggests that individuals throughout history seem to have had glimpses of these higher states of consciousness. Thomas Traherne is a case in point, for his canon contains evocative descriptions of an unbounded state of awareness which strongly resembles descriptions of transcendental consciousness in Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology. The following passage from Select Meditations (Traherne, circa 1660-1665), a Traherne manuscript which was not discovered until 1964 and is still unpublished (Day, 1982, p. 131), will serve as an example:

[W]ere nothing made but a Naked Soul, it would See nothing out of it Self. [F]or Infinite Space would be seen within it. And being all sight it would feel it Self as it were running parallel with it. And that truly in an Endless manner, because it could not be conscious of any Limits: nor feel it Self present in one Center more than another. This is an infinite sweet mystery: to them that have Taste [sic] it. (III. 27)

Traherne’s thought-experiment depicts a state of pure awareness in which the mind is experienced in and of itself. In such a state the unbounded nature of the mind, or “Naked Soul,” becomes readily apparent. It is perceived to be spreading infinitely in all directions, unaware of any limits. He compares this experience of inner unboundedness to endless sight: sight extending through space with nothing to stop it. (Similarly, in Select Meditations he describes his soul as “An extensive & Immaterial Being, which is Like an Indivisible Atom without Bulk, all eye and sight” II. 92). The content of Traherne’s “meditation” parallels the “self-referral state of awareness” described by Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology as the direct experience of the “self-interacting field of transcendental consciousness” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 31):

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

Traherne’s concept of Felicity bears a marked resemblance to this state of inner fullness, as also attested to by another entry in the Select Meditations, which records one of his most personal and explicit accounts of the experience of Felicity:

This Endless Comprehension of my Immortal Soul when I first saw it, so wholly Ravished and Transported my spirit, that for a fortnight after I could scarcely Think or speak or write of any other Thing. But Like a man Doting with Delight and Ecstasy, Talk of it Night and Day as if all the Joy of Heaven and Earth were Shut up in it. . . . There I saw the foundation of man’[s] Excellency, and that which made Him a Son of God. Nor ever shall I be able to forget its Glory. (IV. 3)

This application of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology to the field of literature is the subject of R. Orme-Johnson’s stimulating essay “A Unified Field Theory of Literature” (1987).

Louis Martz kindly allowed me to read a copy of the unpublished Select Meditations manuscript at the Beinecke Rare Books Library, Yale University, New Haven.
This “meditation” evidently preserves one of Traherne’s most dramatic experiences of bliss (“[it] so wholly Ravished and Transported my spirit”) as the essential nature of the mind. He characterizes it as a state of unbounded awareness (“Endless Comprehension”), a direct participation in the “soul’s” or self’s transcendental or “Immortal” nature. Maharishi (1967) describes transcendental consciousness similarly as the basis of profound bliss:

The bliss of this state eliminates the possibility of any sorrow, great or small. . . . No sorrow can enter bliss consciousness, nor can bliss consciousness know any gain greater than itself. This state of self-sufficiency leaves one steadfast in oneself, fulfilled in eternal contentment. (p. 424)

Maharishi clarifies the relationship of this state to ordinary experience by distinguishing between a “lower self” and a “higher Self.” The former is “that aspect of the personality which deals only with the relative aspect of existence. It comprises the mind that thinks, the intellect that decides, the ego that experiences.” The “higher Self,” on the other hand, is “that aspect of the personality which never changes, absolute Being [pure consciousness], which is the very basis of the entire field of relativity, including the lower self” (p. 339).

The existence of an inner unbounded Self, which Traherne seems to be referring to by his use of the term “soul,” is the cornerstone of his philosophy (Balakier, 1988). Its experience locates or is associated with a state he names Felicity. Felicity is Traherne’s word for infinite happiness. Why, it may be wondered, was Traherne such a blissful person, as the testimony of contemporaries seems to corroborate, and why did he write such blissful poems? The basis of his profound experiences of happiness, as will be substantiated more fully in the body of this essay, may be explained from the perspective of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology as the result of deep experiences of subtle values of the mind, including the source of thought—transcendental consciousness—a state of pure, unbounded silence. Maharishi (1967) explains that as an individual grows into higher states of consciousness through the alternation of transcending and daily activity, unbounded transcendental consciousness begins to move and thereby enlivens bliss in activity (p. 184). The overwhelming bliss Traherne claimed repeatedly that he experienced in activity would be consistent with descriptions, in Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology, of the growth of higher states of consciousness based upon repeated exposure to transcendental consciousness.

Traherne pledges himself to the task of revealing Felicity, this “foundation” of human excellence, to others at the beginning of each of his most prized works, namely the Centuries of Meditations, and the Dobell Folio poem sequence. In Century 1. 4, for example, he assures his friend and supposed fellow-member of a local “religious family,” Susanna Hopton (Wade, 1944/1969, p. 82), that he will teach her “profitable wonders,” and lead her “into Paths Plain and Familiar. . . . [where] nothing appear but Contentment and Thanksgiving,” pure contentment being one of Traherne’s many

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*A friend of Traherne’s recorded that “He was a man of a cheerful and sprightly Temper. . . . [He was] very affable and pleasant in his Conversation, ready to do all good Offices to his Friends, and Charitable to the Poor almost beyond his ability” (quoted in Balakier, 1982, p. 4).*
designations for Felicity. Similarly, in “The Author to the Critical Peruser,” a prologue to the Dobell series of poems, Traherne boldly promises:

At that we aim; to th'end thy Soul might see
With open Eyes thy Great Felicity,
Its Objects view, and trace the glorious Way
Whereby thou may'st thy Highest Bliss enjoy.

Traherne’s statement that Felicity can be seen “with open Eyes” and “has objects,” if taken literally, may imply that he has experienced not only transcendental consciousness, in which pure silent bliss is experienced within, but also higher states of consciousness, which involves refined and therefore blissful sensory perception as well.

Traherne, it should be noted, did not have access to an effective, effortless technique like Transcendental Meditation for gaining enlightenment. In *Centuries of Meditations* he comes perhaps his closest to recommending a procedure which he seems to believe will gently encourage the flowering of inner bliss. He advises the reader to simply feel the Self’s, or “soul’s,” “Incomparable Excellency” and “let all your Affections extend to the Endless Wideness” (II. 92). This directive presupposes that the mind has the innate ability, when allowed to follow its single strongest inclination, to become unbounded. This “Principle of Nature,” as Traherne calls its, appears to parallel the concept in Vedic Science which Maharishi (1963) refers to as the “natural tendency” of the mind:

To go to a field of greater happiness is the natural tendency of the mind. Because in the practice of Transcendental Meditation the conscious mind is set on its way to transcending and experiencing transcendent, absolute Being [pure consciousness], whose nature is bliss-consciousness, the mind finds that the way is increasingly attractive as it advances in the direction of bliss... . The mind is charmed and is led to experience transcendent Being [pure consciousness]. (p. 49)

Traherne’s recommendation for stimulating and strengthening the presence of Felicity in the mind by allowing the feelings to “extend to the Endless Wideness” seems to be grounded in this same realization that the mind is already drawn to unbounded happiness—in fact, that it was designed to experience it. But without a reliable technique for fostering the growth of consciousness in the individual, his well-intended goal to actually show his reader “with Open Eyes thy Great Felicity” could only be a limited, though inspiring, endeavor.

Still, consideration of Traherne’s writings in the light of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology and the research on consciousness alluded to above can, I believe, open to view the great subtlety as well as the coherent wholeness that his biographer, Gladys I. Wade, sensed his works possessed, but that has always eluded Traherne specialists (Wade, 1944/1969, p. 144). Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology provides detailed descriptions of the characteristics of higher states of consciousness that naturally evolve with regular experience of pure consciousness and the refinement of the human nervous system that accompanies and supports this experience. Maharishi has also brought to light and systematized mental techniques from Vedic Science that allow anyone to verify these descriptions on the basis of one’s own experience. With over
three million individuals in the world practicing these techniques, a substantial empirical base verifying these experiences has been established (see, for instance, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1976, pp. 75–79 or Maharishi’s Programme to Create World Peace: Global Inauguration, 1987, pp. 570–571).

Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology thus makes it possible to interpret Traherne’s poems not simply as exaggerated metaphor, but as descriptions of sublime experience of finer values of awareness. Although it is not possible to know the precise experiences that inspired Traherne’s writing, certainly wherever his language parallels Maharishi’s descriptions of higher states of consciousness the possibility that Traherne at minimum had glimpses of experiences associated with higher states of consciousness becomes reasonable.

Traherne’s mode of presenting the “infinite sweet mystery” of the mind’s infinite nature will be of special interest in this essay. He adopts the position that the existence of Felicity, the “Highest Bliss,” can be validated objectively and he seems to explore its full nature through imitating the inductive method, popularized in the first half of the seventeenth century by Francis Bacon. In so doing he seems to anticipate contemporary scientific investigations of higher states of consciousness. The thesis of this essay, in short, is that Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology allows one to understand and appreciate Traherne’s poetry in terms of the systematic development of higher states of consciousness; interpreting Traherne’s work in the light of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology thus illuminates his philosophy and his art.

Traherne and the Inductive Method

Critics seeking to establish Traherne’s place in the intellectual tradition have found in him variously a Christian Platonist, a Neoplatonic mystic, a follower of St. Augustine, a traditional Anglican with uncommon emphases, a “new humanist” espousing “the aesthetics of the infinite” (Nicolson, 1960, p. 202), and more. Traherne has appeared to be many things to many people. Still, as a noted Traherne scholar has asserted, ultimately “Traherne defies categories. . . . He remains what he was: an original” (Marks, 1966, p. 534).

From a more literary perspective, Traherne belongs to a group of poets known as “the metaphysical school” who, following the example of the great Anglican divine and poet John Donne, sought to express deeply felt religious and secular experiences in the form of highly intellectual poems. Metaphysical poetry combined passionate feeling with intellectual rigor, a goal synthesized by Donne’s famous image of a “thinking heart.” Traherne, though, is distinguished from Donne and the other “metaphysicals,” including George Herbert, Andrew Marvell, Richard Crashaw and Henry Vaughan, by the simplicity of his poetic diction, the spatial content of his imagery, the childlike sweetness and innocence of his persona, and his infectious optimism.

Traherne shares with the other metaphysicals an avid, eclectic interest in science. They drew their imagery from all the new and exciting areas of scientific learning:

7See Balakier, 1982, pp. 33–51, for a summary of these approaches to Traherne.
astronomy, mathematics, geography, medicine. The energy with which Traherne sets out to establish the existence of Felicity is very much in keeping with the frenetic spirit of discovery of his time, the later Renaissance. This period, the era of the scientific revolution, saw a major change in the perception of the universe. It is known as an “age of the infinite” because “there was an increasing obsession with the unlimitedness of space, with infinite varieties of life in an infinity of (possibly) inhabited worlds” (Tuveson, 1951, p. 21). Galileo, with the help of his “new spyglass,” was responsible for initiating this new age. His telescopic observations, through increasingly powerful lenses, allowed him to view seemingly never-ending “congeries of innumerable stars” (Galileo, 1610/1957, p. 49). These sightings raised the possibility that the universe was an open-ended system, extended indefinitely in all directions. Another discovery, the presence of mountains on the moon, which “seemed proof that the moon and probably the planets were worlds like our own” (Nicolson, 1959, p. 131), fired speculation on the possible existence of “a plurality of worlds.” Suddenly, the dimensions of the universe expanded beyond any known boundaries, and along with it an enlarged sense of the possibilities of human achievement emerged, inspired by the feats of the new astronomy. As Nicolson (1959) explains: “there seemed no limit to discovery, invention, knowledge.” “Man’s potentialities seemed as unlimited as Nature’s” (pp. 131, 142).

Traherne was not a scientist; still, evidence suggests that he was scientifically literate, as were many of the educated men of his time. He obtained his background in the “new science” while a student at Oxford. Day speculates that Traherne’s education there “must have been a strong influence upon his acceptance of the power of a more ‘natural,’ empirical reason,” for though its curriculum emphasized training in the traditional techniques of logic, scholars there were also exposed to contemporary scientific issues. Oxford, indeed, became a center for the study of science in the 1650’s (Traherne was a student there from 1652–56, Day, 1982, pp. iii) and was the original home of the Royal Society, to which the great English scientists of the time belonged.

Traherne was clearly familiar with current developments in science. . . . his Commonplace Book implies an acquaintance with many of the recent theories on atoms, the cohesion of matter, vacuum, fire, the nature of cold, colors, and motion. (Ellrodt, 1964, p. 197)

Marks reports that Traherne also copied out information on “the relationship of mind to body . . . ; ‘difficulties in sciences’ caused by insufficient examination of particulars . . . ; the use of exercises to promote health . . . ; the prolongation of life” (Marks, 1968, p. 527).

Traherne’s fascination with the science of his day was not unique among English poets, for the advances in astronomy inspired, both directly and indirectly, an important body of English literature—a literature, in Nicolson’s words, of “infinite aspiration” which is characterized not only by wonder at the vastness of the universe, but also by a deepened sense of the mind’s ability to entertain infinite possibilities. Although other poets of the era, like Donne, had mixed feelings about the emerging new model of the universe, Traherne is singled out from his contemporaries for his “aesthetic gratification,”

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8 See Nicolson’s The breaking of the circle: Studies in the effect of the “new science” upon seventeenth-century poetry (1960) for a discussion of this sub-genre.
his sheer pleasure at the infinite spaces opened up by the new science.

In seeking to rationally communicate the existence and potency of Felicity, and presumably to better satisfy his own period’s demand for objective truth, Traherne employs a structural motif, which was probably inspired by the inductive model advocated by Francis Bacon. Bacon was once thought to be the “Legislator of Science” of his day who single-handedly invented the scientific method. He is now credited, more correctly, with “stating the descriptive aspect of science in emphatic terms,” rather than with actually devising the experimental method, which was already widely, if informally, in use in England before he first took it up as his personal cause in *The New Organon and Related Writings* in 1620 (Hall, 1963/1981, p. 123). Still, Bacon remains the great articulator of the new methodology, which stressed the role of the observation and description of particular events in the formation of scientific laws (in contrast to the scholastic approach to knowledge, in which the application of right reasoning in reaching a conclusion takes precedence over experimental evidence). Bacon (1620/1963) defines the scientific method in his unfinished work, *The Great Instauration*, as a “marriage between the empirical and the rational faculty” (p. 162), that is, a synthesis of experimentation with the mental analysis of factual results. Facts, or “experience,” are held by this “scientific” approach to knowledge to be of primary importance.9

The drawing of conclusions from experiences is, of course, a common-sense process that everyone, from children to adults, naturally follows. But, it is interesting that no other poet, to my knowledge, makes such an explicit use of the experience/understanding construct. Traherne was writing at a time when the scientific approach was being defined. He also knew Bacon’s writings intimately (an early notebook of Traherne’s contains extracts, for example, from Bacon’s *De augmentis scientarium* Ellrodt, 1964, p. 197). Therefore, it seems plausible that the structural emphasis that Traherne places on the mutually beneficial relationship between experience and understanding is intended to approximate Bacon’s empirical design.

An examination of the *Centuries of Meditations* and the Dobell poem series will demonstrate, I think, the strength of his commitment to such an empirically inspired approach for communicating his experiences, which he seems to assume will hold up to “objective” analysis. If his descriptions of Felicity are understood as denoting experiences of higher states of consciousness, then this is a faith borne out fully in the research of recent years developed through Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology on higher states of consciousness.10 Research at over 200 universities and research institutes has verified the physiological, psychological and sociological benefits of the practice of Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program (Chalmers, Clements, Schenklun, & Weinless, 1989a, 1989b; D. W. Orme-Johnson & Farrow, 1977; Wallace,

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9The early seventeenth century was a transitional phase in the historical development of science. Bacon’s inductive method, in reality, contrasted with the “far more novel” mathematical-deductive method of Galileo, which through “the incipient use of experiment as a method of proof ... served to verify or falsify a previous expectation” (Hall, 1963/1981, pp. 33-34). Bacon himself “appreciated this role of experiment [as a means of corroborating a previously formulated hypothesis], though he had not emphasized it ...” (p. 34). In effect, Bacon’s position that truth can be arrived at with experimental evidence unaided by “previous expectations” or hypotheses is a simplification of how science in the seventeenth century was actually practiced.

10For a review of research on higher states of consciousness see Alexander and Boyer, 1989.
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D. W. Orme-Johnson, & Dillbeck, in press). The research has taken the subjective experience of transcendental consciousness out of the realm of mystical speculation and validated it through the application of the rigorous objective method of modern science.11

Centuries of Meditations

Centuries of Meditations is Traherne’s most popular work, even though “the specific design . . . may be baffling at first because its language is diffuse and full of detail” (Day, 1982, pp. 104–105). Felicity is the theme which unifies and integrates the five Centuries, the core of which (Centuries III and IV) is organized according to the complementary perspectives of experience and understanding, as shown by the following outline:

Century I: Introduction to the “Powers, Inclinations, and Principles” of Felicity
Century II: Amplification upon the “Reality of Happiness” or Felicity
Century III: EXPERIENCE—“Entrance and Progress” in Felicity through Direct Experience
Century IV: UNDERSTANDING—“Principles of Felicity” that Promote its Development in the Direction of Becoming a “Daily Joy”
Century V: Felicity Glorified as Love

Century I, from this perspective, introduces the idea that Felicity is the source of the “Powers, Inclinations, and Principles [in which] the Knowledge of your self chiefly consisteth. Which are so Great that even to the most Learned of men their Greatness is Incredible; and so Divine, that they are infinite in Value” (I. 19). A key formulation on the nature of Felicity occurs about midway through this Century, where Traherne exuberantly avows that his Spirit “can see before and after its Existence into Endless Spaces,” transcending all spatial and temporal boundaries. It is, further, a state in which “the Presence of the understanding [is] endless” (I. 55). Similarly, in his poetry he refers to his “Soul” as “A Naked Simple Pure Intelligence [Traherne’s italics],” “The Preparative” (I. 20).

Maharishi (1980) has often referred to transcendental consciousness, in the same words, as a state of pure intelligence:

We call the unmanifest state of natural law, when it is wide awake within itself, the field of pure consciousness, pure intelligence, at the basis of creation. (p. 10)
Knowledge is born in the junction point between pure intelligence, the simplest form of intelligence, or pure awareness, and its changing modes. (p. 73)
When we analyze the transcendental field of all possibilities we know it must be consciousness, it must be intelligence. It must be pure intelligence, or unbounded infinite intelligence. (p. 78)

11 Though Traherne’s employment of the inductive model has not been noted by seventeenth-century scholars, many years ago one critic, T. O. Beachcroft, cited the uniqueness of Traherne’s highly organized and “unusually objective” presentation of his experiences of Felicity (1930, p. 292).
That Traherne has used the same denotation, in connection with images of infinity, to describe his “soul” as Maharishi uses to describe transcendental consciousness would tend to support the view that Traherne is speaking about a similar experience.

In Century II Traherne amplifies upon the theme of the infinite potential of the “Soul,” offering as evidence of the “Reality of Happiness” and the essentially blissful nature of the mind its spontaneous and joyous response to the world, which “entertains you with many Lovely and Glorious Objects, It feeds you with Joys, and becomes a Theme that furnishes you with perpetual Praises and Thanksgivings” (II. 1). The world also “enflameth you with the Love of God, and is the Link of your Communion with Him” (II. 1). He returns to this idea of an enhanced state of Felicity, which is characterized by unbounded love, in Century V, left incomplete at his death.12

The vital core of Traherne’s teachings on Felicity is organized in Centuries III and IV in conformity, as mentioned above, with the two complementary aspects of the inductive approach to knowledge: direct experience, and objective, systematic analysis. In Century III he treats Felicity from the experiential angle and documents his awakening to the mind’s infinite nature. In Century IV, in turn, he enumerates principles which establish the overriding importance of Felicity in daily life and which will, he believes, foster its growth and assimilation.

In Century III, 1–65, Traherne reconstructs his “Entrance and Progress” into Felicity beginning with the “sublime and Celestial Greatness” (III. 1) he experienced in his childhood, when “all appeared New, and Strange . . . [and] inexpressibly rare” (III. 2). But the light of bliss that shined within him in its “Primitive and Innocent Clarity” (III. 7) was extinguished by a combination of the “rude vulgar and Worthless Things” which distracted him as he grew older, the “Impetuous Torrent of Wrong Desires” that he beheld in those around him, and, most of all, by “the Evil Influence of a Bad Education that did not foster and cherish it” (III. 7). Traherne realizes, in retrospect, that something absolutely vital was missing from his education, including the years he spent at Brasenose College, Oxford: “There was never a Tutor that did professly Teach Felicity: though that be the Mistress of all other Sciences” (III. 37). The knowledge of how to develop Felicity, a state which he knew existed from his childhood recollections of it, was totally absent from the curriculum.

Of note here is Maharishi’s postulation that in order to be complete an education must include the knowledge of how to gain pure awareness, which is the “home of all the laws of nature”:

... the best education will cultivate a habit of working from that totality of natural law, that field which is our own transcendental consciousness, our own unbounded awareness. When we are developing a habit of spontaneously functioning according to natural law, then we are naturally getting out of that old habit where some negativity could arise. All difficulties, suffering, and failures in life belong to violation of the laws of nature. Life according to natural law will always be orderly, evolutionary, and nourishing to everyone. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1986, p. 98)

12 This advanced stage of Felicity is discussed later in the essay in connection with its more expanded thematic development in the Dobell poem sequence.
Traherne attributes his own sufferings to bad desires which resulted from losing touch with the source of happiness within himself.

Traherne recounts in Meditation 46 growing disillusionment which came to a head during an interlude from his studies while in the country. There, with time on his hands, he resolved “to spend it all, whatever it cost me, in Search of Happiness, and to Satiate that burning Thirst which Nature enkindled in me from my Youth.”

Nature, fortunately, left a “Clue” as to how he could regain his former happy state. This clue was a “burning Thirst” for nothing less than infinite happiness. From the strength and persistence of this “Sacred Instinct” he concluded it was within his power to enjoy the “Treasures of God after the similitude of God” (III. 59), that is, to enjoy the world and other people to an infinite degree:

The Image of God implanted in us, guided me to the manner wherein we were to Enjoy. [F]or since we were made in the similitude of God, we were made to enjoy after his Similitude. Now to Enjoy the Treasures of God in the Similitude of God, is the most perfect Blessedness God could Devise. For the Treasures of GOD are the most Perfect Treasures and the Manner of God is the most perfect Manner. To Enjoy therefore the Treasures of God after the similitude of God is to Enjoy the most perfect Treasures in the most Perfect Manner. (III. 59)

As this insight dawned within him, a distinctive physiological response occurred:

This Spectacle once seen, will never be forgotten. It is a Great Part of the Beatific Vision. A Sight of Happiness is Happiness. It transforms the Soul and makes it Heavenly, it power­fully calls us to Communion with God, and weans us from the Customs of this World. . . . I no sooner discerned this [truth] but I was (as Plato sayeth, In summa Rationis Arce Quies­habitat) seated in a Throne of Repose and Perfect Rest. All Things were well in their Proper Places . . . (III. 60)

The “Perfect Rest” and orderliness he mentions, which accompanied his profound real­ization of his “heavenly” nature, suggest the physiological correlates of transcendental consciousness revealed by scientific research. Maharishi (1967) notes that

Any state of consciousness is the expression of a corresponding state of the nervous sys­tem. Transcendental consciousness corresponds to a certain specific state of the nervous system which transcends any activity and is therefore completely different from that state of the nervous system which corresponds to the waking state of consciousness. (p. 314)

Traherne’s experience of inner Felicity, retold in the above passage, bears a striking similarity to the unique metabolic state produced by the TM technique:

During the practice of transcendent meditation, as the mind gains transcendent con­sciousness, the metabolism of the body is reduced to a minimum and the entire nervous system gains a state of restful alertness. This is the physical condition corresponding to the state of Being [pure consciousness]. (p. 346)

Transcendental consciousness is also characterized by increased coherence, as verified by extensive research on the brain-wave patterns of subjects practicing Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program (Travis, 1990; Wallace, 1986, pp. 57–58). That things seemed to be “well in their Proper Places” suggests a profound, natural state of mental orderliness.
In Century III Traherne describes his “Entrance and Progress in Felicity” (IV. 1) whose description, it has been argued, parallels transcendental consciousness. Traherne’s goal in Century IV is to present a collection of interrelated principles, with which he has “endued” or endowed himself, which are conducive to “Practical Happiness,” or Felicity in practical daily life. For besides pure inner happiness, “there is an Active Happiness; which consisteth in Blessed Operations.” These “Blessed” or refined “Operations,” which “fit a man for action,” strengthen the growth of bliss in activity; but they are also, Traherne is quick to add, “infinitely conducive” to the direct, inner experience of Felicity “it self” (IV. 1). Century IV is a lively treatise that complements the actual case history reported in Century III. While in Century III Traherne divulged his direct experience of Felicity, in Century IV he provides a close analysis of the Felicity phenomenon from an intellectual perspective. He reflects a “scientific” approach in this Century by treating his subject, the advancement of Felicity in everyday life, in an objective, systematic and practical manner, as will be illustrated in subsequent paragraphs. A possible connection between Traherne’s principles of Felicity and Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology will also be discussed.

Through most of Century IV Traherne refers to the individual responsible for drafting these principles of Felicity as the reader’s “friend,” in the third person, rather than taking direct personal credit for their formulation. As he writes in Meditation 2:

He thought it a Vain Thing to see Glorious Principles lie Buried in Books, unless he did remove them into his Understanding; and a vain thing to remove them unless he did revive them, and raise them up by continual exercise.

There is a quaint humility to such a stylistic shifting of attention off of himself. But, on another level, this rhetorical strategy allows Traherne to elaborate upon Felicity in a more detached, objective manner. He can enumerate at a remove, as it were, factors which will enhance Felicity. This manner of proceeding is obviously not equivalent to empirical analysis, but it suggests that Traherne recognized the merit of a more detached mode of inquiry.

Century IV, additionally, is the most systematic of the Centuries. Margoliouth identifies twenty-five distinct principles which Traherne expounds in simple language (Traherne, 1903/1958). They fall into two groups: “Principles of Enjoyment” (1-8) and “Principles of Communication” (9-25). A summary of these principles follows.14

The first eight principles, the “Principles of Enjoyment,” legitimize the pursuit of happiness:

... this was His Principle that loved Happiness, and is your friend. I came into this World only that I might be Happy. And whatsoever it cost me, I will be Happy. A Happiness there is, and it is my desire to enjoy it. (IV. 7)

These principles also underscore the necessity of having the right knowledge to balance experience because knowledge alone can ensure that the individual will stay securely on

13 Traherne contrastingly calls the state of pure inner Felicity, in this context, “Contemplative Happiness.”

14 See Balakier (1982), pp. 133-141, for an amplified discussion of these principles.
the path leading to Felicity, a state of full happiness.

Whatever we misapprehend we cannot use. Nor well enjoy, what we cannot use. Nor can a thing be our Happiness, we cannot enjoy. Nothing therefore can be our Happiness, but that alone which we rightly apprehend. (IV. 15)

In answer to the question, “What must I do to gain Felicity?” Traherne locates the source of true happiness in the mind, not in objects, for “Apprehensions within are bet­ter than their Objects” (IV. 15). Ocular mistakes, he points out, such as confusing a knife with a saw, can have ludicrous results. But “far more Absurd ones are unseen. To mistake the World, or the Nature of one’s soul is a more Dangerous Error” (IV. 15).

Traherne now focuses on “Principles of Communication,” which aim at the “communication” or expression of happiness outwardly in the world at large. A central theme is brotherly love, as a selection of these principles will indicate:

He generally held, what Whosoever would enjoy the Happiness of Paradise must put on the charity of Paradise. . . . [F]or observing the Methods, and studying the Nature of Charity in Paradise, he found that all men would be Brothers and Sisters throughout the whole World. [A]nd evermore love one another as their own selves, though they had never seen each other before. (IV. 22)

He thought that men were more to be Beloved now than before [the Fall in the Garden of Eden]. And which is a strange Paradox, the Worse they are the more they were to be Pitied and Tendered and Desired, because they had more need, and were more Miserable. (IV. 26)

He had another saying, He lives most like an Angel that lives upon least Himself, and doth most Good to others. (IV. 29)

The above principles are fairly conventional restatements of the Christian ideal of Charity and do not need commentary. But the most all-encompassing principle of Communication, the “Principle of Nature,” is of special relevance because it highlights a salient feature of Felicity which was brought to light in Century III. Traherne defines this principle, simply, as the realization that true and lasting wealth resides in “whate­soever satisfie[s] the Goodnesse of Nature”:

This he thought a Principle at the Bottom of Nature, that whatsoever satisfied the Goodnesse of Nature was the Greatest Treasure. Certainly men therefore Err because they Know not this Principle. [F]or all Inclinations and Desires in the Soul flow from, and tend to the Satisfaction of Goodnesse. (IV. 44)

In Century III he identified as the most deeply embedded human desire the “Sacred Thirst” for Felicity, which alone can satisfy fully and unequivocally “the Goodnesse of Nature.” In Meditations 44–45 of Century IV he further promises that knowledge of this “sacred” experience of the thirst for full happiness will enable the reader to become truly “Delightful and Joyous to others.” It will bring awareness that as “excellent” as it is to appreciate “all Worlds, with a certain sense that they are infinitely Beautiful and Rich and Glorious,” it is an even greater “Blessedness” to give (IV. 45). He wants to impress upon the reader that as marvelous as the inner bliss of Felicity truly is, it becomes even more excellent when it is expressed outwardly and shared with others.
In the closing meditations of Century IV Traherne impresses upon his reader the importance of taking proper action to gain Felicity. He states, for example, that

It ought to be a firm Principle in us, that This Life is the most precious season in all Eternity, because all Eternity dependeth on it. Now we may do those Actions which hereafter we shall never have occasion to do. (IV. 93)

Traherne enlarges upon this point in stronger language with the following passage:

It is an Indelible Principle of Eternal Truth. That Practice and Exercise is the Life of all. . . . If you will be lazy, and not Meditate, you lose all. The Soul is made for Action, and cannot rest, till it be employed. . . . Worlds of Beauty and Treasure and Felicity may be round about it, and it self Desolate. (IV. 95)

His point that “The Soul is made for Action” (IV. 95) brings this Century full circle. A major theme introduced in Meditation 1 has been the necessity of assimilating and strengthening the experience of infinite happiness through harmonious activity. In this way, Felicity becomes “A Daily Joy” (IV. 100). But lest these principles overwhelm the reader by their number, Traherne insists in his concluding remarks that the process of becoming “Divine” through embodying the unbounded bliss of Felicity “is made as easy, as it is Endless and Invincible” (IV. 98). To paraphrase, the cultivation of Felicity is easy because it is in keeping with the nature of the mind, a point which he has explained as the Principle of Nature. All that is required is “Practice and Exercise.” The alternative is a desolate, unproductive life.

The above points as a whole suggest a third connection between Traherne’s mode of presentation in Century IV and a scientific approach to truth. This Century is decidedly more utilitarian, more action-oriented in emphasis than the others. He stresses the importance of the practical nature of Felicity or pure happiness, which is a comprehensible, non-mystical phenomenon, as the basis of a full and successful outer life.

Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology identifies activity, whether of a mental or physical kind, as a prime factor in the stabilization of transcendental consciousness in higher states of consciousness. Maharishi (1967) explains that for transcendental consciousness “to be lived at all times” the mind must engage in natural “normal activity,” whether mental or physical (pp. 184-185). A permanent state of unbounded awareness, cosmic consciousness, results from the repeated alternation of the deep rest of Transcendental Meditation and dynamic activity:

When, through meditation, the mind has reached transcendental Self-consciousness and then returns from the field of absolute Being [pure awareness], it becomes necessary for it to engage in activity. In this way the nature of transcendental Being [pure awareness], infused into the mind, has an opportunity of maintaining itself even when the mind is engaged in experiencing the relative field of life through the senses. This is how one remains permanently established in Self-consciousness and thereby enjoys life in cosmic consciousness. (p. 211)

Traherne’s writings also suggest that activity is instrumental in producing a more lasting experience of Felicity. Keynoting this point, he writes that “A Daily Joy shall be more my Joy, because it is continual [Traherne’s italics]” (IV. 17). He regards the
performance of “charitable” works as an activity especially conducive to Felicity’s continuation, for in Meditations 21–30 Traherne asserts that unshared happiness is not as “excellent” as a communicated happiness, which is the “Charity of Paradise.” But the “Blessed Operations” he lists also include mental activities, such as the appreciation, through earnest study, of God’s love and laws: “How else should he live in Communion with GOD; to wit, in the Enjoyment of them?” (IV. 6). Though there is no strong biographical or textual evidence that Traherne himself experienced cosmic consciousness, in which twenty-four hours of bliss each day is first experienced, Century IV suggests he may have been moving in that direction. His writings certainly give the sense or inference that a permanent enhancement of daily life could be effected through “Progress” in the Felicity experience, supplemented by life-supporting activities, a sequence parallel to Maharishi’s description of the path to cosmic consciousness.

Traherne promises in Meditation 100 that “Upon the Infinite Extent of the Understanding and Affection of the Soul,” that is, following upon the full understanding and felt-experience (“Affection”) of the unbounded power of the mind, “strange and Wonderful Things will follow.” These wonderful developments include “A Fullness of Joy which nothing can exceed” and “an infinite Beauty and Greatness in the Soul” (IV. 100). Traherne’s belief that the “Daily Joy” of unbounded happiness is the be-all and end-all of Christian life, and his stated unwillingness to dwell on suffering and sin, have been called “radically positive” (Traherne, 1675/1968, p. xxxviii). Centuries III and IV taken together suggest, however, that Traherne’s philosophy of happiness developed inductively out of his subjective experiences—his “Entrance and Progress” in, as he puts it (IV. 1), a higher state of happiness. His experiences and his philosophy were not, as it has at times been alleged, merely the products of a sentimental optimism (Bush, 1962, p. 138). They indeed seem to parallel Maharishi’s description of the development of higher states of consciousness through his Vedic Science and Technology. Traherne’s exploration of the state of Felicity, furthermore, in a non-mystical framework and in a systematic, detached style probably inspired by the scientific approach to knowledge further enhances its parallel with Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology.

In Century II Traherne assured the reader that the practice of “the right enjoyment,” or appreciation of the world, including other people, is the path to the greatest Felicity, Communion with God, “which is infinitely Secure, and He my Happiness” (IV. 19). In the unfinished Century V (only ten meditations were completed) he paints a glorious picture of a life in communion with God. That he may be looking ahead to a higher state of consciousness will be considered later in this essay in conjunction with similar clues in the Dobell poems.

**The Dobell Poems**

The Dobell Folio poems (Traherne, 1958), originally thought to be a disconnected series, are now generally held to be a unified sequence (Day, 1982, p. 137). A. L. Clements (1969) has argued that the sequence as a whole follows the innocence-fall-redemption pattern of the Christian theological tradition (p. 61). Stanley Stewart (1970), however, feels that it is more loosely organized than Clements believes, though he
grants that “the journey of the soul from birth to the New Jerusalem [the heavenly kingdom on earth] informs the structure of the sequence” (p. 171). The explanation of Felicity, Traherne’s dominant theme in the Centuries, as a transformed state of consciousness in which the mind experiences its own unbounded nature, allows an alternative interpretation of the organization of the poems. This view suggests that Traherne is again, as in the Centuries of Meditations, framing his discourse in accordance with the inductive approach to knowledge—namely, from the complementary standpoints of experience and understanding. He is seeking in this way to present a thorough, practical knowledge of the nature of Felicity that will hold up, at least in spirit, to the requirements of the infant experimental sciences of his day.

From this perspective, the ordering of the Dobell Folio poems is as follows: the first 15 poems (“The Salutation” to “Fullnesse”) span the real-life experience of Felicity from its inception in infancy, through its loss in adolescence, to its possible restoration and full cognitive development in adulthood. Traherne shifts to a more analytical mode in poems 16 through 29 (“Nature” to “Love”), exploring in a fairly rudimentary way the intellectual ramifications of his experiences, including Traherne’s understanding of Felicity’s refinement into a glorified state of unbounded love—a state of total oneness with the universe. In the final poems, running from “Thoughts, I” to “Goodnesse” (Poems 30–37), Traherne synthesizes the experience of Felicity with his intellectual understanding into a utopian vision of a society of individuals who embody both the highest bliss of Felicity and the intellectual wisdom it engenders.

The following outline divides the poem into thematic groupings, which highlight the unifying role performed by the concept of Felicity. Parallel to the inductive treatment it receives in the Centuries of Meditations, Felicity is presented initially as a direct “empirical” experience which is subsequently explored and clarified through an ordered analysis:

   B. Fall—Felicity lost. “The Instruction” to “Silence” (Poems 6–12).
      The pivotal poem in this set is “My Spirit,” which is Traherne’s most comprehensive treatment of Felicity. It contains a lively exposition of experiences suggestive of Maharishi’s descriptions of higher states of consciousness, whose basis is transcendental consciousness. It should be noted, though, that Traherne’s presentation does not follow the sequential order of the higher states identified by Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology.

   A. The Principle of Nature. Traherne, in “Nature” to “Speed” (Poems 16–18), first reflects upon the naturalness and ease of the path to gaining the direct experience of Felicity.

B. The theory of “Circulation.” He now provides, in “The Designe” to “The Demonstration” (Poems 19–25), a poetically conceived model in which the Felicity radiated by human beings enhances the universe’s “circulation” or coordinated activities.

C. “Felicity Glorified.” He rounds off his analysis of the experience of Felicity in “The Anticipation” to “Love” (Poems 26–29) by explaining and illustrating that infinite happiness reaches its fullest development in a refined state of feeling and perception which he calls in Century V, “Felicity Glorified.”

III. FELICITY AS EXPERIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING.

A. “Thoughts. I” to “Goodnesse” (Poems 30–37). Traherne celebrates a state of integrated thought and feeling resulting from an intellect imbued with bliss.

**Traherne’s Experience of Felicity**

The first fifteen poems in the series, “The Salutation” through “Fullnesse,” tell the story of Felicity in an individual’s development, corresponding in Christian theology to the “redemptive pattern.”¹⁶ The experience of Felicity, according to Traherne, is vibrant and clear in childhood (Innocence), is subsequently overshadowed in adolescence (Fall), but can shine, once again, in full glory in adulthood (Redemption). In the first four of these poems, he records the quintessential purity and bliss of his childhood. In the poem “Innocence,” for example, he expresses the naturally positive, radiantly happy state of mind with which he was gifted as a child:

*But that which most I Wonder at, which most
I did esteem my Bliss, which most I Boast,
And ever shall Enjoy, is that within
I felt no Stain, nor Spot of Sin.*

*No Darkness then did overshad,
But all within was Pure and Bright,
No Guilt did Crush, nor fear invade
But all my Soul was full of Light.*

*A Joyful Sense and Purity
Is all I can remember.*

*The very Night to me was Bright,
’Twas Summer in December.*  

(II. 1–12)

Felicity, the “Joyful Sense and Purity” he remembers, seemed to shine within him from season to season, through day and night. All the world seemed like an Eden to him, in those guilt-free, unclouded days, and he was a “little Adam”:

*The Prospect was the Gate of Heaven, that Day
The ancient Light of Eden did convey
Into my Soul: I was an Adam there,*

A little Adam in a Sphere
Of Joys! O there my Ravished sense
Was entertained in Paradise,
And had a Sight of Innocence.
All was beyond all Bound and Price.
An Antepast [foretaste] of Heaven sure!
I on the Earth did reign.
Within, without me, all was pure.
I must become a Child again.

(II. 49–60)

He infers from the strength and purity of his joy that he was, indeed, standing in paradise like the unfallen Adam, the king of all he surveyed, viewing the all-encircling "Gate of Heaven" in the "ancient Light of Eden."

The other poems in this group strike the same note of unqualified, unstained happiness. In the pivotal poem in the set, "The Preparative," Traherne paints a stunning, highly imaginative picture of himself within the womb:

My Body being Dead, my Limbs unknown;
Before I skilled [sic] to prize
Those living Stars mine Eyes,
Before my Tongue or Cheeks were to me shown,
Before I knew my Hands were mine,
Or that my Sinews did my Members join,
When neither Nostril, Foot, nor Ear,
As yet was seen, or felt, or did appear;
I was within
A House I knew not, newly clothed with Skin.
Then was my Soul my only All to me,
A Living Endless Eye,
Far wider than the Sky
Whose Power, whose Act, whose Essence was to see.
I was an Inward Sphere of Light,
Or an Interminable Orb of Sight,
An Endless and a Living Day,
A vital Sun that round about did ray
All Life and Sense,
A Naked Simple Pure Intelligence.
I then no Thirst nor Hunger did conceive,
No dull Necessity,
No Want was Known to me;
Without Disturbance then I did receive
The fair Ideas of all Things,
And had the Honey even without the Stings.
A Meditating Inward Eye
Gazing at Quiet did within me lie,
And every Thing
Delighted me that was their Heavenly King.
(II. 1–30)

He imagines himself, in the "House I Knew not," as yet totally unaware of his own
body, as “A Meditating Inward Eye / Gazing at Quiet” on “The fair Ideas of all Things.”
Yet even in the pre-natal state, as he depicts it, he was conscious of Felicity, the source of pure knowledge or intelligence. In a similar vein, he writes: “Newly clothed with Skin” “[my Soul was] my only All to me, / A Living Endless Eye / Far wider than the Sky” (ll. 10–13). He envisions himself enjoying, even before he was born, a state of “Simple Pure Intelligence.” As mentioned earlier, Maharishi (1963) describes transcendent consciousness in a parallel way as the experience of

the unlimited vastness of pure existence or pure consciousness, the essential constituent and content of life. It is the field of the unlimited, the unbounded, eternal life, pure intelligence, pure existence, the absolute. (pp. 26)

Intimations of Felicity came to him throughout his childhood. They were “Divine Impressions” which “Did quickly enter and my Soul enflame” (ll. 55–56). That Felicity represents a dramatic transformation in the entire cognitive mechanism is suggested by subsequent lines, in which Traherne examines the basis of this change:

’Tis not the Object, but the Light
That maketh Heaven; ’Tis a purer Sight.
Felicity
Appears to none but them that purely see.
(ll. 57–60)

It is not the objects of perception themselves, Traherne insists, that “Maketh Heaven,” that is, that give rise to infinite happiness; it is the quality or “Light” of consciousness itself that determines how they are perceived. Felicity is a state of “pure Sight” in which, in other words, the “Light” or mechanism of perception is tremendously enhanced, resulting in a highly refined pleasure in the objects of experience. This is a large part of what, in fact, he calls Felicity. This phenomenon is independent of any attachment to those objects; it is entirely self-sufficient. Traherne calls this state of inner freedom the “Estate of Glory”; he refers, contrastingly, to a life lived outside of the influence of Felicity as the “Estate of Misery.” His theory of enlightened perception parallels, in particular, Maharishi’s description of enhanced sensory experience in the sixth state of consciousness, God consciousness, which will be discussed later in the essay in connection with other related poems.

In the final stanza of “The Preparative,” Traherne looks ahead to the return of Felicity in adulthood and asserts that this same state of “Pure Intelligence” in the adult generates a free, alert but tranquil mind, spontaneously “Acquainted with the Golden Mean” (l. 65), the ancient Greek model of balance, and naturally in possession of beauty, excellence, and pleasure:

A Disentangled and a Naked Sense
A Mind that’[’]s unpossessed,
A Disengaged Breast,
An Empty and a Quick Intelligence
Acquainted with the Golden Mean,
An Even Spirit Pure and Serene,
Is that where Beauty, Excellence,
And Pleasure keep their Court of Residence.
My Soul retire,
Get free, and so thou shalt even all Admire.
(II. 61–70)

The mind in the state of Felicity—serene, detached, lively—is disentangled from outer phenomena and freely admires or enjoys everything. Maharishi (1986) explains that such a state of evenness or balance arises automatically when the mind, in its self-referral state, is attuned to pure consciousness. Maharishi explains that the field of pure consciousness

... is perfectly balanced because its status is self-referral, its activity self-interacting. It cannot be probed by anything from outside. It cannot be disturbed. It is a state of eternal balance, which is the ideal of balance. (p. 109)

Traherne’s proposition that the full recovery of Felicity is accompanied by a natural, dynamic state of order and harmony is thus explained by Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology.

The next seven poems, “The Instruction” to “Silence,” expose the damaging effects of the post-childhood loss of Felicity, and offer some practical guidelines on how to create conditions conducive to its retrieval. In “The Instruction” and “The Vision,” for example, Traherne shifts from invoking the joys of childhood Felicity to inducing the reader, now in the “estate of Misery,” to regain this marvelous state. In the former poem, he admonishes the reader to renounce transitory pleasures and desires which were “to thy Spirit unknown, / When to thy Blessed Infancy / The World, thy Self, thy God was shown” (II. 6–8). They are responsible for all unhappiness and misery because they inhibit the influence of Felicity. Forsake them, he roundly encourages (“thy flesh abjure” I. 1), in favor of the fair and “Stable” bliss of Felicity. In the poem “Silence” he then acknowledges that the first wonderful impressions of Felicity, given to him effortlessly, in “silence, “as a child, “will whisper if I will but hear, / And penetrate the Heart, if not the Ear” (II. 87–88). The bliss of Felicity is always there, deep within the mind (“The Sight [of Felicity] / is Deep and Infinite” [“The Vision” ll. 1–2]). If we are receptive to it, and turn away from “Cares and Sins and Woes” (“The Vision” I. 8), it will “whisper” to us, making its existence known.

Maharishi (1967) describes transcendental consciousness as a state of pure silence which, when alternated with activity, becomes the basis of the development of cosmic consciousness:

The mind, traveling as it were on the ladder of activity from the relative state of waking consciousness to the silence of the transcendental field of absolute consciousness, and again from there to the activity of the waking state, establishes eternal harmony between the silence of the Absolute and the activity of the relative. This is cosmic consciousness... (p. 391)

... in the state of cosmic consciousness, the Self is experienced as separate from activity; ... the eternal silence of transcendental Self-consciousness becomes compatible with the incessant activity of the waking state of consciousness. (p. 313)

Traherne’s recognition that the mind contains within itself deep silence once more suggests that he was directly familiar with the state of transcendental consciousness.
Traherne voices in “The Instruction” the denial-of-earthly-pleasures theme of conventional religious poetry. It strikes a harsh note in the Dobell sequence, especially considering that his consistent position on “the gates of the senses” in the Centuries and in other Dobell poems is that they have brought to him the “unspeakable wonder” of “the most obvious and common things, . . . Air, Light, Heaven and Earth, Water, the Sun, Trees, Men and Women,” which are all “infinite treasures” (III. 53–54). He recommends in “The Instruction” a process of denial as a means to Felicity without at all acknowledging the difficulty of subduing desires. Maharishi (1972) explains, apropos of the idea of renunciation of desires, that desires in themselves are not a hindrance to evolution; rather it is the inability to fulfill desires that creates stress (p. 1-5). When the mind, through the Transcendental Meditation technique, effortlessly “turns . . . to Being,” a state of pure consciousness, it “is mainly identified with the Self” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 151), pure bliss consciousness—the state of complete fulfillment. In Maharishi’s explanation, Transcendental Meditation is “. . . a simple technique of transforming the whole machinery that gives rise to desire, of transforming the mind and heart so that the rising of desires and all their activities will serve as tidal waves of love and bliss . . .” (p. 240). The poem “Silence” suggests that Traherne has a solid sense of the invincible deep silence within the mind, such as described by Maharishi. More than any other poem in this set, it furthers his stated theme, to show his readers their “Great Felicity.”

In the end, though Traherne appears, uncharacteristically, to be endorsing in “The Instruction” the denial of the senses, it is significant that he does not dwell on this theme for long, and rather emphasizes in subsequent poems, like “Silence,” that Felicity is always whispering, as it were, deep within the mind, waiting to be heard, implying that it is always within easy reach. It is also notable that later in the series, as will be discussed, he proposes that the nature of the mind is to gravitate to more and more happiness and, therefore, that no effort is needed to gain happiness. These other poems, at least, seem to express an important insight of Maharishi’s teaching, that desires are fulfilled in transcendental consciousness without any effort. However, perhaps because he lacked the knowledge of an effective, natural technique such as Transcendental Meditation to systematically, yet effortlessly culture the experience of transcendental consciousness, Traherne resorts in “The Instruction” to repeating the denial-of-pleasure doctrine of his religious training.

As a set, the next poems—“My Spirit,” “The Apprehension,” and “Fullnesse”—have as their subject the remarkable results of cultivating the fertile, lively silence, extolled in the poem “Silence” as the source of all Felicity. The first of these poems, “My Spirit,” is of chief interest in the group. As Margoliouth (Traherne, 1958) affirms, it is Traherne’s “most comprehensive poem” (v. 2, p. 349). The poet begins with an extended description of his infinite soul:

My Naked Simple Life was I,
That Act so Strongly Shined
Upon the Earth, the Sea, the Sky,
That was the substance of My Mind.
The Sense it self was I.
I felt no Dross nor Matter in my Soul,
No Brims nor Borders, such as in a Bowl
We see, My Essence was Capacity,
That felt all Things,
The Thought that Springs
Therefrom’s it self. It hath no other Wings
To spread abroad, nor Eyes to see,
Nor Hands Distinct to feel,
Nor Knees to Kneel:
But being Simple like the Deity
In its own Center is a Sphere
Not shut up here, but every Where.
(ll. 1–17)

Traherne’s images correspond principally to Maharishi’s description of transcendental consciousness, a state in which the “I” or finite self becomes totally identified with its “essence,” pure consciousness. Traherne seems to refer to this essence with the phrase “Naked Simple Life” (l. 1). This essential Self is a lively source of thought (ll. 10–11) and feeling (l. 9). It totally lacks any “Brims or Borders.” These qualities suggest the experience of transcendental consciousness, which to quote Maharishi’s words again is the “field of the unlimited, the unbounded.” Traherne likens the mind in this state to a “Sphere / Not shut up here, but every Where” (ll. 16–17).

In the subsequent stanzas he expands upon the unbounded nature of his “Spirit.”

It Acts not from a Center to
Its Object as remote,
But present is, when it doth view,
Being with the Being it doth note,
Whatever it doth do,
It doth not by another Engine work,
But by it self; which in the Act doth lurk.
Its Essence is Transformed into a true
And perfect Act.
And so Exact
Hath God appeared in this Mysterious Fact.
That ’tis all Eye, all Act, all Sight,
And what it please can be,
Not only see,
Or do; for ’tis more Voluble than Light:
Which can put on ten thousand Forms,
Being clothed with what it self adorns.
(ll. 18–34)

The content of the previous stanza seems to conform to Maharishi’s description of the Self. It is self-sufficient, not relying upon “another Engine” or source of power to exist (ll. 20–24). It is also self-referral because in this state of experience all of its perceptions and activities are identified with its essence (ll. 25–32). Maharishi (1986) explains the self-referral dynamics of pure consciousness as the basis of creation. The field of pure consciousness, which is awake in itself, has only itself to be aware of. In the process of becoming aware of itself, its state of wholeness, called Samhita, appears to be “broken” into a three-fold structure: the knower (Rishi), the process of knowing, (Devata), and the known (Chhandas). However, Maharishi refers to this phenomenon as
the three-in-one structure of pure consciousness—it is both one (Samhita) and three (Rishi, Devata, and Chhandas) at the same time.

This is precisely the three-in-one structure of the self-referral state of consciousness. This structure is very simple to understand. The awareness is open to itself and therefore the awareness knows itself. Because the awareness knows itself it is the knower, it is the known, and it is the process of knowing... This is pure consciousness... (p. 29)

Maharishi further explains that the process through which the Samhita is differentiated gives rise to creation, a description reminiscent of Traherne’s line, “Which can put on ten thousand Forms”:

The self-referral state of pure consciousness... is an infinitely dynamic, inexhaustible source of energy and creativity. On that basis the whole creation goes on perpetually in its infinite variety, multiplying itself all the time. (p. 30)

Because all time and space evolve out of this transcendental field, it must be completely self-sufficient, a pure field of creative intelligence:

At the basis of all creation there is something which is wide awake in itself, something which must necessarily be completely self-sufficient because... from there it has to evolve into the whole creation.

That is why we take that level of creation to be unmanifest, but completely self-sufficient. (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1980, p. 10)

As Maharishi explains, the self-referral mechanics of creation can be experienced directly in higher states of consciousness.¹⁷

In stanza 5 Traherne alludes to a distinct state of Felicity which is accompanied by the recognition that his “Spirit Infinite” or unbounded Self is “An Image of the Deity!” (ll. 69–72):

O Joy! O Wonder, and Delight!
O Sacred Mystery!
My Soul a Spirit Infinite!
An Image of the Deity!
A pure Substantial Light!
That Being Greatest which doth Nothing Seem!
Why 'twas my All, I nothing did esteem
But that alone. A Strange Mysterious Sphere!
A Deep Abyss
That sees and is
The only Proper Place or Bower of Bliss;
To its Creator 'tis near
In Love and Excellence
In Life and Sense,
In Greatness Worth and Nature; And so Dear;
In it, without Hyperbole,
The Son and friend of God we see.
(ll. 69–85)

It is a state of unbounded “Love and Excellence.” It is the only “Proper” or authentic source of fullness and life in which the almighty intelligence of nature is concretely perceived and appreciated in all its inestimable value.

Traherne here merely introduces the possibility of this state of fully developed love, which he considers more completely in later poems. The description of unbounded love for the universe Traherne relates in this poem is characteristic of the sixth state of consciousness described in Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology in which “the individual, while permanently established in the unboundedness of transcendental consciousness, experiences a much deeper appreciation of the profound harmony and grandeur of creation” (Alexander, Boyer, & Alexander, 1987, p. 96). Traherne’s treatment of themes that seem to parallel Maharishi’s description of God consciousness will be analyzed more completely in the next section.

Traherne’s text further seems to reflect experiences of a state in which, as Maharishi (1972) explains, “The gulf between the knower and the object of his knowing has been bridged” (p. 23-9). As explained above in the introduction, Maharishi (1986) refers to this state as unity consciousness, for the mind is at one with “all activities, performances, interchanges, and exchanges” (p. 34). In stanza 3, Traherne rejoices that “Dame Nature’s” treasures were all within him, and were a source of “Immediate and Internal Pleasures” (ll. 35-40). He expands upon this theme in stanza 4:

This made me present evermore
With whatso ere [sic] I saw,
An Object, if it were before
My Eye, was by Dame Nature[']s Law,
Within my Soul. Her Store
Was all at once within me; all her Treasures
Were my Immediate and Internal Pleasures,
Substantial Joys, which did inform my Mind.
With all she wrought,
My Soul was fraught,
And every Object in my Soul a Thought
Begot, or was; I could not tell,
Whether the Things did there
Themselves appear,
Which in my Spirit truly seemed to dwell;
Or whether my conforming Mind
Were not alone even all that shined.
But yet of this I was most sure,
That at the utmost Length,
(so Worthy was it to endure)
My Soul could best Express its Strength.
It was Indivisible, and so Pure,
That all my Mind was wholly Every where [sic]
What ere it saw, 'twas ever wholly there;
The Sun ten thousand Legions off, was nigh:
The utmost Star,
Though seen from far,
Was present in the Apple of my Eye.
There was my Sight, My Life, my Sense,
Traherne’s perception of the power of his Spirit to “put on ten thousand Forms” (II. 52-54) sounds consistent with Maharishi’s descriptions of experience in unity consciousness. Traherne realizes that it is not only whole within itself, but capable of experiencing itself “wholly Every where” (II. 55-57). Even the distant sun or the farthest star is present imminently or inherently in the substance of his mind—not as a transient, fleeting phenomenon, but in all the reality of his “Spirit.”

Traherne returns to and expands upon the sphere or “orb” comparison, introduced at the beginning of “My Spirit,” in stanzas 6 and 7, the final ones in the poem:

A Strange Extended Orb of Joy,
Proceeding from within,
Which did on every side convey
It self and being nigh of Kin
To God did every Way
Dilate it self even in an Instant, and
Like an Indivisible Center Stand
At once Surrounding all Eternity.
Twas not a Sphere
Yet did appear
One infinite. ’Twas somewhat every where.
And thought it had a Power to see
Far more, yet still it shined
And was a Mind
Exerted[,] for it saw Infinity
Twas not a Sphere, but ’twas a
Power Invisible, and yet a Bower.
(II. 86-102)

His awareness seemed to extend in every direction, paradoxically, like a dilating sphere without a definite center. But he goes on to dismiss the sphere metaphor as inadequate by relating that it was “not a sphere, / Yet did appear / One infinite. ’Twas somewhat every where” (II. 94-96). His uncertainty over the exact nature of the experience heightens the drama of the situation. It was clearly something incredible, though it is hard to say what. He realizes, in the end, that it was the infinite power within his own mind which, though invisible, was yet like “a Bower,” a garden overflowing with life.

The depth of Traherne’s descriptions of experiences, which from the perspective of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology seem to reflect important aspects of higher states of consciousness, is impressive, as the poem “My Spirit” reveals. This poem seems to embody salient qualities of the state of unity consciousness in which the Self is experienced to be whole within itself, and spontaneously perceives all things to be nothing other than it Self.

In “The Apprehension,” the next poem, Traherne relates that though his attention had
strayed to “other Objects” than Felicity, the re apprehension of the true nature of the
mind, as portrayed in “My Spirit,” restored his “whole felicity” (l. 7) by returning him
to the fullness and joy of his childhood. In the poem “Fullnesse” he then recapitulates
that the attainment of a state of Felicity is the only goal “to which I may / Assent to
day” (ll. 3–4), summarizing pithily: “My Bliss / Consists in this, / My Duty too / In this
I view” (ll. 11–14). The infinite bliss of Felicity has reclaimed its supreme importance
in his life. If Traherne has indeed glimpsed higher states of consciousness, it is only
natural that he would view their development as all-important to his well-being.

Maharishi (Maharishi International University, 1974) correspondingly expresses the
enormous importance of developing higher states of consciousness:

Knowledge is for action, action for achievement, achievement for fulfillment. Thus, know-
ledge is directly concerned with fulfillment. For complete fulfillment, complete knowledge
is necessary. Complete knowledge should mean total knowledge of the object of inquiry
and total knowledge of the subject: total knowledge of both the known and the knower.
When the knower does not know himself, then the basis of knowledge is missing. In this
situation of baseless knowledge, fulfillment will always remain baseless. This is what
mankind had been left to face concerning life throughout the ages.

Now in this scientific age, it is high time for knowledge to be complete and for fulfill-
ment to be profound for every man, for every society, for the whole human race. (p. xiii)

He therefore encourages all educational systems to incorporate his Vedic Science and
Technology, which opens the mind to

the infinite, unbounded value of intelligence, broadens the awareness and makes it perma-
nently unbounded, so that no area of life remains foreign. This is the ground of all knowl-
dge—complete knowledge—and therefore is the basis of complete fulfillment. (p. xiii)

Insofar as Traherne sought full knowledge and personal excellence diligently, he stands
as a positive example for our own time.

Traherne’s Understanding of Felicity

Traherne has demonstrated in the first group of poems that Felicity, characterized by
pure intelligence and bliss, is the basis of personal fullness. As he writes in the poem
“Fullnesse,” “my Perfect Being” was “a Fountain or a Spring, / Refreshing me in every
thing” (ll. 9, 14–15). He now turns his attention more to reflecting upon the nature and
ramifications of this experience. He begins by considering why and how the mind is
able to experience and grow in Felicity.

The first of the next three sets of poems has as its central theme the naturalness and
spontaneousness of Nature’s “teachings” including, most especially, those dealing with
Felicity. As Traherne writes in “Ease”:

How easily doth Nature teach the Soul,
How irresistible is her Infusion! There’s
Nothing found that can her force control. . . .

(ll. 1–3)
Nature effortlessly teaches the soul that its own nature is bliss through an irresistible infusion. This gentle, easy force cannot be controlled or manipulated. In the poem "Nature" he explains:

I was by Nature prone and apt to love
All Light and Beauty, both in Heaven above,
And Earth beneath, prone even to Admire,
Adore and Praise as well as to Desire.
My inclinations raised me up on high,
And guided me to all Infinity.

(ll. 13-18)

His natural inclinations—his love of truth ("Light") and beauty—led him spontaneously to their infinite source, Felicity. This innate response, called in the Centuries the "Principle of Nature," is the starting point in the poems for Traherne’s investigation of the qualities of Felicity. It suggests that Felicity is a natural experience, that is, it is entirely in keeping with the nature of the mind. Similarly, Maharishi (1963) has explained the principle of the natural tendency of the mind to move in the direction of increasing charm as the basis of his Transcendental Meditation technique.

A light becomes faint and dim as we go away from the source, and the intensity increases as we proceed towards the source. Similarly, when the mind goes in the direction of the absolute bliss of transcendental Being [transcendental consciousness], it finds increasing charm at every step of its march. The mind is charmed and is led to experience transcendental Being. (pp. 49-50)

Traherne’s central premise in his methodical investigation of the effects of experiencing Felicity is also that it is only necessary to take advantage of the natural inclination of the mind to desire greater happiness and then the whole process will go automatically. Once these conditions have been met, as Traherne has also argued in the Centuries, the deep inner bliss of Felicity will unfold on its own. But he lacks a systematic technique that would allow anyone to efficiently use this natural tendency of the mind—a technique such as Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation program that provides systematic, effortless experience of transcendental consciousness.

Traherne now reflects, in the second set of poems, upon the effect that the experience of Felicity has not just on individual human life, but on the life of the whole universe. “The Designe,” one of the poems in this set, has as its theme the beauty of Nature’s infinitely coordinated “design” or plan. The dynamic process of “circulation,” as Traherne calls it, integrates all the diverse objects and activities of expressed nature. Traherne conceives of the universe as a magnificently ordered system whose manifold activities are supported and glorified by human beings who radiate Felicity. Our bodies were made, he writes in another poem, “The Estate,”

... to be like Suns, whose Rays,
Dispersed, Scatter many thousand Ways.
They Drink in Nectars, and Disburse again
In Purer Beams, those Streams,
Those Nectars which are caused by Joys.

(ll. 35-39)
Humans established in the experience of Felicity, who drink in the enjoyment of the world, “disburse” Felicity’s enhancing influence throughout nature. In the final set of poems in Part II (“The Anticipation” to “Love”), Traherne divulges the existence of an advanced state of Felicity, “Felicity Glorified.” It is a supreme state of love which develops naturally out of the overflowing happiness which characterizes the earlier phases of Felicity. He began to develop this theme of an even greater state of Felicity in the uncompleted fifth Century of Centuries of Meditations, in which he specifies God as “the Sovereign Object of all Felicity” (V. 1), the most sublime object to be perceived in the state of Felicity. In the bulk of these meditations he catalogs God’s attributes, namely his infinity (V. 2–5), his eternity (V. 7–8) and his omnipresence (V. 9). In the last, Meditation 10, Traherne states that God’s “Essence” is the source of “Delights of inestimable value” and is “wholly Busied in all Parts and places in his Dominion, perfecting and completing our Bliss and Happiness.” The bliss of inner Felicity, in other words, is transformed into an even greater experience through devotion to God. Traherne picks up this theme, now, in the poems. In “The Recovery,” for example, he makes the interesting assertion that:

Tis not alone a Lively Sense
A clear and Quick Intelligence
A free, Profound, and full Esteem:
Though these Elixirs all and Ends to[o] seem...

(II. 51–54)

Instead, it is “A Heart returned for all these Joys, / These are the Things admired, / These are the Nectar and the Quintessence / The Cream and Flower that most affect his Sense” (II. 56–57, 59–60), that is, which most please God. Traherne proclaims that:

One Voluntary Act of Love
Far more Delightful to his Soul doth Prove
And is above all these as far as Love.

(II. 68–70)

Judging from the above lines, the lively joy of Felicity appears to be but a stepping stone to the more fully expanded bliss of divine love.

The lines again suggest experience of the sixth state of consciousness, “refined cosmic consciousness” or God consciousness (glimpses of which can be experienced even before unbounded awareness is in fact permanently established in the mind in cosmic consciousness), in which “the silent ocean of bliss, the silent ocean of love, begins to rise in waves of devotion” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1967, p. 307). Maharishi explains that the physiological integration of this sixth state of consciousness is cultivated through highly refined mental activity:

In order to define activity of this quality, we must analyze the whole range of activity. The activity of the organs of action is the most gross, the activity of the senses of perception is

---

Footnote: Traherne’s “circulation” theme very loosely suggests a concept of Vedic Science termed by Maharishi (1986) “infinite correlation,” which is “a quality of the transcendental level of nature’s functioning from where orderliness governs the universe” (p. 75).
more refined, the mental activity of thought is finer still, and the activity of feeling and emotion is the finest of all. One could further classify different levels of quality in emotional activity, such as anger, fear, despair, happiness, reverence, service and love.

The activity of devotion comprises the feelings of service, reverence and love, which are the most refined qualities of feeling. (p. 315)

The devoted service to which Maharishi refers as the foundation of the sixth state of consciousness is evident in poems in this set on the theme of Felicity Glorified. The poem “Love” in particular crystallizes Traherne’s thinking on the growth of unbounded love. It commences with a long, brilliant catalog of love’s qualities.

\[
\begin{aligned}
&O \text{ Nectar! } O \text{ Delicious Stream!} \\
&O \text{ ravishing and only Pleasure! Where} \\
&\text{Shall such another Theme} \\
&\text{Inspire my Tongue with Joys, or please mine Ear!} \\
&Abridgement of Delights! \\
&\text{And Queen of Sights!} \\
&O \text{ Mine of Rarities! } O \text{ Kingdom Wide!} \\
&O \text{ more! } O \text{ Cause of all! } O \text{ Glorious Bride!} \\
&O \text{ God! } O \text{ Bride of God! } O \text{ King!} \\
&O \text{ Soul and Crown of every thing!} \\
\end{aligned}
\]

(II. 1-10)

Love is the only true pleasure (l. 2): “Where / Shall such another Theme / Inspire my Tongue with Joys, or please mine Ear!” (ll. 2-4). Traherne calls it an “Abridgement [condensation] of Delights,” and a “Mine of Rarities!” (ll. 5, 7). It is the cause of all creation, and the “Bride of God” (ll. 8-9). He then congratulates himself on having found the “Endless Monarch” he has always desired to see, who is a spring of all the “Glories, Honors, friendships, Pleasures, Joys, Praises, Beauties, and Celestial treasures” (ll. 12-18):

\[
\begin{aligned}
&\text{Did not I covet to behold} \\
&\text{Some Endless Monarch, that did always live} \\
&\text{In Palaces of Gold} \\
&\text{Willing all Kingdoms Realms and Crowns to give} \\
&\text{Unto my Soul! Whose Love} \\
&\text{A Spring might prove} \\
&\text{Of Endless Glories, Honors, friendships, Pleasures} \\
&\text{Joys, Praises, Beauties and Celestial Treasures!} \\
&\text{Lo, now I see there’s such a King,} \\
&\text{The fountain Head of every Thing!} \\
\end{aligned}
\]

(ll. 11-20)

But the reality of the experience exceeds his highest expectations:

\[
\begin{aligned}
&\text{Did my Ambition ever Dream} \\
&\text{Of such a Lord, of such a Love! Did I} \\
&\text{Expect so Sweet a Stream} \\
&\text{As this at any time! Could any Eye} \\
&\text{Believe it? Why all Power} \\
&\text{Is used here} \\
&\text{Joys down from Heaven on my Head to shower }... \\
\end{aligned}
\]

(ll. 21-27)
The sweet stream of concentrated pleasure and love Traherne celebrates, and his incredulous happiness at the true “Depths of Blessedness” (l. 37), reflect refined perceptions. He believes, despite himself, that all of the power of Nature “is used here” to shower down infinite joys upon him. He concludes by affirming that

I am his Image, and his Friend.
His Son, Bride, Glory, Temple, End.
(ll. 39–40)

Maharishi’s description of the development of the sixth state of consciousness allows us to interpret Traherne’s poems not simply as metaphor, but as descriptions of sublime experience.

Traherne is not a “natural philosopher” or scientist; he is a poet exploring psycho-emotional realities. Still, two ideas that have the power of intuitive discoveries have emerged from his analysis of Felicity in the above poems: (1) that the mind’s natural tendency is to move in the direction of finer values of happiness until it enjoys pure happiness, and (2) that infinite happiness, seemingly the pinnacle of human experience, is the basis of perceptual refinements that dramatically enhance human experience even further. Both of these insights, as has been illustrated, have parallels with Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology.

Felicity: Experience and Understanding

The last eight Dobell poems (“Thoughts. I” to “Goodnesse,” poems 30–37) suggest a synthesis of the experience of Felicity and its intellectual understanding. Traherne has considered Felicity from the experiential (poems 1–15) and from a more analytical (poems 16–29) perspective, corresponding to the two aspects of the scientific method. He now rounds out his sequence by displaying in “Thoughts I–IV” an intimate union of these two complementary angles of inquiry in the unhampered power and grace of an intellect which itself is lively with the experience of infinite happiness. “Thoughts, I,” the leading poem in the set, overflows with Traherne’s reflections on the unbounded power of thought in the state of Felicity, in which thoughts become the effervescent “Offsprings and Effects of bliss”:

Ye brisk Divine and Living things,
Ye great Exemplars, and ye Heavenly Springs,
Which I within me see;
Ye Machines Great,
Which in my Spirit God did Seat,
Ye Engines of Felicity;
Ye Wondrous Fabrics of his Hands,
Who all possesseth that he understands;
That ye are pent within my Breast,
Yet rove at large from East to West,
And are Invisible, yet Infinite;
Is my Transcendent, and my Best Delight.
(ll. 1–12)
Ye Thoughts and Apprehensions are  
The Heavenly Streams which fill the Soul with rare  
Transcendent Perfect Pleasures.  
At any time,  
As if ye still were in your Prime,  
Ye Open all his Heavenly Treasures.  
His joys accessible are found  
To you, and those Things enter which Surround  
The Soul, Ye Living Things within!  
Where had all Joy and Glory been  
Had ye not made the Soul those Things to Know,  
Which Seated in it make the fairest Show?  
(II. 25-36)

Thoughts, which he metaphorically calls “Machines Great” and the dynamic “Engines of Felicity,” bubble up blissfully in this transformed state of mind. He perceives them to be the “Fabrics” or expressions of intelligence, a stream of “transcendent” delights. His experience of these “Heavenly Treasures” or pleasures (II. 21, 4-7), a development without which “all the Joy and Glory” would have been incomplete, suggests the great happiness, based on the direct experience of the state of transcendental consciousness, that arises in higher states of consciousness. Thoughts, he now believes, are the subtle instruments which in fact link him to external nature. Thoughts have illuminated all “those Things . . . which Surround / The Soul”—all of the treasures of the world, which now vibrate joyously like “Living Things within!” (II. 31-33).

Traherne continues:

O ye Conceptions of Delight!  
Ye that inform my Soul with Life and Sight!  
Ye Representatives, and Springs  
Of inward Pleasure!  
Ye Joys! Ye Ends of Outward Treasure!  
Ye Inward, and ye Living Things!  
The Thought, or Joy Conceived is  
The inward Fabric of my Standing Bliss.  
It is the Substance of my Mind  
Transformed, and with its Objects lined.  
The Quintessence, Elixir, Spirit, Cream.  
’Tis Strange that Things unseen should be Supreme.  
The Eye’s confined, the Body pent  
In narrow Room: Limbs are of small Extent.  
But Thoughts are always free.  
And as they’re best,  
So can they even in the Breast,  
Rove o’er the World with Liberty:  
Can Enter Ages, Present be  
In any Kingdom, into Bosoms see.  
Thoughts, Thoughts can come to Things, and view,  
What Bodies can’t it approach unto.  
They know no Bar, Denial, Limit, Wall:  
But have a Liberty to look on all.
Like Bees they fly from Flower to Flower,
Appear in Every Closet, Temple, Bower;
And suck the Sweet from thence,
No Eye can see:
As Tasters to the Deity.
Incredible's their Excellence.
For ever-more they will be seen
Nor ever moulder into less Esteem.
They ever show an Equal face,
And are Immortal in their place.
Ten thousand Ages hence they are as Strong,
Ten thousand Ages hence they are as Young.

(II. 49-84)

Thoughts in this state of purity have become “The inward Fabric of my Standing [continuing] Bliss” and the “Substance of my mind / Transformed, and with its Objects lined” (ll. 56-58). They are his “Transcendent and Best Delight” for through them he can possess within his Self all objects of perception and thereby delight in the “fairest Show.” They enable him to gloriously transcend all external boundaries, any “Bar, Limit, Wall” (l. 71), and “Rove o'er the World with Liberty” (l. 66) and visit all places and times. Thoughts are, finally, “Immortal in their place” (l. 82) for they will remain true and real, “Strong” and “Young” throughout time.

Maharishi (1967) explains that “The level at which a desire is appreciated differs according to the level of the conscious mind of the individual. Men of purer mind appreciate thought and desire at a much subtler level during the process of thinking” (p. 282). Traherne seems to be just such an individual. Though his “Thoughts” poems can refer to just any thoughts, his characterization of cognition seems to reflect the enhanced potency and charm of a “purer” mind, a mind familiar with transcendental consciousness. The very “Substance” of his mind, he states, has been “transformed” into pure pleasure and delight. It is in this context that Traherne’s “thoughts” take on full meaning: an intimacy with “Being” or pure consciousness.

In “Desire,” one of the last Dobell poems, Traherne reminds the reader that the path from the state of Misery—in which his “Soul was full of Groans” (l. 15) and his heart was “a deep profound Abyss, / And every Joy and Pleasure a Wound” (ll. 22-23)—to full Glory has been the natural tendency to desire to enjoy or “Prize, and Taste, and See” more and more happiness.

This Soaring Sacred Thirst,
Ambassador of Bliss, approached first,
Making a Place in me,
That made me apt to Prize, and Taste, and See,
For not the objects, but the Sense
Of Things, doth Bliss to Souls dispense,
And make it Lord like Thee.

(ll. 53-59)

Traherne has joyously reached the goal of this “Soaring Sacred Thirst” which was the herald or “Ambassador” of infinite happiness.
Conclusion

In “Goodnesse,” which brings his sequence of poems to a close, Traherne eulogizes, through a series of figurative comparisons, the sweet fullness of the lives of those who live Felicity. They overflow with bliss: “rich Affections do like precious Seas / Of Nectar and Ambrosia please” (ll. 61–62). Their senses, represented by their lips, which are compared sensuously to “Soft and Swelling Grapes” (l. 64), drink in refined delights. Their eyes shine like stars, though “more Divine” (ll. 63–64). Their hearts delight in the blessings that God showers down upon their friends. Their voices spontaneously burst forth in “A Choir of Blessed and Harmonious Songs” (ll. 64–65). Most of all, “Their Bosoms, fraught with Love / Are Heavens all Heavens above” (ll. 67–68).

Maharishi (1986) explains that “The great Vedic wisdom, which declares life to be bliss, is now going to be a common experience in the world” (p. 37), and that Heaven on Earth, so delightfully evoked by Traherne, will become a reality. In presenting a detailed and lively picture of a state of infinite happiness, Traherne stirs readers to embrace this beautiful possibility wholeheartedly. Traherne’s position is always that, no matter how incredible a thing may sound, “Experience will make it Plain” (IV. 46.), a fitting modus operandi for a poet of the scientific age. Though the exact parallels between Felicity and Maharishi’s descriptions of higher states must necessarily remain tentative, Felicity is obviously a sublime experience, and textual evidence suggests that his experience of Felicity was something more than a fleeting, isolated phenomenon. As he writes in “Innocence,” “A World of true Delight / ... to this day [I] do see” (l. 47–8). He also seems to indicate a recurrent experience of Felicity in Select Meditations where he writes, “When I retire first I seem to come in my Self to a center, but in this center I find Eternity, and all its Riches” (l. 81). It is tempting to infer from this statement that Traherne has had the experience of retiring into the state of transcendental consciousness on repeated occasions. In any case, Felicity’s power to inspire Traherne never flags. It is never out of the picture, but is an intimate part of his sense of self. As he writes in Century II, “Infinity we know and feel by our souls: and feel it so Naturally, as if it were the very Essence and Being of the Soul” (II. 81).

But though he joyously induces the reader to “let all your Affections extend to the Endless Wideness” (ll. 92), he lacked knowledge of an easy and effective technique for developing unbounded awareness. Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program now makes it possible for anyone to gain the benefit of this enriching state of being. It also makes Traherne’s work finally accessible in all its intellectual wholeness and depth, freeing him of the charge, once and for all, of “mysticism” or facile optimism. Traherne’s boundless optimism is based on objective reality, and that he recognized the importance of a scientific approach, as rudimentary as his application of Bacon’s inductive methodology may be, is highly significant. It ranks him at least in spirit among the scientists of our own day exploring the frontiers of consciousness. As Maharishi (1986) explains:

Today, those who exclude consciousness are not with the times, they are far behind. Every generation has a few scientists who are really dedicated to research, and the fruit of their research is enjoyed by all. It is very fortunate for the world that much has been uncovered
about the reality of that self-referral state of intelligence at the basis of all the designs of life in creation. All who are practicing the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program are the real scientists of this generation, on the forefront of scientific investigation. (p. 28)

Traherne appears to have been just such a “scientist” for his own generation. Though men and women of his own time did not have the opportunity to partake of the fruits of Traherne’s “research” into consciousness, after centuries of obscurity, these fruits are now finally available “to be enjoyed by all.”

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References


Research Reviews

Research Reviews presents summaries of recently published studies on Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program and of recently completed Ph.D. theses that investigate Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology. The purpose of this section is to allow our readers to remain current on the principal results of recent research in this area as well as to provide bibliographic information for those who wish to access the original papers. We invite readers to help us locate current research. Please send any correspondence to Dr. Samuel Boothby, Modern Science and Vedic Science, Maharishi International University, 1000 North Fourth Street, DB 1157, Fairfield, IA 52557-1157.

Published Research


The purpose of this study was to replicate the results of previous research studies by the same authors and by others, and to investigate further the EEG signature immediately before lift-off in Yogic Flying, which is hypothesized to be characterized by the experience of pure consciousness. To do so, the authors compared EEG power and coherence patterns from 10 subjects practicing the TM-Sidhi technique of Yogic Flying with patterns from 10 control subjects who were completely unfamiliar with Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program. These controls performed voluntary jumping from a seated position in order to approximate hopping during Yogic Flying. All subjects were right-handed males matched for age (as handedness, gender, and age all are known to affect EEG patterns).

EEG for each subject was recorded on a Grass 78D polygraph using the Electro-cap system from electrodes attached to six frontal-central locations that in previous research had been shown to be sensitive to changes during Transcendental Meditation practice. Other electrodes were also applied in order to help identify, and thus control for, eye and movement artifacts.

For the YF subjects, EEG was recorded during 10 minutes of Transcendental Meditation followed by 10 minutes of Yogic Flying, and for the controls, during 10 minutes of eyes-closed rest followed by 10 minutes of jumping from a seated position with eyes closed.

After removal of eye and muscle/movement artifacts (which for all subjects clearly denoted the transition between sitting quietly and lift-off during both YF and jumping), the data were spectral analyzed using fast Fourier transformations in 10 epochs of 1.06 seconds each, in .94-Hz wide bands.

In order to test the hypothesis that the phenomenon of YF follows the experience of pure consciousness, coherence and power were calculated for three 2.12-second inter-
The most significant group differences were seen in the 2.12-second period just before lift-off. In this period, the YF group had high-frequency beta bursts (30 Hz) lasting about .2 seconds that were not seen between periods of controls' jumping. These group differences were significant using a one-way repeated measures MANOVA ($F(1,14) = 5.22, p = .038$). The MANOVA also showed a significant main effect for period ($F(2,13) = 4.97, p = .025$), with more bursts seen during the first 2.12-second period (immediately before lift-off) than during the second or third ($p = .049$ and .045, respectively). The significant main effect for period seemed primarily due to the YF group's first-period 30–32 Hz absolute power, which was significantly higher than the controls' ($p = .048$).

Significant increases in broad-band (4.7–17.9 Hz) coherence were also seen prior to lift-off in the YF group. These coherence increases were significantly higher than those occurring just before the controls jumped ($p = .042$). Moreover, within the YF group, broad-band coherence was significantly higher during the 2 seconds immediately before each lift-off than in the two previous periods (4 and 6 seconds) before each lift-off ($p$'s = .030 and .046) and significantly higher than all other times during the five-minute YF period ($p = .011$). There were no significant period differences for the control group.

The observed shift in coherence just before lift-off in the experimental (YF) group, as indicated by significantly higher broad-band global coherence and high-frequency bursts just before lift-off in the YF group, but not for the controls, supports earlier findings by Orme-Johnson and others as well as the hypothesis that lift-off during Yogic Flying is preceded by the experience of pure consciousness.

The article concludes with an overview of prior research studies on experiences of pure consciousness during the practice of Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program, with special emphasis on Yogic Flying. The authors also discuss the findings of studies (replicated over 30 times) indicating the significant benefits that the collective practice of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program—particularly Yogic Flying—can have on society as a whole via the phenomenon of action-at-a-distance or field effects (effects between individuals or groups who do not directly interact). The results of several of these empirical studies have been reviewed in previous issues of this journal, including another article by Travis and Orme-Johnson on field effects during Yogic Flying, which was reviewed in the last issue of *Modern Science and Vedic Science*.

**Ph.D. Theses**

In his doctoral dissertation, Lee Fergusson—the first graduate of Maharishi International University’s (MIU) Ph.D. program in the Science of Creative Intelligence—examines the relationship of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology and post-secondary art education. His study analyzes the foundational themes and principles of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology as they relate to art practice and art education and explores how these themes and principles impact a sample post-secondary art curriculum.

Fergusson begins with a brief discussion of key influences and directions in contemporary post-secondary art education, noting that a new paradigm of knowledge called “revisionary postmodernism” has recently emerged from the postmodern scientific paradigm. As it applies to science, art, and education, revisionary postmodernism states that the knower and the known are not separate but interdependent, and thus the purpose of education is more to culture a sense of the totality of knowledge, rather than simply to gain knowledge and develop skill. Fergusson next discusses the difficulties of achieving the goals of revisionary postmodern art education and then elaborates the significance of Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology in resolving these difficulties.

Having identified 88 principles of art from a series of lectures and written statements by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Fergusson shows how these principles form a coherent and stable core of complete knowledge in post-secondary art education. For example, Maharishi explains that the skill of an artist lies in completely knowing what consciousness is, what it is made of, and what its mechanics of manifestation are. Maharishi notes that what has been missing in art education is the basic requirement of developing the students’ consciousness in such a way that they live the fullness of life. Thus a model Vedic Science based curriculum focuses on systematically developing the consciousness of the students.

In order to evaluate the impact of applying these fundamental principles to post-secondary art education, Fergusson designed a sample art curriculum, which he subsequently implemented and evaluated during a four-month undergraduate Foundations of Art Program at MIU. Five faculty and 20 undergraduate students participated in this research project.

The Foundations of Art program, taught in the fall of 1990, differed from previous programs in art at MIU in that every aspect of the curriculum—sequence of courses, content, instructional foci, and even evaluation—was specifically deduced from and connected to Maharishi’s principles of art. In addition to the standard knowledge and skills acquisition emphases of prevailing post-secondary art curricula, this program suggested an entirely unique way of fulfilling the goals of revisionary postmodern art education. Using a multiple-methods case-study approach employing eight quantitative measures and three qualitative components, Fergusson found that students increased significantly in field-independence ($p \leq .0005$), spatial ability ($p \leq .006$), art values (attitudes, behavior, and ability) ($p \leq .006$), quality of consciousness ($p \leq .006$), and attitude toward exploring the relationship between Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology and art ($p \leq .006$). In addition to substantial qualitative evidence, these results suggest that Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology significantly impacts the lives of both students and faculty—particularly in the areas of development of con-
For his doctoral dissertation, Henry Ahlstrom used two methodologies to explore the effects on deeper structures of personality that result from practice of Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation (TM) program over time. One angle investigated the effect of Transcendental Meditation practice on perceptual processes as indicative of personality, and the other looked at Transcendental Meditation's effect on an orientation toward positive values and psychological health. Both approaches to personality fundamentally study the individual's appreciation of reality—particularly, how reality is viewed, as a reflection of personality.

The dissertation study extends previous research on the effect of Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation technique on adaptation mechanisms, orientation toward positive values, and psychological health. In an earlier pilot study, for example, Ahlstrom had found that long-term meditators scored as having much higher-than-average defense mechanisms, according to traditional interpretations of such measures. Such findings appeared to be in marked contrast to a large body of research showing significantly decreased anxiety in meditators, along with increased orientation toward positive values. In order to investigate the underlying reasons for these seemingly disparate results, and to test his hypothesis that individuals become more positive in their outlook after practicing the Transcendental Meditation program over time, Ahlstrom performed three separate experiments with a group of 89 company employees, 22 of whom self-selected to learn Transcendental Meditation.

The first study consisted of 22 subjects in the experimental (TM) group and 22 controls matched at pre-test for gender, age, and pattern of response on a preliminary test that was similar to the one eventually administered. Each group contained 8 males and 14 females, mean age 42.8 and 42.0 years for the experimental and control groups, respectively. All subjects were post-tested (after nine months) for specific adaptation mechanisms using a standard test called Defensive Mechanisms Test—modified (DMTM). In this test, subjects are shown two picture series, each containing an image with a relatively benign figure in the center (called the Hero and always of the same gender as the test subject) and a much smaller figure in the upper left- or right-hand corner that appears to threaten the Hero. The image is flashed a total of 20 times, at first for only an instant and then for increasingly longer periods (the last being for 1.15 seconds), and each time the subject is asked what he or she saw.

The specific adaptation mechanism considered in Experiment 1 is called “Reversal II” and is scored when the test subject describes the Secondary (threatening) figure in either consciousness, enthusiasm for art, and art abilities.

Based on these outcomes, Fergusson proposes that "Maharishi’s Vedic Science and Technology suggests immediate and practical ways to resolve some of the present difficulties associated with postmodern theories of art education, particularly those that call upon educators to develop a complete individual capable of upholding plurality yet sensitive to the needs of culturing harmony, peace, and progress in the family of nations."

Ahlström found that a significantly larger number of subjects in the TM group (12 out of 22) were scored with Reversal II at post-test, as compared to 5 out of 22 for the control group ($p = .03$, one-tail test).

Of the other DMTm responses, only one clearly differed between the two groups. This one—called Transformation—is usually seen as a measure of anxiety. Again, a significantly larger number of individuals in the TM group versus the control group were scored with Transformations in post-test ($p = .03$, two-tailed test).

In order to probe the psychological mechanisms underlying the scorings of Reversal II and Transformation in the TM group, Ahlström analyzed a second test given to the same 22 matched pairs, which looked at changes in the subjects' orientation toward positive values. This experiment involved, for both pre- and post-test, a shortened version of Hermans' Self-Investigation Method (SIMm), in which the subjects were individually interviewed about significant, important, and/or meaningful aspects—past, present, and future—in their lives.

All valuations from SIMm were subsequently rated blind by two independent judges in terms of three separate dimensions of psychological health characteristics—Unifying/Separation; Autonomy/Dependency; and Creativity/Stagnation. These three dimensions were combined into a composite measure, called psychological health, by a principle components analysis. The changes from pre-test to post-test in the experimental group were then compared with corresponding changes for the control group.

The results showed an overall increase in orientation toward positive values for the experimental group after nine months' practice of Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation technique. The groups differed significantly in the hypothesized direction on Unifying ($F(1,41) = 5.26; p = .027$), Creativity ($F(1,41) = 7.79; p = .008$), and on the psychological health factor ($F(1,41) = 6.22; p = .017$), with a trend toward an increase in Autonomy ($F(1,41) = 3.55; p = .067$).

To replicate his findings, Ahlström carried out a third experiment in a larger sample of 89 subjects, again using the SIMm from Experiment 2, but this time conceptualized as a measure of psychological health rather than simply orientation toward positive values. This study was a quasi-experimental pre- and post-test design, which tested all 89 of the company employees on SIMm in order to evaluate the effect of the Transcendental Meditation technique on psychological health. There were 33 subjects in the experimental (TM) group and 56 unmatched controls. All subjects were post-tested after nine months, and, as in Experiment 2, all valuations from SIMm were subsequently rated by two independent judges. As compared to controls, the experimental group showed significant increases in the psychological health factor after nine months of Transcendental Meditation practice ($p < .05$) as well as in measures of the specific psychological health characteristics of Unifying, Creativity, and Autonomy.

To integrate the findings in Experiment 1 of increased scoring of defense mechanisms along with the findings in Experiments 2 and 3 of a shift in orientation toward positive values and growth in psychological health with Transcendental Meditation practice, Ahlström suggested that in a TM population, the traditional interpretation of the DMTm scorings may not apply. Rather, in TM subjects a shift in attention toward
relatively more positive aspects of the picture, which is typically scored as a reflection of defenses, could reflect an increased orientation toward positive values and an increased capacity for experience based on a strong sense of inner stability which develops through Transcendental Meditation practice. Therefore, the TM subjects would interpret experience from an underlying sense of well-being and integrity of functioning rather than from an avoidance of anxiety.

Ahlström concluded that overall, the results of all three studies suggest that the practice of Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation technique generally increases psychological health as it enhances individuals' awareness of stressful stimuli and spontaneously shifts the individual's attention toward positive values, suggesting an increased adaptive capacity in challenging situations.