

# Spiritual Intelligence

with Harris Wiseman and Fraser Watts, "Spiritual Intelligence: Participating with Heart, Mind and Body"; Harris Wiseman, "Knowing Slowly: Unfolding the Depths of Meaning"; Harris Wiseman, "The Japanese Arts and Meditation-in-Action"; Harris Wiseman, "Meaning and Embodiment in Ritual Practice"; and Harris Wiseman, "Theoria to Theory (and Back Again): Integrating Masterman's Writings on Language and Religion."

## KNOWING SLOWLY: UNFOLDING THE DEPTHS OF MEANING

by Harris Wiseman

*Abstract.* The article explores an aspect of spiritual intelligence characterized as a lifelong search for meaning. Slow knowing involves wrestling with perplexity. Periods of such tarrying gradually facilitate an unfolding of meaning. More than just the content of one's knowledge, it is the relationship, the *how* or *manner* of one's relationship with meaning that grounds the spiritual generativity of the seeking. Slow knowing is presented as an existential orientation, a lifelong process akin to ongoing conversion. Part 1 distinguishes such *slow knowing* from other senses of *slow* in current discourse (Kahneman's fast/slow thinking framework, and meditative concepts of *slow mind*). Part 2 explores slow knowing through the lenses of *lectio divina* and the use of metaphor in religious language. Slow knowing is characterized as having both individual and social dimensions. The article concludes with the concern that the conditions needed for slow knowing—and thus for spiritual intelligence—are undermined by the hasty pace of contemporary life.

*Keywords:* *aporia*; defamiliarization; *lectio divina*; metaphor; Systems I and II

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### PART 1: KNOWING SLOWLY

#### Slow Knowing

*Slow: Not as Mindfulness or "Thinking: Fast and Slow".* This article asserts that a certain kind of slow knowing has an important role to play in spiritual intelligence. This slow knowing can be clarified by contrasting

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it with two other senses of slow knowing popular in contemporary discourse:

- (a) The mindfulness, meditative sense of *slowness*: this is the notion that one should slow down one's mental operations by returning to a calm state of centered awareness. This approach, though itself very important for spiritual intelligence (this will be the subject of the following article on the Japanese arts as meditation-in-action) is not the subject of present concern. Slow knowing in the mindful context usually de-emphasizes the verbal and analytic modes of thinking, shifts attention to the present moment, often to the body, and generally settles the usual everyday scattered state of mind. Such a slow mind generates a softer, more open, relaxed state of awareness as the person's whole being settles down. However, slowness, in this article, refers to the protracted quality of the seeking rather than to the settled, calmness of body and mind. Such slow knowing is slow because arriving at some deeper comprehension, and the investment of something with personal significance, is a slow process. It takes a lot of time. This sort of slow knowing is much more of an existential orientation than a particular state of mind, state of body, or mode of awareness.
- (b) Kahneman's fast/slow model of cognition (Kahneman 2003): In this particular model of cognition, all human mental operations are divided into two broad categories. First, there are the *fast*, reflex-like mental operations which are usually characterized as automatic and associative (see table below). Second, there are the *slow* mental operations, generally characterized as effortful, deliberate, rational, sequential, and analytic (Gawronski and Yaacov 2014, 8). Effortful deliberation is presented as slow in the relative sense, that is, as relative to the reflex and automatic operations of the brain. This article argues that there is a kind of slowness of thinking which can, *in no adequate way*, be captured in this System I and II way of dichotomizing human cognition.

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<b>SYSTEM 1</b>	<b>SYSTEM 2<sup>1</sup></b>
Associative	Rule-based
Automatic	Nonautomatic
Slow learning	Fast learning
Experiential	Rational
Affective	Cognitive
Parallel	Sequential
Holistic	Analytic

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*Taking Time.* The first quality of slow knowing that needs to be highlighted is its temporally protracted nature. The search for meaning, the attempt to uncover, or to unfold meaning, is an activity that takes time. In searching for deeper and deeper layers of meaning (be that in words, concepts, images, or even seeking meaning in life generally), there is no predictable duration of time needed to elicit some deeper sense of meaning in what one is exploring. There is no clear endpoint to one's searching, and the possibilities for finding more and more layers of significance in things (particularly those of spiritual import) are open-ended. Thus, depending on what one is looking at (a temporary interest, or the scripture whose sense one wishes to deepen across the whole of one's life), the slowness here refers to a protraction of time meaning days, weeks, years, or even the entire lifespan.

None of these temporal settings fit with Kahneman's cognitive account. Kahneman's fast/slow account of human cognition has but two temporal settings: (a) the fast processes, which, being automatic, occur at reflex speed; (b) absolutely everything else. Compared with slow knowing in the protracted sense applied in this article, both of Kahneman's cognitive speeds are fast.

One of the problems with Kahneman's fast/slow dichotomy is that it conceals what might be described, arguably, as the deepest part of the human mind. The fast/slow dichotomy neglects a third dimension, or pace, of knowing, something picked up by Claxton (1999) in his *Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind*. Rather than thinking of the brain as being a two-speed set of systems, Claxton presents a tripartite account: there is Kahneman's fast and automatic mode (what Claxton describes as our "wits" [Claxton 1999, 21]). There is also Kahneman's slow thinking (called "d-mode," for deliberation [Claxton 1999, 7]). This is the activity involved in ratiocination and problem solving. It is logical, rational, and linear. However, Claxton also presents an even slower mental operation than this: the "tortoise mind" of very slow insight (Claxton 1999), the (sometimes agonizingly) slow creative mind (Claxton asserts: "The slow ways of knowing will not deliver their delicate produce when the mind is in a hurry" (Claxton 1999, 214). This is the level of the mind which bubbles away beneath conscious awareness, working at the pace that it works. It cannot be rushed or cajoled into doing its work any faster. Such mental work just takes the time that it takes to get its work done. With the creative tortoise mind, Claxton describes a level of mind that does not neatly correspond to the fast/slow dichotomy as given in the popular literature.

As a mental set of operations relevant to spiritual intelligence, one sees that a certain set of virtues are helpful for working to explore and unfold spiritual meaning. Knowing slowly implies a kind of patience, a willingness to engage with something, to give things more than a merely cursory

glance or scan, and a willingness to engage with things in a way that gives them the time that is needed for deeper layers of meaning to unfold.

Such operations not only require patience, they are very unpredictable with respect to what they produce (if anything). Not only does one not know how long it will take to go deeper into something, one has no idea what will be gleaned from such seeking (indeed, if one already knew what to expect, there would be no point in seeking—it is the surprise that indicates that some genuinely creative work has been done). While gaining insights may be part of this process, really, it is the ongoing deepening of the understanding that is in view—it is this ongoing deepening that is at the core of spiritual intelligence more than any series of insights to be accumulated or stages to be worked through. As such, this temporal dimension, so far from representing a momentary cognitive mode or state of mind, points to the unfolding of deep layers of meaning, not in moments, nor days, nor weeks, but months, years, and potentially the entire lifetime. Finally, insofar as this slower mode of thinking is central to deepening one's understanding, the fact that Kahneman's fast/slow model cannot even adequately articulate this kind of slow knowing (which is central to deepening one's understanding) shows the poverty of the Systems I and II model in thinking through some essential aspects of spiritual intelligence.

*The Searching Mind.* While Claxton's tripartite account is certainly richer than Kahneman's Systems I and II approach for talking about spiritual intelligence, Claxton's account still leaves a great deal lacking. Claxton is right that increased creativity is less about discovering some new fad or technique, and more about patience, about putting the hours in. However, Claxton mischaracterizes the nature of d-mode (as Kahneman has) and leaves out much that is important from his tortoise mind too. According to Claxton, insight comes to this slower, tortoise mind, when one stops questing, stops analyzing, stops problem solving, and falls back into what he describes as a relaxed, open, and star-gazing sort of attention (Claxton 1999, 49). While this can certainly be a valuable state of mind, it is still not adequate to capture the sort of slow searching that this article is concerned with.

Claxton's account does two injustices to human thinking. First: like Kahneman's account, it mischaracterizes deliberative thinking by presenting it as a problem-solving, logical, linear way of thinking that concerns itself with clearly defined problems. Second: it excludes *engaged* searching for meaning. Claxton talks about insight as resulting from an unengaged, not-questing, relaxed, and aimlessly meandering kind of attention. This is a sort of attention Claxton describes as working best when gazing out of windows and staring at wallpaper. Again, that can be a very valuable and powerful state of mind. There is no intention to impugn that here. The aim here is to suggest that this kind of attention is not adequate for

depicting the human search for meaning. Actually, none of the cognitive models here considered are adequate to do justice to this searching.

What one gets in Claxton, in effect, is a picture of human insight arising out of a back-and-forth between a deliberative mode (linear, rational, and problem-solving) and this relaxed, open, and aimless state. That picture does not capture the earnest and driven, the wholly engaged, and yet nonlinear character of the protracted search for meaning. The searching mind, according to the above theories, should be consumed within the d-mode—it is deliberate and deliberative, after all. Yet, searching for meaning is much more messy than any linear account adequately describes. The search for meaning jumps all over the place. There is nothing in the searching mind that necessarily operates in the clear, linear, logical, problem-solving terms that are used in the above cognitive models.

Kahneman, likewise, reduces deliberative thinking to the level of a logical, rational, sequential process. This is not a helpful characterization of deliberative human thinking. Linear, logical, step-by-step thinking is not an accurate picture of how most people's deliberative and conscious thinking operates. Claxton and Kahneman alike share this strange notion that the deliberative thinking is something clear, sequential, and analytic (one might say: computational). This is a bizarre error, much like the economics dogma that all persons are self-serving, rational actors behaving in intricately strategized, syllogistically reasoned ways. In reality, that kind of structured, logical, clear way of thinking takes years to master. And, even when mastered, it is such a strain to think that way, that every natural tendency runs against it. To think that linear, sequential problem-solving is the default of human deliberation is a gross mistake. It is the rare exception, not the rule, and arguably never happens at all (such sequential ordering of one's thoughts is part of the *post-hoc* editing process, not part of the creative work itself).

Seen in this light, the fast/slow account of human cognition can be said to have utterly mischaracterized human thinking—or at least, to have left off one of the most spiritually-relevant aspects of human thinking, the search for meaning.

Once one divests oneself of the above framework, one has to reconceive some aspects of how thinking is carried on. Due shrift has to be given to the searching kind of reflection which is much more jumpy, hesitant and sometimes muddled—yet still deliberate and engaged. The searching mind has much of the sense of jumping around from place to place, stabbing in the dark, flailing about, trying to find an answer. It is a really inefficient process which involves making many mistakes before getting anywhere at all, if indeed it does get anywhere at all. It is very much directed, willed, driven by a question, a confusion, something not known. Yet, this search for meaning (and the *need* to search for meaning), could be one of the

most profound and generative forces in spiritual life and human life in general.

### Slow Knowing As Generative and Life-Giving

*A Personally Invested Way of Knowing.* One of the most significant features of the searching mind is the manner in which it infuses what it explores with a personal investment, *projecting* something personal into that which is being examined. This is in contrast to slow knowing in the meditative sense, which is meant to bring to light the extent to which one has projected one's own meanings onto the (purportedly) pristine *is-ness* of reality. Yet, both these capacities, projection and seeing beyond one's projections, are important aspects of spiritual intelligence. As for the projection of meaning, such investing of personal significance into things energizes the knower in relation to what is known. As such, it can be helpful to characterize slow knowing in terms variously deployed by Soren Kierkegaard and John Henry Newman. A significant part of spiritual intelligence is not just *what* one relates to, the manner of that relationship is important too. Knowledge which is taken merely as information, cold facts, lists, technical specifications, and so on, is not generally held with rich personal significance. On the other hand, there is a different quality of relationship to other objects of knowing, one which involves a strong dimension of *care*.

Significantly, it is not always the object of knowledge which determines the relationship one has. One can treat religiously significant truths as mere propositions to be scanned, accumulated, and analyzed. That is exactly the problem that Kierkegaard diagnoses in *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849) [2004]: the truths in which one should be personally invested, the truths which should disturb and be of profound concern, can be treated like just another set of data. Such truths, rather than being matters of personal concern, are just more objects to be accumulated, scanned, and passed over, without comment, without lingering, without savoring, and without any particular personal relationship of care. Most significant here is the insight that, if a truth is to have any real impact on one's life, to affect one's behavior, to ground a commitment that is personally meaningful, then it is this relationship of care that is needed. Such is the difference between what Newman (1870, 89) called "notional assent" and "real assent." There is a categorical difference between merely paying lip-service to a belief, going through the motions of practice (believing six impossible things before breakfast, as Lewis Carroll put it), and those ideas one is genuinely committed to, and which one uses to shape (and judge) one's life.

One aspect of slow knowing, characterized as a potentially lifelong seeking for meaning and understanding, is exactly this personal dimension.

When one talks about a search for meaning, one does not mean any kind of meaning. Matters of profound concern that affect one's life to its very core cannot be impersonal. In this sense, slow knowing is generative, life-giving. One has invested one's life in something. One has literally given a portion of one's life to what one is searching after. One has invested one's time, one's spirit, one's energies, one's passion and earnestness, into a committed, ongoing attempt to unfold some deeper layers of understanding of that which one feels to be worthy of searching after. As an existential orientation, slow knowing means investing much.

*Functional Shift, Excitement, and Reward.*

... literariness does involve special techniques and devices that slow us down. ... It creates a distance between two points, rather than a straight line, an arabesque. In other words, it makes us pause over what we're reading. It gets in the way of arriving too quickly at meaning, if indeed one arrives at meaning at all. (Fry 2009)

The search for meaning can be life-giving in many senses. Davis' (2013, 2020) work on the psychological and neurological benefits of reading literature provides many rich examples in which the very activity of searching for meaning can be a potent healing power (though it will be noted later in this article, that the search for meaning can also be destructive, too). Davis, motivated by a profound sense of discontentment with contemporary modes of reading, which he characterizes as having been reduced mostly to scan reading and information gathering (i.e., the exact opposite of the personally invested mode, above), sought to explore the potential benefits of reading complex literature.

Davis remarks that complex literature is, by its nature, not readily scanned. This is because its meaning is not immediately obvious from the surface of the text. Davis is drawing here on that great tradition deployed by modernist writers and the Russian Formalists: defamiliarization. Literary scholar Paul Fry writes on the Formalists as follows:

... what they're interested in is precisely the way in which "literariness," as they call it—the devices of literariness—can be deployed so as to impede, to interfere with, and to hinder our arrival at meaning. If, in other words, hermeneutics is devoted to the possibility of communication and of understanding, the Russian formalists are interested in that special aspect of verbal communication called "literariness" which actually interferes with these very processes of communication and understanding. The roughening of the surface—celebrated by Shklovsky as a form of "defamiliarization"—is what slows us down, what gets in the way of our arriving at meaning ... It slows us down, yes, but this slowing down is a means of enriching what we finally grasp to be the meaning of a text. (Fry 2009)

The lack of an immediately obvious meaning, or being presented with something obscure and confusing, forces the reader to go on a search for meaning. The reader is forced to pause, re-read, hesitate, conjecture, and engage with the text in a way that scanning or information gathering cannot help with. This searching kind of reading has the manner of being hesitant, involves much recapitulation, going over things again and again. That characterization of reading offers a much better description for the process of slow knowing than anything found in the Systems I and II cognitive accounts. This search, which is not automatic, is the difference that more sophisticated reading makes. As Davis describes, such reading “carries forward not by merely mechanical impulse, not by automatic and straightforward linear processing, but by a ‘to-and-fro’ motion” (Davis 2020, 163).

As such, Davis’ account of real reading aligns very closely with the activity of slow knowing outlined above. Such seeking is deliberate, yet it is not linear or logical, nor is it dreamy and aimless either. There is an engaged sense of perplexity about this kind of search which involves some jumping about, some fumbling. It is a very inefficient, error-prone, and nonlinear seeking. To use Davis’ term, there is a “functional shift” (Davis 2020) that occurs when confronted by a strange metaphor, or some poor syntax, some semantically shifted term, some unusual way of structuring a sentence, some bizarre yet poetically significant way of saying something.<sup>2</sup> This functional shift, a shift in how one attempts to process or understand a statement, encourages the creation of new links, the breaking of ordinary patterns of thought, the formation of new ideas and new approaches. The very act of deciphering something difficult necessitates a kind of cross-talk in the brain which would not be stimulated by clear speech, or neatly written, well-organized prose. Of course, there is a time where clear text is beneficial and much needed, but where everything is made crystal clear, smooth and easily digested, the mind is not necessarily given the stimulus to double-take, to look deeper, to let itself be confused and challenged by what it sees but cannot immediately comprehend.

Davis is keen to emphasize the nature of the rewards produced by such searching. Davies characterizes the usual rewards for learning offered at schools as following a basic model of suffering-compensation (one masters an unpleasant task, and then is given some indirect reward as compensation, for example, a qualification, a title, or a medal).<sup>3</sup> In contrast, discovery offers a different kind of reward—not an indirect reward, but a reward that emerges directly out of the seeking itself. When one finds or discovers meaning, the reward is not a compensation, it is part of the search itself. Seeking is both difficult and rewarding—so the reward is given directly as a consequence of the seeking, and in the seeking itself, rather than something like a dog biscuit given after one has been obedient or

learned a new trick (though, regarding a model for education, it is hard to know what other kind of reward to use in order to motivate groups of children to engage for hours a day in a whole range of different subjects, some of which will inevitably seem uninteresting and potentially useless to them).

As a spiritual project, however, there can be a visceral kind of excitement in searching, an intrinsic reward in working through one's difficulties, in the potential for surprise. Such surprises then become a launchpad to further seeking. Much in line with James' (1902) work on conversion, Davis cites the potential that such illumination has for reorganizing the meanings and semantic frames which govern one's life. The discovery of some insight refers to the creation of a potentially new center of meaning. There is an excitement that new ideas produce, a "hot spot," which—if of great significance—generates a new center of meaning for the individual. Again, this speaks to the personal investment arising out of slow knowing. This new center of meaning can stimulate the rest of one's understanding to suddenly reorganize itself generating significant changes in the way a person sees and interprets everything in their lives. In generating such a hot spot, in forcing the creation of new connections in the brain, new cross talk, the search for meaning can be life-giving in the most literal physiological sense. Indeed, the idea of conversion (lifelong conversion) might be a very helpful way of articulating the overarching existential journey of slow knowing given in the searching mind.

## PART 2: SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

Slow knowing, as an orientation toward meaning, must be a significant dimension of spiritual intelligence—that is, if spiritual intelligence is anything at all to do with discerning and then investing one's life with that which is meaningful, living according to what one discerns as meaningful. Part 2 explores three religious practices which might be said to require the sort of slow knowing characterized above. The aim is not to be too systematic here. Because the searching mind is involved in so much flailing about and stabbing in the dark, trying to give too schematic an account of the processes involved would be as problematic as trying to reduce mental prayer to a clear step 1-2-3. Mental prayer might have some stereotyped divisions, but without some measure of awkwardly fumbling one's way around and not really knowing quite what to say, there is no real possibility of opening up some personal substance in the prayer. Rather than reducing slow knowing to a singular model or schematic, therefore, one helpful way of exploring it might be to try and catch it at work through its operations in certain spiritually significant religious practices.

## Lectio Divina

*Beyond Surface Readings.*

In the West, meditation and contemplation became far more associated with a specialist technology, the act of reading: *lectio divina*. (MacCulloch 2013)

In the West, the classic example of searching reading is *lectio divina*. Here, there is a practice which could not be more opposed to information gathering or any scanning mode of reading. Above all, *lectio divina* requires the clearing of a space through which meaning emerges slowly. If scan reading is an accelerated form of reading where the eye skips to take in the overall gist or sense of a large passage, divine reading takes the exact opposite approach. Reading is purposefully slowed down, almost to the point of absurdity. The amount of text to be covered is pruned to the minimum, perhaps even a sentence or paragraph. The slow reading of these words is repetitive, filled with silences and spaces. The words are attended to, almost caressed. This clearing of a space, this slowing down, this careful constraining of the quantity of the text, the careful attention, is what allows meaning to gradually emerge from the text. What one has, in other words, is a different sense of the word *meaning* to what one is used to. The meaning of any given sentence is usually grasped by the mind in an instant, but the meaning of spiritual words—which emerges when one constrains oneself, slows down and seeks to unfold meaning in such a manner—is of a different order. Such meaning is no longer informational, but personal, much richer and much more vivid.

In contemporary practice, *lectio divina* is performed either individually or communally, and without too much interpretative contrivance.<sup>4</sup> At its inception, however, there were a range of interpretative levels through which scripture could be explored, of which the literal sense was but one (and perhaps the least interesting sense at that). Herein, scripture could be interpreted in a range of ways, literally, analogically, morally, and anagogically. In the words of Bonaventure:

Scripture has depth, which consists in its having many mystical understandings. Besides its literal meaning, in many places it can be interpreted in three ways: allegorically, morally, and anagogically. Allegory occurs when by one thing is indicated by another which is a matter of belief. The tropological or moral understanding occurs when, from something done, we learn something else that we should do. The anagogical meaning, a kind of “lifting upwards,” occurs when we are shown what it is we should desire, that is, the eternal happiness of the blessed. (Bonaventure in Johnson 2005, 39)

All of these depths are lost if one only gives the text a cursory glance, or only takes scripture as a literal document, as a simple mirror of doctrinal propositions to be merely read off the page as they appear.

The contrasting way of approaching scripture, looking through the text, as MacCulloch suggests (2013), allows the imagination to wander and deeper meanings to unfold. Such meanings are then the subject for meditation and prayer. Such activities further highlight and elaborate the meanings discerned in scripture, they personalize such meanings and motivate a commitment or some wish to implement such meaning into one's life. This is the classic contemplative ladder: beginning with careful reading (which draws out some sense to the words), followed by reflection (which elaborates that sense)<sup>5</sup>, followed by prayer (which personalizes that sense and creates commitment), followed by a contemplative infusion of the whole matter into one's being. By actively (and routinely) seeking meaning in scripture, one has the first step in a ladder of lifelong conversion. Precisely this is how slow knowing, a searching approach to meaning, contributes to something like spiritual intelligence. The usual pace of reading is already too fast, not to mention the accelerated pace of the information gatherer and scan reader. Those approaches are exactly the opposite ways of going about nourishing some spiritually intelligent apprehension of what is meaningful.

*Tasting the Truth.*

Reading puts as it were whole food into your mouth; meditation chews it and breaks it down; prayer finds its savour; contemplation is the sweetness that so delights and strengthens. (Guigo II 1174)

It is interesting to note how many bodily metaphors are used in describing *lectio divina*. The words of holy scripture are to be fed upon, they are to be savored, they are a source of nourishment, they need to be chewed upon, digested, their substance is to be incorporated in the person's own being. One might say that the search for meaning at the heart of *lectio divina* is better described less as a wholly intellectual pursuit, and more as a profoundly embodied activity. Such seeking for meaning is less about systematizing as it is about gradually letting an idea seep into the reader. Such seeping in takes time. Again, slow knowing is not just about the *what* or the content of learning, but it is also about the *how* of learning, the very manner in which one seeks to learn something. The difference between meanings that are accumulated, like facts, and the meanings which actually penetrate into the life of a person is exactly the difference at hand, and what makes slow knowing so pertinent to questions of spiritual intelligence.

The paradigm example of the difference between divine reading and other modes of reading is given with reference to Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (NIV). The point with divine reading is for the words to be palpably experienced. One is not seeking an abstract

definition of “the peace of God,” rather one is seeking to participate in the peace of God, to experience and take that peace within oneself. In reading and reflecting on this verse, one is counseled to avoid producing anything like a sermon on what the word *peace* means, to avoid systematic theological analysis. Instead, the reading is repetitive, couched with silences, the words are held with gentle but penetrating intention. This kind of dwelling on the words allows one to get sucked into the words, to be absorbed (and to absorb) those words. *How* one performs the practice is central to the kind of meaning that emerges from the practice. That is why slowness matters, it refers to the *how* of the practice. The point is not about intellectually understanding “the peace of God” as an abstract idea (though that may come later), rather the point is to genuinely participate in the very peace of God, to find it in one’s own being. It is the manner of reading and attention which makes this possible. One participates in the peace of God through the slow knowing which facilitates the unfolding of the meaning of that peace in a much more concrete and personal sense. Thus, *lectio divina* is a means of knowing God *in the very act of searching*. Such reading is as far as possible from indifferent analytic speculation. Nor can the desired richness of spiritual meaning be attained by the rushed state of mind which usually motivates scan reading.

A word of caution would be helpful, however, regarding the gustatory metaphors deployed in describing *lectio divina*. Such reading can produce *indigestion*, as it were, as much as fulfillment. It is not always appropriate to regard the search for meaning as a pleasant feasting, where everything is pleasant to the taste, or as if the activity is as easy as sitting down to a meal. The present article also emphasizes the struggling aspect of the search for meaning. Another image more fitting here is that of Jacob’s wrestling with the angel till daybreak (Genesis 32:22), which yields to him by volition, *but not without cost*. The contrasting bodily metaphors of tasting, chewing, digestion, and incorporation, give intimations more to do with savoring and feasting. Yet, it is important that both the feasting and the struggling metaphors be used in characterizing the search for meaning, hence the emphasis in Part 1 of Davis’ notion of reward in relation to searching. There is reward in the seeking—at the same time, this is an “ascetic joy” (Williams 2013), much more than a simple bodily gratification. Intimations of the embodied aspects of spiritual seeking are valuable here—but one must balance the image of the feast with something like the image Paul gives of the athlete running the course (1 Corinthians 9:24), or Jacob having to fight to get his way. Neither a metaphor of struggling nor of feasting is adequate without the other for capturing the kind of reward that searching promises.

*Aporia* and Perplexity

*Not Knowing.* The searching mind is most naturally set working when it is confronted with something it cannot understand. Davis, above, presented literature and poetry as opportuning such an impetus. The confusion sets off a search for meaning, and that search can be generative, rewarding, though not easy. This notion of perplexity is grounded in a long philosophical tradition. The state of perplexity (*aporia* as termed by Socrates in Plato's dialogue *The Theaetetus*)<sup>6</sup> is one's state of mind when reduced to complete unknowing and confusion. Socrates produced this state by interrogating people about their most precious beliefs and ideas until they realized how lacking in rational foundation their beliefs were. Once persons have been led into the realization that they do not know nearly as much as they thought they knew, that they are not able to defend that which they held to be authoritative and true, once they have been drawn into a state of complete bewilderment, then a profound search can begin. Put another way: there is a mode of searching initiated by a confrontation with *not knowing*, motivated by the acute realization that one does not know something and a realization that one has no idea of one's way about.

What is one to do with this state of perplexity? In some traditions, meditative and philosophical, the state of not knowing is the goal in itself. For example, in much of the popular literature surrounding Zen Buddhist teaching, the experience of analytic breakdown is precisely the goal to be aimed at, to be rested in. Such a state of release or surrender (a breaking down of one's analytic grasping in that moment) is the opening up of nothing less than the state of enlightenment itself. Much Rinzai Zen literature is presented in dialogical form and culminates in a master breaking down a student's intellectual understanding of something through some jarring nonintellectual interjection (a shout, a slap, an answer that makes no logical sense, and so on).

It is important to tease apart two approaches to *aporia*. Arguably, in the earlier Socratic writings, as with the Rinzai Zen dialogues, the aim with unknowing is simply to reach the realization that one's intellectual grasp on things is inadequate, and to move onto a more concrete and direct approach to living. Confusion indicates that something is fundamentally lacking in an intellectually-dominant approach to life. Afterward, one stops living quite so much in clouds of ideas and analysis. One proceeds to live in a grounded manner, applying the intellect (reconceived as a helpful tool) as needed.

Another tradition sees confusion as a step toward a renewed, or higher level, of representation. Confusion highlights failures in one's understanding, not as a means to avoiding analysis altogether, but as an opportunity, a crisis, for developing a new understanding. This is the approach one finds in the work of Masterman (1989) and Williams (2014). Here, the state

of perplexity is not taken as an end in itself. Rather, *aporia* is presented as a generative prospect, generative of new modes of representation, new ideas. Perplexity is a call to be willing to dispossess oneself of what one thinks one knows—if it shows itself to fall short—and to take steps toward finding better ways of talking about those important realities which our usual ways of talking fail to do justice to. Bewilderment is, therefore, a confrontation with the limits of one's thinking which forces us to rethink, re-present, the object that so confuses us (Williams 2013).

This latter view, perplexity as an invitation to reconceive things, leads to a search for truth which requires that one venture down into the dark place of not knowing, precisely in order to ascend to the possibility of a more exalted point of view. Moreover, at least as importantly, one must return, like Dante the pilgrim, in order to tell everyone what has been seen, to communicate, and distribute the fruit that have been given and received.

A Zen approach might regard Williams' construct of *aporia*—that is, confusion and pressure leading to re-presentation—as doing no more than just advocating a move from one concept to another, shifting one chair for another. The point with *aporia* (or, great doubt, *dai-gidan*, which is one of the three pillars of Zen) is to get one to discover an entirely different level of one's mind altogether—not to merely produce yet another concept, which is to just to remain on basically the same mental level. Even so, slow knowing, in this article, must necessarily appeal to something more like Williams' view. Perplexity is the beginning of the search for meaning, not its terminus. It is the point where one realizes one's current limits, the inadequacy of one's current view, that one is at sea, and does not know how to proceed. One goes beyond a previous, limited, and inadequate understanding, even if one is still remaining on conceptual ground. As such, is slow knowing an invitation to a protracted search for meaning. The generative aspect of *aporia* is in the potential for breakthrough that tarrying through the difficulty can bring, so long as one can learn to tolerate being at sea. As Williams puts it, truth emerges from the difficulty (Williams 2013).

#### *Tarrying, Difficulty, and Breakthrough.*

... that wraith of meaning exists not only when you cannot find the right word but also after you have found it – in the release of meaning surrounding a verbal breakthrough, the ghost of competing words invisibly surrounding the finally chosen ones. (Davis 2013, 9)

Bewilderment is particularly germane regarding questions of spiritual intelligence. The task of putting profound spiritual experiences into words, finding ways of conveying that which escapes ordinary material realities, is a perplexing one indeed. In the apophatic theological tradition, one is very quickly made to see the limits of one's words in talking about God

(Williams 2020a). Negative theology requires both that one speak about God while being aware of the limits of the words that one is using (as Newheiser [2019, 8] observes, “negative theology” is a misnomer, such theology affirms just as it negates). One must be vigilant and humble in speaking of God, yet one must speak.

In *The Edge of Words*, Williams (2014) draws on the tradition of *aporia* in presenting a praxis, a spiritual discipline, of taking oneself to the limits of one’s understanding and attending carefully in the difficulty that is produced when one has worn out all of one’s usual ways of thinking about something. After struggling to represent, and to re-present, one’s reality, one finds that one’s understanding can fall into a state of blank confusion. Once one has said everything one knows how to say, what happens next? Once one has pressed one’s understanding to its limits, where does one go? There is the urge to speak, but one does not know what to say. One has to give over something of oneself, go beyond the limits of one’s comprehension, force open some new ways of representing what one is trying to grasp. In this sense, *aporia*, as a spiritual discipline, demands a measure of dispossession. In Williams’ use of the term, dispossession marks out a realization that one’s understanding never has its object completely wrapped up, that one does not own the object, does not have its truth, and cannot force it into being what one wants it to be. When one tries to understand another person, one does not own that other person—that other is always more. This is likewise true with the use of spiritual language.

While every discipline has its crises and puzzles that require attention, *aporia* is something that one can set out to produce deliberately. One can consciously pressurize one’s understanding, force oneself to go beyond one’s usual ways of conceptualizing things in order to see what is loosed—potentially uncovering new modes of representation, new shifts in discourse, new ideas and treasures, illumination. However, Williams is not suggesting anything like a schematic, step-by-step procedure. Dealing with perplexity can mean a protracted stumbling about in the darkness with no clear notion in sight of what (if anything) might be gleaned in tarrying through such difficulty.

Much the same might be said to be true with the attempt to convey profound religious experience, or profound mystical experience, which often utterly defies clear, transparent articulation. There is no step-by-step procedure. So, the notion of slow searching, ongoing searching, perhaps for years or a lifetime, is a helpful way of thinking about the process of conveying profound spiritual experience, too.

*Aporia* is also about difficulty, learning to tolerate difficulty, and learning to see the value in difficulty. Bacon, in his (aptly incomplete) fiction *The New Atlantis* (1626), was the first to set up the ideal of a progressive scientific endeavor, a self-consciously utopian ideal, whose goal it would be to make human life more and more commodious, to remove all

inconvenience from human existence. Every difficulty is conceived here as something to be technologically solved. This could not be further from Williams' presentation of *aporia* as a spiritual discipline. Learning, not only to tolerate difficulty, but to value it, to grow in suspicion of any idea of a frictionless world, is part of what Williams describes as the discipline and the joy of the ascetic practice of perplexity (Williams 2010). Slow knowing, as regards spiritual intelligence, must therefore make appeal to difficulty. Part of slow knowing is the willingness to patiently endure through difficulty. Whatever breakthrough the search for meaning might bring, this breakthrough can only occur on the basis of difficulty—the search for meaning is every bit as taxing as it is rewarding.

What is gained by embracing *aporia*, and the dispossession it implies, is a sense of the endless potential for meaningfulness in the world, finding that reality is packed with meaning, pregnant with meaning, that there are endless generative possibilities infolded in the created order. In confronting (and in palpably experiencing) the limits of one's own understanding, there is the undeniable realization that one does not own, and has not mastered, what one is taking hold of. There is, in this sense, an ethical dimension to *aporia*, a humbling aspect, an other-centered aspect, where one can only step forward by properly engaging with the other that stands beyond one's limits. This is an antidote to narcissistic forms of spirituality on the popular market. Spiritual searching forces one to look beyond oneself.

#### *Public Reasoning, Public Testing.*

To speak at all is to invite *recognition*: when I say something, I assume that I occupy a world that is not exclusively mine, a world where the criteria for speaking intelligibly are shared with others whom I may never have met, others with whom I have never negotiated any sort of agreed protocol for conversation. I assume that the human stranger, even when speaking what seems a completely alien tongue, can make sense to me. The impulse to *translate* is universal. (Williams 2020b)

What happens when some breakthrough has been made in the search for meaning, when one's searching has borne fruit? Part of any collaborative searching for meaning, is the collaborative *testing* of meaning. For an idea to be durable, it must pass the test of some public scrutiny. Socrates, again, was among the first to perform this unpleasant task, and was put to death for doing just that: holding his contemporaries to public, rational account—publicly testing their ideas. From Socrates onward, the philosophical view has been that, unless an idea is contested, examined (specifically through dialogue), one cannot tell if there is any substance to it. An idea, without the ordeal of public testing, is no idea at all.

The search for meaning must be understood as a fundamentally dialogical phenomenon. Socrates, characterizing himself as the midwife of ideas

(again, in Plato's *Theaetetus*), plagued his interlocutors with endless repetitions of the same questions: *What do you mean? How do you know that?* This tradition was continued by the scholastics through the practice of learning through disputation (hence the format of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*), through Descartes (who, so far from thinking alone in his heated cabin, was famed for his disputation skills), continuing seamlessly into the Enlightenment (namely, John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant, with their contempt for received authorities and tyrannical majorities). Nor do things end there. Popper (1959) [2005], as if unaware of this proud tradition, used exactly the same criterion for defining science as separate from all other activities. Popper presents science as a battlefield of ideas, a field which only functions if it is subject to constant interrogation. After the most brutal and testing disputation, whichever idea is left standing (though not necessarily correct in any final sense), is taken to be the best one, at least until some new idea surfaces.<sup>7</sup> Again and again, one sees the same criterion: Public reasoning is what tries the worth of ideas. All things must be disputed before being accepted.

These points are crucial for exploring spiritual intelligence. The wealth of insight that comes through sustained spiritual attention and seeking can very rarely, if at all, be considered an utterly isolated phenomenon. The goods of spiritual seeking are the fruit of a tree which are not to be hoarded. Yet, though the process of public testing—again, a slow and searching process, and never an easy one—that such fruit come to be well-ripened. Without this slow process of mutual searching, mutual interrogation, something crucial is lost. Even if one goes through the process of perplexity, tarrys and finds illumination, yet the truly generative and life-giving aspects of the search manifest in the fruit one brings back to the table. That, as much as any personal illumination, is requisite to spiritual intelligence and the search for meaning.

As Harrison (2015) notes, from the seventeenth century onward, the habit of inquiry that became the root of scientific work gradually moved away from an individually morally-perfective activity, and became increasingly oriented toward producing something for the commonweal of humankind. The search for meaning, and progress in understanding the world, ceased to be confined to a human lifespan. Rather, humankind became a unitary person, progress in the sciences became understood as a constant passing of the baton from one generation of inquirer to the next (Harrison 2015). In light of this, there are important questions to be raised about spiritual intelligence, and whether its products are a matter of individual self-formation to be measured by personal (usually, moral) development. To what extent does spiritual intelligence fit into a larger social eschatology, a movement toward an ever-deepening of the understanding which produces fruit for the larger commonweal (though without necessarily appealing to any linear notion of progress in characterizing the

development of spiritual understanding). To what extent is spiritual understanding like faith in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (1843) [2006]—an individual project, where everyone has to start at the beginning and do the work of seeking for themselves? And, to what extent is there a larger social *opera* in play where the public testing of spiritual discourse is needed to sift and distribute the fruit of spiritual intelligence to a larger population?

A final word on the public testing of the meanings gleaned from slow knowing is needed. Throughout this article, slow knowing has been presented as an unfolding of deeper layers of meaning. It needs to be mentioned how profoundly such unfolding can err. To put it crudely: there is a fine line between genius and madness in the unfolding of meaning. The search for meaning can unfold many problematic ideas, nor is there any guarantee at all that one's seeking will uncover things which are true. Taking the extreme case, one need only look to schizophrenia (which can be characterized in part as the unbridled detection of patterns and their infusion with extreme personal significance), to see how far the meaning-seeking faculties can go awry, doing immense damage to a person's perception of reality. It is precisely because a purely personal seeking can become unbridled, unhinged, that a social testing of meaning is so significant.

Clark has written extensively on the overlap of psychosis and spiritual crisis (Clark 2008), terms which she describes as sometimes overlapping and sometimes very difficult to distinguish (Clark's concern is that some of that which is dismissed as psychosis is actually a spiritual crisis in disguise, extremely rich in potential for spiritual transformation). Clark emphasizes the much-needed balance in such mental health patients for spending time, not just in their own liminal, meaning-rich personal worlds, but in the shared world of public meaning.<sup>8</sup> Thus, while this article does advocate the view that slow knowing is a crucial aspect of spiritual intelligence, it is essential to highlight that there is much potential calamity in the seeking, much potential for crisis. The public world of shared meaning is one helpful bulwark against such calamity, but no guarantee is possible there, either. For the tyranny of majorities, even entire societies, cultures, and sects, have been known to get collectively lost in their own damaging fortresses of self-enclosed systems of meaning.

### Dead Metaphors and Ossification in Religious Language

*Searching, Potency, and Freshness.* In Article 4 of this series, the argument is made that one cannot have religious language without unclear forms of speech. Metaphor, symbols, myths, metonymy, and other non-literal, opaque modes of representation are part of the daily work of religious language. As such, a search for meaning will always be needed for grappling with religious teachings, particularly biblical teachings, many of which remain as enigmatic today as they ever were. However, attempts to

make religious language too simple and obvious, too neat and digestible, too *unthreatening*, also undermines the need for searching (Pelz & Pelz 1963, 2). As Pelz and Pelz argue, biblical language loses virtually everything significant when one tries to control it, sanitize it, or make it wholly regular and self-consistent. For one, such simplification makes comprehending the words of Jesus impossible. Jesus' words, they argue, are baffling, shocking, unreasonable, at once simple and direct, yet ambiguous, troubling and contradictory (Pelz & Pelz 1963, 12). Without a searching mind, there is no way of having a serious engagement with the words of Christ. Thus, some account of how to search for meaning intelligently is highly pertinent a discourse on spiritual intelligence.

One of the difficulties with religious imagery is that, often, one loses the potency of meaning through overuse. Janet Soskice writes:

Christian teaching, we could say, has been for many centuries in receipt of a 'grey mythology' – metaphors worn smooth, like an old marble staircase, through centuries of stately liturgical ascent until their original figurative potency was lost. It was left to a later day for kinship metaphors to disturb and scandalize, but also to reawaken us to the promise of what we may become. (Soskice 2007, 3)

Above, it was noted that a key aspect of slow knowing is the personal investment of meaning into what one knows. Christian teaching is invested with potency through such slow and searching engagement. It is this searching which invests (and continually reinvests) such teaching with meaning, and thus with potency. The old adage maintains that familiarity breeds contempt. Yet, with religious language, familiarity is more likely to produce blindness. In that state of blindness, sometimes of indifference, one loses the sense that such teachings contain depths to be unfolded. Therein, even the most startling and disturbing stories in scripture are diminished and become just as comfortable as the furniture one sits upon, as taken for granted as the air one breathes.<sup>9</sup>

To illustrate, in *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard mocks the clergy of his day, whom he depicts as giving sermons on that most disturbing story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, without being in the least bit ruffled by what it says, going home and puffing happily on their pipes, feeling pleasantly edified, and then having a peaceful night's sleep. Kierkegaard's mission, his meditations on Abraham (which bring one as close as can be to Abraham's side), are nothing less than the attempt to restore the absolute horror and incomprehensibility of the story of Abraham from the deadness of received familiarity. This is achieved through imaginative and sustained meditation. *Fear and Trembling* is a paradigm case of a searching attempt to restore the deep sense of significance of a once-powerful, but utterly dead, scriptural story.

Such an investment of potency in religious teaching cannot be captured by any kind of superficial, tip of the wing appreciation. Moreover, when the personal investment diminishes, gradually the potency begins to diminish too. What one finds in the idea of slow knowing, therefore, is a call for the continual reinvestment of potency to one's religious ideas. The power of religious language is derived from such meditation and searching. This investment is never completed, it is an ongoing process, hence the idea of slow knowing as an existential orientation.

At the same time, reinvesting religious ideas with significance does not mean simply keeping the old ideas exactly as they were. A spiritually intelligent approach to the search for meaning—particularly when talking about religious ideas, language, and images that are millennia old—involves the challenge of negotiating tradition and innovation. Reinvesting scripture with meaning does not necessarily mean doing exactly the same thing performed thousands of years ago. Engaging with the old, even respecting the old, does not mean doing the same as the old.

On the one hand, religion needs to keep true to its roots. But, since the world changes, religious teachings must also remain meaningful for the world in which its believers live. As such, *discernment* is also part of the searching that engaging with religious teaching requires. One must ask: In *what way* should we be true to our roots? Every religion has its so-called texts of terror. There are texts in all scriptures that support misogyny, deify violence, and support every kind of division imaginable. These are just facts of the text. Even if one allows oneself to be scandalized by these facts (i.e., not just pretend that they do not exist), that does not imply that one should take an uncritical acceptance of what they demand. Nor does it mean throwing out the whole lot. Spiritual discernment and the searching mind are closely bound together in coping with such vexing issues.

Being faithful to one's religion does not mean leaving one's religion as it is. As Newheiser observes, citing Derrida, fidelity is not just a matter of repetition but involves invention too—one can engage the past whilst actively transforming it (Newheiser 2019, 12), although painstaking care is needed here. What would be the point in searching for meaning, if everything is to be left as it is? Christian faith is not something that has been revealed once and for all, and then sealed so that it can never change or adapt to any new circumstances. It is constantly unfolding, and it is the process of ongoing searching that enables this unfolding to occur. Thus, at the heart of searching for meaning is discernment: working out appropriate ways of watering the roots of the plant, as well as letting new branches grow, and letting new fruit be given forth. When considering things at the level of traditions, any searching that one does as an individual comes into a tradition that is already thousands of years old, and is likely to remain long after one is gone. Slow knowing—if viewed on the social scale—therefore extends beyond one's own lifetime of searching,

continuing through millennia. Therein, one's own searching voice is but a single one among so many.

### PART 3: CRITIQUE AND CONCLUSION

#### Critique and Concluding Remarks

*The Fast/Slow Dichotomy.* Exploration of slow knowing as a search for meaning has opened up various avenues of critique. First, the searching mind is not adequately articulated in the fast/slow, popular cognitive frameworks such as Kahneman's Systems I and II. Nor, is the search for meaning appropriately described in terms of Claxton's tripartite view, which makes reference to the relaxed, aimless, wandering, and star-gazing kind of attention he associates with the creative mind. To the contrary, the search for meaning must involve an engaged, deliberate, driven, and personally invested kind of activity. Yet, such slow knowing defies being characterized in terms of the usual problem-solving, linear, strategic sort of analytic thinking either. Rather, slow knowing has been characterized as being protracted through time, across various periods and seasons of seeking and resting, extended potentially throughout one's entire life.

Given: (a) the profound importance of the seeking mind, an activity which is requisite for any mode of living that is not content with mere surface appearances (i.e., consensus and uncritically accepted meanings), nor with being spoon fed one's answers, but rather seeks to penetrate deeper into the meanings of things; and, (b) that the fast/slow dichotomy has no adequate way of describing or representing this seeking mind given the narrow dichotomous oppositions it has to draw on, it should be apparent that something of the greatest significance is missing from the standard form of the fast/slow cognitive dichotomy.

To dichotomize human thought along the lines of automatic reflexes versus inefficient, rational thought mechanisms is to exclude the most subtle and generative mode from the picture of human thinking—precisely that of searching, of jumping, of struggling, wrangling, engaging with perplexity, turning around from here to there and being at sea.

*Social Critique.* In terms of social critique, slow knowing opens up a seemingly endless litany of complaints to be leveled against the everyday mindset and pace - one that is generally incentivized across too many social domains. In contrast, slow knowing requires a certain sustained, open-ended engagement, a willingness to meet with failure and an openness to surprise, to finding the unpredictable, an openness to that which is outside one's starting framework. This stands in polar opposition to the fast-faced, results-driven, problem-solving, efficiency-based, target-oriented culture that we inhabit. The searching mind stands in opposition to scan reading,

and to any manner of reading which is just about information gathering, learning for tests, multiple choice, and indifferently accumulating trivia to be recalled on demand. The idea of giving people the time that is needed for searching is not one that sits well in the excessively time-organized structure by which even free, liberal societies are forced to conform.

Is it any wonder religious metaphors degrade into a gray mythology, to the apathy of the familiar, the indifference of that which is endlessly available, when the search for meaning is not actively encouraged? Slow knowing is incredibly *inefficient*, wildly unpredictable, demands a toleration for error after error, it may or may not respond to deadlines, may or may not produce something that was promised or expected, is constantly struggling against the constraints that one attempts to funnel its insights through.

Slow knowing is difficult, and demands a willingness to work through the discomfort of not knowing. This is quite at odds with a technofix culture which treats the least inconvenience as something to be binned or dominated. An attitude toward difficulty and seeming imperfection conflicts with any ideal aiming toward creating some completely smooth and easy state of continuous material and psychological comfort. Yet, time is exactly what slow knowing requires. Leisure, here, is not construed as free-time spent in constant occupation. To the contrary, a kind of leisure (something like Cicero's *otium cum dignitate*) is needed which involves the creation of a disciplined empty space, a prepared emptiness, the sabbath rest, the open door through which some as-yet-unknown traveller may enter in during the spiritual seeking.

It is here that the discourse on defamiliarization is so significant. As Fry observes, Roman Jakobson's 1930 essay, *The Generation that Squandered Its Poets*, marks out something of the bureaucratization of perception that is taking hold, the automatization of the meanings one attributes to one's world (Fry 2009). When meaning and perception become automated one no longer even really sees what is around one. Thus, Fry asserts that poetry should "make the visible a little hard to see" (Fry 2009). Fry writes:

... the business of the roughening of surface by means of various modes of literariness is to defamiliarize automated perceptions; to make us suddenly see again, to see the nature of the language that we're using, and, ... at the same time to see the world itself anew by means of devices of language that tear the film away from our eyes. ... [that] dulled grayness or ordinariness of life. It's that backdrop—it's that sense of bureaucratized existence—that defamiliarization has, to a certain extent, the ideological purpose of dispelling and undermining. (Fry 2009)

In conclusion, one might say that it is not so much secularity that poses the threat to spiritual intelligence, as it is the pace and superficiality of that automated system of meaning-giving, the consensus of meaning (what

might be called *the surface* of things) that offers the real threat to the expression of spiritual intelligence. When meaning is automatized there is no personal search, then one becomes blind and indifferent to what is around one. This is a kind of nihilism, the sort described by Baudrillard—not of value and truth, but of meaning, and of reality itself. Today's nihilism is one of transparency, a procession of endless forms and images whose ever-accelerating proliferation, superfluity, induces a kind of indifference and pervasive neutrality (Baudrillard 1981, 60). For Baudrillard, the seduction of meaningful images (like icons) has given way to, degenerated into, mere fascination. Seduction still assumes there is some deeper meaning behind the image, something to be sought out, something meaningful that is hidden, or immanent within it, some pregnancy of meaning to be got at so long as there is some seeking. However, Fascination is what remains when one only has surfaces, endlessly overflowing, endlessly superfluous surfaces and bits of information. Such information leaves one in a state of complete indifference, and fundamentally dissatisfied. These are images replaced as quickly as they emerge, a process of replacement which means that one never has time or inclination to look any deeper into any of them in particular.

Slow knowing is such a spiritually generative concept in this hasty and overrushed climate. It takes time to look deeply into things, to unfold the meanings they are pregnant with, one must dwell on these things for such meaning to emerge—this is most important of all with the sacred, over which richness an excessive swiftness in merely *passing through* may be tantamount to blasphemy. Certainly, such a rushed state means the loss of so much that is meaningful in the sacred.

What is needed, then, is less a change in the object of knowing (rushing about from one surface to another), but a change in the knower—or rather: a change in the relationship between subject and object which can be produced by a change in the pace of the attention paid. Insofar as everything spiritual is beyond the surface of things (i.e., beyond the automatized consensus of meaning already attributed to the world), unless one takes an approach to knowing which encourages seeking beyond the most superficial level of things, there can be no spiritual intelligence at all.

It is said that encroaching secularism is a core threat to religion. Perhaps this is so. However, at least secularism can be seen to have a philosophy that makes some searching possible, that invites reflection. One can search in a secular way. One can search profoundly, even within the bounds of secular discourse. Of course, penetrating search is as little guaranteed in the secular space as in the religious, and that is exactly the point: it is not really the encroaching secularity that poses the threat to religion. The real threat subtends both: the removal of grounds needed for encouraging any kind of orientation toward the development of a penetrating search for what is meaningful in life.

Secularity, if it involves a considered approach, at least utilizes the faculties needed for slow knowing, and is in that sense closer to spiritual intelligence than it might like to admit. When it plumbs the depths, even a secular search for meaning exercises the thirst for meaning, for discovery, for understanding, for ongoing illumination, and might then be said to be spiritual in that sense. But, the efficiency-driven, mad pace of modern life works in myriad ways to make such slow knowing as difficult as can be. If spiritual intelligence, and religion in general, absolutely require some degree of searching, what, then, does all this neglect do for spiritual intelligence?

## NOTES

1. Table drawn from Gawronski et al. (2014, 8). Also, see Epstein (1994); Sloman (1996); Smith and DeCoster (2000), for iterations of this kind of theory.

2. Davis gives an example from Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*: "Shakespeare, rather than write 'made a god of', turns 'god' more immediately into 'godded'" (Davis 2020, 175).

3. Davis has also explored the psychologically healing potential of such reading, its cathartic possibilities, and the kind of space for exploration that is opened in creating alternative thought-worlds for self-exploration through reading (Davis 2020). Reading gives the person a voice to think thoughts that are hard to think, or painful, by providing an exploratory space. Reading triggers the creation of that space in which people can do thinking and experiencing of painful emotions.

4. The spiritual and philosophical tradition of searching for meaning has always been a *searching together*. Searching also has a social aspect.

5. It is fitting that the spelling of the words *refection* (a refreshing food or drink) and *reflection* should be so similar. Certainly, that indicates the point about spiritual seeking perfectly.

6. While, for theologians, the *Phaedrus* is generally the Platonic dialogue of dialogues, for philosophers it has always been the *Theaetetus* that represented the Genesis account of philosophical thinking.

7. One does need to be careful with the idea that public testing is the criterion of worth in ideas. Philosophers, including Popper, would not suggest that it is the *whole* public that should be consulted when testing ideas, rather just an elite cadre of self-agreed experts. While public testing is a necessary stage for insights to take root and be developed, questions of whom this *public* should be present a thorny issue, particularly when attempting to present paradigm-shifting or majority-opposing ideas that might be poorly received by the status quo.

8. An insightful, if rude, euphemism for an unusual person is to say that they are: *out there where the buses don't run*. This contains a powerful insight. Buses are *public* transportation, shared. They run along lines which everyone is familiar and cover routes that the public travel together. To refer to a person as being in a place where the buses do not run indicates a severance from the public, shared world of meaning—it is to say a person is wholly engulfed in a personal world of meaning, a privacy so enclosed that they are essentially inaccessible to the public.

9. In the quote above, Soskice meditates on the shocking even scandalous use of kinship metaphors in scripture—what does it mean to say that one is *kin to God*?

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