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."

THEORIA TO THEORY (AND BACK AGAIN): INTEGRATING MASTERMAN'S WRITINGS ON LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

by Harris Wiseman

Abstract. This article explores three aspects of Masterman's language work and applies them to questions of spiritual intelligence: metaphor, coherence, and ambiguity. First, metaphor, which is ubiquitous in ordinary language, both leads and misleads in religious and scientific understanding. Masterman's case for a "dual-approach" to thinking, both speculative and critical, is explored and tied to concepts of moral-spiritual development *per* Pierre Hadot and Hannah Arendt. Second, Masterman's work on machine translation presents semantic disambiguation as an emerging coherence wherein one gradually hones in on meaning through features of ordinary language (like redundancy and repetition). This is applied to the problem of comprehending difficult spiritual language, and tied to spiritual stretching and spiritual cartography. Third, Masterman's work with thesauri, rather than relying on words as having fixed meanings, appeals to a concept of semantic spaces, nebulae of variously interconnected meanings. This is constructed into an exhortation to *reambiguate* overfamiliar religious language, to reinvest one's quotidian surroundings with spiritual meaning through defamilarization.

Keywords: coherence; defamiliarization; Hadot; Margaret Masterman; metaphor; thesauri

Introduction

Attending to how one makes sense of religious language can shed light on some important aspects of spiritual intelligence. Sometimes religious

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language seems so exotic that one does not know what to make of it, and sometimes its terms are so overused that one barely notices their richness at all. Many germane insights about how one makes sense of religious language can be gleaned from Masterman's language and religious writings. In Part 1, this article will explore Masterman's remarks on the role of metaphor in language, contextualizing this within what Masterman called a "dual approach" to philosophy (Masterman 1989, 89), which demanded not only rigorous thinking about "deep" things, but a degree of self-awareness regarding how one is thinking through these deep things. One of the arguments to be developed here is that approaching spiritual intelligence is not just about understanding religious content, but involves some metacognitive facility of *knowing what one is doing* when so speaking. In other words: one must be concerned with both the *what* and the *how* of religious language, its content and the manner of deployment of that content.

In Parts 2 and 3, this article will follow Masterman's exploration of ambiguity and coherence in the translation of language. An argument will be constructed suggesting that a facility both for clearing up ambiguity (in mystifying uses of religious language), as well as for reintroducing ambiguity (into the overused religious terms for which one has lost any rich sense of), are significant powers related to, what one might call, a spiritually intelligent approach to religious language. Masterman's work helps one think about the ways one uses language (its power to clarify, obfuscate, and create). This can inform one's approach to seeking meaning in religious language. Masterman's account of linguistic coherence (as emerging out of reiteration and redundancy), as well as her view on the infinite extensibility of meaning, provide a rich ground for thinking about questions of meaning-giving, meaning-seeking, and meaning-finding, not just in religious language, but in religious living more broadly. Indeed, if there is any integration of Masterman's language and religious writings, something like Pierre Hadot's concept of philosophy as a "way of life" (Hadot 1995) offers a helpful key.

It is important to note that Masterman's language writing should not—and cannot—be taken as a construing a model or picture of spiritual intelligence *per se*. Masterman's language work does not (nor was it intended to) offer any putative model of a distinctively *spiritual* intelligence. That being so, one might yet say that the general ideas outlined above are in semi-overlapping semantic spaces. If anything, Masterman's work offers an *orientation* to thinking about religious language. Masterman can be counted among those thinkers that invite one to reflect on, and take very great care with, how one uses language in religious talk, especially in metaphysics. Masterman exhorts us to be aware of the problems with language whilst not cowering away from asking difficult religious questions, nor retreating in the face of the considerable difficulties that arise when one tries to answer such questions in a sharp and rigorous manner.[1]

PART 1—METAPHOR AND METAPHYSICS

The Ubiquity of Metaphor

> Here for [Masterman] was the root not only of metaphor but also of metaphysics itself, which consisted for her, as for Wittgenstein, of words used outside their hitherto normal realm of application. … he thought that words were "on holiday" when so used, for her it was part of their everyday work. (Wilks 2005, 14–15)

Part 1 explores Masterman's assertions that metaphor is part of the normal usage of everyday language; that metaphors are part of how language and understanding grow, how they creatively expand; and, that metaphor is at the heart of metaphysical language too. As for the first claim, it has gradually become increasingly accepted that metaphor is an important, even unavoidable, part of everyday language. Metaphor is not just some optional extra that one adds to normal language for aesthetic effect, not some mere frippery added to the literal sense of words (though it can be used that way, too). As Lakoff and Johnson (2003 [1980], 5) have suggested, most concepts are structured in metaphorical terms. This has pressing relevance for religious language. If metaphors are at the heart of ordinary language, this is at least as true regarding religious language—regarding both the more exotic terminology of abstract metaphysical speculation, as well as the more routinely used religious terms that one is very familiar with, and uses on a daily basis, in prayer, at worship, and so on (which is often no less exotic than metaphysical terminology, except that the sense of the exotic is removed through familiarity).

Part of the importance of recognizing the centrality of metaphor is that, very often, one uses figurative language usually *without even realizing one is doing so*, without intending to wax figurative, and without really going into the conscious work of thinking through the nonliteral dimensions of the speech involved. One might well routinely call Christ: "the lamb of God," but without some sense of what is going on in saying that (with its resonances of innocence and sacrifice, and many more besides), which then comes to be something more like a euphemism or nickname than a powerful and evocative, reverential title. Indeed, as John Cottingham once quipped, too many Christians treat the word *Christ* itself as if it were Jesus' surname. So, there is an aspect of the nonliteral, which is driven so deeply into religious language that one is often not even aware of what is going on as one uses it. As much is true of ordinary, everyday language. As Pickstock put it, commenting on Rowan Williams' (2014) work:

> … poetic aspects of truth-making, it seems, covertly enter into our ordinary prosaic practices, and yet we are not attended by the sense that we are arbitrarily making things up or being dishonest as to the way things are … Most of our speech, he argues, is neither directly pictorial nor descriptive. In order to describe, we must have recourse to invocation. (Pickstock 2015, 18)[2]

Perhaps Ralph Waldo Emerson hit at the point best when he suggested that all language is "fossil poetry … tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin" (Murray 1956, 204). It may be that one does not begin with clarity and then add metaphor for decoration. To the contrary, language probably begins as primarily nonliteral, ambiguous, multidimensional (and in the case of religious language, often highly embodied, see Watts 2021). The poetic senses of terms gradually get worn down through normal usage, becoming dead metaphor. Perhaps all metaphors, insofar as they become ordinary language (that is, after their fresh introduction into common speech), can be said to be in various stages of decomposition and renewal, as new resonances and associations take the place of lost shared meanings (the term *semantic shift* is often used to convey this idea).

The centrality of the figurative in ordinary language is evidenced in the extraordinary difficulty of creating tools for machine translation, as Masterman discovered. To this day, it is widely granted in natural language processing (NLP) and artificial intelligence (AI), that ordinary speech is hard to deal with, computationally (Wilks 2016). If all speech were primarily literal, and followed neat logical patterns, machine translation would not be so difficult. In fact, because so much speech is nonliteral, figurative, truncated, vague, and poorly structured, machine translation posed many challenges (and still does pose them, to no small degree). Again, if ordinary language is so dependent on metaphor and is overwhelmingly articulated through idiomatic or colloquial (or otherwise mangled, grammatically imperfect shorthand) structures, then this is going to be at least as true, if not more so, of religious language too. There is no real separation between ordinary language and most religious language (with regard their use of the nonliteral and grammatically imperfect expression, at least).

Yet, even the purified, scholarly articulation of metaphysics is likewise reliant on metaphor. Ordinary religious language, like metaphysics, often involves language pushed beyond its usual senses, and involves mapping together disparate images with complex experiences and meanings (metaphor, in fine, is understanding one thing in terms of another). Like the most rarefied of metaphysical expression, one's usual religious language involves some greater or lesser degree of the semantic *stretching* of words. Whenever using words to capture religious ideas and experiences (particularly of persons speaking thousands of years ago), a metaphorical stretch is very much needed. One thing is understood by appealing to something else. There is a mapping of one aspect of religious concern, be that an experience or any kind of concept, onto something more familiar—as noted: the innocent, sacrificial lamb of God.[3]

In fact, religious language is absolutely saturated with such semantic stretching, and relies constantly on evocation, figurative speech, and the whole panoply of nonliteral forms of expression that humans have available to them. For those that preference literal or clear speech, those who dispute the necessity and value of metaphor, the pervasively nonliteral character of religious language is just another reason to reject it as nonsense. But, once one understands the centrality of the nonliteral (in all language, not just religious language), then one needs to attend more carefully to how one makes sense of religious language.[4]

A Dual Approach (Speculation and Self-Critique)

This need for self-awareness in how one uses language, in how one goes about thinking and theorizing at all, can be found in some of Masterman's remarks regarding metaphysical and scientific work. Masterman's suggestion (*The Boundaries of Thought*, 1989) is that a "new kind of philosophical activity" is required (Masterman 1989, 89). Masterman aspired to a rigorous intellectual activity involving "profound metaphysical speculation, in order to gain some greater and newer light on older, metaphysical 'deep things' … whilst being self-conscious of what you are doing" (Masterman 1989). Masterman's insistence was that "… you have to think in two ways at the same time; because you have to think both about the nature of the 'deep things' of reality; and you also have to *observe yourself thinking* about these same 'deep things'" (Masterman 1989, emphasis added). What is needed is "a long hard deep look at the world, not a superficial one" (Masterman 1989, 94–95), a look which—for Christians—is guided by, but not limited by, Gospel narrative.

To contextualize that point, Masterman was writing at a time when physics was undergoing an "explanatory crisis" (Masterman 1989). Masterman regarded this crisis as nothing less than a breakdown of the metaphors used to explain and describe reality, which no longer fitted with what was being experimentally observed and discovered. As such, any hypotheses arising from these failing metaphors were not liable to produce science that advanced one's understanding. *A new set of metaphors stood to be devised*, one through which physics research could be set on a better footing, a set of metaphors to push hypothesizing and testing further, but which would inevitably be likewise temporary, lasting until a new and better set of metaphors are required once more.

The dual approach Masterman advanced (i.e., thinking, and observing oneself whilst thinking, put another way: speculation and self-critique), came to signify for Masterman some integration of comparative religion (as a source of metaphysics), and the rigors of analytic philosophy. Both were emphasized by Masterman because of her acute awareness of the failings, as well as the strengths, involved in metaphysical speculation and analytic philosophy alike. Comparative religion, which offered the creative, speculative part, (at that time) provided a rich and vital source for exploratory Christian thought and metaphysics, one unconstrained by what Masterman deemed to be the narrow straitjacket of doctrine-based study (Masterman 1989, 90). Unfortunately, such comparative religious speculation tended (and still does tend) to take flight rather easily, and degenerates into bad science fiction, wishy-washy nonsense, and plain old fantasy (Masterman 1989).

Thus, it is not sufficient merely to be creative and bold in metaphysical speculation, one needs a rigorous structure of analytic tools to ground and limit that speculation. Here, Masterman held up the philosophy of maths and science as the paradigm, which, offering the study of conceptual frameworks, provided exact techniques of analysis and mathematical models of fundamental forms of thinking. However, the problem with analytic philosophy, for Masterman, is that "it easily deteriorates into making oversimplified and emasculated models instead of real ones" (Masterman 1989). In short, analytic philosophy offers the sharp rigor needed for thinking things through, but on its own has shown itself to be uncreative, anemic, and lacking boldness in setting forth any worthwhile constructive propositions (on the metaphysical front, at least—though, it should be said, at points Masterman does not distinguish particularly clearly between metaphysics and physics proper).

Masterman cannot have been unaware of the tension involved in holding the speculative trends of comparative religion together with the rigors of analytic philosophy. Yet, she was uncompromising on this point: the strengths of both are required. Razor-sharp analytic rigor must be combined with the vital freshness of grassroots contemplative groups in order to carry understanding forwards—not just in religious understanding, but *scientific* understanding too. Science stands to gain at least as much from rigorous metaphysical speculation. Indeed, both Masterman and Emmett regarded scientists as the inheritors of the monastic contemplative traditions—though, to be fair, their definition of the word *scientist* was rather idiosyncratic, and perhaps not really representative of what is meant by the word today (or by anyone else at all, for that matter).

It is this fusion of form and content in thinking—*what* one is thinking and *how* one is thinking about it—that really informs the question of metaphor in religious language. It is not sufficient to grasp that metaphor is ubiquitous. A certain training, or habit of mind, is needed by which one seeks to deploy such stretched language in a careful manner, at once to benefit from the power of metaphor to stimulate hypothesizing and understanding, whilst not being bamboozled by that strange manner in which metaphors hide in plain sight. Again, when talking about semantic *stretching*—meaning is not literally stretched. Metaphors hide in plain sight, and part of the work of careful religious deployment of words involves fostering a certain diligence. One must carefully attend to both the necessity and potential within metaphorical language, without being hoodwinked by it either.

Masterman had the explanatory crisis in physics in mind when talking about this need for double thinking. Yet, the insights have a broader import. This dual-task cuts right to the heart of spiritual intelligence. This dual thinking—call it a *dialectical* process, forwarding something whilst being self-aware, and self-critical, of what one is saying—has often been presented as one of the key habits of spiritual and moral exercise. As Hadot observes (2002, 179), it is the dialectic, the dialogue, the double-voice, which makes for the spiritually generative power of thinking. Likewise, Hannah Arendt (1984) places this process of dialogue at the heart of moral transformation in her remarkable text on Richard III, imaged as Socrates' evil twin, whose evil comes about precisely as an ongoing process of self-talk and self-analysis.[5] Richard III *talks himself into evil* by a dialectical process, just as Socrates talks himself and his opponents, first into confusion, and then into the Good. As Stonebridge (2013) puts it: "Only through the experience of thinking, Arendt insisted, of being in dialogue with oneself, can conscience again be breathed into life. … thinking is the precondition for the return of judgment, of knowing and saying: 'this is not right'" (Stonebridge 2013).

This insight is a salutary warning against anti-intellectual elements of the various meditative and contemplative traditions on the popular market today. Following Hadot, the dialectic involved in this kind of thinking (philosophy as lived) is part of the essential ground of sophisticated moral development. As Arendt suggests, "the activity of thinking, … by actualizing the dialogue of me and myself which is given in consciousness, produces *conscience* as a by-product" (Arendt 1978, in Passerin d'Entreves 2019). For Socrates and Richard III alike, it is the doubleness of mind, the dialogue, that creates the moral (and evil, respectively) conscience that drives their action. In terms of spiritual intelligence, one might say, *reflexivity* is key.

Rooting this dialectic in something like a *way of life* has to be a crucial dimension informing spiritual intelligence. A dual-approach plays a role in keeping oneself *accountable* to one's faith. The point here cannot simply be to engage in some semantic playfulness, to gain some abstract self-insight into how one is using words. It is the grounding with respect to one's way of life that this dual-approach needs to serve. The dialectic, the double voice (one voice: speculative and audacious, the other: critical, formal, strict) is necessary to keep oneself faithful, in word and deed, to what one claims to be committed to. This aspect of ongoing metacognitive work invites one to cast spiritual intelligence in a formative light. Spiritual intelligence might be said to involve a habit of reflecting one's ideas back to oneself and examining, not just whether they are apt, but whether *one is living one's life in a way that is apt to those ideas.*

Conceptual Exploration—How Metaphor Leads and Misleads

> Metaphor's centrality follows naturally from the infinite extensibility of language use, the majority of which extensions would be, at first at least, metaphorical in nature. (Wilks 2005, 14)

Metaphor is part of how language grows and changes, how it creatively expands. Such expansion is potentially unlimited because, as noted at above, understanding unfolds by means of creating analogies between different things. Since the list of possible analogies that might be drawn between things to illuminate them is infinite (i.e., anything can be juxtaposed with anything), the scope for the metaphorical advancement of understanding, likewise, is in principle infinite. Operationalization of this can be found in Edward de Bono's *Lateral Thinking* (2009), which poses a discipline of creating jarring juxtapositions to promote creativity. The point is not just to make new connections, but to learn something about the workings of the mind itself (this is another form of the dual-approach). Regardless of how unrelated a set of objects might be, no matter how jarring their juxtaposition may be, the mind will still find some point of connection between them if given time and attention. Finding patterns and analogies between things, regardless of how opposed or unrelated they may be, is something that the mind just naturally seems to want to do. This is exactly why a self-critical approach to speculative thinking is needed.

Metaphor is a powerful guide for advancing human understanding, but it is not always a reliable guide. Or at least, metaphorical stretching limits at the same time as it enlightens. Hence, the need for the dual approach: to keep a keen eye on the possibilities as well as the limits of the metaphors being used. A look at the indispensable role metaphor plays in scientific advancement will be illuminative. In science, as Michael Ruse and Mary Midgley point out: development happens all the time by exploring metaphors. Terms like *genetic code, population drift, clockwork universe, machine universe, the brain is a computer*, and so on, have all been used to guide understanding in very significant ways (Ruse 2010, Midgley 2011). If one believes the brain is a computer, then this structures the hypotheses that one creates for empirical testing (likewise, makes difficult certain alternative noncomputational concepts of the brain).

As with religious images, certain metaphors in science can become so well worn that it comes as a genuine surprise when someone points out that many scientific terms are *just metaphors* after all. The genetic code is not literally a code. The brain is not literally a computer. As Midgely writes:

> This machine imagery has been so useful in many scientific contexts that many people no longer think of it as a metaphor but as a scientific fact. Thus, much as they might say "soot is just carbon" or "penguins are just birds", they remark in passing that the human brain is just a computer made of meat. They don't think of this as a metaphor at all. (Midgley 2011, 27)

Metaphors are generative, they extend the understanding, but taken exclusively, they close off alternative ways of understanding things. One of the benefits of religious language is that, usually, it offers no systematic or consistent metaphorical system. Religious language offers an overflow of utterly inconsistent, if not directly contradictory, metaphors in its routine expressions. By way of example, in Scripture, the Holy Spirit is alternatively, fire (Acts 2:3), water (John 7:37), wind (John 3:8), dove (Luke 3:22), and various other images are used besides. It would be as foolish to ask: *Well, which is it? Is the Spirit fire, or is it water, or is it wind?* regarding the reality of the Holy Spirit as it is to settle on a singular metaphor in science as final, or in any other descriptive domain. No single likeness is going to do the job. Nothing can be closed off in this manner. This process of reflexive appraisal never ends. There is no final metaphor which wraps everything up, not in science and certainly not in religious life.

For an illustration of this need to keep on tarrying and struggling with one's words, one might look to Rowan Williams' extensive writings on apophatic theology (Williams 2020). Williams describes the manner in which the Church Fathers struggled with the words they used. They understood that God infinitely outstripped their words, and struggled with the problem of how it might be possible *to use words at all* when trying to talk about God (Williams 2020). Again, there is a dual-movement, both speaking and problematizing what one says (Newheiser 2019, 8). It seemed not to be enough merely to acknowledge that their words were inadequate, not enough to remain in dumb silence. Rather there is fruit to be gained in the investigation of why exactly one's words are falling short. The Church Fathers were not merely stunned into silence by God's grandeur. Having a vocation to speak, to praise, to reflect meant that a way of speaking had to be developed—a way of speaking was needed that both satisfied the need to praise and understand, whilst simultaneously taking account of its own shortcomings. Metaphor and analogy (and negation as part of that pattern) were some of the paths they chose. The shortcomings of one image lead to another image, and to another. Hence the importance of the double task, the dialectic which keeps moving things along. Without having that self-awareness, that self-critical edge with respect to what one is saying, there is a constant tendency to get muddled, to get bewitched, by the images one is using to stretch the understanding. Instead, there is something ongoing, dynamic in the process of struggling to use religious language. The use of metaphor is part of an ongoing wrangling with words and images.

In sum: One must use religious language whilst also knowing that language causes problems. There is always a struggle in spiritual language between the use of words and the manner in which those words are being applied out of their ordinary usage and do not really fit. Perhaps one could say that spiritual language (metaphysics too) is a task of using ill-fitting words in a well-fitting manner without degenerating into unnecessary vagueness and without getting lost in any particular image either. Ideally, one should not have to wait for an explanatory crisis in order to seek to find new modes of representation. The dialectical approach encourages this kind of exploration as a certain reflexive habit of thought.

Part 2—Translation, Ambiguity, and Coherence

Part 2 gets to the heart of Masterman's work on machine translation: How is it that one can hear or look at words and take meaning from them at all? As noted above, metaphysical language and ordinary religious language both involve stretched uses of language. Grasping the meaning of words is, thankfully, something one is able to do without having the least understanding of how one manages to do it. Yet, exploring the question of how one gets the meaning of stretched religious language can be illuminating for thinking about spiritual intelligence. When Theresa of Avila, or John of the Cross, or Julian of Norwich, or any such spiritual giants, talk about exalted states of contemplation, advanced spiritual experiences, they are using words in ways that—to put it baldly—most persons have no direct way of making sense of, not having had the experiences themselves. Saint Theresa of Avila's account of her transverberation is a classic point in case, she writes:

> I saw in his hand a long spear of gold, and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart, and to pierce my very entrails; when he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out also, and to leave me all on fire with a great love of God. The pain was so great, that it made me moan; and yet so surpassing was the sweetness of this excessive pain, that I could not wish to be rid of it. The soul is satisfied now with nothing less than God. The pain is not bodily, but spiritual; though the body has its share in it. It is a caressing of love so sweet which now takes place between the soul and God, that I pray God of His goodness to make him experience it who may think that I am lying. (Theresa of Avila [1582] 1904)

How is one to know what to make of these words? The same problem arises in understanding the words describing all religious and mystical experiences. Such stretched language, it will be suggested, serves as a set of signposts—guiding terms which often employ everyday or completely recognizable language (gold, light, fire, spears, piercings, brides and bridegrooms, bedchambers, water, wind, and so on), but in a manner stretched to refer to experiences that are, actually, very far beyond what the reader has any point of reference to. A lot of such stretched spiritual language, it will be suggested, stands as a kind of waypoint—means for communicating an experience that most of the readers will either have no possible point of connection to, or at best the most approximate and foggy sense of. Such stretched terms are the only way the authors can describe to readers—*and to themselves*—the contents of their own religious experience. Such language directs the seeker towards things to look for and stimulates the imagination, somewhat like postcards sent from someone ahead of one on a journey.

Masterman's account of *coherence*—the sense of the meaning of words that emerges through repetition and redundancy—offers a striking way of describing how persons make sense of spiritual and metaphysical language, particularly that which is ambiguous, unusual, and pointing to experiences or ideas far advanced of what the reader has obtained in his or her own spiritual work. Herein, the sense of difficult metaphysical or spiritual language comes clear, gradually, *not in any one particular sentence or word*, but only by wrestling with a larger passage as a whole, whose repetitions and reiterations and (seemingly) redundant excesses are essentially what allow the reader to gradually hone in on what is meant (albeit, without ever getting quite to the bottom of things). As such, *the process of grasping the sense of difficult religious and spiritual language can be characterized as a gradually emerging coherence, pieced together through repetition and reiteration (requiring persevering attention).* Perhaps most importantly, this means that understanding the meaning of spiritual texts is necessarily grounded on some virtues—not least of all, patience, attention, perseverance, and an ongoing will to engage and understand. Only on the basis of such persevering work could the meaning of very difficult, ambiguous religious language be allowed to emerge as a projected unity, of coherence, of meaning.

Apprehending Meaning: Semantics not Syntactics

How do humans extract meanings from words? The problems of machine translation—having a computer translate text from one language into another—really bring this question home. What is so often the most natural and effortless of powers, grasping the meaning of what is said to us, becomes a shockingly mysterious problem as soon as one tries to teach a computer to do so. As Masterman saw, the problem of machine translation demands the creation of a model of how persons understand the meaning of words.

One of the more revolutionary aspects of Masterman's approach was a focus on *semantic* meaning, the sense of a sentence, rather than on analysis of the syntactic structure of sentences, grammatical structure or syntactic parsing (Wilks 2005, 3). As Wilks put it, Masterman's approach:

> … would include that same ambiguous attitude that Wittgenstein himself had towards language in relations to logic: that logic is magnificent, but no guide to language. If anything, the reverse is the case, and logic and reasoning itself can only be understood as a scholarly product of language users. Language itself is always primary … (Wilks 2005, 16)

For Masterman, formal logic was grounded on ordinary language use. In contrast, knowledge representation schemes constituted a neatened, polished, but inaccurate picture of the way ordinary language works (Wilks 2005, 17). The point is significant: There is a distinction between language as it is actually used, versus the formal, logically ordered, grammatically correct versions of a language known by scholars. If all one does is teach a machine how to work with the formal syntactical structure of language, then the machine is not going to be able to grasp language as it is ordinarily used, nor will it be able to respond to humans in any ordinarily comprehensible way. Lydia Liu expressed the difference between ordinary and formal language as follows:

> [Masterman's] main objection to the prevailing theory of syntactic structure is that Chomsky's syntactic rules are modeled on logical calculus, not on natural languages that are flexible, rich, ambiguous, metaphorical, and infinitely extensible. Like other rules derived from the calculus, syntactic rules subtract their linguistic facts "from that very superficial and highly redundant part of language that children, aphasics, people in a hurry, and colloquial speakers always, quite rightly, drop" … Masterman contends that the ambiguities and indeterminate meanings in natural languages are not a defect to be overcome by substituting a purified language of logical calculus. (Liu 2021, 430)

Thus, for Masterman, it was NLP that needed to be the central focus, which allowed one to begin to model "the multiplicity and indeterminacy of word meanings" (Liu 2021, 430)—not the abstract and excessively neat, formal rules of logic. As Wilks put it, Masterman wanted to build language processing programs that had "*a sound philosophical basis*" (Wilks 2005, 3). It was clear that the syntactic approach dominating the scene was not up to the job.

Apprehending Meaning: Ambiguity and Coherence

One problem with sense-making is *ambiguity*. Though persons can often grasp the meaning of words at lightning speed, there are times when one becomes confused by the speech of others, when one does not know in exactly what sense to take their words, either because many possible senses present themselves, or no sense whatsoever can be made of the words. One gets right to the core of the problem of machine translation when faced with this question of ambiguity. Even if a machine is programmed with the full range of meanings for a word, on what basis should it select one sense over another? How can a machine be programmed to know what is the relevant meaning of a set of words in a given sentence? What is the process of *disambiguation*? Liu writes:

> … we still find ourselves wondering what the meaning of a word is and how we are to determine its semantic boundaries. … We are unable clearly to circumscribe the concepts we use; not because we don't know their real definition, but because there is no real 'definition' to them … in The Blue Book, Wittgenstein begins to develop one of his best-known arguments in the discussion of language games: the meaning of a word (or phrase) is not a mental state or "a mental accompaniment to the expression" but "the use we make of it" … He argues that there is no such a thing as private language because the meaning of a word happens in the context of language use and will always change depending upon the next context in which the word is used. (Liu 2021, 435)

Disambiguation is not always easy. All sorts of confusions and crossed wires occur in everyday speech, which is often truncated, not sufficiently explicit, and uses lots of indeterminate words like *it*, or *him*, or *them* without making clear what the subjects and objects in question are. For computational purposes, per NLP, Masterman developed an approach which used thesauri for sense disambiguation (more in Part 3). For present purposes, what is particularly germane is Masterman's characterization of the *making sense* of difficult words—which is a process of the gradual emergence of coherence, which comes about through absorbing various aspects of the larger text one is perusing.

The key to making sense of ambiguous words is the repetitive and redundant structures in language use. Repetition is used in language to clear up ambiguities, by saying the same thing over and over again, usually in different ways. Redundancy is a signal that helps hearers and readers disambiguate what is being said, allowing a coherent sense to gradually emerge out of the various retellings and the variations of use (Wilks 2005, 1). This coherence arises also out of the boundaries that exist within texts, for example, the rhythm of words, the stresses in sentences, emphases, even the breath-groupings (i.e., the amount of words that a person can comfortably say in one breath), all of which work like often-invisible punctuation, or parentheses in the spoken word, binding together statements and serving as the stage out of which coherence of meaning arises. In short: Through reiteration (and thus what seem like redundant repetitions), persons gradually *hone in* on the sense of ambiguous terms.[6]

Finding Coherence in Religious Words

For Wilks, the overarching goal of Masterman's language project was nothing less than finding the special nature of the coherence that holds language-use together—one not yet captured by conventional logic or linguistics—it would be: " … a coherence that drew natural language and metaphysics together in a way undreamed of by linguistic philosophers … in which the solution to problems of language would have profound consequences for the understanding of the world and mind itself" (Wilks 2005, 16–17).

One problem for understanding especially difficult religious language, as indicated above, is that such language is often profoundly ambiguous. Familiar words and images are being used to convey some stretched meaning, and one does not necessarily know what the stretched meaning points to. Such ambiguous terms could mean any number of things, or nothing. One often does not have the grounding experiences or background to make sense of the ideas being forwarded. Confusion about ambiguities in religious language, the need for stretching oneself so as to be able to accommodate new meanings in familiar words, is what one sees enshrined in Nicodemus' comical lack of comprehension of Jesus' injunction that his followers need to be born of the spirit (John 3:2). Right from the start, Scripture indicates that a surface reading of Jesus' injunctions is simply not going to be sufficient to grasp the meanings at play. More work, more engagement, more perseverance in following these words is going to be needed if their sense is to continue to emerge.

Such a lack of reference is similar to the problem any beginner faces in learning a specialized vocabulary, or in developing an understanding of a new paradigm—one has to walk some new terrain, feel one's way about, pick up some idiomatic ways of doing things, work within some new vernacular, participate in some new language games. One might have no frame of reference for making sense of such new and ambiguous terms, or worse, one might be impeded in one's understanding by a preexisting frame of reference which no longer serves. Bertrand Russell once quipped that it is easier to teach Einstein's relativity theory to a child than to those trained in pre-relativistic physics. Part of the difficulty of making sense of religious ideas is that one might have an inappropriate framework for mapping the sense of words, or no real way of orienting oneself at all.

The problem of making sense of difficult religious language is exactly that of stretching oneself.[7] All kinds of growth require a little stretching of oneself beyond one's previous limits. This is the same with all processes of cultural elevation, the cultivation of certain tastes, in wine, music, and so on. One is learning to get to grips with something that is not immediately comprehensible, not immediately gratifying. One is beginning to find a set of senses, or limbs, that one never knew ~~one~~ were available, and using them in a way one never knew to be possible. That is cultivation. One parallel here might be with premodern Japanese poetry (*waka* and *renga*), which was explicitly fashioned as a way of cultivating one's emotions. Rather than directly expressing one's emotions, one spoke through reference to, say, falling blossoms, the evening cry of the stag, and so on (Shirane 2013, 41). These were not just euphemisms or veiled speech (though, such *pillow words* were also used). Rather, the fixed poetic vocabulary gave ways of putting into words an awareness of something ordinarily inaccessible. Therein lay a genuine cultivation of the emotions. Through such *waka* poetry, one cultivates the ability not just to express oneself, but actually to feel in a certain manner. It is part of the process of the cartography of the soul, attempts to make articulate various aspects of the person that are extremely subtle, even imperceptible. Until the words are provided, and the senses cultivated, one stands with respect to these feelings as a baby does before it has learnt to articulate its desires. A baby simply cries out, but does not know what it is crying for. The project of poetic cultivation of the emotions (or, in this case, spiritual cultivation) is that task of giving words and voice to aspects of oneself that cry out, but one does not know what for.

These parallels offer a striking way of capturing the sense-making work involved in difficult spiritual texts. What one has is a cartography which maps potentiality for meaning, as yet uncultivated. Above all, these texts *give us words*, it makes potentialities within us articulate, brings them to awareness. Some part of spiritual intelligence resides in this making articulate increasingly subtle levels of the person's spiritual being and needs. To draw a crude analogy with emotional intelligence, which can be said to involve an articulate awareness of what persons are feeling, a like spiritual intelligence might involve an articulate perception of spiritual needs and voices, which often cry out, but without necessarily having the words to cry with. This is by no means to equate spiritual intelligence with emotional intelligence, nor with the crude quantitative measures of "SQ" (like IQ, except *spiritual*) on the popular market. However, it is important to see that understanding spiritual intelligence points to a certain quality of perceptiveness, an ability to articulate certain spiritual depths of soul.

One might suggest that Masterman's ideas about repetition, reiteration, and redundancy in bringing about a sense of coherence to ambiguous words is an important guide for a spiritually intelligent approach to reading difficult religious language. It is precisely in the repetition, hearing and re-hearing the words, going over and over them again and again, keeping an eye open to the reiterations, the redundancy (cf., Julian of Norwich: "all shall be well, all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well"—which resounds over and over through the pages of the text [(1373) 2007, 48, 49, 53, 55, 57, 60-1]), for gradually getting to grips with something outside one's usual frame of reference. The point is to get away from thinking that words have clear conceptual boundaries. One cannot understand ambiguous language just by analyzing a particular word, sentence, or paragraph. The meaning of stretched words is not in any given snippet of the text. Rather, comprehension here is a more holistic process—taking a text in, again and again, which helps generate a hermeneutic circle of understanding which fills in the gaps, finds interpretative clues, and gradually comes to allow the reader to make more and more sense of the words that have been presented. With reference to Part 1 above, by careful use of metaphor and striking images (setting up waypoints between familiar and unfamiliar, one thing posed as another), repetitive seeking facilitates the emergence of some coherent sense to difficult and ambiguous words.

Coherence, characterized as a kind of *honing in*, is a matter of *degrees* of clarity, a task without final perfection. Pickstock cites Masterman's work on ideograms:

> … as Masterman argues, since the initial concept is somewhat open to vagueness, the qualifying term can be perceived as analogically akin to it, *without one being able to reduce this likeness to univocity*. In an equivalent way, it can also be unlike, without one being able to reduce this to equivocity. The reason for this likeness and unlikeness, in both cases, is that the initial statement is not sufficiently precise for one to secure exactness of agreement or contradiction. Rather, the addition of ideographic qualifications is itself the very attempt to arrive at further exact specification or disambiguation, *even though this process can never be brought to completion, but involves receding aspectual insight*. (Pickstock 2015, 213 [emphases added])

Pickstock's phrasing "receding aspectual insight" captures the process of comprehending spiritually difficult language perfectly. If one is trying to cope with the language of Theresa of Avila, say, in describing contemplative union with God in the final Mansion of the Interior Castle, there is only ever going to be a certain extent to which one can make sense of what she is saying. But, instead of approaching such ideas as a proposition-by-proposition accretion of meaning (as if the process of understanding difficult ideas were a like building a tower, brick upon brick), rather one should try to see things as a honing in, as the emergence of some overall sense of coherence. The emergence of meaning, in this sense, is more like a combination of notes, as one describes a perfume (an olfactory alternative to the usual musical analogy). Semantics units then describe the curious effect of the various notes of a fragrance which somehow merge to produce the overall scent (in such a metaphor, one could just as well say that a sentence has *sense*, as that it has *scents*).

In sum: there are no shortcuts in appraising difficult language, but understanding disambiguation as a process of honing in, as one of a gradually emerging coherence, offers something like a message of hope. Even in what is apparently the most impenetrable religious language, one is able to get coherent sense to emerge, and one does so by repetition and by attending to redundancies and stresses. If one cultivates a spirit for repetition, and does not expect everything to come clear all at once (after all: if everything is clear on first reading, that means one has not learned anything really new). Thus, if spiritual intelligence marks out a facility to cope with difficult religious language, it also involves a sensitivity to the need to stretch oneself.

If difficult religious language means that one has to build up a new frame of reference, if it is like cartography, or something to give voice to a part of oneself crying in some inarticulate manner, then spiritual intelligence needs to be explored in light of such self-stretching. As in Part 1, such spiritual intelligence is grounded on a whole set of virtues—not least of these are: perseverance, patience, and here: a willingness to engage with difficult language, and a willingness to be stretched by it. Where difficult religious language genuinely does mark out new territory (rather than being merely mystifying and unnecessarily verbose), it takes a certain amount of willingness to be stretched in order to find coherence in it. The prize for this work is something akin to when a child, previously crying without words for what it needs, learns to sense what it needs, give words to that need, and speak up for it. Spiritual intelligence, in this sense, represents the cultivation of new awareness, a sense that was previously inaccessible. Such cultivation comes, in part, through the hard work of bringing to emergence some coherence to difficult religious language, the willingness to seek sense in that which is difficult to comprehend.

PART 3—THESAURI AND THE INFINITE EXTENSION OF MEANING

If Part 2 sprang from concerns about disambiguation, one might say Part 3 is about *re*ambiguation. Put another way: where Part 2 was concerned with the ability to *hone in* on meaning, Part 3 is about a facility for *extending* or *exploring* layers and associations of meaning. If the ability to hone in on meaning is necessary where religious language is unclear, then a facility for reambiguation would serve when that religious language is deceptively clear, seemingly unproblematic, or too smoothly worn by overuse. A kind of semantic exploration, reambiguation, an examination of the semantic neighborhoods, as it were, that our religious terminology inhabits, offers a route for nourishing one's sense of religious language by discovering ever newer layers of meaning infolded into it—even regarding the most well-worn religious language. This process, call it: reambiguation (not too distant from its more famed cousin, *defamiliarization*) might be said to involve not just an approach to religious language, but, in extremis, something like an orientation towards the re-enchantment of daily life too, the search for spiritual meaning in everyday matters, by purposefully exploring scope for finding meaning, particularly spiritual meaning, in the quotidian world. For, the everyday world, like so much religious language, is largely taken for granted and its richness is too often passed over without notice.

Spiritual intelligence, in its widest scope, might then involve some facility for looking more probingly into daily existence and allowing new sense, new meaning to emerge from (what is too often taken to be) flat, secular materiality. Mindfulness advocates continually indicate that the simple task of washing the dishes holds every bit as much spiritual promise as gazing upon a sunset from atop a snow-crusted mountain peak. Much the same is true, in semantic terms, for deepening one's appreciation of the significance of the most basic quotidian realities, a certain linguistic practice of spiritual appreciation of the everyday might be read out of Masterman's thesis on the infinite extensibility of meaning.

Semantic Neighborhoods

In Part 2, disambiguation was couched in terms of reiteration and coherence. Masterman constructed that into a very specific and precise model for use in machine translation. This semantic approach centered on using thesauri as ways of triangulating meaning for ambiguous words. As Wilks suggests, Masterman envisaged thesauri as potentially revealing the underlying structure of semantic relations in natural language (Wilks 2005, 2). Liu writes on Masterman's use of thesauri as follows:

> The CLRU [Cambridge Language Research Unit] addressed the problem of lexical disambiguation, and advocated the use of a thesaurus as a means of characterizing word meanings, in part because the structure of a thesaurus naturally supports procedures for determining the senses of words or, complementarily, for finding words for meanings. The assumption is that text has to be repetitive to be comprehensible so, in the simplest case in disambiguation, if a word's senses are characterized by several thesaurus classes, or heads, the relevant one will be selected because it is repeated in the list for some other text word. (Spärck Jones 1972 in Liu 2021, 452–53)[8]

A thesaurus contains a range of synonyms for any given word, and as one goes through the words in a text, a range of overlapping synonyms can be found. One can gather together overlapping synonyms across the various words and thereby triangulate the appropriate sense of a word. This is how reiteration produces coherent meaning. Even though words could mean a whole variety of things, when placed in the surrounding text, the overlapping senses tend to stress one overall sense. As Masterman puts it: "These units are then mathematically combined to give a description in 'head-language'" which is computable (Masterman 1977, 58).

One need not go too deeply into the mathematical intricacies here regarding Masterman's models of fans and lattices (i.e., arrangements of the relations between the words, connecting their different senses and meanings). After all, as Wilks notes, neither lattices nor fans are really adequate to cope with the interrelation of the meanings of words. According to Wilks, the project of fans and lattices was "not very successful" because—though fans mapped the spreading of the new senses of words indefinitely—fans lack the recursive structure to capture much, and lattices were too restrictive (Wilks 2005, 6–7). Neither words nor things fall under a taxonomic tree structure. As Wilks states, the relation of meanings is more like "tangled hierarchies" than tree taxonomies.

Even without appealing to Masterman's mathematical precision, her approach definitively involves an overall *orientation* towards meaning and language—a way of viewing sense-making—which shifts the understanding of meaning more towards semantic *extension*, moving away from any neat correspondence view of language, any nominalism. Herein, the potentiality for meaning is seen more like a fluid, associative nebula, branching off in all directions. This has proven stimulating and fruitful, in machine translation. As Liu remarks of "vector-space semantics," which is:

> … a popular method in NLP [natural language processing] that works by finding clusters in the semantic space of a word and measuring how closely any individual use of the word sits near each cluster … vector-space semantics is "a theory of ambiguity, pushing strongly against the impulse to draw clear boundaries that isolate words into discrete concepts." (Liu 2021, 449)

Theologically, it is the talk of "spaces" and "clusters" of meaning (opposing any idea that words have clear and sharp definitions corresponding to them), that has been so helpful in moving the understanding of language forward. As for the issue of Masterman's insistence on extraordinary precision, things get a little more complicated when moving these ideas into a theological domain. After all, theology has its own standards of precision, its own kind of rigor, which is not the same mathematical or empirical sort applied by Masterman in creating fans and lattices for exploring semantic connections, nor for providing a systematic program for practical machine translation purposes. The sense of fans and lattices regarding semantic connections, in theological context, ceases to be the mathematically precise model Masterman deployed, and becomes something more like an emblem for characterizing the possibilities for exploring meaning, an image for the possibilities for re-representing reality (to use Williams' term), and metaphysical claims about the nature of reality as an implicate order (that is: of creation as having meaning already in it, ready to be discovered, a superabundance of meaning, which grounds the human ability to plunge ever-deeper into the nature of reality through disciplined attempts to understand and represent that reality). Masterman's orientation away from logocentrism and towards alternative, more combinatory forms of logic, as found in her presentation of ideogrammic language, provided theologians with an alternative way of thinking about language. Pickstock writes on Williams:

> Following Margaret Masterman, [Williams] sidelines the linguistically concomitant expression of things in terms of subject and predicate, in favour of an ideogrammatic approach to an holistic picture, "fan" or "spray" of a thing, through its complex co-ordinates, near and far, causal, simultaneous and consequent, via a kind of panoptic mapping or archiving of contingency … ideographic clusters or vertices of interlocking networks, densities and pressures obtain at all intermediate levels of reality, but there is no authoritative or natural calligraphy. It is this middle position which we must try to echo in our own writing, if its many-sidedness is to give us to, and embed us within many sided reality. (Pickstock 2015, 613)

Reambiguation

When it comes to modelling how humans grasp meaning, perhaps no perfect mathematical precision is really possible (though Masterman would have despised any lazy attempt to throw in the towel on that account). It could be, ironically, the *inefficiency* of the human creature's sense-making powers that give it such rich potential for expanding and exploring the ambiguities in the meanings of things. This stands in contrast to the computer's instruction-based, algorithmic and statistical method of translation, which may help explain why AI translation has only ever managed to produce a "good enough" translation of text (Wilks 2016). AI may well do a good enough job of translation but always needs some human handholding in translating the finer points—not just because humans genuinely do grasp the sense of words (whereas machines are working by statistics), but more importantly, *humans can find rich meaning in nonsense as much as sense*. Humans can make meaning, or find meaning (the difference between making and finding meaning is not always clear-cut).[9] Strangely, it is often the lack of meaning (the lack of coherence, to use Masterman's word), that sends the mind into something like a tailspin in which a search for meaning is provoked. The richness of human sense-making may be derived from the inefficient, lagging, reiterative, forgetful, mistake-prone, mis-hearing, mis-understanding, scattered, tangent-making, attention-drifting, sleep-requiring, haphazard, fantasy-prone, and wildly imaginative projective tendencies of the mind that are often so creative in how humans make sense of things. It is exactly this kind of fuzziness in human sense-making apparatus which makes for the nebulaic quality of meaning-spaces and gives the human person such a rich capacity to discover new meaning in that which lacks coherence.

A general orientation to language and meaning as infinitely extensible, as something which is not settled, not neat, not final, might provide an important background component to a spiritually intelligent approach to religious language. One of the big problems with religious language is how taken for granted it quickly becomes. Words lose their luster, and some kind of provocation is often required in order for one to look twice at common religious language. Provocation is needed to remind one that there is a meaning *space* in religious language, rather than anything too fixed or finally pinned down. Understanding that this is part of the nature of language itself is an insight which helps in seeking such provocations, and helps us not be too disturbed when one finds religious language too difficult to make sense of. In this regard, one part of spiritual intelligence may involve something like forcing oneself into a state of incoherence in order to provoke a keen sense that one does *not* understand. One needs to let oneself be ruffled by seemingly mundane terms one takes for granted. One uses terms like *God is love* so often that one becomes inured to the range of problems and baggage that such a proposition implies. Some aspect of spiritual intelligence may lie in letting such terms become a problem. Reambiguation, a discipline of working to remove the apparent coherence of one's usual religious thinking may be very productive in stimulating a search for meaning, finding new patterns of coherence in that which is merely accepted without thought.

As stated above, Masterman saw the explanatory crisis in physics as an opportunity to rethink the assumptions and metaphors one uses in exploring reality. Again, there is no need to await such crises, nor are they limited to physics discourse. Crises of meaning, or at least, some measure of palpable confusion can be manufactured by creating a certain kind of awareness of meaning, an orientation towards meaning. As an orientation, one can begin to habitually treat meaning as something that is infinitely extensible—something that can be pushed, pressurized, extended, played with, used to explore new ways of characterizing the new realities that one faces.

Coherence and ambiguity are significant terms here. For, that which clears up ambiguity can be deployed to create ambiguity too. What so much ordinary religious language desperately needs is something to make it stand out again. What is needed is the perception that one's usual words are at risk of losing their coherence in order to provoke the sense-finding activity of the mind. Jarring shifts of sense which obviously overstep comfortable semantic borders are provocations which seemingly compel the mind to restructure and reappraise what it is looking at. Playing with the different senses of words and exploring associative meaning-spaces takes away the sense of familiarity that one invests in words. This is, in some measure, close to Jesus' parable approach, to invite engagement and some searching for a deeper, nonsurface meaning, rather than laying everything out in perfectly clear, easily bullet-pointed terms. A certain facility for self-consciously using language to purposefully make *un*clear in evocative ways, to actively engage with the infinite extensibility of meaning, to explore, to expand upon, might be one potential dimension of spiritual intelligence. Of course, this all relies on the reader being willing to engage with such confusions.

This attempt to push the mind into a state of emergency, or to foster some loss of coherence, wherein the mind is sent on a search for meaning, speaks to Article 3 in this series. In the ritual and embodied cognition article, one of the primary concerns was the interaction between different semantic systems (drawing on Phil Barnard's ICS model). It is an error to imagine that the only semantic system one has is verbal. If one wishes to present a rich picture of how humans make sense of things, looking to the verbal level alone is not going to be adequate. In fact, it is the interplay, the interaction, between kinds of semantic information that captures a broader picture of human sense-making. The idea that the lack of coherence sends the mind into a search for meaning points straight back to the significance of this interplay between modes of semantic information, verbal and intuitive. If the verbal level is not the whole of human meaning-making, then this principle of the infinite extensibility of meaning might not just apply to the senses of words. In fact, *there might be a broader program which spreads out to the search for meaning across the whole of one's life*. The play of coherence, incoherence and the extensibility of meaning can be applied to create miniature crises with respect to whatever situation one is embedded within.

A larger question, therefore, for a cognitive account of spiritual intelligence is how one draws spiritual meaning, not just from words, *but from anything at all*. This points to a spirituality of the everyday. The same need for defamiliarization applies not just to written and spoken words, but to that which is mundane and passed over without notice in daily life. One can provoke a search for meaning by looking at everything mundane as involving a meaning-space—rather than as having the settled meaning one gives to it. The significance of any mundane thing can be expanded infinitely, regarded as nebulaic in potential. In Blake's famous words, one can learn to: "… see a World in a Grain of Sand." Generally, this verse is taken to refer to a mystic vision, a mystic insight of the boundless unity of all things. Equally, such a vision can be understood as semantically driven, a statement of recognizing our interdependence. Looking at a tree one can think about the sun needed to feed that tree, the soil, the rain ("In these fresh vegetables I see a green sun" [Hanh 2011, 128]). One can indeed learn to see the whole universe in a grain of sand, because the one is implied in the other, dependent on the other. What is this but an example of the infinitely expanding potential for reinvesting a spiritual sense into everything, however small and seemingly insignificant it is taken to be?

The importance of drawing spiritual meaning from the everyday, of discovering meaning in the quotidian rhythms and patterns of life, is beautifully expressed by James Martineau (1847, cited by William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*):

> And if we cannot find God in your house or in mine, upon the roadside or the margin of the sea; in the bursting seed or opening flower; in the day duty or the night musing; in the general laugh and the secret grief; in the procession of life, ever entering afresh, and solemnly passing by and dropping off; I do not think we should discern him any more on the grass of Eden, or beneath the moonlight of Gethsemane. … And he who will but discern beneath the sun, as he rises any morning, the supporting finger of the Almighty, may recover the sweet and reverent surprise with which Adam gazed on the first dawn in Paradise. It is no outward change, no shifting in time or place; but only the loving meditation of the pure in heart, that can reawaken the Eternal from the sleep within our souls: that can render him a reality again, and reassert for him once more his ancient name of "the Living God." (James 1902 [2018], 475)

The call is for a semantic attentiveness, a disciplined act of appreciative awareness which refuses to take the obvious, work-a-day meanings imputed to things as the final word. Such an attentiveness might be said to be the semantic counterpart to popular mindfulness practice. Mindfulness advocates, who are always telling one to be in the present moment, simply to be aware of things around us, without judgement, have important correctives to offer for an excessively busy modern world. However, there is another kind of attentiveness which is not just simple presence, rather it involves an appreciation of the meaning of things. As stated above, it is in the *interaction* between different semantic modes that new patterns really come to be discerned. Thus, a semantic attentiveness might be said to be the counterpart for quietly attending to the world. Words and quietness need not be opposites but complements offering a much richer spiritual whole. Mindfulness cannot then just be a quiet, nonjudgmental awareness of sounds and smells and the soles of our feet. Mindful awareness benefits from a careful attention to *meaning*. It is the interplay that has so much promise as a practice of spiritual intelligence. Perhaps no mindfulness is complete without such a balancing act of carefully attending to meaning as well as the quiet suspension of words, in the interplay of these kinds of careful attending, with meaning and silence.

If Masterman is correct that there is a possibility of the infinite extensibility of meaning, then the possibilities for the semantic spiritualization of the everyday, seeing what is already infolded within it, this heightened appreciation of reality, are simply endless. As such, some habit of reambiguating the everyday, learning to see whole semantic meaning-spaces infolded in that which one usually takes for granted as settled, unproblematic, could be a significant aid in discovering for oneself the rich spiritual meanings embedded in the everyday. This could well be, as Ignatius of Loyola put it, learning to see God in all and all in God (Puhl [1951] 2020). This is a profoundly spiritual task. It is a project of appreciation, perhaps even a discipline of gratitude.

At the same time, such semantic expansiveness merits some words of constraint. This article is not particularly interested with exploring the range of techniques for defamiliarizing things. The greatest treasure-trove of such techniques, perhaps frustratingly, comes from the sorts of self-help, corporate retreat culture, creativity-enhancing methods, the best of which come from Edward de Bono (2009). Techniques involve the unusual fractionating of things and ideas, the disciplined attempts to question, the free association link-making, spider diagram drawing, lateral thinking, random stimulation, metaphor and analogy creation from bizarre juxtapositions, undergirded with an attitude of play in the overflow of generating new alternatives for creating new perspectives and links between things. This all constitutes a comprehensive system for creating newness in the familiar. Such techniques show how absolutely vertiginous are the possibilities for finding newness and meaning in that which is utterly mundane. *It is this vertiginous quality that is the problem*. The possibilities are genuinely infinite, as anything can be juxtaposed with anything else to devise some new arrangement, some new meaning-giving structure. But, how many of these possibilities have depth?

Guy Claxton's skepticism regarding such creativity fads provides a wise counter-perspective. What is needed for seeing things freshly is not so much a new technique, of which there are endless, but patience and attention (1999, 82). The constant stream of new techniques just feeds the same old impatience that is unwilling to sit with something and nurture it as it flowers. One wants a quick trick to make some new creative leap. But, as suggested in Article 1—a certain slowness, a willingness to stick with something and explore it, to let it unfold over time, trumps any particular attempt to create endless artificial (and superficial) random links between things. Yes, a certain orientation towards language is highly illuminating—it is helpful to realize that words do not have neat conceptual boundaries, that meaning is more like an associative space than a direct correspondence, that meaning can be (in principle) infinitely extended. These insights are helpful, but only if one has the basic ground of patience, a certain slowness. Otherwise, the excitement over the pleroma of potential meaning to be found in the world collapses under the weight of its own vertiginous infinitude. *When everything can be meaningful, nothing is*. Very quickly the infinite possibilities for rerepresenting reality can collapse into nihilism, indifference. Simply by virtue of the endless possibilities for creatively extending meaning, one connection is infinitely replaceable with another. If nothing has time to take root, then nothing is fundamentally meaningful. Thus, slowness and patience are required. As in Parts 1 and 2 above, spiritual intelligence needs a grounding in certain virtues to prevent this playfulness with meaning from degenerating into some merely superficial overproduction of largely meaningless semantic connections between things. Yes, meaning can be extended infinitely, but without feeding that meaning back into one's way of life, without dwelling on meaning such that it can nourish one's way of life, the threat of superficiality is always there, likewise the threat of just getting lost in worlds of ungrounded abstractions. If spiritual intelligence requires some feeding back into one's way of living, then spiritual intelligence necessarily requires one to take things a little more slowly, to be a little more attentive, a little more patient, to be willing to sit by a singular cause that one cares about deeply, nourishing it as it semantically flowers and unfolds.

Concluding Remarks

> Since the rise of modern science, we have learnt something here about the conditions of knowledge on which we cannot go back. If an intuitive state of mind can lead to understanding, this is not to say that intuition can be a substitute for systematic thinking and empirical testing. Yet these may not be the sufficient conditions of creative thinking, and here the tradition of *Theoria* has had something to say. (Emmett 1966, 15)

The aspiration of the Epiphany Philosophers, of whom Masterman was a member, was to use religious contemplation and meditation as a scientific inspiration, to produce testable contributions to a scientific understanding of the world. Dorothy Emmett writes beautifully on the ancient view of philosophy as, what Hadot would later describe, a way of life. Contemplation leads to theory, and needs a way of life to support that. Emmett writes:

> … the notion of *Theoria* as it came down from the Greek philosophers also stood for a belief that mysticism could degenerate into emotion and pious formulae unless it was flanked on one side by moral development and on the other side by intellectual effort. When this happened, it was claimed that not only could these purify the mystical experience, but it in its turn could inspire them. (Emmett 1966, 18)

Equally, however, that which is gleaned through contemplation also shapes that way of life. The person is *changed* by the long efforts (lifelong) at theorizing and contemplation. One's way of life does not just ground and make possible the process from *theoria* to theory. The way of life is altered by what is learned. Per Peter Harrison's (2015) historical analysis of the categories of science and religion as they existed before the seventeenth century—*scientia* and *religio*—these terms referred at least as much to inner dispositions of the person as they did to any external body of knowledge or doctrine. To practice science, per *scientia*, is nothing less than building up of a *habit of inquiry*, a *habitus mentis*, "that is, reliable, stable and clear" (Harrison 2015, 95). Yet, like the apple which falls to the ground changes the soil it falls upon, so the way of life, and the tree, is shaped by the fruit it produces. This ecology between one's way of life, and one's habits of contemplation and inquiry, is what was pointed at with the title of this article: *Theoria* to Theory *(and back again).*

What, then, has been gleaned about spiritual intelligence? Remembering that there is no total or final picture of spiritual intelligence to be found in Masterman's work (that was not her aim, and she had no such term), a wide range of very germane insights have been found. Spiritual intelligence might be said to have many dimensions, in relation to language use, and in relation to the exploration of meaning in one's life at large. Spiritual intelligence is both supported by, but also accountable to, one's way of life (i.e., if one is not even attempting to live up to one's spiritual insights, if they are but words, chitter-chatter, then this suggests something fundamental is lacking in the ecology depicted above). At the very least, understanding spiritual intelligence involves facilities to be applied, as well as being productive of insights to be lived up to.

Spiritual intelligence also involves a kind of meta-cognitive work, a dual-task of both being nimble in one's use of language whilst being self-aware of the problems and possibilities in language as one speaks. Language can both bewitch and create, for better or worse, and thus a spiritually intelligent mode of speaking requires self-conscious care in the application of words. Not least to be kept in mind as part of the self-conscious use of language is an attitude to difficulty in religious language. Through struggling with difficult terms, repetition, reiteration, use of multiple images, and some hard work, even the most difficult of metaphysical or religious terms can have some real light shed upon them (though they can never be finally wrapped up). This implies that spiritual intelligence needs to be couched in some virtues too, like perseverance, patience, and the hope (specifically a hope of being able to gain understanding), that, with repetition, one can gradually hone in, and make sense of, the most difficult of religious language, whilst yet being aware of its limits. Equally, spiritual intelligence means not taking for granted that overused religious language which is just so well worn that it loses its power. A semantically explorative approach, thinking of semantic neighborhoods, can enrich and carry forward the meanings of that which seems obvious and clear. Whether one is talking about overused religious discourse, which seems to have lost all luster, or the richness of the everyday world and everyday life, no matter how mundane, spiritual intelligence speaks to a kind of attitude of semantic exploration—*a mindful conceptual appreciation*—of one's surroundings, call it gratitude, if you will.

Finally, it is helpful here to bring to mind the God who delights in confounding the wisdom of the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27), that is, in bringing low those self-satisfied persons who *think* they know the meaning of things, who think they have everything all wrapped up, who are content merely to apply the standard categories, the usual language, without ever thinking or questioning. That God exhorts everyone to see as children, or, better, to cultivate a habit of being able to see afresh, to question, to look again, to explore the meaning of that which seems settled, quotidian, ordinary, completed. This habit of enquiry, *scientia*, embedded in *religio*, a reverential, worshipful disposition, is a mutually productive engagement of science and religion. It was the heart of the Epiphany Philosophers' mission. Therefore, Masterman's theorizing on meaning and language, and her overall orientation in her *Religious Explorations*, combine to inspire a rich set of insights speaking to numerous dimensions of what might be called spiritual intelligence, relating both to the use of religious language, to the living of one's life, and to the profound interconnections between the two.

Notes

1. Otherwise, as Dorothy Emmett put it, one ends up only giving simple answers to shallow questions (Emmett 1966, 10).

2. This goes exactly contrary to John Searle's view in *Speech Acts* (1969), which suggested that all language was essentially and primarily literal, and that persons perceive the metaphorical register only when their initial search for a literal meaning to a statement has been thwarted (i.e., one always goes for a literal sense first, and only afterwards seeks some metaphorical meaning).

3. Notice, of course, that the word *stretch* here is itself metaphorical. The words are not really stretched, yet one understands what is meant by this. There is a semantic extension achieved through mapping of one thing onto another. But then, *mapping* is metaphorical too—and so one sees just how unavoidable this metaphorical semantic stretching is, in all language, let alone something so rich as religious language.

4. As Wilks observes, even military organizations have been forced to recognize the ubiquity of metaphor in everyday speech. In 2011, the American defense agency IARPA funded six projects on machine translation of metaphor (the "Metaphor Program"). Intercepted Russian and Iranian communiques could not be deciphered precisely because of the prevalent use of nonliteral speech, not as code, but simply as part of the business of ordinary language use (https://www.iarpa.gov/index.php/research-programs/metaphor).

5. Contrasted, say, with the unthinking *banal* evil of Eichmann, what one now calls *systemic evil.* According to Arendt, Eichmann was evil, not out of any thought, but just because of the lack of thought.

6. As foreign language learners know, sense can be extracted from sentences, even when one does not know all the words. One can be surprisingly successful in getting the gist of sentences, even where a considerable number of words are unknown, by virtue of the positioning, the inflections, the statements which precede and follow, which all give the larger sense of the passage out of which one can get some moderately clear sense of what is being said. For computational purposes, this coherence approach to disambiguation has given rise to "preference semantics" (Wilks 2016). Computers make a best guess at what a sentence might mean in light of a range of factors, including coherence, but also by imposing a recursive, nesting set of instructions about the beliefs and intentions of the speaker. Thereby, semantic representations arise by trying to make the most coherent representation possible (Wilks 2016).

7. This "stretching" (Masterman 1989, 76) was crucial to Masterman, who was adamant about the need for self-renewal, self-correction, and self-rejuvenation, and was insistent that the Church be the place where such rejuvenation occurs.

8. It is helpful to be reminded that there is a line of succession in these ideas, from teacher to student—Wittgenstein to Masterman, and then on to her students, not least of whom were Yorick Wilks and Spärck Jones. Ideas like semantic space are only partially attributable to Masterman. The ideas became increasingly sophisticated as they were appropriated down this line.

9. It should be acknowledged that AI is still a developing area, and has already developed a great deal since its earlier symbolic AI inception. It may be that, in the future, human and artificial intelligence come to form more of a continuum, in some respects, than a set of categorical

distinctions. Whether or not that turns out to be the case is far beyond the scope of the present article.

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