

Soundings from Silence: Insights from the Luminous Core Within

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Abstract: *Suffering can generate the disorienting experience of a deep void within and an accompanying question “Who am I?” I explore the way in which silent attending to this experience transforms suffering into an awareness of a luminous core of consciousness. There are remarkable similarities between the ways in which commentators from Christian and Hindu traditions account for the phenomenon of our luminous centre. The Jesuit theologian, Bernard Lonergan, and the Hindu sage, Ramana Maharshi, both point to the value of focused attention upon our experience of consciousness. Comparative theologian, Francis X. Clooney, helps us to navigate through the terrain of material drawn from such disparate traditions. We discover that silent attentiveness to the depths of our consciousness not only provides an embodied, existential answer to the question “Who am I?” but also opens out into the silent, luminous, loving presence of God.*

Key Words: Void, silence, consciousness, comparative theology, Bernard Lonergan, Francis Clooney, Ramana Maharshi

People are suffering. Such a commonplace does not need elaboration. We see all around us the pain undergone by people torn apart by domestic violence within families, sexual abuse within institutions, conflicts of race, religion and gender within societies, and conflicts occasioned by turmoil within and between nations. In these circumstances people are often the victims of gross injustice, injustices of a major kind, the inequities of which only systemic change can alter. It is not this form of suffering, deriving from what Bernard Lonergan would call a “major unauthenticity,” that the present paper addresses.¹

There is another form of suffering. We suffer when we do not know who we are. We suffer when we do not know, do not experience, that a deep, indeed infinite, well of silence, of stillness, resides at the centre of our being. It is a luminous space that lies below our thoughts and our emotions, yet paradoxically also penetrates these very thoughts and emotions. The lack of awareness of this vast realm within is at the root of much suffering. Our lack of affective and somatic awareness is part of the problem. The other part is an

¹ For the distinction between major and minor unauthenticities, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) 79–80; “First Lecture: Religious Experience,” in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) 121–122.

intellectual ignorance that fails to reflect on the wonder that is within and hence is unable to answer the question, “Who am I?”²

For some, suffering so intrudes on their lives that they seek professional help. I have been privileged to serve such people in the context of my work as a psychologist in private practice. The people who came to me would speak of feeling “lost” and of being separated from others in ways that were distressing to them. Their suffering challenged their previously “felt sense” of presence to themselves.³ It also challenged their relationship with God who often appeared painfully absent. They had been stripped of their previous roles and personas. Their self-concepts had changed and they had no new concepts with which to replace them. Socially, emotionally, cognitively, somatically and spiritually they were in new and unfamiliar territory. Unable to make sense of who they were, my clients had become strangers to themselves. It was a disconcerting and frightening experience.

One does not, however, have to be so exposed to trouble that a presentation to a psychologist is warranted. Such suffering is the stuff of life. Hans Urs von Balthasar observes that for all of us there is a discrepancy between our interior experience of ourselves and our exterior experience in engagement with others.⁴ By midlife the experience of discrepancy can reach breaking point. Dante renders it well: “In the middle of the journey of our (*sic*) life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straightway was lost.”⁵ Prior to the time of coming to oneself, prior to the time of insight and awareness, the suffering is typically managed with distractions—whether of work and busyness, or the avoidance occasioned by entertainment, drugs or alcohol. However, as Peter Kreeft insightfully observes, “Evasion is always temporary, a matter of time,” for evasion is not possible in eternity. He encourages us to “practice (*sic*) eternity in time” and to “evade evasion.”⁶ He encourages us to look within, to look at the depths of our unhappiness, and he cites Malcolm Muggeridge as an example of one who found his deepest fulfilment in confronting his deepest distress. For Muggeridge the experience of “lostness,” of “alienation,” of being “a stranger in a strange land,” was the pathway to his true home.⁷

I too encouraged my clients to look within. I encouraged my clients to be aware of and to accept their interior experience of emotional pain in a non-evaluative manner. Eventually they learnt to sit with the experiences of “not knowing,” of feeling “empty,” and

² The notion of spiritual ignorance, and its corollary of self-knowledge, is present in both Christian and non-Christian traditions. Bernard of Clairvaux advises us to know ourselves. See Bernard of Clairvaux, “Knowledge and Ignorance of God and of Self,” in *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, ed. Beloved Publishing (Beloved Publishing, 2014) 238–241. St Catherine of Siena instructs us to dwell in the “cell of self-knowledge,” for a consideration of which see Meredith Secomb, “The Role of the ‘Cell of Self-Knowledge’ in the Authority of Catherine of Siena,” *Magistra: A Journal of Women’s Spirituality in History* 9/2 (2003): 41–54. The notion is important also in Buddhism. See throughout Analayo, *Satipatthana: the Direct Path to Realization* (Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 2003). It is also present in some forms of Hinduism. See Sri Ramana Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, ed. Arthur Osborne (New York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1972).

³ For the notion of a bodily “felt sense” see Eugene T. Gendlin, *Focusing* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Vol. I. Prolegomena* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988) 481.

⁵ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Carlyle-Okey-Wicksteed (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 2013) 11.

⁶ Peter Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart’s Deepest Longing* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989) 62.

⁷ See Malcolm Muggeridge, *Jesus Rediscovered* (New York: Doubleday, 1969) 31.

of having a “vast void” within.⁸ Through the prayerful, faith-filled acceptance of their interior pain, my clients discovered that a profound and mysterious dimension existed as their core experience of Self.⁹ When they learnt to hold that place open before God in faith, not only did their suffering gain spiritual meaning and value, but a new, albeit inexplicable, sense of Self arose with a capacity to be attentive to the impact of grace felt at the level of embodied consciousness. Their experience of the Self had been transformed. In attending to the experience of interior silence they discovered the hidden core of themselves.

In a previous paper I spoke more generally about the value of being attentive to silence.¹⁰ This paper seeks to identify two major insights that can arise from such attention. A first insight is the realisation that the core of our being, our centre, our heart, is luminous; a second insight is that this luminous centre leads to God. In other words, when we focus intentionally on the depths of our interiority we find a dimension that can only be described in the paradoxical terms typically found in spiritual literature, terms that draw on the notions of both light and darkness.¹¹ In this paper I give greater emphasis to the reports of light although there is a significant literature that refers also to the darkness experienced as lovers of God pursue their interior journey.¹²

⁸ Note the apophatic nature of their experiences. The contemplative tradition typically distinguishes between the terms “kataphatic” and “apophatic,” the former using very specific imagery and describing God by way of affirmation and the latter describing God by way of negation. However, while apophatic experiences are typically and simplistically described as having no imagery, they do in fact use imagery although of a paradoxical nature. See, for example, the classical image of the “cloud of unknowing” or St John of the Cross’ “silent music, sounding solitude” in Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, trans. Clifton Wolters (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978); St. John of the Cross, “The Spiritual Cantic,” in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, ed. Kieran Kavanagh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington: ICS Publications, 1979) 412. Note also that it is much more difficult to acknowledge the reality and value of the sense of a profound darkness within than it is to refer to images analogous to everyday experiences. Often an apophatic experience needs affirmation from another before its value can be appropriated as an intimate and warm experience of God’s presence. The emotion of fear can keep these silent depths from the transformation that awaits them. To be told that such experiences are not only normal, but redolent of healthy, transformative possibilities, creates a new context for openness to change and renewal. Such affirmation sustains the intentionality of faith and love in the exercise of apophatic spirituality.

⁹ Note that I capitalise the term “Self” in order to distinguish it from the ego, which is merely a managerial component of the Self. In adopting this distinction I follow the work of Carl Jung, for which see Carl Jung, *Aion: Researches in the Phenomenology of the Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959). The notion of “Self” adopted here comprises all the conscious and unconscious dimensions operative in the exercise of self-transcending intentional consciousness. The experience of the core of that all-embracing constellation of operations is the “I” and it is this experience with which the present paper is concerned, although I acknowledge that there are depths of this “I” which are not accessible, being “beyond perception because, as perceiver, it precedes perception,” for which see Eugene Stockton, *The Deep Within: Towards an Archetypal Theology* (Lawson, NSW: Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust, 2011) 24. The notions of “I” and “Self” can be further distinguished insofar as the term “I” refers to an *experience* pertinent to the aesthetic-dramatic pattern of consciousness, while the term “Self” refers to a *concept* pertinent to the intellectual pattern of consciousness. For the identification of different patterns of human experience as biological, aesthetic, intellectual and dramatic, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: a Study of Human Understanding* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983) 181–189.

¹⁰ Meredith Secomb, “Being Attentive to Silence,” *Australian eJournal of Theology* 21/1 (2014): 15–28.

¹¹ Gregory of Nyssa speaks of entering a “luminous darkness” on his journey into God, for which see Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006) 80–81. For an interesting discussion which highlights the nuanced luminous dimension of Gregory’s experience see Philip Kariatlis, “‘Dazzling Darkness’: The Mystical or Theophanic Theology of St Gregory of Nyssa,” *Phronema* 27/2 (2012): 99–123.

¹² See, for example, St. John of the Cross, “The Dark Night,” 295–389. Postmodern writers such as Jean-Luc Marion emphasise the dark unknowing of encounters with God, for a succinct presentation of which see Robyn Horner, “The Weight of Love,” in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion* (Notre Dame: Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007) 238–239. The encounter with God is described by another postmodern writer, Jean-Louis Chrétien, as one of the “darkness of touch” for which see Davenport, Preface to Jean-Louis

I explore how the discovery of that centre provides an answer to the question “Who am I?” It is not a cognitively derived answer. It is an existentially embodied answer. It is an answer that opens into the peaceful, loving, silence of God. In so doing I draw on reflections from both Christianity and Hinduism. From the Christian tradition I look to the work of Jesuit philosopher and theologian, Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984). From the Hindu tradition I consider the teaching of Indian sage, Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950). The work of comparative theologian, Francis Clooney, serves me in my endeavours to integrate reflections from such disparate traditions.¹³

OUR LUMINOUS CORE: BERNARD LONERGAN

As well as being a theologian and philosopher, Bernard Lonergan was psychologically astute. He examined the phenomenology of consciousness and demarcated its topography in a way that nicely complements the experiential discoveries of those great explorers of consciousness from Eastern traditions of meditation. Like the latter, Lonergan grounded his considerations in the empirical data of consciousness, data which is available to all who attend to their own experience of themselves. Unlike the latter, Lonergan placed those considerations within a systematic context that appreciated the various levels of intentionality in an authentically functioning subject. Foundational to both Lonerganian and Eastern traditions is attentiveness to experience.

Lonergan identifies two primary sources available for experience. Our five senses generate experiences of seeing or hearing or smelling or tasting or touching. These experiences generate “data of sense.” There is, however, another type of data available for us to reflect on and to come to understand. It is the “data of consciousness” and it is this type of data which concerns us here. For Lonergan consciousness is the awareness immanent in acts of sensing and feeling, inquiring and understanding, deliberating, deciding and acting.¹⁴ Consciousness constitutes and reveals the basic psychological unity of the subject as subject.¹⁵ It is the “self-experience of a subject as subject in its acts and states and while these acts and states vary over time the subject remains consciously the same.”¹⁶ Consciousness makes “operating subjects present to themselves.”¹⁷

Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne A. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004) xvi. See also Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For the recognition of the phenomenon of darkness in non-Christian spirituality, see Francis X. Clooney, *His Hiding Place is Darkness: A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

¹³ Note that these three figures demarcate the field of enquiry. Hence the paper does not discuss concepts such as that of a “pure consciousness event,” nor does it offer a presentation of such distinctions as those between “bare” and “mystical” consciousness, for which see Robert K. C. Forman, “What does Mysticism have to Teach us about Consciousness?,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 5/2 (1998): 185–201; James R. Price III, “Transcendence and Images: The Apophatic and Kataphatic Reconsidered,” *Studies in Formative Spirituality* 11/2 (1990): 198.

¹⁴ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: a Study of Human Understanding* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983) 320, 322; Lonergan, “First Lecture: Religious Experience” 117.

¹⁵ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “Christ as Subject: A Reply,” in *Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 165.

¹⁶ Kevin Tortorelli, *Christology with Lonergan and Balthasar* (Ely, Cambridgeshire: Melrose Books, 2005) 55.

¹⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 7.

The essential unity of a person manifests in this primordially immediate experience of consciousness as presence to Self.¹⁸ It is the core experience of one's Self: "The *oneself* is the irreducibly individual element whence spring the choices of the decisive person and the drifting or forgetting of the indecisive person. What springs from that source is free; for it one is responsible."¹⁹ We tacitly experience this Self—an experience that, while remaining in the background, always accompanies our explicit experiencing, knowing and acting—as "prior, opaque and luminous."²⁰ It is that which is most private and intimate within us.²¹ It is the "unrevealed, hidden core" of our being.²²

To speak of such things is an "existential speaking" that is difficult to categorise, engaging as it does the whole human person and involving thereby dimensions that are "psychological, sociological, historical, philosophic (*sic*), theological, religious, ascetic [and] ... even mystical."²³ Our core is present within ourselves before we know ourselves as intentional and acting subjects.²⁴ Yet, just as we can be in love before we come to the wonderful realisation of the fact, so this luminous presence can reside within us without our adverting to it. We can, however, learn to advert to it. We can learn to be attentive to our interiority.

We can learn, first, to be aware of our capacity to experience things through our five senses. We can also learn to be aware of engaging in the next step of intentional consciousness. This step involves reflecting on the data our senses provide and coming to understand that data. Thirdly, if we are functioning authentically and not hastily jumping to conclusions, we learn to consider whether that understanding is true or otherwise. Only then, in a fourth step as authentically functioning subjects, do we decide to act upon that understanding.

If we learn to be attentive to ourselves at each of these stages, catching ourselves "in the act" as it were, then we become aware of ourselves as subjects. In other words we have through arduous attention to our interiority verified in our own experience our conscious and intentional operations. At each stage there is the opportunity to reflect on our experience of consciousness; at each stage we will find such consciousness to be luminous. In Lonerganian terms we have discovered "the luminosity concomitant with operations."²⁵

¹⁸ Robert M. Doran, *Subject and Psyche: Ricoeur, Jung and the Search for Foundations* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979) 114; Lonergan, "Christ as Subject" 165.

¹⁹ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Subject and Horizon," in *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, ed. Philip J. McShane, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 18 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001) 240. Emphasis in the original.

²⁰ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," in *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 229.

²¹ *Ibid.* 222.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.* 229. Note that the term "subject" has technical meaning for Lonergan, referring to the person's self-appropriation through the authentic exercise of the dynamics of intentional consciousness. Subjects are "present" to themselves through the exercise of consciousness, for which see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 8.

²⁵ Thomas J. McPartland, "Consciousness and Normative Subjectivity: Lonergan's Unique Foundational Enterprise," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13/2 (1995): 116.

So, for example, travelling through the vast Australian desert we might focus on an object in the distance. The “operations” comprise our effort to see and to understand what we are seeing. We are not yet able to make the judgement “It is a desert shrub” because we do not yet have enough data to answer the question; it may be a kangaroo or an emu. Associated with this effort to see, and to understand our experience of seeing, is a quality of consciousness that is our simple presence to Self. When we focus on this presence to Self, we find we cannot say anything about it. It is an ineffable experience; it is a luminous experience; it is known in dark unknowing. Further, if at this point we gaze on this experience of Self-presence from the point of view of one who has undergone a religious conversion, our experience enters what Lonergan refers to as a transcendent dimension.²⁶ Here the intentionality or “counter-intentionality” of faith, combined with the attained degree of interior awareness, constitutes the experience as religious.²⁷

Lonergan discusses this transcendent dimension from the point of faith, from the point of view of one who is in love with God. Such a subject is “related to divinity in the language of prayer and of prayerful silence.”²⁸ For Lonergan the exercise of prayer and the pursuit of prayerful silence comprise the operations pertinent to the religiously differentiated consciousness.²⁹ Yet the realm of transcendence is concerned not only with experiences of divinity as a traditional understanding of “religious” might convey. It is also concerned with “transcendent states beyond the sensible, beyond space and time.”³⁰ This point is particularly pertinent to Buddhist or Hindu practices which emphasise awareness rather than a faith perspective, although for the latter both awareness and faith are relevant.

While the operations of religiously differentiated consciousness involve both prayer and silence, Christians usually emphasise the former term. With Lonergan we can now appreciate that intelligent reflection on the experience of such silence can generate an awareness of a luminous core. This awareness will contribute greatly not only to the further step of engagement with God in faith-filled prayer but also to an increased

²⁶ Lonergan refers to four “realms of meaning” being that of common-sense, theory, interiority and transcendence. For Lonergan’s references to the four realms of meaning, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 81-85, 257-262, 266. For Lonergan’s discussion of the important topic of conversion see, for example, *Ibid.* 6, 107, 131, 224, 237-244, 267, 289, 292.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 266. The post-modern recognition of a dynamic of “counter-intentionality,” where we are passively open to the gift of graced experience, is also operative here for which see Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). For a succinct presentation of Marion’s work see Kevin Hart, ed. *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed. Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007). Note that, as well as the more commonly used term “counter-intentionality,” both “reverse” and “inverse” intentionality can be found in the postmodern literature, for which see Renée Ryan, *The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter*, no. 13 (2004). <http://www.hiw.kuleuven.be/eng/alumni/newslet13.pdf> (accessed September 30, 2009).

²⁸ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 257.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 257. See also John D. Dadosky, *The Structure of Religious Knowing: Encountering the Sacred in Eliade and Lonergan* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004) 133; Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 140; *What is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 95; Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 273, 281; Carla Mae Streeter, “The Place of Imagination in the Religiously Differentiated Consciousness,” *Aquinas Matters* (2010). <http://www.ai.edu/Resources/Blogs/AquinasMatters/tabid/216/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/87/The-Place-of-Imagination-in-the-Religiously-Differentiated-Consciousness.aspx> (accessed 15 October 2013).

³⁰ Peter Bisson, “The Postconciliar Jesuit Congregations: Social Commitment Constructing a New World of Religious Meaning,” in *Lonergan Workshop: Celebrating the 450th Jesuit Jubilee*, ed. Fred Lawrence, vol. 19 (Boston: Boston College, 2006) 5.

experience of Self-awareness. It will thereby effect a feeling of centred groundedness. Lonergan teaches us that we *all* have a “luminous being” within; it is the core of our very Self. It is, however, often difficult to access this awareness. Augustine lamented that God was “within” while he was “without.”³¹ The present-day contemplative and teacher, Martin Laird, observes that, while this quiet, luminous centre is the “most fundamental fact of our spiritual lives, it takes a lifetime to realize it.”³² Because we tend to identify ourselves with our thoughts and feelings rather than with the stillness at the core, we usually need help to access this centre.

While Lonergan explains the way, other traditions describe how to avail ourselves of this way. For thousands of years Hindu practitioners of meditation have been attending to their experience of interiority. One such is the South Indian Hindu sage, Ramana Maharshi. There are remarkable parallels between his assured answer to the question, “Who am I?” and Bernard Lonergan’s articulation of what it is to be one’s Self. However, before I present such parallels I need to justify the very undertaking of drawing material from two very different cultures and belief systems. How can such an enterprise benefit us? How can it help us grow in the knowledge of ourselves? How can it draw us nearer to Christ? To answer these questions I turn to the field of comparative theology, the foremost exponent of which is Francis X. Clooney.

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY: FRANCIS CLOONEY

Francis Clooney nicely articulates the value for our personal faith development of considering material drawn from different traditions.³³ He cites the affirmation by the Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*, of the “true and holy” elements present in non-Christian religions and argues that theological comparison “grounds a deeper validation and intensification of each tradition.”³⁴ As he says, “Faith and reason are in harmony; the true, the good and the beautiful converge; no question is to be stifled, no truth feared; to know is ultimately to know God.”³⁵ In this globalised world we cannot ignore the diversity of religious expression around us and, Clooney avers, our own commitment to Christ is served by being intelligently attentive to diversity with the “eyes of faith.”³⁶ By discovering the riches in other traditions we can return with new perspectives and with a heightened valuing of our own.³⁷

Clooney explains comparative theology as that which “combines tradition-rooted theological concerns with actual study of another tradition.”³⁸ It involves, for Clooney, textual examination and as such can entail not only rational engagement with a text but

³¹ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 2.

³² Martin Laird, *A Sunlit Absence: Silence, Awareness, and Contemplation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 2.

³³ Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 15.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 15.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 5.

³⁷ For the observation that we are enabled to see “ourselves differently in light of the new” discoveries drawn from texts from other traditions, see *Ibid.* 104.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 8.

also an “intuitive” dimension as we identify apparent commonalities in the texts of our own tradition and that of another.³⁹ Clooney explains the benefit for comparative theology of the reading of scriptural and theological texts:

If we wish to learn and be changed by what we learn, we are unlikely to find another practice as reliably rich and fruitful as such reading. Just as we can learn religiously by going to a temple or hearing sacred recitation, comparative practice occurs when *acts* of reading have been undertaken, as we read back and forth across religious borders, examining multiple texts, individually but then too in light of one another.⁴⁰

Clooney explains that his comparative theology evolves by way of historical reflection upon the “particular experiments and practical choices” undertaken by theologians working in the field.⁴¹ From Lonergan’s point of view Clooney’s pioneering endeavours place his work within the functional specialty of “Research.” This is the first of eight specialties that Lonergan identifies as constituting a comprehensive theological method.⁴² This preliminary functional specialty identifies the materials pertinent to a particular theological investigation. Lonergan observes that “doing research is much more a matter of practice than theory.”⁴³ The researcher’s “practical intelligence” chooses concrete—rather than abstract—tasks for investigation, choices that are guided at each stage by the “self-correcting process of learning.”⁴⁴

As one undertaking pioneering research Clooney is traversing uncharted territory in theological reflection. These preliminary, experimental, practical and, to uninformed observers, perhaps arbitrary choices must occur before any historical evolution is apparent.⁴⁵ Once pertinent texts are identified the mode of reading is that of “loving attention.”⁴⁶ Both heart and mind must be engaged, ensuring thereby that readers are attentive to the experience generated by such reading. Such attentiveness is a necessary preliminary step before reflecting on that experience if one’s conclusions are to be authentic.

The intuitive dimension related to my reflections in this paper was perhaps less than that required of Clooney in his various works. Clooney pursued an in-depth reading of Sanskrit texts to enable him to recognise commonalities in the human experience of devotion from different traditions.⁴⁷ In my case it was not difficult to see that both Lonergan and Ramana Maharshi were both asking an existential question about the nature

³⁹ Ibid. 8, 20, 56.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 56. The emphasis is original.

⁴¹ Ibid. 20.

⁴² For an overview of the notion of “functional specialties” in theological method, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 125-145.

⁴³ Ibid. 149.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 149.

⁴⁵ For the recognition that the practice of comparative theology at this stage of its evolution is “necessarily arbitrary and intuitive” see Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 9. Note that Lonergan would insert “interpretation” as a separate functional specialty intervening between research and Clooney’s identification of any “historical evolution,” for which see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 153–173.

⁴⁶ Clooney, *Comparative Theology* 58, 104.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Francis X. Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); *Beyond Compare: St. Francis de Sales and Sri Venanta Desika on Loving Surrender to God* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008); *His Hiding Place is Darkness*.

of the Self. The latter put the explicit question, “Who am I?”; the former framed the question as “What is it to be oneself?”⁴⁸ Common to both Lonergan and Ramana Maharshi is an interest in the human subject. Also common to both is the capacity to attend to their experience and to reflect intelligently upon those experiences. Such a capacity constitutes each of them with an authentic subjectivity that is able to communicate insights from interior realms of which most of us are unaware. After giving some biographical detail I will present some of Ramana Maharshi’s insights into the question “Who am I?” We will find that those insights arise not from conceptual formulation but from a profound experience of the depths of his interiority.

OUR LUMINOUS CORE: RAMANA MAHARSHI

Born into an orthodox Hindu family as Venkataraman Iyer, the boy later became known as Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi.⁴⁹ He was popular, good at sports and, although intelligent, was interested neither in study nor in spiritual matters. However his father died when he was twelve and the children were sent to live with their paternal uncle.⁵⁰ It is possible that this emotional suffering prepared for the experience that occurred at the age of 16 when, for no reason apparent to Venkataraman, he suddenly feared he was going to die.⁵¹ With no prior training the boy spontaneously responded to this fear with an exercise in interiority. He describes the experience:

The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: “Now death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies. ... But with the death of this body am I dead? Is the body I? It is silent and inert but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the “I” within me, apart from it. So I am Spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the Spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit.” ... From that moment onwards the “I” or Self, focused attention on itself by a powerful fascination. ... Whether the body was engaged in talking, reading or anything else, I was still centred on “I.”⁵²

⁴⁸ See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “On Being Oneself,” in *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism* ed. Philip J. McShane, vol. 18 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002) 234-246, especially 240; Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*. For an historical overview of the question, “Who am I?”, perennially raised by humanity, see Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory* 481-491.

⁴⁹ “Bhagavan,” meaning “God,” was the name with which he was typically addressed; “Ramana” is a shortened version of his name Venkataraman; “Maharshi” is a shortened form of Maha-Rishi, which means “great sage.” See Arthur Osborne, “Preface,” in *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* (New York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1972) 10. The title “Sri” is one of respect.

⁵⁰ Arthur Osborne, *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-knowledge* (New Delhi: B.I. Publications, 1954; reprint, 1990) 14-15.

⁵¹ Anita Ray offers this psychological account. John Dupuche makes a complementary proposal, namely, that the experience described below was a graced moment wherein Venkataraman “realised that his individual self was not his essential being. He died to himself, and this was experienced as a death. The event was therefore primarily an experience of the reality of I am.” I thank both scholars for their suggestions which were offered in the context of a presentation of this paper at the Comparative Theology Focus Group of the Australian Catholic University (Melbourne) on 27 October 2014.

⁵² Osborne, “Preface” 8.

Venkataraman's experience of the "I" was like an ongoing bass note, undergirding and blending with all his normal, everyday activity.⁵³

His fascination with the Self he had discovered transformed him, reprioritising all his activities such that his behaviour began to be, for Indian eyes, recognisably that of a "sadhu" or holy man. His brother jeered at him, "If you want to behave like a Yogi, why are you studying for a career?"⁵⁴ The words stung him with their truth. His father was dead and he was confident that his uncle and brothers would care for his mother. He abandoned his schooling, left his family without notice and went to Arunachala. For Hindus this was a holy mountain. Its name had gripped the depths of the boy's being when a relative had spoken about it. He never left the mountain environs, residing initially in the temple grounds and later moving to a cave until devotees who formed around him built him a shelter. Sri Ramana came to be seen by the Western Christian world as a St Francis of Assisi figure, the depths of his love endearing him to humans and animals alike.⁵⁵ He spoke little, teaching mostly by his silence. His profound depths of interiority influenced all who came into contact with him, drawing them into their own centre, into silence, into the Self.⁵⁶ There they would find that questions would fall away as a deep peace settled in their spirits. When Ramana did teach, his method was founded on asking the question, "Who am I?" The method became known as "Self-Enquiry."

Those who came to Ramana Maharshi recognised his wisdom, a wisdom derived not from formal education but from attending to, and reflecting upon, his own experience. It was a wisdom that led him to value all creeds as "sincere expressions of a great experience."⁵⁷ For Ramana there were two ways to liberation from the confines of egocentricity, a liberation that issued in the freedom of the larger Self. He instructed, "There are two ways: ask yourself 'Who am I?' or submit."⁵⁸ Either Self-inquiry or devotion were satisfactory routes. For Ramana accessing the Self, accessing the depths of one's consciousness, led to the same dynamics of ego-abandonment as devout surrender to a beloved Divinity.

The question arises as to what that "Self" is for Ramana Maharshi. Three works give a detailed and technical understanding: "Self-Enquiry," "Who am I?" and "Spiritual Instruction." There are also many other works of both prose and poetry, all of which point to the importance of focus on the Self and the abandonment of egoic attachment. Written at twenty-two years of age "Self-Enquiry" was the first work the Maharshi wrote.⁵⁹ Commentators observe it is a mature work, the fruit of a sage "in perfect realization of the Self."⁶⁰ In Socratic style Ramana instructs, "Is not the sense of 'I' natural to all beings,

⁵³ He describes it as a "fundamental sruti note," referring to the monotone that persists through a piece of Indian music "like the thread on which beads are strung," for which see Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 8. Note that Ramana Maharshi identifies the Self with this core experience.

⁵⁴ Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1985) 284.

⁵⁵ He became known to the West through the auspices of an Englishman who searched India for spiritual enlightenment, for which see *Ibid.* Chs. IX and XVI.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 292.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 291.

⁵⁸ Osborne, "Preface" 12. Note that this injunction accommodates the preference for either a cognitive or affective personality style in engagement with the Self or the world.

⁵⁹ Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* 17-38.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 17.

expressed in all their feelings as ‘I came,’ ‘I went,’ ‘I did,’ ‘I was?’⁶¹ Initial reflection on the source of this “I” by those unfamiliar with Self-inquiry might identify it with the body.⁶² However, he urges his listeners to go further, leading them in simple language to identify for themselves what Bernard Lonergan calls the experience of presence to Self:

Lay aside this insentient body as though it were truly a corpse. Do not even murmur “I,” but enquire keenly within what it is that now shines within the heart as “I.” Underlying the ceaseless flow of varied thoughts, there arises the continuous, unbroken awareness, silent and spontaneous as “I-I” in the heart. If one catches hold of it and remains still, it will completely annihilate the sense of “I” in the body, and will itself disappear as a fire of burning camphor.⁶³

In a section explicitly devoted to the question “Who am I?” he rejects the notion that the gross body or the various capacities of our being comprise the Self.⁶⁴ Our thoughts and our emotions do not comprise the Self. We are to refrain from identifying with them. We are to refrain from pursuing them. We are instead merely to witness them. We are to adopt “the attitude, ‘Let whatever strange things happen, happen; let us see!’.”⁶⁵ Ramana gives the same advice as Teresa of Avila concerning the management of thoughts during meditation for Teresa similarly recommended patience and endurance when confronted by these unwanted distractions.⁶⁶

If we refrain from identifying with all these “operations” of consciousness, to use Lonergan’s term, then all that remains is awareness. All that remains is pure Consciousness or Self. This Self persists through all, remaining “resplendent” and “luminous” and filled with light.⁶⁷ When through perseverance we arrive at a state wherein “there is not the slightest trace of the ‘I-thought,” then we have found “the true Being of oneself.”⁶⁸ To experience this “I-consciousness” is to experience the core of the Self. For Ramana, there too we access God. Significantly he insists, “Knowing oneself is knowing God.”⁶⁹

⁶¹ Ibid. 18.

⁶² Ramana also teaches that we must surrender all identification with thoughts and emotions to access the Self. Those who spent time in his presence reported that such dimensions simply fell away, felt as superfluous to the deep peace that welled up from their interior, for which see Brunton, *A Search in Secret India*, 293. For the observation that we identify first with a fluid sensory world informed by our preceding intra-uterine experience, then with our physical bodies, and thirdly with the psychological world, see Frances Tustin, “The Emergence of a Sense of Self, or, the Development of ‘I-ness,’” in *The Person Who Is Me: Contemporary Perspectives on the True and False Self*, ed. Val Richards and Gillian Wilce (London: Karnac Books, 1996) 47–63.

⁶³ Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 19. Ramana uses the term “I-I” to describe nondual consciousness wherein the experience of pure subjectivity lacks the reflexive moment of being present to oneself as an object. See, for example, Jim Marion, *Putting on the Mind of Christ: The Inner Work of Christian Spirituality* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads, 2011) 203; Ken Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1995) 302.

⁶⁴ Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* 39–47.

⁶⁵ Sri Ramana Maharshi, “The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi,” (Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu: Ramanan, V.S, 2013). http://www.amazon.com/Collected-works-Ramana-Maharshi-ebook/dp/B00F0NSAP4/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1410319191&sr=1-1&keywords=ramana+maharshi (accessed 10 September 2014) loc.311. Note that this quote is from material available only in electronic form, having been omitted from Osborne’s earlier version.

⁶⁶ See St. Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle,” in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1980) §4.4.11.

⁶⁷ Ramana refers to such terms over one hundred times.

⁶⁸ Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* 42.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 36.

This is a remarkable statement. To know oneself is to know God. Can the Christian say this? Can the Christian say that to plumb the depths of one's consciousness, to plumb the depths of pure awareness, is also to experience Jesus Christ? There are a number of Christian writers who would respond in the affirmative, while at the same time insisting that there are significant theological differences between Hinduism and Christianity. Can we understand from the nature of our consciousness *why* they would respond in the affirmative? I think we can. The reason for this resides in the very constitution of ourselves. The next section reflects on the identity of the experience of the depths of the Self with the experience of God.⁷⁰ It also considers why the experience is not only one of light but also one of love.

OUR LUMINOUS CORE AND THE LOVING LIGHT OF GOD

Peter Kreeft argues that the Hindu search for the blissful liberation of enlightenment, for *sat-chit-ananda*, constitutes the search for God.⁷¹ Martin Laird contends that answering the question "Who am I?" is equivalent, for the Christian, to finding Jesus Christ.⁷² John Dupuche observes that "Christians ... proclaim that they and the members of another tradition arrive at the same Silence from which the Word springs."⁷³ Death to our attachments to those things which preoccupy the ego enables us to transcend our ego. If we then exercise a focused intentionality towards, or abandonment of ourselves to, the depths thus revealed, we find ourselves immersed in the profoundly peaceful and joyous waters of the Self. With faith we find there too the gracious and healing presence of Our Lord. As Dupuche reflects, "We become fully conscious of ourselves by being simply present to the Presence. This Presence is Light which transforms all into light. The ego, the idea of the Self, thoughts, desire: all disappear in the clear radiance of the Presence."⁷⁴ Here the glistening drop of the Self cannot distinguish itself from the glorious Ocean of God.

The constant theme in testimonies from both Christian and Hindu mystical experience is that the depths of Self-awareness generate an apophatic experience of simplicity and light. Words such as "radiance," "luminosity," "flame" and many other terms associated with light abound in writings which reflect on the nature of the Self, awareness and consciousness. The psalmist knew this light when he observed, "In your light we see light" (Ps 36:9). Thomas Aquinas knew this light, contending that God so transforms the human being that a spiritual "seeing" of God's light becomes possible.⁷⁵ Mystics know this

⁷⁰ Note that I refer to the "depths" of the Self because, for the Christian, the human person, made in the image of Jesus Christ, comprises both humanity and divinity. The core experience of Self does not comprise the whole Self as it does for the Hindu who adopts a monism which claims that ultimately all is consciousness. A statement of what, for the Christian, comprises the fullness of authentically functioning humanity made in the image of God is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁷¹ Kreeft, *Heaven* 48-49.

⁷² Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land: The Practice of Contemplation* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006) 142.

⁷³ John R. Dupuche, *Towards a Christian Tantra: The Interplay of Christianity and Kashmir Shaivism* (Melbourne: David Lovell, 2009) 96.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 103.

⁷⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ed. Patrick Rogers, trans. Dominican Fathers of the English Province, ST1 q12 a2.

light. St John of the Cross, for example, refers to the “dominating fulness of the pure and simple light of God.”⁷⁶ Martin Laird comments on the luminosity of prayerful silence: “The interior silence that all contemplative practices cultivate finally blossoms as luminous flowing awareness.”⁷⁷ Ramana Maharshi speaks of the Self as “self-luminous in the heart as pure consciousness.”⁷⁸ It is “that flame which is throbbing as I.”⁷⁹

The question arises as to why the core of the Self is experienced as luminous, or as resplendent, and not, for example, experienced as fragrant, or melodious, or sweet, or as balm? Why is the sense of sight privileged and not, for example, the olfactory sense? The very asking of these questions presumes an awareness of the phenomenon of the “spiritual senses.” The Christian mystical tradition applies the term “spiritual senses” to profoundly interior experiences that are analogous to physical experiences. Origen (c.185-255) first used the term.⁸⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure, and Ignatius of Loyola all contributed to the tradition.⁸¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar also cites Cyprian, Macarius, Diadochus and Augustine.⁸²

Augustine nicely demonstrates the phenomenon as he first rejects material beauty as a satisfactory means for describing the experience of God and then reflects:

And yet, when I love him, it is true that I love a light of a certain kind, a voice, a perfume, a food, an embrace; but they are of the kind that I love in my inner self when my soul is bathed in light that is not bound by space; when it listens to sound that never dies away; when it breathes fragrance that is not borne away on the wind; when it tastes as food that which is never consumed by the eating; when it clings to an embrace from which it is not severed by fulfilment of desire. This is what I love when I love my God.⁸³

Sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch—all are included in Augustine’s inner experience of light and sound and fragrance and food and embrace.

Interestingly Augustine combines touch and sight when he speaks of being “bathed in light.” Mystics frequently combine sensory modalities in their attempts to articulate spiritual experience. St. John of the Cross, for example, draws on sight and touch when he describes his guide as a “light ... that burned in his heart.”⁸⁴ Later in his journey John refers to the sense of hearing in his paradoxical description of his “Beloved” as “silent music, sounding solitude.”⁸⁵ References to the spiritual senses occur throughout scripture. The

⁷⁶ John of the Cross, “The Ascent of Mt. Carmel” §1.4.

⁷⁷ Laird, *A Sunlit Absence* 14.

⁷⁸ Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* 26.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 36.

⁸⁰ For an excellent presentation of Origen’s position, see Karl Rahner, “The ‘Spiritual Senses’ According to Origen,” in *Theological Investigations: Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, vol. 16 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979) 81–103.

⁸¹ Philip Sheldrake, “Senses, Spiritual,” in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005) 572.

⁸² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics. Vol. I. Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982) 249.

⁸³ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1961) §10.6.

⁸⁴ John of the Cross, “The Ascent of Mt. Carmel” 69.

⁸⁵ John of the Cross, “The Spiritual Canticle” 412.

spiritual senses of sight and taste are present in the scriptural injunctions to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8) and to discover that “the ordinances of the Lord are sweeter than honey” (Ps 19:10). The sense of touch is present in the metaphor, “you anoint my head with oil” (Ps 23:5). Jeremiah felt a “burning fire” in his bones (Jer 20:9). Teresa of Avila reflects, in a way similar to that of Augustine, on what the soul can perceive in certain states of prayer:

It perceives a fragrance ... as though there were in that interior depth a brazier giving off sweet-smelling perfumes. ... no heat is felt, nor is there the scent of any perfume, for the experience is more delicate than an experience of these things.⁸⁶

For Teresa, as for Augustine, the experience is paradoxical. There is warmth, yet no heat is felt; there is fragrance, but no scent. The experience is too delicate to be accounted for by our mundane sensory modalities. Similarly when Ramana Maharshi offers the nuanced observation that “the Self is the effulgence transcending darkness and light,” he is implying here that the experience of consciousness, or of awareness, is not really univocal with light or darkness.⁸⁷ Instead the spiritual awareness of light transcends the usual dichotomy of light and darkness. Given the acceptance of the notion of the “spiritual senses,” the question still arises as to why descriptions of the Self or awareness or consciousness privilege the spiritual sense of “light.”

To answer this question we need to reflect on the two primary modes with which we come to know something as true. One is through reasoning derived from rational thinking. The other is through a felt sense of the rightness or appropriateness of a particular choice. Pascal commented, “The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.”⁸⁸ Rational processes reach a limit in matters of the heart. In the realm of transcendence love, experienced in the core of a person and expressed as the heart, has greater sway than merely cerebral functioning.⁸⁹ Peter Kreeft, reflecting on the capacity of the heart to guide us in decision-making, observes:

The heart ... has eyes. Its deepest love and longing, the longing that nothing earthly can satisfy, is an eye. It sees something; it tells us something. ... What lamp lights up our interior well as we descend to where the surface daylight no longer shines? We find a glow emanating from the depths, an interior source of light: the eye of the heart. Where head-lights fail, the heart lights up itself.⁹⁰

Consciousness becomes a light that guides us because it is a light infused with love. St John of the Cross had no other light than the one that *burnt* in his heart. There is a *felt* sense to this light because it is love and desire that accompanies it. Here, consistent with the

⁸⁶ Teresa of Avila, “The Interior Castle” §4.2.6. Charles Wesley similarly drew on the spiritual senses when he described his conversion as, “my heart was strangely warmed,” for which see Britannica, *John Wesley*, ed. Dale H. Hoiberg, (CD-Rom, 2001).

⁸⁷ Maharshi, *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* 19.

⁸⁸ Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Classics, 1995) 127.

⁸⁹ For an excellent discussion of the role of the “heart” in decision-making see Andrew Tallon, *Head and Heart. Affection, Cognition, Volition as Triune Consciousness* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997). Tallon draws on the Thomist notion of “connaturality” for which see Thomas Ryan, “Revisiting Affective Knowledge and Connaturality in Aquinas,” *Theological Studies* 66/1 (2005): 49–68; R. J. Snell, “Connaturality in Aquinas: The Ground of Wisdom,” *Quodlibet* 5/4 (2003): 1–8. Note that there are also neuropsychological and neurophysiological reasons that can be submitted to account for the experience of the heart as our centre but the limits of this paper do not permit exploration of this interesting field.

⁹⁰ Kreeft, *Heaven* 39.

tendency for spiritual senses to combine modalities, there is both a spiritual sense of sight and a kinaesthetic sense of touch which registers in a very subtle somatic way.⁹¹ Here, in the heart, all spiritual modalities can combine to generate a luminous awareness of the fragrance and sweetness and anointing of love.

Having come to an assured awareness of the luminous light of Christ within, Christians can now more confidently allow that light to radiate out through every aspect of their being. Flesh is transformed by grace. Christ is incarnate once again. Love and light unite in a compassionate wisdom conveyed by feet that walk and hands that serve on earth.

CONCLUSION

Commentators from both Christianity (Bernard Lonergan) and Hinduism (Ramana Maharshi) call us to attend to our experience of the Self, an experience known apart from our bodily awareness and apart from our thoughts and emotions. It is the awareness of pure consciousness, our simple presence to the Self. When in the depths of silence we learn to focus on this simple awareness, we discover ourselves. We find an embodied, existential answer in the core of our being to the question “Who am I?” Significantly, as we attend to that experience with an attitude of faith and surrender, we find that it opens to the experience of God.

For Ramana Maharshi we can either ask the question “Who am I?” in the depths of simple presence to Self or submit to the revelation of God within. Either way leads to freedom from the bondage and confines of egocentricity. For Bernard Lonergan we can learn to attend to the data of consciousness and, in the realm of transcendence with hearts filled with love, we can open to an experience of the immediacy of grace. There are indeed “soundings” to be had from silence. There are indeed insights to be derived from being attentive to the silence within. There we find not only the luminous depths of ourselves but also the loving presence of our God.

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⁹¹ The “light” is usually associated with a felt sense of rightness and appropriateness; a decision “sits well” with us or otherwise. The important matter of discernment arises here but addressing it is beyond the scope of this paper.