



LUX INTERNA  
NEW WILDERNESS GOSPEL  
AUTUMN RITUAL GUIDE



+ LUX INTERNA +  
AUTUMN RITUAL GUIDE



## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE RITUAL

Those of us in the northern hemisphere are now entering the season of lengthening night, cooling air, and thinning veils between the living and the dead. Autumn opens its own secret wildernesses. To honor this shift, we've created a ritual and reflection guide that gives darkness its due—an invitation to turn out the lights and adjust our eyes to the older truths of the night.

We've keyed these offerings to the track "Into Night" from *New Wilderness Gospel*—a fitting song for the season. May this small collection of words, sounds, and practices serve as a companion as you step into autumn's shadowed paths.



## CONTENTS

### 1. Autumn Ritual Meditation with Audio Guide

Kathryn leads a practice of entering the hidden luminosity of night.

### 2. Reflection on Wendell Berry's "To Know the Dark"

A recorded talk and text by Joshua, reading Berry's poem as a hymn to autumn mysteries.

### 3. Song: "Into Night"

A direct link to the track from *New Wilderness Gospel*.



## PREPARATION

To enter the rite, gather the following and set your space with care:

- Location: Choose a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.
- Companionship: Practice alone or with one trusted companion.
- Candle: Light a single candle just before nightfall.

When you are finished, record your reflections. If you create anything in response to this ritual guide—writing, art, sound—we would love if you shared it with us: [newwildernesssociety@gmail.com](mailto:newwildernesssociety@gmail.com).



AUTUMN RITUAL MEDITATION  
& AUDIO GUIDE



## AUTUMN MEDITATION

Listen to the meditation narrated by Kathryn Ian via clicking on the "Autumn 2025 Ritual" button located below this e-book.

Find a place where you will not be disturbed.

Practice alone, or with one close companion.

If possible, step outside into whatever nature surrounds you.

If this isn't feasible, choose a room with a window that opens to the night.

If you can't escape electric light, retreat to a darkened room.

Light a single candle at least twenty minutes before nightfall.

If scented, choose earthy or chthonic notes: cedar, sandalwood, agarwood, vetiver, oakmoss.

Wait for the blue hour — that brief time when twilight deepens into night.

When it arrives, extinguish the candle.

Let the smoke wreath around you.

If you cannot watch night's onset, then let evening flood into your inner eyes.

The image provided may function here as a fragmented icon – a gateway into the older night that lies outside the glow of technology.

Focus deeply on the gathering darkness.

Slow your breath. Still your thoughts.

Notice how night first pools among the roots of trees, then rises toward the star-shimmering sky.

Darkness does not fall: it rises.

Like smoke, it reaches for transcendence.

Feel it climb from your feet into your lungs, your heart, your eyes. Let it overflow the body, stretching your imagination like a bridge between earth and sky.

Attend to the darkness as to a friend or lover.

Let the contours of your form meet and merge with its mystery.

Feel formlessness; deepen in its depth.

Let body and borderless night dissolve into one.

If you sit in total darkness, keep your eyes open.

If electric light intrudes, close them.

Now imagine a shifting field of energy — a dark luminosity.

A light that is darkness, a darkness that is light.

Enter it as an ocean.

Swim through the waves of its shimmering silence.

Listen. Breathe. Listen. Breathe.

When the time feels complete, slowly rise back.

Emerge from the luminous night as if from water, the darkness receding in silvery flickers.

Feel your body return to form and focus.

Without thinking or judging, write down any words, images, or fragments that arise.

Continue for at least a few uninterrupted minutes.

Do not read them. Fold them away.

Tomorrow evening, read these words just before sleep.

Ask the night itself to interpret them as you drift into dreams.

In the morning, record what you remember.

Keep this wisdom close throughout the season of lengthening night.



A REFLECTION ON WENDELL BERRY'S  
"TO KNOW THE DARK"

# A REFLECTION ON WENDELL BERRY'S TO KNOW THE DARK

by Joshua Levi Ian, PhD.

Watch the talk by clicking on the video located below this e-book.

Those of us in the northern hemisphere move into the season of lengthening night, cooling air, and thinning veils between the living and the dead. To honor this shift, I'd like to give darkness its due—I'd like to ask what visions might come if we turn out the lights and adjust our eyes to the older truths of the night.

The opening lines of the short but striking poem “To Know the Dark,” by American writer, environmental activist, and farmer Wendell Berry (b. 1934), evocatively interweave themes of ecological awareness and existential transformation by challenging the historical devaluation of darkness within the Western social imaginary:

“To go in the dark with a light is to know the light. To know the dark, go dark.”

Here, in a poetic intervention rich with polysemous significance, Berry simultaneously draws upon and subverts the deeply rooted and highly charged antonymic dualism of light/dark, turning its force back upon itself. Whether envisioned as a metaphysical truth or a metaphorical trope, the binary light/dark has animated countless images and stories that play central roles in the self-narration of Western culture: the hierarchical separation of light and darkness recounted in Genesis 1:4; Plato's promise of enlightenment from a world of shadows; Milton's evocation of luminous salvation against a darkness become visible; the world appearing as a drama of chiaroscuro beneath Caravaggio's brush. As Hans Blumenberg noted, the “metaphorics of light” permeate the Western cultural imaginary so thoroughly that they function on a preconceptual level. So too the metaphorics of darkness.

As Berry's poem alludes to, these *metaphorics* are bound up with a constellation of implicit *metaphysical* presumptions that entwine the epistemological and the ontological with the ethical—what the physicist-philosopher Karen Barad calls “ethico-onto-epistemology.” Light signifies knowledge, moral fortitude, productivity, psychological health, virtue, and other desirable commodities; darkness signifies light's sinister other across a spectrum of registers—the shadow of the Enlightenment's ideal of human flourishing. Furthermore, this translation of natural phenomena into the cultural currency of metaphorical and metaphysical narratives conceals a subtle politicization of nature and a

naturalization of politics—one that has not only shaped religion and the arts, but discourses on race, gender, and colonialism as well. Yet the ubiquity of these metaphorical and metaphysical tropes has often historically served to conceal their contingency.

Let's return here to Berry.

Speaking as it does in an imperative voice, Berry's poem ostensibly provides instructions on how to "know" the dark. But there's a catch: the dark requires an alternate mode of knowing—to "know the dark" is to "go dark." Berry's phrasing here tellingly differs from the more prosaic "go *into* the dark." In doing so, the command takes on a paradoxical quality: while the verbal "go" might seem to imply a movement *toward* or *into*—thus implying a relationship between a subject and their environment predicated on agentive motility and spatiotemporal differentiation—the idiom "go dark" suggests the sudden ceasing of activity, the withdrawal of communication, or even disappearance. In short, Berry is counseling the reader to suspend their habitual ways of encountering the world and adopt an attitude of radical openness rooted in a sort of "agentive passivity." Although sounded in an ecological rather than theological key, Berry's mode of dark cognition is redolent of the medieval mystical notion of *Geslassenheit* ("release-ment"), wherein the initiate attempts to temporarily suspend active sense making processes to dissolve the boundedness of egoic consciousness and be "released" into an

experience of raw *otherness*.

In this sense, within Berry's poem, the literal, metaphorical, and metaphysical significances of light and dark whirl about in a semantic loop—they gracefully overlap and blur into one another, performing and presenting the sense of initiatory disorientation hidden at the heart of the poem.

Visualizing the situation in concrete terms, one might imagine the simple action of shining a flashlight into the woods at night and watching the darkness dissolve in a split second. Transposed into a poetic key, "light" here can be thought of as being synonymous with technology, both in a literal sense (*the prosthetic apparatus of the flashlight*) and in a philosophical-epistemological sense (*the metaphor of light-as-knowledge as bound up with an instrumental and analytical mode of revealing and relating to the world*).

The latter reading points to the notion of "light" as a specific way of cognitively ordering relations between the human and other-than-human world(s)—and a particular attitude or mode of consciousness. Concomitantly, the image of darkness points not only to an intellectual imperative but also, beyond that, to an ethical entreaty.





In this sense, the poem draws attention to the myriad ways that our metaphorical and metaphysical presumptions impact our relationships with both other-than-human worlds and ourselves. In foregrounding these connections, which have often historically remained hidden in rhetorical and instrumental uses of the light/dark binary, Berry implicitly implores us to question the complex ways in which culture, thought, and nature intersect and inform one another. Moreover, he centers the consubstantiality of the human and other-than-human world(s)—both inner and outer—by underscoring the material nature of the poeticizing imagination and the nonphenomenalizable dimensions of the natural world; rather than a technology that captures the world within images, *the dark imagination* celebrated here fosters a sense of fluid openness between the human and other-than-human world(s)—it unveils to us a liminal territory wherein the co-constitutional relationship between these realms rushes to the fore.

Here, Berry’s language resonates with the Platonic-Christian tradition of apophatic or *via negativa* mysticism, which envisions the Divine Other as a darkness that cannot be objectified via concept or image. Yet, at the same time, Berry’s poem radically *immanentizes* the apophatic motif of the dark Other—here we are not asked to engage in a flight from the

physical world, but rather, we are entreated to return to it with a radical new awareness of its ineffable depths, luminous darknesses, and its shimmering sensualities. One might say that Berry asks the reader to let the things of the world “withdraw into their original darkness,” which is to say, he presents a vision of reality wherein the other-than-human world is shot through with a strange, nonquantifiable presence that can never be fully captured by concept or calculation. To put it another way, the world that we inhabit cannot be contained by our theories, cultural systems, or attempts at definition—it is ultimately and infinitely *more*. To be open to this other-than-human ontological excess, Berry infers, is the only way that the imagined nocturnal traveler will obtain dark ecological gnosis.

Staying true to the mode of knowing/relating-to that the poem endorses, Berry concludes by invoking an experience that rejects instrumentalizing visions of the other-than-human world; here nature is darkly vital, expressive, and ultimately ineffable. The dark is not only filled with strange forms of life—it is itself a form of life; one finds that indeed, “the dark, too, blooms and sings.”

This autumn, I invite us all to “go dark” for a while—to step back from our usual habits and encounter the world with new eyes. In each act of opening ourselves to other ways of seeing and being, we honor the Otherness that surrounds us. We learn to relate to others – human or other-than-human – in all their bewildering wildness, not through categories or concepts, but as infinite mysteries that meet and merge with our own. And perhaps, if we take the time to adjust our eyes, we might just glimpse a trace of Divinity within the ever-deepening darkness.

Happy Equinox!

LUX INTERNA

[WWW.NEWWILDERNESSGOSPEL.COM](http://WWW.NEWWILDERNESSGOSPEL.COM)



