



2.3.d Illuminations: Moments of Enlightenment

In the phase of deepening, moments of enlightenments can already occur. In Zen Buddhism, these are called kenshō in Japanese. Christian mystics refer to spiritual insights of this kind as illuminations.

These insights have a different quality than purely intellectual realizations that arise from understanding content and connections.

They surpass intellectual understanding by far in their clarity.

Spiritual truth cannot be grasped by the intellect alone. It is revealed through spiritual illumination by God – this is the Christian understanding, and it also corresponds to my personal experience.

These illuminations are a sudden awareness of a spiritual reality.

They often happen during meditation, but they can also occur in everyday situations. Such experiences touch us deeply at the core of our being – sometimes to the point of tears or emotional overwhelm.

For example, during my morning exercises – which for me are also a mindfulness practice – I had a kenshō experience.

In a clarity I had never known before, I became aware that I am not the thinker within me. I am something entirely different – what Buddhism refers to as the true self. In ordinary consciousness, we are completely identified with our thinking, feeling, and willing.

I have known this for 30 years – but I had never experienced the expansion of consciousness with such intensity.

I will share more about this kind of illumination and similar experiences later on.

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