



2.5.1 Phenomenon 2: The Dark Night of the Soul

"*The dark night of the soul*" is a predominantly Christian term for a phenomenon known in all mystical traditions. It refers to a phase of profound inner desolation, in which the presence of God can no longer be felt.

The "dark night of the soul" in Buddhism:

In meditative practice, deep crises are often described, such as the "*nanas*" (stages of insight) in the Vipassana tradition. These include stages like the "*knowledge of arising and passing away*" (which often begins with euphoria), followed by the "*knowledge of suffering*" (*dukkha-nana*), which is marked by frustration, confusion, and existential fears. This phase precedes deep liberation.

ChatGPT

Mystics, who have already experienced the inner bliss of the divine presence through their deep prayer life, particularly suffer when this state suddenly disappears.

It is a feeling of deep loneliness and abandonment. This phase could also be described as a spiritual crisis or a deep crisis of faith. It is often accompanied by great doubts and disillusionment.

Yet all deeply devout people go through such crises and, after overcoming them, experience a deepening and renewal of their faith. Faith becomes more mature and grounded. In this sense, the dark night of the soul is a natural part of the path to God.

Natural fluctuations in our sense of God's presence

There are also natural fluctuations in how close we feel to God.

Emanuel Swedenborg describes how even angels in heaven do not always live in the same nearness to God. He refers to all spirit beings as angels, including departed human souls. They go through phases in which they are more self-focused.

During such times, they feel deep sadness and long for the phase to pass. These are followed by periods in which they feel close to God again and are filled with bliss.

Sun Myung Moon speaks in this context of the "four seasons of the mind," in which our inner feelings change naturally. These cyclical changes do not occur only over long periods but even within a single day:

- Morning – Spring
- Noon/Afternoon – Summer
- Early Evening – Autumn
- Night – Winter

Each of these times of day also contains within itself all four seasons. These fluctuations

arise from the rotation of the gate of the mind (the spirit-mind).

When our spiritual sensitivity is open, we can feel the times when we can reach God most deeply in prayer.

I myself often experience a deep longing for prayer at different times of day - sometimes in the afternoon, sometimes in the middle of the night, around 3 a.m., when I am awakened by dreams.

These natural fluctuations, however, are not the "dark night of the soul." They are more an expression of an inner movement.

The dark night of the soul is a profound crisis

The dark night of the soul, on the other hand, is a massive spiritual crisis. It is part of a deep process of restoration that is meant to bring about a fundamental inner transformation.

Going through these phases prepares us for a great grace - a wonderful gift awaits us.

Every dark night of the soul contains a lesson and a message. In such a phase, we should therefore pay close attention to what God wants to teach us.

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