

# *Falling Awake*

the non-story of Realization

I often write about non-duality in the lives of Debbie and me, both of us having this realization<sup>1</sup> as well. And sometimes people ask me about my approach to life, how it is to be beyond the person. They want to know what happened and whether or not this had a cultural or spiritual inclination. Mostly I shy away from stories like these, because in a way they are not true. They are the stories of a person that no longer exists and truly never existed, only as an illusion. And seekers, people who (erroneously) think they are still a step away from realization, sometimes cling to stories and circumstances to find out what they have been doing wrong so far, what other tricks there are to “gain” liberation. Which is not possible and not true, it doesn’t work that way.

No one can *gain* liberation, liberation *happens* (or not, as the case may be). It is mostly unknowable how liberation comes about, it can happen any moment to anyone. Perhaps there are conducive circumstances, like when going to sleep one stops talking, calms the mind, dims the light and lies down horizontally, but still this is no guarantee for falling asleep. And one can even fall asleep in the middle of a lot of noise and light as well. Falling asleep is much like realization in that respect, which could be called *falling awake*. In most cases however, once we have fallen awake, we will never “sleep up” again. At most we could have occasional “daymares” where the mind seems to be active again, but this is seen through almost immediately and we (that is to say: Oneness) recover(s) from that quickly again. The part of the brain called mind, that produces the sustained illusion of separation, has died once and for all. But the circumstances for this to happen, if relevant at all, are different for every other person.

There is no path to liberation. This is because in the end, it is not the person who realizes liberation, it is Oneness which realizes the illusion of the person by pulling it into itself again by the umbilical cord, and dissolving its apparent separation. And Oneness is going nowhere. When in Paris, you can’t take the bus to Paris. But, even after a warning like this, most seekers want to hear the story anyway, so here it comes. Reciting from memory that is. Vague, illusory, incorrect – but there you go.

## The Pull of Reality – *Who Am I?*

I don’t think my approach to life is culturally based – there is not anything in Dutch culture (if such a thing exists) that is more conducive to this approach than in the average Western values and beliefs. And the word “spiritual” has been misused too much to have any strength or clarity left, so I’d rather avoid that. My story is just a story of someone who started wanting pure reality, for no other reason than to find what really is. For me, it had a strong pull, stronger than anything else. It was like a moth being attracted to the light. Finding a more pure sense of reality than my conditioned mind could provide for me. “Who am I?” was the leading question, and still is.

I was not brought up with a religion or a specific philosophy. My mother was a pianist and housewife and my father had a scientific mind as an engineer and a busy job in management. There were no

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<sup>1</sup> See my [earlier Tale](#) on this website for a definition of some terms of nonduality.

dogma's in our house. My youth was unproblematic apart from my health, there was enough money and the family was close. I had a good learning mind and soon discovered the joy of music, when my mother taught me to play the piano. My father was a *homo universalis* who knew a lot about everything and was a good and objective teacher<sup>2</sup>. I was sent to a Christian primary school (I think it was slightly evangelical) not for religious reasons but because it was the nearest to our house, and my parents chose for practicality – which was a wise choice. And although I loved the stories in the New Testament about the teachings of Jesus, I was never satisfied with the easy and unclear answers of the conditioned mind, institutionalized religions or contemporary sciences. After René Descartes confused “being” with thinking, most<sup>3</sup> new (Western) philosophies and other sciences mainly revolved around the knowledge of thinking, and clearly missed the point that they should have looked into: the knowledge of Being. Fortunately, early Christian philosophy, like in the teachings of Jesus and the sermons of Meister Eckhart and especially the Eastern philosophies that caused Daoism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sufism provide in that and have been very well documented too. These days one does not have to physically visit India, China or Japan or read Sanskrit, Mandarin or Japanese to get familiar with these ancient texts of wisdom. Even after discovering the teachings of Meister Eckhart, St. Francis of Assisi, Angelus Silesius and Eckhart Tolle, still Christian nonduality seemed only a vestigial form of the nonduality we discovered in the Eastern philosophies. Until we discovered the talks and books of Marshall Davis<sup>4</sup>, that is. Coming from a mixed Daoist/Christian inclination, he was able to translate the teachings of Jesus in nondual terms in a very lucid and convincing way, which also sort of closed a loop in our perception of perennial philosophy. Of the Eastern philosophies, many good translations are available. And if reading is not one's inclination, many teachers have made it their life's achievement to give workshops and presentations and these are available on the internet as well.

Does having a deadly disease help?

For me the question “Who am I?” furthermore came clearly presented as being born with a deadly disease, called *cystic fibrosis* by the doctors. Although it turned out to be a lot less deadly than I was made to believe when I was young, because I am from 1963. Circumstances and the world however tried to sell this story to my mind, but I intuitively never felt it to be true – it just didn't feel like this story was about me. However, initially it provided my mind with a clearly visible and noticeable all encompassing identification, an easy story of myself that seemed to be real. Being told that my life was probably to end any time soon for as long as I can remember, had a profound impact on me. It put me clearly “in the Now” and I couldn't be bothered with dwelling in the future for sure. At first there was also an impact of fear and sadness of course, for dying seemed not a funny thing to do, but I soon started to notice that the promised physical death just didn't want to happen, also due to the revolution of medical knowledge and medication. And once I noticed that not even my disease story

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<sup>2</sup> Read more about their marriage and influence on me in *From the Hague with Love*, a [tale](#) on this website.

<sup>3</sup> With a few exceptions, for instance Martin Heidegger, Baruch Spinoza, David Hume. Schopenhauer at least came to the understanding that there is some solace in Art, but he never discovered why this is. I talked about the special aspect of Art as a means of expressing and discovering Oneness in [this talk](#). Also, the [paintings](#) of Debbie Parkins on this website all are a clear emanation of Oneness and realization. And a good example of Art as an expression of Oneness can be found in the piano music of Frederic Mompou, about whom I wrote [here](#).

<sup>4</sup> Marshall Davis, *Christian Nonduality*, [YouTube](#). Many books of him are available, of which we have so far read two: *Experiencing God directly: the Way of Christian Nonduality* (2013) and *The Tao of Christ* (2013), one of the most pure and clear translations of the Dao de Jing we know of.

was real<sup>5</sup> (although the symptoms were), I did not stop there and started wondering what other identifications I, and most other people, had that were unreal as well. Thinking about “me” had lost a lot of its appeal due to the disease story that had no future anyway and only showed a soon to be dead “me”, and I soon discovered the blissful experience of “being in the flow”, totally immersed in doing something I really liked and was interested in. When I was not completely “gone” and immersed in classical music, playing the piano for hours every day (and more often than not Chopin, who’s music and person I adored), I was out in nature on my kettcar and bike, enjoying the weather and the physical activity. And once having mastered the art of reading, I lost myself in books about space travel (it was the time of the Saturn moon rockets), science fiction (Jules Verne, Isaac Asimov), and all kinds of other sciences, I found in the rich collection of books of my father who enjoyed watching his young son developing as a scientific explorer. I despised “literature” like fiction novels or poetry, because in my view they were about persons that were healthy and squandering valuable time in doing stupid things of personal drama. I had enough of my own drama being ill, and I not even believed in that, so why would I believe the even more remote and smaller drama’s of other people? Although my father had a lot of books about Art, I didn’t bother to read about that, because I practiced art myself on the piano and this was more powerful than any theory about other Arts. Only later, after realization happened and seeing the beauty and miracle of painting and drawing come to life in the hands of Debbie, I discovered the other Arts, and started a little painting and poetry myself. It is remarkable to notice that Debbie had similar experiences in early life, immersing herself in swimming (to combat a form of asthma that was cured by this), reading and painting (which she was inspired to by her father), and shying away from stories of personal and egoic drama as well.

Every year I got older, the belief in all the stories of the person, most of all my own person, diminished, finally to disappear completely when I was around thirty-nine, reaching the unthinkable age of my idol, *Frédéric Chopin* (I am a classical pianist and also – out of my love for language and words - studied law). And with it, almost all other stories and identifications went away as well. Not that there were so many other identities that could compete with the strong one about dying soon. But no seeker has to regret being healthy, by the way. In the end, everyone has a deadly disease, it’s called life and it is a door to liberation for everyone. When you really knock on it, it turns out you are on the inside already<sup>6</sup>.

So, one by one, helped by the happenings in life (another word for grace) and good people that came on my way (see later), I found out that none of the identifications could stand the test of true looking, or the test of time. It was like the belief in *Santa Claus*<sup>7</sup> that came and, on close inspection, turned out untrue and went away again for good. Every identity proved to be a conditioning, a colored translation and conceptualization that limited my most inner intuitions of being, and so my attention turned away from those limitations one by one. Sometimes entire systems of conditioning fell away in one go, for instance the inclinations to judge, compare, compete or complain. And every time these realizations happened, they were followed by nothing, that is to say by a tremendous feeling of space, stillness and freedom. Together you could call it peace and love.

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<sup>5</sup> See my talk about going beyond the identification with disease [here](#) on this website.

<sup>6</sup> *Mohamed Jalal ad-Din Balkhi Rumi (1207-1273)*, “I have lived on the lip of insanity, wanting to know reasons, knocking on a door. It opens. I have been knocking from the inside”.

<sup>7</sup> See my tale *The Santa Clausness of Life* [here](#) on this website.

Conducive to this process was no doubt the circumstance that I was brought up in a way that clearly did not support the construction of an independent ego-identity either. My sister and I were more or less the puppets in the doll house of my mother, which caused considerable trouble when I at last had to find my way in life myself. But fortunately, with some good psychotherapy as a young adult, I managed fine.

### Meeting Debbie

After my thirty-ninth birthday, the mind, having reached it's ultimate and most important goal, was robbed of almost all its means of illusion. It managed to grab hold of some residual threats though, that presented as a negative attention for my physical limitations that began to show more and more growing older. It also tried to crystalize as a conviction that because of this, I wouldn't find a wife to spend the rest of my life with.

But it was a lost fight as soon as two years later I first looked into the eyes of my present wife Debbie on the 20th of August 2004. We immediately recognized the timeless dimension in each other and my mind gave up its last bastion, having been proven wrong again. It just didn't believe in itself anymore and went away.



When Debbie and I met, the whole process of liberation was sped up because she also had a strong inclination for reality and stillness, and it is a joy doing this together because we both love it. I am sure an important part of our instant mutual attraction is caused by the recognition in each other of this love for innate unbound freedom – and of course Debbie is lovely in every other way as well. We were soulmates hence for 7 years to come, after which finally and suddenly we found our lives connected as man and woman as well, and we have been happily married since.

Realization happened, but there was a strong wish for more clarity, to embody and integrate what this new freedom was all about. So together, studying Daoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, reading from and about *Eckhart Tolle*, *Nisargadatta*, *Ramana Maharshi*, *J. Krishnamurti*, *Meister Eckhart*, *Angelus Silesius*, *Rumi* and *Ryokan* and a few other teachers and communicators, we

integrated the experience of wholeness in our daily lives, acting as each others guru and source of clarity. Being immersed in the realization of these people by reading and listening, in a way provided the vocabulary for us to talk and become more conscious about what had already happened. This process of clarification, to become ever more settled in this realization of Oneness, is still going on and every step of it reveals more freedom.

## Talking about the mirage – again the *caveat*

We feel there is no limit to this process because freedom is boundless and timeless. Freedom from the mind, from the known. On our website you find some more stories about this process, getting out of the mind, wholeness etc. But mind (!) you, these are only stories of a mirage telling the passing Bedouin how he managed to turn into the sand again. As is this story as well. Because of course, there never was a mirage in the first place. Meaning that the person finds out in the end that he never existed, other than as an illusory bundle of thoughts and beliefs, and vanishes when this function of the brain, called the mind, fades away from focus. And then others who watched the whole thing, question who they still perceive as the person – they ask what happened and how he did it. And the answer then comes from that what is exposed after the person has gone, and was always there – the pure aliveness of “I am” which doesn't know what the fuss is all about because nothing has changed for that part of the creation. The sand was always the sand and never really turned in to the mirage. No “one”, no person, was ever realized or enlightened, not even the Buddha or Jesus. It is Oneness that realizes the illusion of the person, not the person who achieves enlightenment or realization. And only the rest of the world then erroneously perceives the being that emerges as “an enlightened person” and tries to figure this out, destroy/crucify it or follow it as a master, building a philosophy or a religion/church upon it and reducing it again to a system of thinking, a philosophy, a playground for their minds. This can lead to a lot of suffering and misunderstandings, needless to say. So, don't give these stories to the mind – take them matter of factly, as an example that is not to be followed by way of reverse engineering. It won't work.

## Realization is no belief

Realization is no belief or set of beliefs, on the contrary it is more like an ever expanding set of non-beliefs. It is filling the mind with emptiness. It is about the emptying and dissolving of the conditioned beliefs and convictions of the mind. Most of what remains is non-conceptual, more like intuition. Because it is non-conceptual, it can't be grasped or understood by the mind, and it is difficult to explain in words - one can only point to it. But all of this can be very clearly experienced by testing and applying it in daily life<sup>8</sup>. Which is crucial, because only reading and mentally understanding will not do it. One can talk and write about the taste of a strawberry until one runs out of words, but only the eating will clarify what that really means. It is more like self induced psychotherapy, the foundations of which are mostly in Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, like *Advaita Vedanta* (Vedantic nonduality). It is changing one's perspective on reality to a degree where, in the end, there is no separate perspective left and only direct reality remains. There are practices like meditation (I did a lot of that during medical therapy) that can be conducive, but it all starts with a sincere longing for what the Japanese Zen master *Bankei* called “*the unborn mind*”, the pure mind that is free from conditioning (which includes seeing through conditioning and thus render it harmless). Every technique needs to be abandoned again, the goal of practicing is to make the practice superfluous, not to get good at it. After all, I don't want to be an accomplished meditator, I want to be free. Eventually to find out that “I” have to vanish for that, the ego has to go.

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<sup>8</sup> In some earlier Tales I describe what nondual living is about – and I might expand on this in Tales to follow.



## Good examples (the Guru element)

We never met the teachers I mentioned in person. But with today's technology, this is no longer needed. Listening to talks and reading books by and about *Papaji*, *Alan Watts*<sup>9</sup>, *Eckhart Tolle*<sup>10</sup>, *Mooji*<sup>11</sup>, *Fred Davis*<sup>12</sup>, *Tony Parsons*<sup>13</sup>, *Marshall Davis*<sup>14</sup>, *Paul Morgan-Somers*<sup>15</sup> and many other teachers and communicators, provides an experience that is comparable and even more diverse than what seekers did who went to India and joined an ashram. There is one exception, once in my early life I met someone who was realized. Without knowing it (both of us). This was my grandmother<sup>16</sup>. She was the second mother of my mother and we called her *Manja*. *Isabella van Gaalen*, as her birthname was, emanated the Buddha-Nature, for she was an enlightened being no doubt. As a small boy I didn't know what this was of course, but intuitively we connected on this level and it was the most wonderful kind of selfless and unconditional love I had experienced so far in life. After this, earthly love just felt incomplete to me and unconsciously I was in search for this feeling to repeat. But this is not an experience that is to be found in the world outside, it only comes from within by liberation and it took me another 35 years to discover this layer of consciousness in my being. In my first marriage that lasted twenty years I was not unhappy by any means, but only a few years after my divorce, when meeting *Debbie* this level of awareness was uncovered again, and now permanently. By then, the appearance called *Manja* had already died, but the connection I have with her is timeless and beyond form. This encounter with a realized being most likely ignited the pull to this in my being.

Everyone needs to find his or her own unique way in this process. Having good examples, wise people that have gone there before, helps of course. Because there is a lot of, what we call, "sweet nonsense" around in this area of human knowledge as well. And the mind does not give in easily, it prefers to hide in pitfalls and rabbit holes, pretending not to be there anymore, but lingering on in a new disguise.



Liberation does not come from following -isms or precepts

For instance, although there are some things that seem conducive for liberation to happen, like meditation, they should not be taken as mental practice. I unknowingly did about 30.000 hours of meditation prior to realization, for my lungs required sitting still and concentrating on nothing else than my breathing on the couch every morning and evening for a total of 3 hours, nebulizing medication to get rid of the mucoid obstructions that continually form as a result of cystic fibrosis. This is *Pranayama* meditation *après la lettre*, and it had a profound appeasing effect on my mind

<sup>9</sup> <https://alanwatts.org>

<sup>10</sup> <https://eckharttolle.com> and [YouTube](#)

<sup>11</sup> <https://mooji.org> and [YouTube](#)

<sup>12</sup> <https://awakeningclaritynow.com> and [YouTube](#)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theopensecret.com> and [YouTube](#)

<sup>14</sup> Christian Nonduality is his [YouTube](#) channel and he is author of many books about this subject.

<sup>15</sup> [Facebook](#).

<sup>16</sup> More about *Manja* in my Tale "From the Hague with Love" [on this website](#).

which is undeniable, discovering the spaciousness between thoughts. But I would not know, although it might have been conducive, whether or not this had any *direct* causal relationship with realization, nor would I know of other practices that will do that.

Religions and, in my view, mostly the Buddhist philosophy is most prominent in pointing to many things like this in a plethora of prescriptions (precepts), telling monks that they should follow 200 or so rules, and nuns even 300 or so, to become a *Bodhisattva*, someone who is on the way to achieving Buddhahood (which is the same as liberation, or moksha in Hindu (advaita) philosophy). But in the end, there is no guarantee of liberation happening here. The practice or principal of *neti-neti* means that one should starve *the mind* (not the being!) from identifying with anything external. Not this, not that. In the *Hsin Hsin Ming*<sup>17</sup> this is phrased as follows: “*When neither (personal) love nor hate arises, all is clear and undisguised*”. This is the real meaning of the Dao principle of *Wu Wei*. No resistance, no struggle, no thoughts, no doings, no problems, natural happening will take care of all. *Neti-neti* is however not to be taken literally as a way of forming hundreds of *mental precepts* about behaviour: “*I should not do/be that, but I should do/be this*”. The Christian Bible is also filled with precepts like these, most prominently in the so called Ten Commandments.

But forming of and living by a moral or ethical code of behaviour is not the way to find freedom, because it is only more food for the mind and the conditioned mind can not obey these precepts for long, being lost in wandering thoughts and perverted ways that arise from craving for happiness and avoiding pain. These practices then produce suppression, violation, guilt, resulting in more suppression. No realization, on the contrary, there is a good chance of forming a mindset that is like the proverbial suppressed “horny celibate”, while internally, it is still craving for all the things that it has learned not to do or be and feeling guilty of not obtaining the optimal moral outcome. This is the opposite of freedom from the mind. In fact, the majority of all those monks and nuns, or even their so called masters, will never find realization.

The *Hsin Hsin Ming* explains why: “*Separate by the smallest amount however, and you are as far from it as Heaven is from Earth*”. And the separation by hundreds of precepts is not exactly small, it is enormous. If one reads the stories of famous wandering Zen monks (like Ryokan<sup>18</sup> or Bankei<sup>19</sup>), one clearly sees their struggle in finding a realized master to explain to them the state of realization. Many of those established Zen masters they visited and questioned, had to admit that they didn’t have the realization themselves either, and they could only refer the monk to other masters, who had to confess the same thing. And finally, the wandering monks found liberation all by themselves by living a life of non separation, until Oneness did away with its own illusion of the person of the monk. And with it, with all precepts. After that, the monks lived a life of Oneness, free from precepts, but outwardly not

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<sup>17</sup> Seng-Ts’an, Third Zen Patriarch, *Hsin Hsin Ming, Verses on the Faith-Mind*, translated from the Chinese by Richard B. Clarke, White Pine Press, Buffalo, New York, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> See for instance Kazuaki Tanahashi, *Sky Above, Great Wind – The Life and Poetry of Zen Master Ryokan*, Shambala, Boulder 2012; Eido Frances Carney, *Kakurenbo or the Whereabouts of Zen Priest Ryokan*, Temple Ground Press, 2013; John Stevens, *One Robe, One Bowl, The Zen Poetry of Ryokan*, Weather Hill, Boulder 2006.

<sup>19</sup> See for instance Norman Waddell, *The Unborn, The Life and Teachings of Zen Master Bankei 1622-1693*, North Point Press, 2000; Peter Haskel, *Bankei Zen, Translations from The Record of Bankei* edited by Yoshito Hakeda.

much differently – only with the Joy that comes from Liberation, called *Sat Chit Ananda* in Hindu (advaita) Vedanta.

Liberation comes from inside out – the character stays

So, kind being can not come from outside in by imposing precepts on a belligerent mind in an effort to subdue it. Kind being will arise inside out by itself, from liberation. Oneness, being only One and in its right mind (which is the unborn<sup>20</sup> mind), will not kill (itself), it will not commit adultery (to itself), it will not steal (from itself) etcetera. It doesn't need to follow any precepts or commandment for that. In the human body, it might eat meat, or not (which is not the same as being vegan, for that is a concept). It might have sex, or not (which is not the same as being celibate, because that is a concept). It might have a hot temper, or not (which is not the same as being patient, because that is a concept again). These things are not the question. Liberation is not about peculiarities of behaviour. With liberation, the character need not disappear. Only the personal separating tendencies go. Nisargadatta was a chain smoker. Ramana hated to spill any food and loved his cow more than anything else. Ryokan loved to get gloriously drunk on Sake. Eckhart Tolle has a wife and loves mechanical watches. Mooji loves to paint and eat sweets and Jamaican food. Ram Dass experimented extensively with LSD and hallucinogenic drugs.

The stories are manyfold and funny, nothing human is alien to liberated people. After realizing happened, Debbie and I don't eat meat anymore, but it is not a mental choice with a story of reasoning, it just happened. Eating meat left us. And so did drinking alcohol. Covid ended some social activities, which we don't miss and have not returned to yet. And many more tendencies changed in the same natural way. With the vanishing of the needing mind, personal and separating habits also went. Other habits and tendencies stayed and sometimes became even more profound, for instance our love for stillness, nature, simplifying, music, reading (mostly about Oneness and Art) and painting.

Nature is Love and Kindness. Even when sudden death occurs in nature, it is not murder or manslaughter. It is about animals that feed themselves by eating what nature provides for them in other animals and plants, it is a process of assimilation. There are no evil mental thoughts involved. When cells in the body die, it is because they have fulfilled their task, or they are dissolving in performing the task itself. Otherwise, there would be cancer, or the immune system would break down. These are all spontaneous doings/not doings (happenings) according to *Wu Wei*, to preserve the natural balance. *Wu Wei* doesn't mean doing nothing, it does not refer to inactivity. It refers to doing what spontaneously arises, without resistance to what already naturally is. This might involve action or sitting still. There are no precepts or thoughts involved or needed, on the contrary, they would only interfere in the optimal natural way of things.

This is not to say there is anything wrong *per se* with living like a monk (in a monastery or in the middle of a city), because following precepts will in many cases improve the personal experience of life, provided they are accepted in freedom and out of joy, and not in some obligatory scheme. This is also an emanation of Oneness, and Oneness can be free or contracted. At most however, living this way can result in a peaceful existence, with a subdued mind that is not looking for trouble. Opposed to

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<sup>20</sup> We first came across this term in the teachings of the Japanese monk and Zen master Bankei.



what happens in the world predominantly, this can be perceived as an improvement for sure. But it does not provide a way to liberation at all.

There is no way to liberation, because in the end, we all are already it. When in Paris, there is no taking the bus to Paris. Anyone who thinks or tries differently, will never realize that he/she is in Paris - he will only be ever erroneously in the bus on the way to it.

Liberation happens, but Clarification is never done

So the process is never done. Even after realization, one has to be vigilant to remain clear and to prevent the mind from smudging it over again. Our best guides were *Eckhart Tolle* (The power of now



– and many of his talks and meditations on his site), *Jiddu Krishnamurti* (Freedom from the Known – and many of his talks on YouTube), *Nisargadatta Maharaj* (I am That) and *Ramana Maharshi* (whose life and teachings are very well documented by *David Godman*<sup>21</sup> in many books and videos). We enjoyed listening to the life stories of *Ram Dass*<sup>22</sup> (*Richard Alpert*) very much as well, and *Alan Watts* had a unique way of introducing these perennial philosophies with a lot of humor and eloquence in his many talks that were recorded. Each of these sources provide a fountain of other sources as well. There is so much to learn and realize in this area of maturing, that was never taught to us in the Western systems of learning, or in the ego-based way people are brought up in our part of the world.

No systems, no schools, no path, no goal, no time, no effort, no agenda

We never limited ourselves to one source or school of thought or wisdom, it was and still is a very eclectic and intuitive, non-linear course of self study and clarifying we follow. After being in traditional Western education for 35 years, first as students and then as teachers ourselves<sup>23</sup>, to clarify the process of realizing we studied and taught ourselves for the past 17 years, reading hundreds of books about Western and Eastern philosophy and poetry, listening to thousand of hours of talks on YouTube from realized beings, and we became ever more proficient and free in music and visual Art in a fully connected way. No single institution could provide for this, so we developed our own way of ICBL (Intuitive and Curiosity Based Learning), in which we were completely free to cross all existing official borders in theory and practice. For instance, besides *Advaita Vedanta* and the Buddhist *Pali* canon (and other school of Buddhism), we also came to know about the early Christian teachings of *Meister*

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.davidgodman.org> and [YouTube](#)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ramdass.org> and [YouTube](#)

<sup>23</sup> Paul studied Civil Law at the University of Maastricht and was an assistant Professor at the University of Leiden between 1984 and 2002, and he is a proficient classical pianist as well. Since realization happened, he also occasionally writes poems and Debbie taught him to paint as well (visit "*Paul's Attic*" on the [website](#)). Debbie studied for and was Schoolteacher and Remedial teacher between 1986 and 2011, and was certified in Education Development and Management. She is a proficient Art painter and teacher as well and she also studied for Yoga teacher. Paul taught her to play the piano for fun.

*Eckhart* and *Benedictus*, about Sufi wisdom, and a lot about Zen and Dao, the life and poems of the Japanese wandering monks such as *Ryokan* and *Bankei*, and the poetry of *Rumi*, *Hafez*, *Rainer Maria Rilke* and *Hermann Hesse*. Not to mention the clear nonduality that speaks from the writings and paintings of the painter *Paul Klee*<sup>24</sup> and the music of *Frederic Mompou*<sup>25</sup>. The intriguing thing in this ongoing process in which we love to keep a beginner's mind<sup>26</sup>, is to find out that in the core they all point to the same truth. As all religions do as well - before they went viral and institutional, that is. And because we do it together, we never had any inclination to join any group or official school. It is total self-inquiry and applying it in life every second.

Debbie applies this freedom in her paintings as well, and I in my talks and poems. Even my piano playing improved from this freedom of the mind. And it is the thing we love to "do" most. It is fun, surprising and still very enlightening. It makes us dance through life, where identity based thinking falls away more and more. Doing that together is a true joy. We have no goals, we don't want to reach anything in the future, the doing is the entire thing and freedom is the lead. We don't mind finding out that we are as helpless and vulnerable as the leaves blown away by the wind of life – because we are the wind as well. Surrendering to that is freedom, and nothing compares.

J.Paul Jordaans, Grathem 20 March 2022

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Klee, *The Thinking Eye, 1961 and The Nature of Nature, 1970*.

<sup>25</sup> More about Mompou in a [Tale](#) on this website about him.

<sup>26</sup> *Shoshin* is the original word for this, coming from Zen Buddhism. Shunryu Suzuki wrote a book about this, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, Shambala Library 2006. Also the teachings of Benedictus of Nursia (480 – 547) are an emanation of this openness and benevolent curiosity.