

Fifty-eight Years with CF

How Cystic Fibrosis dissolved all of my predicaments in life

In 1963, being born with *Cystic Fibrosis* provided my mind with a clear story about my almost non-existent future. I quickly lost interest in this story of my mind, which only showed a “soon to be dead me”. So I concentrated on the experience of Being Here Now¹. After discovering the Art of Music when I learned to play the piano, I also came to know the blissful experience of being “in the flow”, doing something with so much concentration that all notion of who, where and when I was, vanished. Ego, Space and Time dissolved into One. It was not a matter of being lost in the flow, but quite the opposite: I clearly felt “being found” in the flow of Oneness and I discovered my real Source again.

In the course of my working life, with meditation I learned to be in this flow almost continuously. The obligatory two-hours practice of silently cleaning my lungs with a nebulizer, twice a day for thirty years with nothing to focus on but my own breathing, was a great way of doing *Pranayama*² without knowing it – and without any spiritual intention. I came to recognize the stillness between thoughts as who I truly was. I learned to ignore the short periods of suffering in between stillness, when the ego/mind got a temporal hold over me again and made me believe that I was not the One, but some small person, locked in a diseased single body, separated from All that ever Is. I “*Fell Awake*”, the moments of “day-mares” became less and less frequent. Even when they occurred, there was always this intuition in the background that it was not I who suffered, but the little ego. And suddenly the mind stopped all together, shortly after meeting Debbie.

Seven years later, after Debbie and I married, switching from our previous occupations to studying philosophy and nonduality, to our surprise we learned that this realization of Oneness and the becoming of who we really are, is called enlightenment or (the term I prefer:) Liberation, a way of experiencing reality directly without the interface of the personalizing and separating mind. It was well documented in (mostly) Eastern Philosophies like Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism and Daoism. It is what is meant by the *Mahavakyas*³ “*Tat Tvam Asi*”⁴ (That Thou Art, thus you are) and “*Aham Brahman Asmi*”⁵ (I am Brahman, or: I am divine) in the *Upanishads* (as explained in the *Advaita* school of Indian *Vedanta*).

But not only is it known in those for us distant regions and foreign language, it is also what Jesus talked about when he said “the Kingdom of Heaven is within you”, what St. Francis of Assisi meant when he pointed out “what you are looking for, is where you are looking from”,

¹ Or, as **Martin Heidegger** formulated: “*Dasein, das Seiende das wir selbst je sind*” (the being that we already are ourselves), *Sein und Zeit*, p.7.

² *Pranayama* is the yogic practice of focusing on breath. In Sanskrit, *Prana* means “vital life force” and *Yama* means “to gain control”. *Pranayama* is described in Hindu texts like the *Bhagavad Gita* and the yoga *Sutras* of **Patanjali**. It is a practice to elevate life energy. Contrary to the meaning of the words, practically it has nothing to do with control, but it is all about surrendering and letting go (*Wu Wei*).

³ The Great Sayings from the *Upanishads*.

⁴ *Chandogya Upanishad* 6.8.7 of the *Sama Veda*.

⁵ *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 1.4.10 of the *Yajur Veda*.

and what Meister Eckhart found when he said “the eye with which I see God, is the same eye with which God sees me”. We came to know this fundamental part of Christianity⁶ that really spoke to us⁷, like the famous words “I am who I am” that Moses heard as described in the Old Testament of the Bible⁸, and what Jesus refers to when he said “Before Abraham was, I am⁹”. Recently, science has also found evidence of the expressions of liberation in the brain, using fMRI technology¹⁰, to make visible a shadow of this state of consciousness on the screens of our technical achievements.

Liberation brought me totally beyond the body and the disease, it dissolved both notions almost completely. It is a very peaceful and complete way of experiencing reality. It is special and miraculous, but it is not something that is only for a few. It is who we All really Are, regardless of religion, faith, health, or any other identity that we are clinging to. As soon as we learn to let those identities go, the underlying identification with All that really Is will emerge by itself. It takes no effort or time, it only needs the choiceless awareness of a listening and quiet brain, that is in awe of itself and of all of Creation, and a true longing for the reality beyond our limited mindset and our disease, called the human condition.

I am sure that my body having *cystic fibrosis* has been conducive for the possibility of this viewpoint arising in me, which is in fact the breakdown of all separate viewpoints, merging into the impersonal but ever so close and intimate realization of who I really Am. In this regard, for me *cystic fibrosis* showed itself not as a disease, but rather as a blessing in disguise. And the best blessing is sharing this liberation with each other.

Recently, I answered a question on the forum of a *cystic fibrosis* website¹¹, where I also write a weekly Sunday morning column. It was about what “we” (people with CF) do to keep in shape and fight the disease and keep alive longer. The answer that arose, was:

“I like to walk. I have a dog. She likes this too. We keep each other fit.

I am not a warrior tho. I am not fighting my body, disease or anything. I cooperate with it. We are in this together. Or actually the body is in me. We take care of each other. This is a thing of peace, not of war. A quiet mind in a happy body. Life expectancy for me is not about longevity. I am not here for the quantity. I am here to be an emanation of nature. Nature comes and goes, that’s its quality. Life expectancy is about what I expect from life and what life can expect from me. Which is compliance, creativity, joy and surrender. This is effortless freedom. And Love.

My body is from 1963. I am however the timeless one.”

⁶ In a way, like Judaism and Islam, Christianity is a (middle) Eastern philosophy/religion as well. They are also called *Abrahamic* religions.

⁷ The words, wisdom and emanation of Marshall Davis were a great help in this.

⁸ Exodus 3:14.

⁹ **John** 8:58.

¹⁰ See Tale no. 39 on our website (*Is Enlightenment a form of Neurodiversity?*).

¹¹ Cystic Fibrosis News Today (post #18307).

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Grathem, 4 May 2022
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Paul with his lovely wife Debbie