



## Al Pessso: What Sustains Me

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Albert Pessso, co-founder with his wife, Diane Boyden-Pessso, of PBSP, Pessso Boyden System Psychomotor and President of the Psychomotor Institute, Inc. was formerly Associate Professor and Director of the Dance Division at Emerson College, Supervisor of Psychomotor Therapy at McLean Hospital in Massachusetts and Consultant in Psychiatric Research at the Boston VA Hospital. He has conducted training programs in PBSP in the US, Brazil, Israel and in many countries in Europe. He and his work with PBSP for the German GTZ Mission in The Democratic Republic of Congo have been featured in a documentary film, "State of Mind" distributed by Icarus Films. He is the author of many books and articles on PBSP, and a frequent lecturer at universities, hospitals and clinics in the US and Europe. Al is the recipient of the USABP's 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award.

For better or worse, this transcript retains the spontaneous, spoken-language quality of the podcast conversation.

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This conversation (January 2015) is a follow-up on an earlier conversation on the same topic (March 2014). The purpose of this conversation was to help organize his thoughts into what would become his chapter for "What Sustains Me". In the following unedited transcript, Serge Prengel's questions and comments are in italics, and Al Pessso's words are in regular type.

*So we're taking it back from where we left off last time, and I'm asking you how you would write it, what kind of things you would want to write?*

What came just this morning, just this moment even, is doing my own PBSP structure in my head... And looking at how I feel, or what's coming up, and then thinking what history might have produced: the distress of the moment, or the overload of the moment. I think that's coming up because this last half year - and even less than that - have been very stressful, extraordinarily stressful. Working, working, working. Some people say, "How in the world do you do all those things", and Diane declining. And I've been finding there are times when I can do a structure, and I've done a couple recently in my mind that have had a profound effect. I'm astonished that you can do it in your mind, on your own, and it comes up. It gave me... Is that okay what I'm saying?

*That's beautiful, actually. Let me put it in context as I understand it, okay. In a way, at the moment of reflecting on the question of "what sustains me", what comes to mind is, "Oh I could do a PBSP structure. In a way, the beauty of it is that doing the PBSP structure right now would be a specific help for this project. But it's also, in a way, connecting to the work of a lifetime.*

That's true.

*So, in a way, what I'm hearing you say is actually: The work of my lifetime has been to understand myself, to understand human beings, including myself, in such a way that I can evolve the tools so*

*that in a moment like this one, I have access to this PBSP structure. So I'm hearing it almost like the babushka saying that there is like the small babushka doll of this moment, but there's also all the other babushka dolls of the stuff that you've done in your life to create that.*

Right. That's interesting you put it that way. That's very fine. But it opened up another spot in my head because the reason the process came about was because leaving dance and leaving - not so much that - leaving New York City and the goals of that resulted in seven years of anxiety and panic, and the most miserable years of my life. I think what sustains me is to know that I could be that miserable for that long and not give up, and have the world absolutely change. Because at that time, I felt like the world has no meaning. I'm just a zombie. Not that I stopped working. I never stopped teaching a day or stopped working, but the fact that it can change so radically after being so bad so long. Then it lets you hold on and not quit, and know that something absolutely unexpected can come. And as a matter of fact, because of all that misery that came up... In the middle of all that misery was parts of myself that had not come alive in the work that I had chosen. So there's something to learn out of the misery. I don't know how to put that any other way than at this moment.

*Yeah, I know. But that's like after you survive the misery, it comes as a help in the sense of remembering that since you survived it, you can survive a lot.*

That's one thing. But then there's something in the qualities of the misery that has the unborn self in it, and I think it pushed me to find the whole system of PBSP from that. Anyway, I think it motivated it. So, that's one thing.

Then the other thing that changed me is the love for people. Immediately, I think of my wife, I think of all my friends and my family, and all the people I work with. The love of humanity, of life, of believing this, the dearness and sweetness of that, that sustains me. I don't know any other way to put that. Then I think what also sustains me is the body stuff that I started doing when I was five years old. So I have been a body person since five, or maybe even before that. I started doing body exercises on my own. Nobody told me, "Do it." I had four older brothers who couldn't pay attention to me and didn't give a damn what I did. My father had no idea what I was doing, but I started doing that stuff early on. That became body building with Dan Laurie. I don't know if you've ever heard of Dan Laurie?

*Just from our talk.*

Yeah. Then I was in his gymnasium for years, and then out of that came the dance, and then all the body stuff with Martha Graham. As I talk about that, I've said it in my bio somewhere... I was raised in a very, very orthodox family, and I'm so glad that, with that came ritual rather than dogma. Because I can't stand - I shouldn't be saying this - but I can't stand the dogma of fundamental thinking of any kind. I just can't stand it. I've just written an article for Nancy Eichhorn on spirituality. But with ritual, there's a moment of sacredness in the present... When you move with it and make a ritual with it, it changes life... Which is the kind of thing where a moment in the present becomes a long-term memory rather than just a short-term memory. So the whole notion of ritual... and that ritual stuff came from Martha Graham, because all of her dance and all of her movement stuff didn't have to do with exhibitionism, but it had to do with ritual re-drama, and stuff like that. That combination of spirituality without dogma and ritual, and how to make a moment in the present have a profound influence, even though it's only an hour.

*Let's maybe just stay a little longer on that, because it's a very powerful image. You see a moment in the present go from, in a way, into long-term experience. Obviously, there's something that happens for the people who watch the dance, but there's also something that happens for the person who performs the dance.*

That's right.

*What's it like for you as you remember such moments?*

What comes up in my mind now, separate from Martha Graham, was the very first time I saw a live theater and it was breathtaking. That's when I was quite young. I think we must have gone into town to see one in New York City, Manhattan, and saw a living-- the color and the motion, it just dazzled me. I don't mean for exhibitionism. It's-- anyway, I don't know if that's the way you want it to go, but that's--

*No, I want to because that's something very powerful there. So you know that's your first experience watching theater.*

Theater... And you know it's just on the stage, but it awakens something in your heart and in your brain that is so different than something that's just simply put on the stage -- the stage in the brain, and that changes enormously.

*What I'm putting together... I'm staying with the concept that you brought up of ritual as opposed to dogma. Ritual as opposed to dogma: You say the experience of ritual is something where the moment takes a quality that is really different. In a way, convert it from present and fleeting to long-term. So in a sense, you are out of the boundaries of time, but not in an intellectual way, or something emotional that happens... And that quality is what you found in theater and dance as well. So I'm staying longer to see-- describing what the inner experience is.*

That's what I'm working on. There's something about immanence that I want to put in it. And that has something to do with what people call spirituality, where you are in that extra... And I don't believe in spirituality as something separate from the body. It's the emergence of something. And that immanence is an emergence of part of the self. Or a quality that has to do with the ultimate meaning of existence or something like that.

*So there's something in that moment that you're still very much in touch with who you are in a physical way, but at the same there's an experience of something emerging...*

Yeah, and it has a sacred quality. I can't put it any other way. Sacred. Then when I say that that, when I moved in the Graham thing and when I just moved now, if I just do things and the quality of the movement, I'm not just dancing. This is a quality that I can't tell you. When I danced, I lived it.

*But right now, between the two of us, what's happening is: I'm seeing you with Skype. Just a moment ago, you were doing it, your voice slowed down a little bit. And then the movement of just moving your hands slightly... There's a part, that's a way in which your hand position... your fingers a little bit outstretched... so the sense of stretching, and then stretching the movement slowly, as you open up your hand...*

Well, I didn't think of stretching, but I sense, a sense of... I can't put a word on it [chuckles]. It was the timing of it, the rhythm. I wasn't stretchy. It's just that...

*An opening?*

No. It's just that it's meaningful that wherever the source of that motion... It wasn't to stretch. There was an expression of some kind. I can't tell you what—it was an expression. And there's a sense of meaning and rightness, rather than opening.

*So, it's not necessarily the opening, but I'm trying to find the words to capture my experience of watching from the outside, what you experienced from the inside. And as you're talking a little bit, then I'm changing from the notion of "opening" to the notion, maybe, of "following". Almost like, if you are touching a rock or a surface, and you are following the surface to kind of follow the contour.*

No.

*No? Okay.*

Because I'm not dealing with something from the inside. I'm dealing for the quality that's making that movement.

*So you are following some kind of a quality inside that's making that movement. And the movement is only a by-product so..*

It's not a by-product, but an expression of what's inside.

An expression of what's inside. So, what, in a way, makes this moment sacred, outside of the ordinary flow of time, but more special, is that you are in touch with that something inside. And as you are in touch with it and you are paying attention to it, you are listening to it and trying to follow it with your movement of your arm

No, I'm just being it.

*You are being it.*

I don't try to follow. I don't try to follow it at all. I'm just being it, and I'm being it knowing I'm observing it, and you are observing it. So I'm the observer of it, the liver of it, and the deliverer of it. I don't know if that makes sense.

*Yeah. Yeah. Is it okay to stay with that experience of observing that movement and being that movement? So just for a moment... Obviously, understandably, the words are going to be very hard to render that.*

Yeah.

*But that's what we're trying to do because that's a very profound experience for you of the sacred.*

Sure... It is. Yes. And I'm expressing with my body what could also be expressed in words, but has a totally different quality when it's expressed--

*Yeah. I'm with you that now it's going to be very different. We're trying to find a little bridge [laughter].*

I know.

*So when I hear you say the yes, yes, there [replicating Al Pessó's reflective tone of voice]... Again, I'm trying to find a phrase that might work there. And the analogy that comes to mind is resonance. Like when you have a sound and another sound, and--*

Yes. But the resonance now is the resonance with the inner quality that produced that movement. That my body is resonating to the quality that I wanted it to express, so when I'm saying yes-- because if I did this, this, this, it's meaningless. That's not ritual. But if I go: Yes... Yes... Yes... [in a slower, reflective tone]... Each moment of that is an absolute expression of what I feel inside, and I'm communicating it, and now I'm hearing my voice is doing the same thing. I don't know any other way to put it than that, but I don't know if that's where we were going.

*No, that's beautiful. It feels like really a beautiful place. So we're talking about is that moment of, say, religious ritual without dogma - dance, theater. But I'm hearing it also as a way in which, say, I as a person can experience moments of feeling authentic in that sense of me resonating with myself. Is that what you're talking about?*

Yes, but I never used the word authenticity. It doesn't fit. But let me go on to another--

*Yeah, go ahead.*

Because I've been doing a workshop for three days in my apartment, right here, and one of the things that they talk about is how I am with each person. That I'm really there. And they say every move I make is there with that person, and they feel connected. But other people call that... that's my presence. But I'm resonating and I'm truly present with them, so there's something about not being just... Again, I don't know how to put it. It's just really being there. I can't put it any... I'm being there in the relationship. So when I'm working with people, the words I use, the movements of my gestures, are fitting them, and they are connecting with it.

But I don't do it to think I'm dancing. When I am doing that, I am totally unconscious. They say that you're doing that... Right now I'm consciously communicating that to you, but when I'm with people and doing the work, there is something of that resonance going on. I can't put any other word on it.

*So just again, I'm approximating, and sometimes I'm closer and sometimes they're farther, so we're kind of playing hot-cold there. What I'm hearing you say is... something about... This is something that you certainly experience in contact, in connection with people. The movement that happens, and movements that happen when you are connected with people, are an expression that can be unconscious, of-- in a way, picking up what's happening in the relationship.*

That's right. And sometimes I do that, or I may be doing that in real time. And maybe that's what sometimes people like to be with me, maybe. Because when I'm doing -- when I'm in a leadership place in a group, I feel that I'm in a ritual setting, so I'm very careful with what I say and what I do.

But I'm not being careful in a sense that I'm elaborately putting together words and whatnot. But I'm in an attunement kind of thing. When I'm with people, that happens also. But I don't know if that's what sustains me. We're talking about movement and meaning now.

*But knowing you, certainly movement and meaning are going to have a lot to do [laughter] with what sustains you. So I don't think we could go wrong spending some time there. In addition, we're not just talking about just movement and meaning in abstract, but we're talking in movement and meaning connected to the experience of the theater, but also connected to the experience of the ritual space.*

And the sense of meaning and that life has meaning and connection. And there's meaningfulness in human interaction.

*I think that's the key word there. You say 'human interaction'. And what you were saying before is: In a workshop, the thing that happens is you're attuning. What we're talking about is we're talking about moving in a space that's not the ordinary, or mindless space, but in a space that's structured by connection and attunement.*

You got it. You got it. Right on. I guess that must have seemed... Because when I lead a workshop like that, when I'm finished, I'm not exhausted. I'm enlivened. I started that workshop still recovering from two weeks of flu, and I ended the workshop being more vivid and alive. From... I don't know. Also, alive from furthering their own each of their individual lives because I participated in that further. So, what you got here is them participating in the act of becoming the next part of the self or becoming another step in the realization of the self, which is endless.

*Yeah. Yeah. But so the small movements, in the way micro-processes and macro-processes... There is the attunement, like a moment-by-moment connection of paying attention, so that's the micro level, the detail... And, as you enter into that space, there is the connection that happens through that, the engagement. And, at a much larger level, the sense of being part of this process of enrichment and opening up, and growth.*

Yep. Yep. And that's what life is all about. Then you sense 'I'm truly alive'. That feeling. So there's a sustaining there.

Let me see what else might sustain me.

*Is it okay to just stay with that? Not to say that other things are not important, but this feels like a very powerful one.*

Yeah, oh sure.

*So what I would like to do is, if it's okay, stay a little bit more into the physical experience of that. What is it that signals to you when you're in that space? And compare it: What is it when you're not?*

Oh gosh. Let me think. When I'm in that space, I don't know that I try to be in that space. So I don't get a signal like 'Ah, now I'm in that space'. It isn't quite like that. I think, when you put it the way you put it, I think that there's been a part of me that's had for one reason or another the sense of the sacred from the beginning of time. I think I have been weaving in and out of that without naming it as a little boy, and school, and whatnot.

*Maybe let's go to experiences as a little boy. When you would not in any way have described this as sacred, and would have, whatever... Can you access some of these qualities?*

Some of that came from being in the synagogue with my father, I think. Some of that. Two things come to mind. I mentioned it before, the moment in the Saturday... Because every Friday and every Saturday, my father would-- he had six children and I was the littlest one. He would take me to the synagogue with him. That was the only relationship we had. He never spoke. We never had any conversation really. But I'd be sitting and then there's something sometimes about the tonality of the rabbinical singing, and it's the Sephardic sound, which is very different than the Ashkenazi sound. Because, when I hear Ashkenazi rituals, it turns me off, because, to me, it's a mispronunciation of Hebrew sounds. At the moment when they do all the preparatory things and then they're going to open where the Torah is. And the sense of now we're going to open absoluteness. Now, thank goodness, I don't believe what's in the Torah is absolute. Whatsoever, it's nonsense, a lot of it, to me. But the sense that here is value, here is meaning, here is the sacred. And just opening it, and then carrying the sacred object in a ritual ceremony around the synagogue. And every now and then, my father would arrange that I carried the little Torah. So I was carrying this truth in a way. That's eerily as conscious sacred thing...

*Yeah. So what feels very powerful there is it has nothing to do with the content, you know.*

Not at all, not at all.

*But it's the container itself, the experience of 'Ah, this is really something very valuable'. And in order to be in connection to this something valuable, we need to take all these steps. There is the music, and there is a quality of the music, and there is the setting.*

No, there was no music at that time.

*The singing?*

There was a little of a tonal... Okay, if you want to say some of the singing--

*The singing.*

But that--

*No, because you were talking about the sound.*

The sound.

*You know, the sound.*

That may be part of it, but I think in the sound was the... What I saw in it is that now they're going to present the ineffable, like that. And that was, that was dear.

*Right. What happened is you could conceivably have been... To say, how you responded to this... You could conceivably have been somebody who says, 'Well, they said here comes the ineffable. Here*

*comes to magnificent' and then something comes, 'Oh, it's not important. Therefore, it was a hoax'. Actually, what happened is you connected to 'I really love the experience of the waiting for the ineffable'. And, in a way, waiting for the ineffable and preparing for it is already the ineffable and the other doesn't count in a way.*

Yeah.

*It's like it's a pretext.*

There's movement of opening the cabinet, and there's a movement of touching it. I guess I began to see ritual dance at that point. Although... Although, if you want to hear the absolutely non-sacred part preceded that...And this will be a little weird. I don't know whether I was going to say this: That before they would do any of this ritual, they had to decide who was going to participate in it, who was going to carry the Torahs. And so they stopped the moment, and then this nasal-sounding guy would say in Spanish as if he was auctioning, '[what the guy said, replicating his words and tone].' It's, 'How much you going to give for this [laughter]?' I think, 'Oh my God. What stupid bullshit.' [Repeating what the guy said, replicating his words and tone]. But then they choose, they say, 'Okay.' And you can't write, so we had little pieces of paper with names on it so they'd know how much to charge the people for it. So this a stupid part of...

*But in a way, you could say it's part of the ritual too, because the..*

Not to me. Don't...

*Not to you? Well, I'm not sure because the way you played back that stupid voice... It's so part of it.*

No, it's mockery. I was mocking it.

*Well, okay. So we may disagree on where the ritual [chuckles] is, but in a way-- anyway...*

No, please don't. It's tarnishing the other. I just want to tell you there was a part of me that had to move away from the dogma, and why I married someone who wasn't Jewish, and why my daughter is also Buddhist. I didn't want the singularity of one simple religion, and have to be the one and only. So I...

*Yeah. That comes loud and clear*

Okay.

*That comes loud and clear.*

I wanted universal things, and I was just showing you the local nasal nonsense here, but the universal thing is the treatment of the Torah itself. That was the ritual stuff.

*Yeah. That's something that, in a way, that you connected with the sacredness of this moment of, hey, we're entering that space. So from that moment, that's what you were sensitive to as opposed to, in a way, caring for what was in the Torah or not.*



Yeah, because when I began to learn what was in it, I couldn't-- I didn't like-- I said, 'What the heck? Thank God I was born a man and not a woman?.. Oh, thank you [laughter].' And God gets angry, then he punishes... Never mind.

But there's a part of it is you were able to connect to... And in that, to find the universal. Which..

No, but in that ceremony, I--

*In the ceremony, the universal, which is the longing for that moment of opening up to the sacred.*

I wouldn't want to put longing. It...

*So, what...?*

Not that I was longing. The experience of it.

*The experience, okay.*

I wasn't longing. I didn't say, 'Oh, please, I want it.' I just bloody experienced it. I just experienced it.

*So just that you were able to receive it. Because not necessarily everybody could receive that.*

No, no. I don't think they were trying to communicate it. I think that the ritual was in my brain and not in the folks who were doing this stuff.

*Yeah. Although, is your sense that they were picking it up at some level? Or...*

Some people, maybe. Some people, maybe. But as I look back, they were just doing -- repeating what they did every goddamn Saturday morning. And then they felt -- in the repetition, they were feeling confident in it. Anyway, I'm sorry. I'm kind of..

*No, that feels beautiful there. And so there was also something special about the fact that it was with your father, with whom you did not communicate much other than that.*

Yeah, we had no communi... Right now, I am so pissed off over the lack of fathering he did. I mean, some of the stuff I've been working on recently has highlighted enormously the absolute absence of fathering model for me.

That was the only constant thing that he did... was doing... I don't know why I want to put this out. My brother once asked him, 'Why do you do--?' Because every morning he'd do all the prayers, and all this kind of thing. My brother told me recently, he asked my father. He said 'Why do you do these...?' 'It makes me feel good.' So he didn't speak about sacredness, but he had a habit of doing things that made him feel good. So I don't know if he felt the truly sacred. I hate to say that about my poor father, but-- because—Well, I can give you a number of the things that he didn't know how to... Maybe let me put this here. I don't know why I want to bring this up. We're bringing up a all kinds of stuff here [laughter].

One of the most horrifying moments in being in the synagogue with my father... One time, one of my brothers was present, and my father wanted him to participate, and when the guy said, [repeating what the guy said and his tone], he wanted to have my brother do one of the things. And

my brother, being a... I can't find right word right now, but he was going to be a fighter. He said, 'No, I don't wanna do it!' And they had a yelling fight right there in the synagogue at each other. And they had to suspend the whole process and that was like... I could have like disappeared. So I think my father... He wanted to do the right thing. Not because... I don't... I don't know if he felt the sacred, but he didn't want to get in trouble with God. He had a funny thing about having to follow orders. He never could be a leader in himself. And when it comes up in this-- I'm in psychoanalysis? [laughter] I don't like doing it [laughter].

My brother told me he once went to work at the same place my father was working, and then he said to my father, he said, 'You know, the boss here is cheating on staff, and I'm going to tell him what he's doing.' And he says, 'If you do that, you get out of here.' And he said, 'You don't jeopardize my livelihood.' So he was going to be a quiet accepting of boss-hood. And so he was accepting the boss-hood of God and doing all the ritual, but I don't know if he did it from an individual place and feeling he was being sacred... He wasn't going to get in trouble with the boss. I'm sorry I'm putting it like that [laughter].

*No, but that's interesting. So that's a question of relationship. So the relationship that your father had with God is essentially the respecting of authority... And you're better off doing what the boss says.*

And if you don't, you're going to get me in trouble.

*Yeah, and your own experience at that moment was actually of experiencing connection with God, quote unquote, because that's what was the sacred.*

Yeah. And I don't know if I was thinking of God, but I had a sense of sacred, and I had that same sense of sacred when I would see Martha Graham movement. Just the way her body moved from an inner impulse, not from a volitional... In ballet, you put your arms here, you do this, but every bit of the movement came from an inner state.. When we developed PBSP, we broke movement into three modalities. I think I spoke to you about that. It was reflexive, voluntary, and emotional. And the basic part of PBSP is to let what wants to come in out without modulation and that's what Graham was doing. There was some modulation, but she was staying right with the inner quality of it, rather than simply saying I'm going to make a pretty movement, looking good from the outside. It rose out of an inner state and Martha had that and it absolutely drew me.

*So that sound, so the movement that rises out of an inner state, and that's what you were describing earlier when we were talking about... And I started saying about opening or following. And that's really the sense that movement that rises out of an inner state. And that inner state that corresponds, in a way, at the deep level, being in connection with who you are and where you are in your relationship with other people in the universe and...*

And in relationship with existence inside me is the whole quality of existence. I can't put it any other way.

*So where we're coming to is that sense of the way you're connected, the way you feel, your relationship with existence, is in the movement that arises spontaneously.*

And in the relationship with the... It's like, when I look at my wife, or touch my wife, or I feel her touch, some connection with that quality comes in again, and it could be not in movement; it could be just in seeing. I can't describe it any other way.

*So something about... that, maybe what is happening in the movement itself... where it's visible... but in seeing... there's a sense of perceiving the relationship. And relationship is, in a way, something that happens, or exists,*

Between

*Or takes place between. So there's something about the implicit interaction [crosstalk]*

And connected. And when you put it, Connectedness. When I'm doing that movement, it's connected to my feeling inside. When I see my wife or people I love, there's a feeling of being connected to them. Just on the sight, something happens in the heart where there's a connection going on without literally touching.

*Yeah. And so you notice how, when we started and you were at the beginning mentioning things that sustain you, and you were talking about the connection to your wife... You were talking about connection to people and for humanity... And so now we're bringing this back together with that notion of the sacred, and that felt relationship. Even though it's not a movement, in a way it resonates with you in the way that a movement would. There's that interaction, there's something, that connection.*

Yeah. And if connection is the word, that we're all connected and we're connected to everything that is. And when you say that, I'm looking around the room here, and I've got many plants around, and often I touch them, and talk to them. So I feel connected to all that is, sometimes... that matter, and that goes back to the thing I'm writing with Nancy - not with, I've written for Nancy - that matter is divine. So that every thing that is, is divine. So I don't think that the divine stuff exists separate from matter. There's living matter and so called inert matter, but inert matter interacts with other so-called inert matter, so reactivity is already the beginning of aliveness, even materially.

*Right. So, again, the word connection is something that's so often used that it could sound abstract and we can think of it as an idea. But for you, the quality that touches you is that connection has almost a touchy, touchy-feely quality to it, is you can--*

I would put it more as a divine feeling.

*Divine. But what I meant by it-- because divine is one of these words, again, people can talk divine in a material way. And so what I'm trying to check is that sense that, for you, there is a sense of even something that doesn't move... It's like seeing a movement... Like connection is the possibility of A physically moving to B, even if they're not.*

What you're saying doesn't quite fit.

*Okay, so let's stay with that. Let's change it to what you think might fit.*

I don't know how to put it. Anyway, I don't know if this is what sustains me, but to feel that everything is, in a sense, alive, that we're all part of a totality, not a fragmentation. So there is no... I mean, when I think about the world as also split into different dogmas and there's terrorism and whatnot, but underneath all of that we're all connected. I don't know what I'm saying.

*So let me try it. There's something about connected as opposed to split. So, in a way, the experience, you say, even not just when you think or you look at your wife, but you look at the room you're in, and you look at plants... The sense of connection is not just, say, I'm me and I'm so totally different from a plant.*

Yeah, I hear you.

*But something about, there is a connection, there is...*

We're all part of the same stuff. We're all part of material. As a human being, I'm fortunate enough to be able to be conscious and to experience it. There may be a different level of experiencing it on the material level. Maybe, who knows. But I'm not saying that objects talk or think. I'm not putting--

*No, but there's something about a sense of being in the same something.*

We're part of a huge singularity, which is the cosmos itself. There's a wonder in that.

*So let's, maybe, as we're connecting a little bit to the wonder, describe with the experience of the wonder is, what's happening physically as you're--*

When I say wonder, two things happen. One is the tone and the other is the voice. It's Aaah. And Aah is awe. The sense of awe. It has breath-taking. Aah. And it isn't the aah of pleasure where you get a warmth and you go Aah. It's Aah. Yeah. Almost wordless wonder.

*So, I'm hearing you, and I'm trying to replicate it by saying it, to notice what's happening. And noticing that, as I do it, there's a certain way in which I feel my mouth expanding, moving sideways, you know, like aah.*

I don't think I say, 'Oh, this my mouth moving.' I'm just feeling the feeling, and letting the feeling make the sound. I'm not trying to make..

*No, I'm not trying it. I'm just trying to describe what I'm...*

Let me see. Anyway, that's the sense of wonder. Isn't that funny when I put 'wonder' [pronounced one-der]... Is the first time I've had the oneness of wonder. And now am hearing the 'one' of it, that we are winners, that we are alive, so there's that wonder. We won, but not by beating somebody, but we won the lottery. I say that we did win the lottery because our sperm and our eggs... that I'm a father... that I was at the combination, I'm a winner. There's that wonder. I'm playing with the word. This is just for..

*Yeah. Absolutely. You're here. It's a series of winners. People who could have been eliminated at every stage of the way for quite a few million years, so...*

So how lucky we are.

*Yeah.*

How lucky. But then there's the awe of speechlessness that is so beyond comprehension that the wonder of existence is beyond human capacity to embrace it. We just aren't... The cosmos is so enormous and so complex we can only be speechless in the face of it.

*Yeah.*

Anyway, that's the Aah, Ooh. And I think that some of the chanting carries that. The Om. The infinite quality in that. In all kinds of Buddhist chanting, or Indian chanting, it all carries that sense of wonder. I didn't know we'd get to all this. What the heck [laughter].

*So I want to share with you a possible way... Not in a sense that in any way you should follow it, but as a way to possibly react... If I had to write your chapter, as of today, one way it would come about would be to describe the experience as a kid of going to temple with your father. And noticing, not the dogma, but in a way the movement, the preparation, the ritual which is the gateway to entering that space. And noticing that, even though the people who were doing it for the most part were probably doing it mindlessly, but it has nothing to do that... In a way, you got into something... It resonated deeply with you in the ritual, and certainly had nothing to do with the content. And then later, you find yourself, first as a kid in the theater, then later as a dancer with Martha Graham, connecting to that quality of ritual space where you have the movement arising from inside.*

And where she would work with fundamental human meaning. She was going for... Yep.

*So that the ritual is a way to connecting to the fundamental human being, and then later in your PBSP development, and through the whole process that culminated into PBSP, that sense of paying attention to that quality...*

Of... That we had in PBSP, the movement that would come from our body, would come from our emotional state, and the body should be the expression of that, but then there had to be a counter-shape and a response to it. So it wasn't a matter of simply doing it in PBSP. It's that, when we let something out, there had to be an answer from the outside, of satisfying the expression. In PBSP then, it wasn't just letting it go, it was having an answer.

*Having an answer, which brings us again that notion that related to the sense of connection.*

Exactly.

*So that there is interaction, there is connection.*

Exactly.

*It's all about that connection.*

*Yeah.*

*And then in a way, where we ended up is what that connection leads to is actually that sense of wonder [pronounced one-der].*

And not only does it-- the sense of being connected to ultimate reality.

*Yeah. That's how I would put it...*

That sounds good to me as a beginning of how I came about to do all this kind of stuff, and it's still resonating. And I'm still looking for the connection. I'm getting the connection to an image of fathering that I never had before. This is coming in the last day or so. I've had what an ideal mother would be like, and I've thought of an ideal father, but I never could fully experience it. And now I'm experiencing that, and it's having a profound effect on how I behave and think. That has nothing to do with our conversation, but this has happened overnight.

*Good.*

So it's just that we're endlessly becoming. It's an endless process.

*Yeah, it is.*

Yeah. Ok. And I like you saying that it is. There is an is-ness, which means an existence. That there's an is-ness, not just dead matter. That in matter is an is-ness. I don't know why I'm going with that. But that's--

*That's very connected to what you were saying before about being very alive, about the aliveness of things. In a way, that's the opposite of the opposition between matter and spirit...*

Yeah. Yeah.

*Because what you're saying is there's matter, but matter is very alive and there is an existence and is-ness in it.*

That's right. Absolutely true. That's my belief.

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