

## PB Interview with Pat Witter (1977)

*Editor's Note: This interview took place in Columbus Ohio during PB's last visit to the U.S.; at this point Patty had been struggling with the mental and physical deteriorations of Multiple Sclerosis for two years. She was housebound, and died there in 1985. Her husband, Dr. Richard "Red" Witter, was present at this interview as well; in a case of tragic irony he contracted ALS in 1989 and died in 1993. Partly due to Patty's illness and partly due to Red's charismatic character, their home became the central gathering point for PB students in Columbus Ohio – a group of 20 to 50 people over the years. Patty had first started studying PB in 1965 when she met some of the people who had met PB during his visits to Roy Burkhart in the 1950s. The Witters had been in Burkhart's congregation from their college years through his passing. They could have been easily taken to be a typical successful suburban midwestern couple: Red's Veterinary hospital was nationally known, and Patty was very socially active. They neither disguised nor flaunted their interests, and in Red's final years he became the teacher of a group of clerics interested in mysticism and meditation. I knew the Witters quite well, and often visited them with PB's student Anthony Damiani in these years.*

*For more information about the editorial standards, spelling changes, and formatting that we have implemented—including page and para numbering—please see the file titled "Introductory Readers' Guide." We have introduced minimal changes to the text; our changes deal with inconsistencies of spelling, educated guesses at illegible words, and the rare modification of grammar for clarity's sake. Whenever there is any question as to whether what is typed is what PB wrote, please consult the associated scan of the original pages, currently to be found in a PDF of the same name. – Timothy Smith (TJS), 2020*

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### (1-1) PB's Interview With Pat Witter, On The Body

Columbus, Ohio, Summer 1977

Note: (inaudible) refers to words that could not be picked up by Red or Pat from the original tape of the interview.

Pat: I'm trying to pose a philosophical, impersonal question about the body.

PB: Do you mean how to regard it, to react to it, or what attitude to take?

Pat: How best to make use of it? In the plan, how best to respond with the body that is given to me to use in this experience.

PB: Do you mean what you should do about the body? What its role is in the plan now? Is there some other thought?

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<sup>1</sup> "1" in the original.

Pat: The situation given to me is unfamiliar. This body is telling me something. There is a lesson there, I am sure.

PB: Have you tried to grasp what this lesson is?

Pat: No. I've tried to cope on a very mundane level. My mind is not grasping what it is.

PB: In your general readings and studies by various teachers and teachings including mind that you must have read and studied, do you remember them? Do you remember what Buddha said about the body? I can only tell you how the body is considered in... (inaudible). That is, its general situation for everyone.

The body is first of all a field of experience. You get experience through the use of the body experience, which is not got in the same way without the body. It makes sharp and definite thoughts which we have as the result of that experience. Now every body we have in every incarnation gives us sometimes the same experiences, sometimes new ones. But generally they are the experience which all human beings, at some time or other, realise, have to go through, which is a mixture, a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant, and of growth and deterioration. That has something to say in each place and through those different phases we begin to understand laws, the laws which are governing the cosmos, and those are laws which apply not only to the body, but so to other (inaudible)... Not only to all creatures which have a body.

Now these laws at the level of the person teach us first of all that the body is passing. In Buddha's words, it's a coming together of many causes which come together for a time and then they part again and the body is gone. The body is a result of this coming together of these combined causes. The consciousness in which this body was remembers. It is still there but not here, not on this earth level. It carries the results of this incarnation's experience. It carries them into other levels of consciousness, other planes where it digests these experiences and digests them into essence, understanding, and also growth and development. Some of it is new. Some of it is a repetition of what we had gone through before but did not get sufficiently enlightened.

Now these lessons are not only what you think they are, just either moral lessons or personal lessons. They are also lessons about nature in general. Nature is itself a continuous, living entity and it is also - this earth is getting its lessons too. It's also a living being getting these so-called lessons. It is actually growing, expanding, developing and becoming something greater than itself. And we too are going through this and becoming greater, larger in activity and understanding. And these lessons are not necessarily moral lessons. They are lessons about what it is to be here as an entity. It's the life in us which is expanding. Life and consciousness. Life, consciousness, being. They are all intermingled in developing themselves. Part of that development is knowledge of cause and effect. Everything comes back to its place of origin. Everything moves in a circle.

(Continued from the previous page) So we as individuals move in a circle through different phases of experience which means different bodies and on different levels. The material level is one. There are higher levels. We go through all of them. In that way we all become more in our Self. More than we are now. With so-called time we should become superior beings but meanwhile this body that we have to deal with here has five limited senses and through them it gains knowledge and experience in repetition of certain actions which are regularly performed to gain the Self-cyclic movement. Thus from all these experiences there is a gathering, digesting, then brought back again for further embodiment and activity.

Something in us which we may call the Higher Self keeps these various results together and like a book keeps records. All in one book it keeps these things, holds them for further results the will come later again in time. So our place as the only self that we know in the body is part of that Self. That's the ego. The ego consists of the body, the intellect, the emotions, and all these are effected and brought on by the (inaudible). The body most of all, but for the shortest period because it is the most intense, the others have a longer period. They are not so intense. So the body having given up what it had to give, is left behind, goes back to where it came from. Dust to dust. The consciousness, the limited consciousness of the ego, that remains. But it is no longer limited by the body, only by its own mental limitations so far as they have been experienced. But they are obviously greater than the physical limitations. The body, having served its purpose in its work for the Self, has no further concern in this body. One atom, the tiniest atom of the body, is kept and held by the Higher Self, added to the results, and it is that which is linked like a link between the body and its Divine Higher Self. That thing is not destroyed. That remains, is picked up again at the time of incarnation and again comes into play. It's here in the heart. That's why the heart is so important. It is the Divine Centre. The atom remains. And though it's not part of the body since it survives the body, it is very much related to the body in the sense that with each birth it moves to the next body. And so there is this chain. We can't say that the body is therefore completely annihilated and we can't say that it isn't because all the atomic (inaudible) go back to it and there is something that doesn't and it's not a material thing and yet it's linked in this mysterious way. So we can only regard it as the servant of the Divine atom functioning for the higher purpose for which it is here. The body is serving as a higher purpose and therefore it is a servant whether it knows it or not. The best use that you can make is the best use it is in a position to make. It still has a you and you still can work with your feelings, using them towards the purpose.

Pat: Before my body became obstreperous, I wrote.

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<sup>2</sup> Blank page

<sup>3</sup> "2" in the original.

PB: Did you write poetry or prose? Did you publish?

Pat: No.

PB: It was your private?

Pat: Now my body doesn't cooperate. I can't write. I can't study. It is not the way now. I know my body situation will change because that is the nature of experience. Where am I to devote my attention?

PB: Do you have the power of attention?

Pat: No. I just want to rest.

PB: But can you rest in your meditation? There are two kinds of meditation. One is thinking meditation, and the other you might call resting. It's thinking and letting go. The mind comes to a rest. Have you ever experienced that?

Pat: I am so busy by the whole process, that I haven't been able to grasp.

PB: Would it be possible for you to let thoughts go and not attempt to think anything at all, just to let be? Does that -

Pat: Meditation used to be very much part of my day before, and now I do not meditate.

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(Continued from the previous page) PB: I don't mean sitting down as especially to meditate. Just sitting down and relaxing. Not attempting, but not... Don't attempt to meditate. Just sit and not try to do anything, not even meditation. Could you do that?

Pat: Of course.

PB: If you try that and sit like that sometime without trying, what do you feel?

Pat: At peace.

PB: You ask what lesson the body can learn from this. Can you give up attempts to learn any lesson? Can you let go of lessons on this earth, let all of that business go? Can you just relax in that chair and not try anything, either to learn lessons, or to meditate, or to transmit? Can you sustain that for an hour?

Pat: Yes.

PB: What did you feel? Can you do it without feeling? You can do it if you want to. Without feeling that you are doing something wrong by neglecting this and neglecting that.

Pat: Without feeling guilty? Yes, that has come. My whole life has, as you must know, has taken a somersault.

PB: Yes, it has turned upside down.

Pat: And so if I am to be at all, indeed, if I have to be able to do just that.

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<sup>4</sup> Blank page

<sup>5</sup> "3" in the original.

PB: If you can do this, if you can let go and let others attain and if you do not make any attempt to do anything, not to study books, not to consider what is any lesson, not to meditate not to make attempts to think this, that, to (inaudible) high-lofted (inaudible). Can you, just as if you'd become absent-minded? "I have forgotten this, forgotten that," can you do it?

Pat: Yes, I often think of how peaceful my life has become and as a result of this limitation because I am unable to do. Somehow other people do those things that I thought I had to do. I don't have to do them anymore. It frees me. So I have let go

PB: (inaudible)... but still is the letting go. Now could you bring yourself to believe that at this stage of your life you have nothing to learn? You haven't to strive to learn anything. You have nothing to do. You haven't strived to do. Can you just let go? Not by using the will to make yourself better. Just as if you had become absent-minded and not attempting to do anything. If you were to do that you would also find that you did really become absent-minded and forgot who you were, for a while. Now if you were willing to do this, it may sound terrible, but if you were willing to give up by letting go everything, it will come to this. Let go, and let by. Nothing more left. Then why should you not make the experiment and let go, even of your identity? Don't attempt to hold on intellect. Don't attempt to let go. To me, looking at it from the outside, this is a challenge too. It's an opportunity to learn, to do what you thought you want to do and that's why you're asking to learn the lesson. We learn not by words but by experience. You know the lesson in your attitude. It will be a game, if you want to talk in such language. It will not be a deterioration of your life but it will be the finding of what has real meaning. If you were to take that kind of view and give yourself some time every day - an hour here, an hour there, so that you get a few hours during the day in letting go, not trying to