

# EMBODIED LIVES

*Reflections on the Influence of  
Suprpto Suryodarmo and Amerta Movement*



*Edited by: Katya Bloom, Margit Galanter and Sandra Reeve*

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Suprpto Suryodarmo and Amerta Movement

**OPEN ACCESS**

*Chapter 17*

*Near the Unknown*

**Franca Fubini**

Edited by:

Katya Bloom, Margit Galanter and Sandra Reeve

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## A Balinese Saying

*Ilmu Padi* (a lesson from the rice plant)

*semakin tua semakin berisi, dan semakin merunduk*  
(the older, the fuller, and the more it bows)



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## 17. NEAR THE UNKNOWN

Franca Fubini (Italy)

“The more we succeed in letting go of our own intentions and ideas the better instruments we become for something to emerge that is more than the sum of our movements. We are tools and at the same time witnesses for something that might be shown to us.”  
(Susana Miranti)

I met Prapto in 1994; from the start his movement work touched a deep chord within, giving voice to something which had always been there, an archaic area of the body and of the being as a whole.

Soon after, I realized that this work had also entered my professional life and that it had had a profound effect both on my Shiatsu and psychotherapy practices and also on my capacity to dream and to remember dreams.

Since the early '90s I had been involved in the development of Social Dreaming (SD), a methodology, discovered by Gordon Lawrence in the 1980s, which allows a collective of people to tap into the cultural knowledge and the thinking embedded in the dreaming of its members. Importantly, it focuses on the dreams and not the dreamer. It stimulates the capacity of the dreamers jointly to find social meaning.

Within the context of SD the meaning of the dreams and of dreaming expands, thoughts circulate more freely so that one and all can hear echoes of thoughts that inhabit the space of the mind where each of us is connected to the social, cultural, and natural environment.

Parallel to that field of discovery, for many years my friend Tim Jones – a voice teacher and performer – and I have offered workshops combining sound and movement. We had worked over

the years developing a way of opening to inner and outer sounds, the movement between sounds, the reciprocal support between sound and movement and the connections amongst the people participating as a way of deepening sensitivity, resonance, and artistic production.

The time came when we thought it would be good to introduce SD into our workshops. One hypothesis was that it would accelerate and facilitate the existing process. The other hypothesis was that sounds, free movement, and dreaming would all feed into a common pool of shared connections and resonance.

Our experiment indeed confirmed the initial hypothesis that SD would facilitate and deepen the existing process. Like warp and weft, dreams did provide the language of images to support the movement work. Equally the practice of movement and sound deepened the capacity to connect to both one's own and others' unconscious sources and, by doing so in concert, to foster the potential for transformation of the individuals in the group.

Together both methodologies provided a containing frame to facilitate participants' encounters with unknown parts of reality without feeling paralyzed by them.

A couple of years later favourable circumstances brought the opportunity for Prapto, Tim and myself to work together. Each of us worked in our own specific field, but also as a trio who could share the different languages and who, together, would support the work and the awareness process of the whole group.

In the invitation to the workshop we wrote:

*"The three of us have worked together for many years and in a variety of contexts. We welcome the opportunity to be in Bolsena once more and host this meeting.*

*The workshop takes place at the beautiful Franciscan monastery in Bolsena. The mineral-rich volcanic Lake Bolsena is a short walk, and nearby are hot springs and Etruscan sites. Our work is supported by this environment.*

*The theme (Sound, dreams and new thoughts), explored through sound, movement and with the stimulus of sharing our dreams, reveals the world of connections: the subtle threads amongst ourselves, the links to our cultural roots, to the roots of our common humanity, to the environment we live in, all expressions of connections to the infinite source."*

## Dreamworld and Realityworld

Prapto often introduces his teachings with the concepts of *dreamworld* and *realityworld*. It was not so easy at first to discover what he means by that; however over the years of movement practice with him, my personal understanding of *dreamworld* is that it relates to the world of art, of poetry, of dreams, of shadows and night-life, of hopes and desires and that *realityworld* is more connected to the essence of what reality is about, namely emptiness, as well as to the material level of existence: nature, earth, body, senses.

My own experience of these ideas is that *dreamworld* and *realityworld* are two facets of one interconnected reality, echoing the explanation that is often given in order to explain *the-work-of-dreams* at the level of mental functioning. Borrowing from the theory of quantum mechanics:

“...it can be said that every atom of our body and mind contains at the sub-atomic level both waves and particles simultaneously. Every elemental event in neurophysiology is related to other elemental events as entities in the cosmos at large through waves and particles. Waves periodically collapse, coalesce or configure as particles. When it is in this form, it becomes a piece of information, a fragment of knowing, a shard of the infinite. We can have the working hypothesis that dream-work, which is continuous for 24/7/365 throughout our lives, is a wave function. When a dream emerges from the ‘black hole of the psyche’, it is a particle.” (Lawrence 1991)

I suggest that, borrowing from the same metaphor, the ultimate truth of *realityworld*, i.e. its emptiness – a concept derived from both Buddhist philosophy and from modern physics – is the wave phenomenon and the infinite manifestations of the world we inhabit are the particles emerging from that emptiness.<sup>1</sup> Through Amerta Movement one can have the experience of the ongoing and infinite dance of life and energy; at the same time it facilitates in the movers an awareness of their own particular way of moving as well as of their connections to the social,

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1 Both Buddhist philosophy and quantum physics share the view that the universe is empty, that there is no concrete and objective reality. The mind of the observer creates phenomena. Reality is the inseparability of emptiness and cognition, of calm state and movement. The universe starts empty, but potentially with a huge amount of information. In this respect the words of Buddha expressed in the Prajna Paramita, the empty nature of phenomena, match closely those of the contemporary quantum physicists, like Fritjof Capra, Stephen Hawking, John Wheeler, et al.

cultural and natural context that they move in.

Prapto is deeply involved in observing the web of connections that link humans to the culture they create and the nature that surrounds them. He invites us to observe the connection to God and to the living environment.

Sharing is a word which binds most of his work. 'Sharing Art and Religiosity' has been one of the themes chosen for the work that he offered in Italy during the 'Blossoming in Europe' project<sup>2</sup>, where the concept of 'sacred' was explored as the space where humans connect to God, through art, nature, and environment.

My intuition in bringing social dreaming to our joint workshops years later was that dreams in this context would support the work, would accelerate the connecting process and would represent a clear bridge between unconscious contents and the images emerging both from the dreams and from the movement work. Indeed the body is where the unconscious resides.

## What is Social Dreaming?

Social Dreaming is a tool of cultural enquiry and evolution: it is a probe that enlarges the field it explores. SD was discovered by Gordon Lawrence in the 1980s while he was working at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations and it is shaped by anthropology as well as by psychoanalytic and systemic thinking.

SD is a methodology which allows not only a thorough experience of the unconscious processes at work in a group's life, but also taps into its creative and generative core.

SD capitalizes on the power of conscious and unconscious processes to work in concert; it was then a tentative answer to the question of developing an instrument that could mobilize the group potential for accessing its infinite, unknown, collective wisdom and using it to foster change. SD focuses on the nature of the dreaming/ thinking that human contexts produce.

Prapto's work is steeped in the unconscious and at the same time it stimulates awareness of the unconscious vision that permeates our lives and that expresses itself through the body and its movements; by doing so, his work develops presence and awareness whilst also tapping into the creative potential of participants.

<sup>2</sup> *"Blossoming in Europe creates a mandala journey from seven points in Europe. The purpose is to create an exchange of goodness from any place and cultural background. We hope from this process to create purification and crystallization for discovering a new view of human growing in the process of the human art culture."* (Prapto 1996/2002, from the leaflet announcing the events)

## Social Dreaming Matrix

A specific setting holds the process of Social Dreaming: the matrix.

“As a process, the matrix is the system or web of emotions and thinking that is present in every social relationship, but is, for the most part, unattended and not acknowledged. It can be thought of as mirroring, while awake, the infinite, unconscious processes in waking life that give rise to dreaming when asleep...

As a form, the matrix is a configuration of people that provides a unique space, or ‘container’ (receptacle) for thinking out of the content of dreams to consider and discover their hidden, elusive/infinite meaning.”  
(Lawrence 2011)

A matrix, from the Latin word for womb, is a place where something can grow, a mental receptacle for creativity and discovery; it is the net where knowledge and thinking “won from the void and formless infinite” (Lawrence 1991) can be received and brought to consciousness.

At the beginning of each matrix the host/convener states the primary task, like an invocation/act of faith in the existence of an unknown reality. The primary task of the matrix is to transform the thinking of the dream by looking for associations with the dreams offered in the matrix in order to find links and connections, and to discover new thoughts.

In SD, dreams are not interpreted in terms of the individual dreamer so that the potential meanings that are developing do not get saturated by untimely explanations. There should not be any specific expectation about the outcome of the work; the dreams themselves should be set free to work for the members, undisturbed by premature search for meaning. This privileges the non-linear and synchronous mode of thinking and the unconscious/infinite dimension of the mind.

Dreamers should dwell in ‘not knowing’ until a pattern emerges; they cultivate the capacity of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without reaching after facts and reason. With its own unique pace, a web of connections amongst the dreams captures and reveals the meaning of the matrix.

This is very close to the mindset which stirs the first movements and the first sounds in Amerta work. Prapto indicates a task, for

example: “*work in oval, circle or square*” or “*moving in the garden*” or “*moving in the road*”; movers listen, poise until an impulse emerges, both from within and from without, which prompts them to move, to resonate, even if often unconsciously, with the context they are in. Movers give shape to that inner impulse and by doing so they contribute to the manifestation of collective patterns in space.

The dreaming matrix – like Amerta movement – works as a resonating box for its dreamers/movers; the following dream, once voiced in an SD matrix, captures its resonating essence using language as only dreams and poetry can do:

*“...there is a cobweb, and at each intersection there is a spider in meditation; the web has the same sensitivity of the spider mouth and it resonates with the vibrations of all the other spiders on the web...”*

## The Workshops

During the two workshops facilitated with Prapto and Tim, unconscious contents that reside in the body manifested themselves as the images of the shared dreams, which quickly became thread and support for the development of the expressive and creative work of the participants.

My experience is that in order to touch the ‘unknown’, often revealed by the nature of what the three of us were doing, a holding frame made of task and boundaries is needed.

In Tim’s work, sound, the seven notes scale, and learning a song all represent the support and the reference point for allowing such exploration through one’s own voice.

In a Social Dreaming matrix (SDM) there is a clear task, boundaries of time, rules which regulate interactions amongst the dreamers and make safe and enjoyable the telling of the dreams and the plunge into the unconscious/infinite.

In Prapto’s work, there are reference points, but often it is difficult to see them, particularly if you are a beginner. The work is profound, it has an extraordinary capacity to initiate change in the people who practice it, yet it is also difficult to have an idea of what is really happening inside oneself. It is as though the work were bypassing the conceptual mind, in a way that is at the same time extraordinary as well as frightening.

Change is an essential component of being alive, yet it is feared as much as it is desired. Many have tried to capture the inner turmoil

and the terror involved both in change and in learning – which are closely connected – due to the difficulty in tolerating the empty space before something new would appear. Both learning and growing are related to allowing change to happen and to the experience of knowing as well as tolerating not-knowing.

Growth, which is the outcome of creativity, is feared because it involves the destruction of the known order on which are based our feelings of safety and the idea of living in a predictable and controllable universe. It can be felt as an impending catastrophe.

Developing awareness and transformation mobilizes these powerful forces; Amerta Movement, SD and the voice work support their emergence and make them visible.

When Amerta Movement and SD were brought together, it was as though the dreams voiced in the matrix provided a light frame of shared images as a support for the movement and, in turn, the movement offered the possibility to take further and into action the transformation of thinking that emerged through the dreams.

## The Evidence

I shall give some evidence of the process even if very partial and short, as a detailed description of the process goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

It will deal mainly with the initial stages of the first workshop which took place in an old and beautiful convent, no longer inhabited by monks, but still owned by the Church, which had given the management of the place to a group of young volunteers.

The atmosphere was extremely laid back and homely, nevertheless one could certainly feel that until a still recent past the place had belonged to a rigorous monastic order.

A SDM would start each morning session. The imagery, the themes and the associations with the dreams offered in the matrix would appear in the movement work and in the free dialogues which would take place during the day.

During the first morning all the dreams and the associations offered in the matrix emerged from the distant past/history of each participant. They were disquieting dreams, speaking of danger and the impossibility of finding a way out:

*"I am on my own and crucified, I don't know how to save myself"*

*"I will be sacrificed"*

*"I am on an ice pack, afloat in the ocean."*

The matrix was followed by a movement session: people seemed weighed down, pulled by gravity and very much on their own. There was still a group that moved, but the impression was that each person had to be alone in order to bear the weight of their feelings. There was neither sound nor music.

Later on during the day, during a time for dialogue, reflections on the day's work pointed to the context of our workshop. A strong connection was made with the Catholic Church, the constrictions of the religious order, and the suffering that monks might have shared within those walls over the centuries. The hierarchy was still visible in the large and luxurious rooms of the bishop and the small cells of the monks. People could easily connect to the dreams, to the feelings and to the atmosphere expressed in the course of the morning. They could pick up the isolated quality of their movement as though the weight did not allow access to a collective dimension nor to the possibility of transforming what was there.

The second matrix brought dreams that picked up other elements from the context, like the beauty of the place, the youthful joy of the people living inside those walls, the pleasure of the group in being there. A process of transformation was taking place and the initial heaviness was giving way to lighter feelings which manifested in a lighter quality in the movement sessions.

The third matrix opened with a dream from the previous night.

*"I am here with this group, we are about our activities, a Swiss man in his forties is with us. He looks incongruous; he tells me that he is in fact about to go on a walking tour in the Alps, he is all dressed for that, from boots to hat. I am surprised because I know we are all in Bolsena near a lake and very far from Switzerland. Then he leans to my ear and says something sexual, that again I feel is incongruous."*

A therapist in the group asks about this Swiss man: "What does he look like?" and a detailed description follows. She says: "He is a client of mine! He has not found access to me, I have closed down when I came here. He is very demanding and finds his way in: he has found you."

I didn't doubt these words for a moment; they felt true. Rather, I was in awe as the group had already found the stage where dreams don't belong to the individual and dreams can be dreamt on behalf of somebody else, which is a phenomenon that often appears in the SD matrix, when the boundaries between oneself and the shared context become more porous.

What followed, unplanned, at the end of the matrix was a fluid sequence of movements and sounds. There was surprise and joy, as an extraordinary piece of improvised music was performed, where the quality of what emerged was clearly not produced just from the sum of the sounds made by individuals, but from a different level of music production.

The ‘sound of the matrix,’ a common womb where something can grow, had become manifest. It came both from each person’s source and from something else, well beyond the wish of a personal intention.

The initial hypothesis which brought the three of us together seemed to have been confirmed.

Social dreaming, movement, sound and our joint work brought the group to a level of connection where some deep and beautiful content could be expressed.

SD, movement and sound fed into each other and the whole existing process was enhanced by reaching an area of expression previously unexplored. The group, by connecting deeply to the holding of the dreams, had reached an inner opening where ‘something’ different could happen and be received.

## Conclusions

It is not an easy task to draw conclusions – there were only two workshops with the three of us and the circumstances which brought us together changed, so that we could have no more; the integration of that experience needs still further reflection and development.

However that experience was for me a milestone for the work to come. I often introduce elements of movement and voice work in the context of both my therapeutic and consulting work.

Bridging different languages has proven, over and over, to be a worthwhile effort. Not so much in terms of mixing the languages, which could be confusing, but of finding the terrain where differences can meet and, through the act of meeting and of integration, bring a deeper quality of awareness to the experience of the participants.

I often work in institutions and within pretty rigorous psychoanalytic settings, like supervisions, management teams, leadership development skills, group relations, conferences, etc. Most of the time participants are willing to let the unconscious speak through the sharing of their dreams and for the purpose of finding their collective meaning; when that happens, there is also

an openness to letting movement and sound shape the unconscious contents of the dreams, so that a reasonably clear picture of the shared reality of the participants can emerge. Then transformative actions may follow.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to reflect and write about these experiences. As Prapto would often say: “*sharing thoughts and experience helps a process of crystallization.*”

~ ~ ~

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