

# 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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Reflections on the Influence of  
Suprpto Suryodarmo and Amerta Movement

OPEN ACCESS

*Chapter 20*

*“GOING OUT OF THE SITUATION”*

*AND*

*“STOP, DON’T FOLLOW THAT, WALK!”*

**Regula Nell**

Edited by:

Katya Bloom, Margit Galanter and Sandra Reeve

Taken from the book *Embodied Lives*,  
published by:

Triarchy Press  
Axminster  
UK

[info@triarchypress.net](mailto:info@triarchypress.net)

[www.triarchypress.net](http://www.triarchypress.net)

First published in 2014.

Second edition published in 2025.

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Paperback ISBN: 978-1-909470-32-3

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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)



# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	x
INTRODUCTION	1
1. PRESENCE	9
Beate Stühm (Germany)	
2. AMERTA MOVEMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY	18
Keith Miller (UK)	
3. CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE MOVEMENT WORK	28
Christina Stelzer (Germany)	
4. AMERTA AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM	35
Monika Förster (Germany/Holland)	
5. THE EYE OF THE HAND	43
Steve Hopkins (UK)	
6. A DOG PRACTICING ‘TALKING BODY’	55
José Mulder van de Graaf (Bolivia)	
7. “MAKE LESS THE HOPING”	64
Sandra Reeve (UK)	
8. TOUCHING FORGOTTEN REALITIES	72
Bettina Mainz (Germany)	
9. THE ECHO OF LIFE	83
Daniela Coronelli (Italy/UK)	
10. I ALWAYS DO THREE THINGS	92
Shantam Zohar (Israel)	

11. A PRESENCING DIAL	98
Margit Galanter (USA)	
12. AMERTA MOVEMENT AND SOMATICCOSTUME	108
Sally E. Dean (USA/UK)	
13. CRYSTALLIZATION-PERFORMANCE	122
Lise Lavelle (Denmark)	
14. BEING AND DOING IN THE WILD GARDEN	132
Susanne Tümpel (Germany)	
15. 'MANTRA GERAK'/MOVEMENT MANTRA	142
Agus Bima Prayitna (Indonesia)	
16. THE MUSICAL PORTAL	152
Tim Jones (UK)	
17. NEAR THE UNKNOWN	160
Franca Fubini (Italy)	
18. FAMILY	170
Una Nicholson (UK)	
19. THE INFANT'S LANGUAGE	179
Katya Bloom (USA/UK)	
20. GOING OUT OF THE SITUATION and STOP, DON'T FOLLOW THAT, WALK	189
Regula Nell (Switzerland)	
21. AMERTA MOVEMENT AND AUTISM	201
Sean Williams (UK)	

22. "FIND YOUR POSITION"	211
Susan Bauer (USA)	
23. "BODY BODY"	221
Helen Poynor (UK)	
24. EVER-SPEAKING BEING	231
Michael Dick (Germany)	
25. MOVING IN THE LAW	241
Simon Slidders (UK)	
26. THE BREATHING EYE	249
Andrea Morein (Germany)	
27. JOY	263
Anita Lüdke (Germany/Bolivia)	
28. "RE-MEMBERING" BUTTERFLY BEACH	276
Melinda Buckwalter (USA)	
29. I WILL TRACE THE CONSTELLATION OF MY STARS WITH MY FINGERS	283
Ellin Krinsly (USA/Australia/Mexico/Ethiopia)	
30. AWAKENING ART AND DHARMA NATURE TIME	295
Diane Butler (USA/Indonesia)	
AFTERWORD: A PRAPTO COMPANION	306

**20. “GOING OUT OF THE SITUATION”  
AND  
“STOP, DON’T FOLLOW THAT, WALK!”**

**Two Movement Themes That Support My Work  
With Children**

Regula Nell (Switzerland)

‘Prapto work’ (as we used to call it in Switzerland in the 1980s) still influences my daily life as well as my movement practice and professional communication. At the age of 25, in February 1986, eight months after finishing my diploma as a gymnastics teacher, I went off to Java to study movement practice with Prapto. I found myself at the other end of the world, part of an international group of people with no-one else speaking Swiss-German, my mother tongue. At that time there was no internet, nor mobile phones, so there were fewer possibilities for distraction or for finding ways out of the embodied situation that I found myself in: far from home, alone and plunged into an utterly different culture.

Nowadays I work as a movement teacher, a Feldenkrais practitioner and a psychomotor-therapist working mainly with children. My personal way of guiding clients towards an expansion of possibilities and choices for their wellbeing and physical expression is strongly influenced by all that I learned and experienced within the context of Amerta Movement. That practice created for me an important foundation of observing and understanding the physical and energetic aspects of movement within the context of the environment and of personal interaction.

Awareness of one’s personal movement is a first step towards change or adjustment of behaviour. My aim is to support individuals

to broaden their awareness of movement and their expression and communication skills. My understanding of group dynamics was also clearly influenced by the movement practice in groups with Prapto: moving in small groups, witnessing others in their work, and supporting them by watching without judging and without any applause. These models helped me to find a form of accompanying and understanding people in my work, both in movement and in spoken dialogue.

It is useful for me to cultivate being a ‘neutral’ observer or a witness with my clients because I want to understand the possible source of the two patterns that I’m going to introduce in this chapter: “*Going out of the situation*” and “*Stop, don’t follow that, walk!*”

## Going Out of the Situation

The expression *going out of the situation* is one that Prapto used to say at specific moments – and it is still very clear in my mind. *Going out of the situation* offers the possibility of escape. *Going out of the situation* in order to escape happens spontaneously, often unconsciously. It is different from a clearly conscious change in direction or action. It can also be a form of resistance, a way of avoiding, a well known but unhelpful habit, movement pattern or behaviour. When a situation is emotionally too intense or overwhelming, an immediate change of direction is needed. If there is no possibility of expressing with words the need for help and change in such a moment, then *going out of the situation* can be an unconscious reaction, in order to feel safe again. So *going out of the situation* can become a strategy for self preservation: for example when the child has to do something he dislikes, or that he cannot cope with, he might just need to go to the toilet! As with any strategy, it can become an unexamined habit and, once out of date, can become unhelpful.

To give a few more examples: James is building a construction with long cardboard tubes so he can shoot small balls around a track. He suddenly changes everything and starts a completely new construction. There was some difficulty in adapting the construction – instead of asking for help, or finding a way to adjust it, he just started again from scratch. These changes of activity come unexpectedly; I may not know the reason for the sudden change at first. But it doesn’t disturb me, as I recognize the pattern of *going out of the situation* that underlies the change. It is important that he learn step by step that he can adjust situations by asking for help or

by making small changes too. It is not necessary to knock everything down when a part of the construction needs to be done better.

Another time I worked with a boy (let’s call him Mike) who used to say “cha me oo” (translation: “can do too”). Whenever he changed situations, he said that as a commentary on his activity. So he had found a ritualised way to name his *going out of the situation*. With his words he showed that he was somehow aware of the fact that he was about to change his position and/or the situation. When I see this pattern of *going out of the situation* occur, I usually interrupt and speak with the child. I often ask whether he or she is aware of the change there has been in the direction of action. For example I might say: “Do you realise what your feet did just now?” and I might ask whether they are aware of a reason for this: “Do you have any idea, why they did this?” Eventually I ask the child whether I should tell them my opinion about what just happened. To Mike I suggested that, in these moments, he continue with his activity, in the situation as it is, before he changes anything; for example, before he rearranges any material.

Finally, for a child with hyperactivity syndrome it can be essential to recognise the habit of *going out of the situation*. This is an important first step for possible change and more self-control. It can also be helpful for parents to recognise the pattern of *going out of the situation* in their child’s behaviour. They can then find different forms of communication and support their child in learning to express through words his embarrassment or difficulty with the actual situation.

For all these conversations with my clients my personal attitude is fundamental to the outcome – it requires from me an observing attitude, no judging, but understanding. Sometimes we talk about different forms of movement or behaviour. In this way, the child can learn to understand himself better. Being guided without being judged is often not a well known situation for the children I work with; it is in fact their (un)conscious judging of their own action which often brings them to *going out of the situation*.

### **Stop, Don’t Follow That, Walk!**

In contrast to *going out of the situation*, there is the phrase: *Stop, don’t follow that, walk!* This describes moments when a change of momentum is strongly needed and cannot be found because the child is too lost in her own dynamic. The child is losing herself in her way

of moving and behaving. Of course, often this is a sign of being lost in thought or emotion, or both. This is different from an authentic expression; it is more a form of constant, choiceless repetition which could (in extremis) lead into some sort of obsessive behaviour.

Prapto once said to me *Stop, don't follow that, walk!* with a clear and demanding voice. It was at a moment when I was rolling continuously on the floor without any possibility of getting up and standing on my own two feet. His advice/command was like an anchor for me. I managed to get up and walk – and as a result my perception of myself and the space changed completely.

Often in my work as a psychomotor-therapist I like to be receptive and to give the children a huge amount of free space to let them follow their impulses and create their 'things'. However my own experience with: *Stop, don't follow that, walk!* helps me to come into a clear and active position of guiding and, if necessary, to be demanding as well. I find that I often need and use the quality of *Stop, don't follow that, walk!* with my clients.

Those children who easily lose themselves in whatever they are doing need clear, strong, bounded guidance in moments where they have to change direction in their doing, in order to experience a new way of movement and a new form of expression. To adjust and to broaden the possibilities of choice in personal behaviour, it can be necessary to become a clear advocate for change from the outside.

These two expressions of Prapto's: *Going out of the situation* and *Stop, don't follow that, walk!* have proved vital for me in my professional work. Both help me to be able to guide the children through movement dialogue itself and not necessarily with words or fixed exercises. They also describe very clearly some specific mechanisms within movement behaviour. When a child displays certain aspects of these movement behaviours, they are not confusing for me, even if they appear suddenly and unexpectedly, because these two phrases act as a doorway for my understanding of the patterns that underlie the switch or the repetitions. So I can move between the child's present moment, their movement and words without hesitation to access a deeper place in my communication with these children.

As we have seen, both of these forms of behaviour may have been helpful strategies in the child's life. But the difficulty starts when they appear as patterns functioning unconsciously, habitually and continuously. Often a curtain comes down, when something overwhelming is happening, for instance any sort of frustration,

and this can create either a sudden shift or repetitive motion. Then the child isn’t in a balanced position with the capacity to respond adequately to the actual situation, but is more a victim of held-in behaviour patterns that may be well out of date.

My understanding of the world and of intercultural dialogue and diversity has been strongly influenced by Amerta Movement. I am very grateful for this influence in my life. The combination of physical experience, movement in nature, philosophical talks, communication in groups (including aspects of Javanese life and Sumarah meditation) forms an important line in my biography and still influences my daily life. It broadened my Swiss mode of perception and guided me to become more of who I am. I, in turn, am now committed to offering this potential to my clients.

~ ~ ~

**Regula Nell** was born in 1961, in Bern, Switzerland. She was first in touch with Prapto in 1985 and went to Java three times: in 1986 and 1990 for trainings with Prapto and in 1996 she visited Solo for a movement project at a school for handicapped children. Currently she works as a psychomotor-therapist at a primary school in a village near Thun and teaches the Feldenkrais Method in Bern.

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