

## **An Improvised Conversation**

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With Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen and Suprpto Suryodarmo  
at The 26th Annual Body-Mind Centering® Association Conference  
“Somatics: Exploring Our Roots”

A note from the Editor: At the conclusion of this dialogue, there is a discussion of “context” concerning the where, when, how, what and whom of us, humans, as movers. There is also the question of the “egg”—where we begin, but also how we come through, or more accurately through what do we come? Suprpto Suryodarmo refines the idea of “coming out of movement” by calling our attention to the context, but he also has made note in his teachings to be “inside the blossom” wherever you are. The Blossom is not concerned with context or is, precisely because it already is—context. Now, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen was the butterfly flitting from blossom to blossom, because during the scintillating discussion, she always gave two answers: “comme ci, comme ca...or like the Oroboros, she reminded us that it is our own history that both reflects (back) and predicts (forward). In the end, it is not our body that lasts; it is the dance. And so, it is with great pleasure, that the transcribers, myself and Diane Carol Butler, offer to the reader this text, which has resisted all possible edits, and is presented here in complete form.

–Kate Tarlow Morgan

*Before the session, Bonnie and Prapto speak together.*

**Bonnie:** How would you like to begin? I would like to begin in silence if that is okay.

**Prapto:** Great.

**B:** And then I don’t know. You can see the format, impressions?

**P:** I have an impression of your movement yesterday. We can begin in silence and then you move and then also I move a little bit. Simple.

[Pause as participants take their seats]

**B:** Can we begin in silence please – to settle and to be here? To breathe in our self, in our body with all other people in this space.

[One minute of silence]

And gradually taking in everyone.

[After thirty more seconds of silence, Bonnie and Prapto move individually and then together for six minutes. Then Prapto begins to sing-chant and Bonnie also hums tones. They move for another minute]

**P:** Oh, it is nice. Thank you.

[Participants laugh]

**B:** Thank you.

**P:** [to participants] Oh, thank you for coming. It's nice. Thank you for coming to this time.

**B:** And for holding us.

[Participants laugh]

**P:** Thank you.

**Annie Brook:** It's a pleasure.

[Participants applaud]

**P:** Wow [audience chuckles].

Since a long time, somehow since 1992 or 1993, I have an idea what is a Rinpoche. You know Rinpoche? Because, in the legend, it always speaks about who can make a decision about who is his Mom. Do you understand what I mean? I think Lama Yeshe spoke very strong about that.

In Java there is a temple called Suku Temple. One relief there is called Kala Marga; that is the way or the road of the time. There is a picture like two figures, like you can say the God and then Bima and then meeting. This is like Bima finds his own inner teacher or inner God there. And this picture is coming out from [places his hands on his abdomen] – like the womb?

**B:** Womb.

**P:** Ya, womb. This story is very strong until now and is called Dewa Ruci. It means the small God in us.

So, yesterday when I heard what you said about the embryo, cell – it reminded me of that story. About the process of from cell and then become something like human – or a being or something there. So, maybe your way is somehow the same with the way of a Rinpoche – that later you can find where the egg should be. And also the same with the idea about Dewa Ruci that is a shadow-puppet story that is still alive in Java and in Bali.

So, I like to open with that connecting with what you did yesterday – and what I heard. Not really I understand – but I can feel, ya, something there. Can you say?

**B:** Only the question? [pauses] Only the question.

**P:** Only the question. The egg of the question?

**B:** Well [pauses], I remember my egg. I remember my sperm. Do I remember? And I do remember when they were not one.

**P:** Oh, yes.

**B:** Was I still here? When? When, what, who, how [pauses]. The ancestors.

**P:** Right.

**B:** Past lives, I don't know. But, it's very – in my experience – it's very expansive and yet really in the skin [pauses]. But, I feel the ancestors. But I am not the ancestors, but I am the ancestors.

**P:** You are future ancestors.

**B:** I am also.

[All laugh]

Already our great great great great great great great great grandchildren are dead.

**P:** Ya.

[pause]

**B:** And yet we are just in this room and we are just chatting. And there is no difference.

**P:** I see.

**B:** And it's very different

**P:** Yes.

**B:** Comme ci comme ça.

**P:** Comme ci comme ça [chuckles]. Never mind.

[All laugh]

Okay, it is so interesting.

[All laugh]

Because why? Because when you say that – it is a question of linear time or the space or the place time. Which one you like to practice?

Before, I am from the place time – the time of the place opening. Then we are like this [gestures]

and then it's just like this [gestures], and then like this [gestures]. But with the idea of western culture, they have more linear time. So, I really had culture shock with that.

But, suddenly I remembered that in Suku Temple there is really just go straight from the gate and then go to another level, go to another level, and then passing through like a pyramid, and then go in and then going up. So this is linear time. Then after that, in Borobudur we can study about circle time and the other also can be straight linear time. In the movement it can be really different.

So, egg and sperm – the impulse of sperm, because it is like amoebae, one cell somehow, and egg. Which time do you think it is?

**B:** Only what I feel, not what I think.

**P:** Okay.

**B:** For me, I just experience and that is what I know and I don't put a boundary around it.

**P:** Right.

**B:** There is this story and I enjoy. And there is this story and this story. And so once there is a story and I don't know that story. Either I don't pay attention or I seek that story that it becomes my story or your story. But they're never the same story; they're always the same story – *comme ci comme ça*.

[All laugh]

**P:** So you are really Bonnie witnessing, not only Buddha witnessing. That's very good.

[pause]

**B:** I enjoyed so much yesterday – and the day before. But I don't separate; I don't remember them enough to separate them. The transitions between the flower and the animal – and that eventually we don't know maybe which one we are because we are in the moment we are changing. So, we are always one again – but never one.

[pause]

**P:** Interesting [pauses], you have no idea about oneness.

**B:** About?

**P:** Oneness. Because the concept of like in India or Java or at Suku Temple is *lingga-yoni* is oneness. But maybe you are more Tai Chi – that in the white they have black; in the black they have white. Even in one circulation but is always complimenting, but is in the same time together but in the same time is not. Something like that.

It's interesting because in Java – in the mysticism way – they always like how to be oneness with the God. The idea of oneness. Okay, but it's like that.

So, me too. I don't start from oneness. I usually start more from dialogue, more conversation, more chatting, more say 'hello'. From that there will be somehow part of assimilation, part as still we are as we are.

But the main is not the separation itself or oneness itself – but is how the dynamic of the life, the source of the life in each being or in inter-being. In the inter itself. Not only this, but this also – the dynamic of this.

[pause]

**B:** I know nothing about Java.

**P:** Oh, please come.

[All laugh]

**B:** The way to know, right?

**P:** Ya, next year – I can invite you.

**B:** Okay.

**P:** We have Sharing Art in Borobudur next year and will speak about the arts and archaeology; the arts and religiosity; and the arts and mythos. Many friends like to come. So, please come.

[All laugh]

**B:** Thank you.

**P:** No really, ya really.

**B:** When do you? –

**P:** That is in April –

[All laugh]

**B:** [to participants] We're making a date.

**P:** Ya, on 18 April that is World Heritage Day. We just spoke about ancestor. You will be heritage.

Then after that a process of practice – someone will lead a workshop from Germany, and also from Denmark, someone from Japan will work with children to create music, someone will make a retreat in Borobudur until 25 April. Then from 26 to 30 April there will be seminars. From Mexico, USA, until Australia and Japan will come to be involved there.

So, what is Body-Mind Centering in Borobudur?

[All laugh]

This is really a question. Because Siddhartha, in basically, he did not want to become egg again.

**Participants:** Egg?

**P:** [checking pronunciation] Egg or ache?

**Participants:** Egg.

**P:** Egg, he didn't want. Because of that he went out from the house. Because of that he did not want to reincarnate again. So that is why I said ahhh, this is one idea of Buddhism. But the idea of Buddhism of Tibet is come back, come back again [pauses] as a Bodhisattva, as a Rinpoche – will help for many people. Until, in their legend, all become enlightened. Waiting for all human enlightenment.

So that is two concepts – Theravada is 'formula one'.

[All laugh]

Then the other is the concept of Bodhisattva waiting for all can have enlightenment.

So, it is good to know what is that. Hah, I am advertising [chuckles]. Because that is the really, really big question about what is fertility?

**Toni Smith:** Fertility or fate?

**P:** Fertility. Because, may I say something, but please if I am wrong say – please correct me. Because it is just for two days I try to listen, to understand. Yesterday I felt very strong – this is really the art of organ. Ya?

**B:** Ya.

**P:** The art of organ.

**Participants:** Organ? Origin?

**B:** It's our hearing, it's not your speaking. It's our ears.

**Prapto and participants** [speaking at same time]: organ, origin, organ –

[All laugh]

**P:** So, o-r-g – okay, cell, this all muscles what is that?

**Participants:** Organ

**B:** That's what you said.

**P:** Ya, the art of organ, origin [laughs]. Oh sorry, o-r-g-a-n.

**Participants:** Organ.

**Ziji Beth Goren:** You mean the heart and lungs –

**P:** Ya ya ya.

**Ellen Barlow:** – but he also means the organism.

**P:** Ya, organization. Organ having organism, organization and orgasm.

[All laugh]

**P:** Meeting of organism and organization – orgasm.

[All laugh]

No, it is true. I didn't mean only sex. When there is the meeting of you, nature and life that is the highest movement being in orgasm.

**B:** [smiles] Yes.

[All laugh]

**P:** So, yesterday when you talked and then I – ahhh, this is the art of organ. That means connecting with fertility. That means it is not starting from the soul. Sorry, I say it like this: not from the spirit – but the spirit it is coming from the organ. And this is all the connecting with the idea of the elements – giving value, giving fertility, giving born and so on. This is like the cycles of, you can say, all the concept of elements, flora, fauna and human in there. I mean life in there.

It's very different from the idea of this is wrong. The right is nothing, because this is illusion.

**B:** I'm not sure what you said.

[pause]

**P:** There are two approaches when we move. We move from, you can say, the spirit. That I practice also – the spirit, channeling of the spirit and then the body is only a tool – only a vehicle. The main after that *fueet* [gestures upwards] and this is like dispersed. Then, how this will not be caught by this body. This is one idea. Then the other is like from the physical becomes metaphysical and then still in the rolling of the cycle of fertility. The other it is somehow like your way – that is also the way of Siddhartha or vipassana – of witnessing what is just come and go. It is not to make determination in there, I think. So, from that you understand the process of all this physical, which is a point that you can feel if you like or you do not like when there is no need for this again and then it is *pssss* [gestures dissipation]. But it is coming from the understanding of witnessing.

A little bit I practice that. But it is not as deep as you, like cell and so on. I call ‘seed’; you call ‘egg’.

Please tell me something.

**B:** I don’t see the separation. I don’t experience it in that way [pauses].

We are the dancer and this is the body that dances. We are the musician and this is the instrument that plays the music. So, I tune the instrument so that I can more subtly express my song in music. But the instrument, as it is refined and we listen and it sounds – what is that sound? And then, we go deeply – what is that sound? Where is it coming from? And it’s not just from here because maybe it is coming from here. It’s a relationship and so you say, where? Where is it? How is that sound? So you say, oh, well did you ever think of just slightly moving this in relation to that? Oh, that’s where – that’s how my sound is. Huh.

But I am not that changing. I am also in this body in this incarnation – I am that. But that is not the dance. Who is dancing? And when the body is gone the dancer is still there. But, I am not so much looking what was before and what is behind. I am here. But I see the ends of the tunnel on both sides. But I am in the tunnel. But I am not the tunnel. And it is all a prayer.

**P:** Okay. Thank you.

**B:** Not to anyone, but just a prayer.

**P:** Yes.

[long silence]

**B:** Maybe somebody else wants to say anything?

**P:** That’s what I was just thinking.

[All laugh]

**B:** So, we think the same thing. Whatever the verbal is.



**Beth:** So, I know you are using different words and different concepts. And I am jotting down words, but I am not listening to them in the same exact way that you are speaking them. I am listening to the sounds and tones and the textures – and a lot of it is very similar. Even though you were speaking different things, it doesn't feel so different to me.

**B:** To me either.

**P:** Yes, it is –

**Beth:** It seems like you are using different words and slightly different language intonations and maybe we all don't exactly understand all the words of a different language and even all the words of the same language. But, there is something in the spirit that is bringing the egg and the sperm together right here. And it feels like something is being created right here and right now that has never been created before. And I am really appreciating that.

**P:** Who are you?

**Beth:** Beth – Ziji Beth.

**P:** Thank you Beth. That is nice.

\_\_\_\_ (??): What struck me was that Bonnie's work is internal and Prapto's is the external but it is very internal in it's observations. And your work yesterday was \_\_\_ (??) nature and that is a wonderful, wonderful blend. This morning I was meditating at the lake and thinking that I have never really met nature. \_\_\_\_\_ (??).

[pause]

**P:** What I can say that I have learned in this moment from Bonnie – that is how she can listen, she can hear. When you spoke about internal – that is like Bima, in the story of Dewa Ruci. He liked to get enlightenment and then he met Dewa Ruci and then Dewa Ruci invited him to come into his ear. Dewa Ruci is this [small gesture] and Bima is so big. He laughed and said, "How can I go in to your ear?" Dewa Ruci also laughed and asked, "Which one is the biggest – you or the cosmos?" Bima answered, "Yes, of course I am little and the cosmos is more big." Then Dewa Ruci said, "Yes, I am the cosmos." After that Bima, I don't how, but just *whoosh* – coming from listening. He came to the internal – to the microcosm and at the same time the macrocosm. So, it is like the idea of how the meeting of this internal and external. Can be the way of go in first – as in mysticism. They also call it tunnel. You go to the tunnel but you are not the tunnel until you come going out to another place that is opening – that is new awareness. This is Sumarah mysticism. We call it also channeling like that.

Of course I don't want to give you a label that you are mysticism or Dewa Ruci's way. I just give information, yes – that is also one that I practice there also in Sukuh Temple. That is why maybe from that we are here. I am here meeting with you to be able to have experience more deeper, to understand.

Thank you.

**B:** Uh huh [smiles].

**Antara Kyra Lober:** It seems that both of you support the experience of the other in finding out what their truth is. My sense is that we are all – in the Jewish tradition they say that we are the hands and feet of God or the multi-colored robe of *Adonai*. So, we each have a different flavor. And when we are exploring spirit (whatever that means) spirit in body, we discover the truth of what we are bringing forth for the all. Meaning, they say that in fractals in all living things there is a certain mathematical equation and apparently in space there is some element (or I can't even say element as I am not a scientist) that is everywhere and it is the same. But we are obviously all different and the paradox and we bring forth the truth of that.

**Toni:** I really need to ask an obvious question and I am sorry that I do not know the answer to it. How is it that you two people from two totally different traditions – when you move, you have the same language? How is that you came about this from such different approaches? And us too, when we move with Prapto it is the same as moving with Bonnie. And you two – your backgrounds – you have nothing in common. Except that you have everything in common and it's showing up in the movement somehow. It seems like a really silly obvious question. But, I am wondering what is it about this movement thing that can be learned on opposite sides of the world and end up the same language. I don't find it in codified dancing. I find it in this kind of movement.

Anyway, you don't have to answer.

[All laugh]

**B:** How many answers do you want?

**Kate Tarlow Morgan:** Comme ci comme ça.

[All laugh]

\_\_\_\_ (??): It came to me from space and flow.

**Toni:** I think there is a lot of the rhetoric around it – you know language and ways of calling it names. But it just seems like a phenomenon.

**P:** I don't know if it is right, but we try tuning to each other. Listening each other. –

**Participants:** Tuning? Listening? Resonating? Intonate?

**P:** Listening, resonance.

So, I have to study from her how not only skin as a membrane resonance inside of space – that is

what I work. But, my resonance is not so detailed if compared with Bonnie's study about research about ligaments or muscles. I don't know that. I didn't study that. But I study more how can feel that; how can have the atmosphere of that. So, maybe from that we have, you can say, starting to have a common field. But, I guess, for example, for just a moment she *tik tak tak* or me *tik tik*. But we didn't continue – not so much in how expression or connecting with the exploration how our baby can make break of the egg.

[All laugh]

It is like *tuk tuk tuk tuk* or waiting or maybe it's open itself and suddenly can fly or can walk. We were not yet there, not yet in the expression. Ya, we were just making tuning how to have a common field. But it does not mean that what you say is wrong. I think that somehow we have a really common field idea.

For me, you are very strong in the breathing view. We call it *suasono* in Java. We first come into this *suasono* – maybe atmosphere. When we go to the place, to the house, to touch the people or to the nature or at night [pauses]. This first, as a starting to understand what is in there. Something like this?

**B:** Uh huh.

**P:** Thank you for your recognizing, Tony. Thank you [pauses].

My friend in 1997, a musician Philip Corner –

**Kyra:** Oh, I know Philip Corner.

**P:** You know Philip Corner? Ya, he is American. He came to Java and he also studied Javanese gamelan and he made compositions too. Then I asked him – he is American, he is Jewish, “You study gamelan – how can you feel it? the quality of Javanese gamelan?” It is nice he answered, “There are many spectrums, Prapto. But all is white.” You understand? So, he liked to come to the white and then can see and can feel all of the colors.

Okay. I don't know until when. I can talk, talk.

**B:** We like to hear you talk, talk.

\_\_\_\_ (?? male): Can you talk a little about intention?

**P:** Hmm, intention. The intention, it somehow can be interpreted as a need. But can be also the passion. Like in music sometimes *zaaaang* and then *ha*. This before what is this? Or feeling with this. You can feel this. Or the folk dance *tuk tuk tuk tuk tuk tuk dong dung dong dung dong dung dong* and then *krrrr*. That is the intention.

So, many meditators work how not to have that.

[All chuckle]

Because this is the cause of repetition of cycles, because of the need to always grasp something. But this is spiritual. But, if this is connecting with fertility – that is the good one. You need to have that.

[All laugh]

**Mariko Tanabe:** So, can you talk a little more about passion?

**P:** Passion – there is a flower in Italy that is called passion. Have you seen that?

[pause]

Passion is different with the need of concentration. Passion is different with the point [pauses] the point of stillness, like usual someone practice it. Like, in Java when they have the bow and arrow. In kyudo in Japan – they have *pssst* [gestures to the point]. But in Java with [moves lyrically and sings] *tak keding dong tak ding ding — deh tak ding dong dong ding tak deh ding dong dong ding tak deh tak tak ding*. Ya?

[All laugh]

You understand what I mean? Not like this – but have passion. Haa –

\_\_\_ (??): Bonnie, would you like to share a little bit of passion?

**B:** I like this.

[All laugh]

**P:** Her passion is so subtle, so very fine, very brilliant. Very good.

[pause]

Me [chuckles] – I forget my age.

[All laugh]

Thank you for the question.

**Pat Ethridge:** Prapto, when you use the hand gestures when you are improvising – I assume they all have a specific meaning. Are you using them to shape the movement as it is happening? Or does that come out of the dancing? Out of movement? [pause] Or does the meaning come before the –

**P:** I just like to clarify about the word ‘coming out from the movement’. Because my studying is

the movement coming out from the context. The living life of the context, that is coming movement. Because when sometimes someone says – or me I say, ‘that is coming out movement’ sometimes I only move by myself. But I can be not in the context of the weather, or the wind, or with the person, or the breathing. Just me – I like, I need to move. Sometimes I am more trying be in there. Especially when really I need to feel work with someone – for example with Bonnie or with you. That is first. But sometimes, yes, I am just coming out – dance. It’s very improvisational or spontaneous but not from the context. So that is first.

From movement in the context and then when you call shaping and then what kind of context? Can be shaping in calligraphy or can be shaping of painting, or relief, or sculpturing. It’s a different context. That is the second.

But in fact I try the other approach also. Sometimes I am just this [gazes inward] – because I need to feel the energy of her mind.

**Audience:** Energy?

**P:** Energy, ya. Like when moving together, it is like I can feel the meridian of the people’s mind space. For what? Ya, just for communication – for try to understand. And then from that – she is very soft. And that is [subtle gesture].

**Beth:** So, it sounds like when you say that you can feel the meridian of the people’s mind space – I think that is similar to what Bonnie says, ‘the mind of the room’. Feeling the mind of everybody in the room.

**P:** In the womb?

**Audience:** The room –

**P:** Okay, yes

**Beth:** It sounds like it’s a different language but that’s the same mind.

**P:** Yes.

*After the session, Bonnie and Prapto speak together.*

**B:** Thank you.

**P:** Thank you.

**B:** Wonderful. They have never seen me dance.

**P:** Oh, never? Oh, thank you.

Saturday, October 22, 2011  
Heron’s Roost, 9:00-10:30am

The Summit Conference Center  
Haw River State Park, Browns Summit, North Carolina