



# Dancing East and West: Charting Intercultural Possibilities in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze and Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

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A deep fear lies at the heart of the modern civilizational enterprise. The key to understanding this fear and the anorexic, yet stoic hope it inspires lies in understanding the struggles around dialogue and co-creativity in which the Other stands as an accusative figure threatening our own sense of Self. Paradoxically this fear, the fuel in conservative political engines worldwide, is both deadly and illusory. To walk through the fear requires the simple human act of being together, sharing a space around an encounter. *Convivencia*, that loaded historical term, can be extended in many ways: we can live together, we can eat together, we can dream together, laugh together and also cry together. In this chapter we attempt a *thinking together* in the company of Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1922–1990) in order to better understand the intercivilizational possibilities available to theory in a time of global encounters and existential transformations.<sup>1</sup> This act of co-thinking is premised on the assumption that one does not think in a vacuum. Indeed, explorations across cultural boundaries enrich all who undertake the venture. Such encounters are sources of the intellectual vigour which is the life-blood of

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human imagination and inventiveness. This co-creative process gives us new insights into the world and leads to the emergence of new categories and concepts to help us negotiate it. Both Deleuze and Sarkar take their philosophical traditions and rethink them in the light of new global demands, acting as creative traditionalists who speak from the past to the future through the medium of Western and Indic philosophy respectively. At the heart of this work lies the recognition that “philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 2).

Western philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze are famous for their neologisms. They are not alone in this creative enterprise. Sarkar for instance, coined many new terms (neohumanism, microvita, Prout, etc.) to describe and activate the realities his philosophical oeuvre sought to establish. This creativity is amplified when traditions intersect. It is dangerous however to assume that there is some kind of equivalence between a Western concept and an Eastern one. What emerges from such encounters are parallels that generate tension, the opportunity for creative dialogue and the emergence of new hybrid conceptual forms to populate the epistemological space that is emerging in response to intercivilizational engagement.

This activity is a form of futures thinking in which certain intellectual and conceptual possibilities immanent in the present globalizing context are mapped to better understand futures directions in both philosophy and human action (Bussey 2009; Inayatullah 2008). In this, the activity of thinking is directly linked to process. It helps to see the intellectual direction of this futures thinking as a form of shamanic intervention in which the reader becomes, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, acephalic, aphasic and illiterate (1994, p. 109).

### THE SHAMAN

This shamanic positioning allows for the multiple, the contradictory and the rhizomic (Bussey 2009). The shaman, as a figure of dissent, is drawn from the work of Ashis Nandy (Nandy 2007). The key to shamanic presence is that the shamanic persona is both familiar and strange; working in the world of everyday concerns while for ever, and simultaneously so, standing outside the ambit of the real. Every culture produces the shaman in their own image. For the purposes of this paper, Deleuze is the Western postmodern shaman of language play and deterritorialization; Sarkar, is

the Eastern neohumanist shaman of Tantra and socio-political mysticism. The key to this representation is that both thinkers function as lenses that invert *common sense* and release the creative potential immanent in the lifeworld. In this they follow Nandy's summary: "The shaman has one foot in the familiar, one foot outside; one foot in the present, one in the future; or, as some would put it, one foot in the timeless" (ibid., 176).

Both Deleuze and Sarkar chart *crazy vectors* as they defy the epistemological rules (epistemic gravity) of their contexts and chart new conceptual territory in order to better engage with humanity in a globalizing and culturally dynamic context. Deleuze's work can be seen as a sustained resistance to the hegemony of his own discipline of philosophy. His is a resistance from within, with the deep understanding of the history and traditions of the philosophical Western mind. His tools are his creative disregard for boundaries, a playful approach to language and form and what Tom Conley describes as "a consciousness of possibility" (2005, p. 176). His interest is in the morphological nature of signs and the transgressive flights they take. Old categories do not help here as they perform subjectivity in traditional and stereotypical ways. For Deleuze habit is the downfall of the philosopher whose challenge is to expose "regimes of signs" as they "cross over very different 'stratifications'" (Deleuze 2006, p. 15). To do this he positions himself on the periphery of "the system", where hybrid forms emerge and disappear, where identity becomes fragile and alternatives more possible. In this light his own work can be read as a shamanic resistance to the temptation to conform. As he puts it:

the closer one gets to the periphery of the system, the more subjects find themselves caught in a kind of temptation: whether to submit oneself to signifiers, to obey the orders of the bureaucrat and follow the interpretation of the high priest—or rather to be carried off elsewhere, the beyond, on a crazy vector, a tangent of deterritorialization—to follow a line of escape, to set off as a nomad, to emit what Guattari just called a-signifying particles. (ibid.)

Sarkar by contrast, *is* a representative of the Other. From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective he is an exponent of non-philosophy, in that "the Orient is not before philosophy but alongside" (1994, p. 95). This parallel form of thinking is anchored to an attitude towards being that is, from Sarkar's perspective, the Orient-self, individuated via a relationship with the *telos* of becoming-God.<sup>2</sup> As Deleuze does, he challenges his own tradition from within by inverting traditional Indian Tantric practice and culture.

He can, as a result, be seen as doubly other: the *other* of the Other. Thus Sarkar critiques the traditional metaphysical orientation that invalidates the lived realities of most people, and offers a form of praxis that informs spirituality with a pragmatism and revolutionary ardour that links personal spiritual growth with social engagement (Sarkar 1992, p. 94). In this way, Sarkar steps beyond the timeless ahistoricity of the metaphysic of Eastern thought (Lal 2002, pp. 121–122) and situates spiritual practice in the social realities of people.

The result was that he developed a dialectical philosophy that integrated spiritual and practical excursions into philosophical, social and economic concerns. In this he sought to develop the conceptual potential of Tantric thought through an engagement with reality and social struggle (Sarkar 1988, p. 14). This resulted in him reworking ancient Sanskrit categories and also, as Deleuze did, providing new categories when they were absent or insufficient. This project, placed beyond the Western theatre of philosophy, is perhaps easy to categorize as shamanic.<sup>3</sup> What is significant is that it mirrors in many respects Deleuze's strategy of distantiation and deterritorialization in which both thinkers chart crazy vectors across the cultural, intellectual and philosophical landscape.

### RADICAL EMPIRICISM

Both Deleuze and Sarkar offer open systems responses to hegemonic modernity. They do this by adopting a form of *radical empiricism* that subverts the narrow limiting rationality that legitimates the worldviews of both capitalism and metaphysical dualism. Yet there is a difference between the empiricism of West and East as embodied in the practices of Deleuze and Sarkar. Inna Semetsky notes that, for Deleuze, his empiricism is linked to his notion of the plane of immanence (Semetsky 2006, p. 6). Immanence, in the Deleuzean sense, implies both the possibility of inversion and the ground on which any philosophizing occurs. May (1994, p. 36) thus acknowledges that Deleuze's planes of immanence "indicate that there is no source beneath or beyond the plane that can be considered its hidden principle". Empiricism, Deleuze and Guattari assert, "knows only events and other people" (1994, p. 48), yet, they argue, both events and people are multiple, being in a constant process of becoming. Semetsky describes this becoming-context as occurring in a "relational dynamics [that] constitute an anti-representational, pluralistic and distributive semiotics which cannot be reduced to a static recognition" (ibid., p. 12).

Deleuze's empiricism is enacted relationally, driven by a "logic of multiplicities" (Deleuze cited in Semetsky, p. 2), rather than the binary logic of positivism and rationalism. Empiricism thus, for Deleuze, invokes the *and* in relation to the becoming-subjects' experience of the outside/real. This *and* reminds actors that there is always something immanent awaiting emergence from the plane of context, thus the subject's story is never complete, never whole; hence we are always *becoming*. Semetsky notes "it is the *milieu* itself that constitutes every multiplicity" (ibid.). The outside is therefore ontologically privileged with the becoming-subject becoming other in her quest for identity and this identity process is folded, being constructed, ironically, around a non-self (ibid., p. 16). Thus Deleuze formulates it: "I do not encounter myself on the outside. I find the other in me" (cited in Semetsky, p. 16).

Sarkar, working within the context of the Indian episteme, is not so much interested in Deleuze's becoming-subject, though he acknowledges the contingency of subjectivity as a work in progress through "clash and cohesion" (Sarkar 1997). Sarkar's empiricism is based on the subject-becoming-whole. In Sarkar's reading of subjectification, the becoming-subject has a similarly folded relationship to the outside, as described by Deleuze, yet the outside is not ontologically prior to the inside but coterminous with it. The outside-inside is for Sarkar the inside of the cosmic generation of subject-context potentiality. Sarkar sees this folded relationship as layered and multiple in that there is relative homogeneity, heterogeneity and differentiation both between and within these. For him the permanent outside of the relative outside is Brahma, "This visible world is the mental manifestation of *Brahma*, He is an unparalleled and all-pervading reality" (1992, p. 90). Thus:

In this manifested universe all the things that we treat as real at first sight are in fact relative truths. All of them bear *svaja'tiyya* or homogeneity, *vija'tiyya* or heterogeneity and *svagata* or self-differentiation. A tree, for example, is heterogenous or *vija'tiyya* to the houses, hills, rivers etc., and amongst the trees there are homogenous or *svaja'tiyya* differences—the mango tree, jack-fruit tree, palm tree, etc., and amongst the mangoes, there are differences in varieties—langra, bambai etc. And there are also self or *svagata* differences in the trunk, branches, leaves etc. of each mango tree. (ibid.)

As for Deleuze, differentiation involves action, yet it is not action to generate identity, as in the Western sense, but action towards (or away) from an ultimate identity (Divinity) in which the empirical can be a tool

for improvement, while identity is one of many states we experience as we strive to overcome relativity.<sup>4</sup> This improvement for Deleuze and Guattari lies in the subject's overcoming of linearity, in their becoming acephalic, non-philosophers who plunge into chaos to allow for new forms and possibilities (1994, p. 109; 202ff). To assist in this task we have empiricism which is a "great creator of concepts" (ibid., p. 48) that have the potential to better define sets of relationships between subjects, non-subjects and objects (ibid., p. 16). By contrast, Sarkar sees improvement as a collective, not primarily subject driven, concern. Deleuze represents the empiricism of the folded becoming "I" as multiple, contingent and ever unfolding (1993); while Sarkar is focused on the empiricism of the becoming "we" in which individual and collective struggle merge, as Inayatullah notes, in a meeting of the universal and the local (2002, p. 10). Both however understand that it is through the human relationship with context that identity emerges and this aligns them as pragmatists—as opposed to idealists, metaphysicians, transcendentalists—who understand that human action builds human identity. This process orientation, in which the doing is the real thinking, results in an open-ended and fragile present, rich with possible inversions and surprises.

### TRANSCENDENTAL EMPIRICISM?

This fragile becoming entity is open ended and unending, being rooted in what Deleuze paradoxically calls "transcendental empiricism" (Deleuze 1994, p. 70; Semetsky 2006, p. 33). Sarkar's position is both pragmatic and spiritual, thus he offers a spiritual empiricism rooted ontologically in the indigenous Indic philosophy of Tantra. This is not otherworldly but essentially practical, as Inayatullah notes, "Tantra stresses the practical experience of inner transformation" yet "Sarkar's theoretical framework is not only spiritual or only concerned with the material world, rather his perspective argues that the real is physical, mental and spiritual" (2002, p. 8).

Both Deleuze and Sarkar bring an attention to reality that is respectively textual and ideative and both ground their insights in an attention to reality that is read as multiple, intersecting the singular. Their understanding of subjectivity can be seen as grounded in the ontological trajectories they have taken from within the European philosophic and Indian Tantric traditions respectively. Yet even here there are strong parallels. Though Deleuze is grounded in a concern to avoid idealist metaphysics

his emphasis on the immanence of the possible and the role of empiricism in disqualifying dualist strategies—“Only empiricism knows how to transcend the experiential dimension of the visible without falling into Ideas, and how to track down, invoke, and perhaps produce a phantom” (cited Semetsky, p. 34)—is the same as Sarkar’s, who rules out the metaphysical dualism of Brahmanic Hinduism, and describes a relative reality of becoming in which differentiation and unification weave together in the transcendent field of Brahma (Sarkar 1978, p. 94). They are both empirical in that the object of their concern is *reality*. Semetsky’s observation of Deleuze thus becomes equally, though qualitatively so, appropriate for Sarkar:

Deleuze’s method remains empirical by virtue of the object of inquiry regarded as real, albeit subrepresentative, experience. Yet, it is also transcendental because the very foundations for the empirical principles are *a priori* left outside the common faculties of perception. (2006, p. 34)

### SHAMANIC PLAY

The shamanic quality of both thinkers therefore lies in their appreciation for that which is *left outside*.

In seeking to apprehend that which is left outside, both thinkers resort to analogy and metaphor. Thus we find their writing rich in poetic, ecological, topological and mathematical analogues. For Deleuze multiplicity, the creative drive towards differentiation immanent in the logic of becoming, takes the form of the rhizome with no beginning or end, only connection and differentiation, hence Alain Badiou describes him as the “metaphysician of the divergent world of modernity” (Badiou 1994, p. 55). For Sarkar, the sense of the cyclic return of the unitary to the many to the unitary is represented as the ocean/nucleus and the rain drop/electron and experienced as the wave.

Such metaphors are played out by Sarkar in his analogue of the Cosmos in which the individual is located in a subtle matrix of wave-like connections. This means that the subject is posited in relationship to the whole.

You know, the function and the existence of each and every entity in this universe has a certain influence on all other entities. The life, the movement, the thought-waves, of an ordinary ant affect you. Even the thought-waves of an ordinary ant affect your destiny. Nobody is alone in this universe. And

this mutual attraction amongst all the entities of the world maintains the balance of the universe. (Sarkar 1997, p. 82)

He builds on this cosmic metaphor by describing individuals metaphorically as electrons moving around a cosmic nucleus or hub. The metaphor often shifts and folds into poetic-mythic ellipses in which cosmos and ocean merge: “This entire Cosmological order is an ocean, an infinite ocean, of divine nectar. And the many vibrations created in this universe, so many waves, are different *devas*.<sup>5</sup> And the life of an individual moves—goes up and down—just like a boat in the sea, according to the length of the wave” (ibid., p. 87).

In this we see the individual always connected to what Sarkar calls the Great, and the impulse that drives individuation is *longing* or *love* (Inayatullah 2002, p. 10). This drive is collective, though experienced individually, and is the root of Sarkar’s thinking about history, which as Inayatullah demonstrates, also follows wave-like processes (ibid., pp. 11–12).

Deleuze also sees the becoming-subject at sea in a chaotic and fractal world. The folded nature of being-becoming is such that the world is legible only when it intersects the becoming consciousness of the individual as subject/monad. This world contains that which is always beyond, always mystery, yet it is also the relative world of lived experience. Like Sarkar, Deleuze acknowledges the poetry of this relationship of monad to world.

The world exists only in its representatives as long as they are included in each monad. It is a lapping of waves, a rumor, a fog, a mass of dancing particles of dust. It is a state of death or catalepsy, of sleep, drowsiness, or of numbness. It is as if the depths of every monad were made from an infinity of tiny folds (inflections). Endlessly furling and unfurling in every direction, so that the monad’s spontaneity resembles that of agitated sleepers who twist and turn on their mattresses. (1993, p. 86)

In Deleuze’s thinking the impetus to change is the drive to differentiate, to break down and reform, or what he and Guattari call deterritorialize and reterritorialize. In this they too can be as poetic as Sarkar. Semetzky captures Deleuze’s interplay of poetical and mathematical thinking well when describing the Deleuzian self.

Such a singular self ... is capable of multiple “leaps from one soul to another, ‘every now and then’ crossing closed deserts ... And from soul to soul it



traces the design of an *open* society, a society of creators” (Deleuze 1991, p. 111). The “now and then” are distinctive points, or *events* within the qualitative multiplicity, the latter functioning, as we remember, as a mode of existence of any “thing” including subjectivity. It is an experiential event that indeed affects the shape, in almost mathematical terms, of one’s life by virtue of itself being a variation on the curve that gives this or that shape to any figure. (Semetsky 2006, p. 13)

As shamanic signifiers Deleuze and Sarkar both have a lived context that situates them in their worlds as professor of philosophy and as guru. Both categories are intelligible and hold considerable status within their cultures; yet, they both deterritorialize their contexts through a form of radical empiricism that links abstract concerns with practical social issues. Such interventions can be seen to flow around the role of the subject and reality. Both thinkers approach reality, not as a single unitary *out there* but as a multiple and complex configuration that is experienced and created via a process of subjectification.

## BECOMING

For Sarkar the individual is a vibrational centre of consciousness that evolves within an “out-there” of Cosmic rhythms (1978, p. 23, 1993, pp. 50–51). Subjectivity emerges as an awareness of relationship to the Cosmic and proceeds through a struggle towards what he called “liberation” from the causal chain, which is experienced as cycles of birth and death, pleasure and pain. Liberation, known in Sanskrit as *mukti*, is grounded ethically in relation to the other without which no progress can occur. This is a break from traditional Tantra in which the world is seen as an obstacle to spiritual *mukti*/liberation. For Sarkar, “sentimental contact with the external world is a must” (1993, p. 51). Liberation is the primary drive of both the individual and the collective. What enables this drive is seen as rational, what blocks it is irrational. Because this performative rationality is set within a collective consciousness that embodies both the inner and outer processes of subjectivity, as Sarkar defines them, it retains its indigenous Tantric roots as a form of synthetic praxis.

For Deleuze, the individual is a monad or singularity within the chaos of the multiple; an event of sorts, a localized resistance to homogeneity. His individual is defined by a tension he calls *becoming*, in which the outside is selectively, though not self-consciously, internalized via the fold. Folding describes the relationship between subjectivity (the monad) and

the objective reality (the world) in which individuals function. The body is a requirement for engagement with this potent form of creative possibility as it houses “an obscure object in us” (Deleuze 1993, p. 85). This obscure object is the inside of the outside, it is prehended but not apprehended, as it is a non-object—thus Deleuze asserts that “Prehension is individual unity” (ibid., p. 78). In Sarkar’s terms this obscure unitary object is the *atman*, or soul, that resides in the *guhā*, or cave, not in the Platonic sense, but in the Tantric sense of immanent creative presence, or Divine potentiality. The world is internalized through a range of vibrational routes that are both physical and psycho-spiritual in nature. Thus he describes the roll of the senses and of chakras in filtering and processing external stimuli and in shaping the vibrational identity of both individual and culture.

Deleuze’s prehending monad is experienced as multiple, but operationally it is Unitary. This tension—paradox—is something that cannot be overcome but is definitional of the state of being-subject, following what Semetsky calls the logic of non-non-contradiction (2006, p. 28). Thus Deleuze asks, while exploring Leibniz’s thought: “How can the Many become the One?” His response is that “A great screen has to be placed in between them” (1993, p. 76). The screen acts as a *between*, the hinge of the fold that lies between the outside-inside, and is experienced as consciousness, particularly consciousness of mediation. The world is therefore the creative chaosmos of individual prehended reality within which lies all possibility. Thus becoming, the struggle to become, is the primary category of being. Hence Deleuze argues that “Every monad expresses the entire world, but obscurely and dimly because it is finite and the world is infinite. That is why the lower depths of the monad are so dark” (1993, p. 86). The world here is operationalized, as in Sarkar’s category of the outside of the outside, Brahma, as the chaos of “universal giddiness” that is experienced when the screen of apprehension “composes infinite series of whole and parts, which appear chaotic to us (as aleatory developments) only because we are incapable of following them, or because of the insufficiency of our own screens” (ibid., p. 77).

### DESIRE AND LONGING

The situation here between outside-inside, macro and micro, Semetsky describes as problematic because “it involves tension and conflict ... due to the intervention, sometimes beyond one’s awareness of this action, of the brute facts of human existence” (2006, p. 29). Yet, this tension is also

definitional of a Tantric world view in which fold and liberation are coordinates for reading the *real*. Tantra, which has been heavily orientalized over the past century by European commentators (Said 1995), is often misunderstood either as a religion (as in Tibetan Buddhism) or as a sexual cult (Anand 1999). From Sarkar's perspective this is an error (1978, p. 329; 335). He argues that it is an orientation to the real that is premised upon tension and struggle. This emerges as the subjectivity of each individual works to form a relationship with the multiple and fractal elements of their inner and outer realities that collectively constitute identity.

Tantra is not only a fight, it is an all round fight. It is not only an external or internal fight, it is simultaneously both. Internal fight is a practice of the subtler portion of Tantra. External fight is a fight of the cruder portion of Tantra and the fight—both internal and external, is a fight in between the two. So practice in each and every stratum of life has got due recognition in Tantra and the co-related and the co-operated form of practices in all the strata represent Tantra in proper perspectives. (1978, p. 332)

In this struggle the desire for Liberation is essential. In fact, Deleuze argues that desire is not affective but effective, in that it produces consciousness (affects) and is instrumental in the production of “reality”. Thus Semetsky summarizes: “The subject does not possess desire; just the opposite, it is desire that ‘produces reality’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 30) enveloping everything, including subjects and objects alike, in itself” (2006, p. 56). Desire drives expression, both individually and collectively; for Sarkar, as Inayatullah notes (2002, p. 10), it takes the form of the longing for the Great. This longing is external to the unit beings driven by it, being an essential ingredient of Tantric cosmogenesis. It is the source of creativity and the new. Thus Deleuze observes the becoming-subject is not complete, or as Sarkar would have it, *liberated*, “without the sum of perceptions tending to be integrated in a great pleasure, a Satisfaction with which the monad fills itself when it expresses the world, a musical Joy of contracting its vibrations, of calculating them without knowing their harmonics or of drawing force enough to go further and further ahead in order to produce something new” (1993, p. 79).

### FREEDOM AND EUPSYCHIA

Yet, for Sarkar, this liberation is equally an inner state of freedom from distortions to consciousness and a socio-political stance in which injustice and violence are challenged (Hatley and Inayatullah 1999, p. 140).

He is looking not for an eternal verity, but a world in which all beings achieve full potential. This is the eupsychia of the good, or what Deleuze calls the “best of all worlds”, a place he describes as “neither the least abominable nor the least ugly, but the one whose All granted a production of novelty, *a liberation of true quanta of ‘private’ subjectivity*, even at the cost of the removal of the damned. The best of all worlds is not the one that produces the eternal, but the one in which new creations are produced, the one endowed with a capacity for innovation or creativity: a teleological conversion of philosophy” (italics in original, 1993, p. 79). Thus Deleuze’s thoughts intersect Sarkar’s in their collective desire for the *liberation* of an individual’s potential, or true quanta. This is significant because, despite their geophilosophical positioning, their commitment to an open-ended transcendental empiricism align across both culture and ontological tradition, setting up surprising parallels in terms of language and process. They both articulate what Semetsky calls a “grammar of disequilibrium as a precondition for the production of meanings, [that] can be considered a specific syntax of a self-organized language-system” (2006, p. 41).

Thus the *mukti* that propels Sarkar’s vision aligns with Deleuze’s liberation of the monad’s true quanta and recognizes the multiple and layered nature of reality and triggers both epistemological and political interventions that are, as he and Guattari note, “fractal in nature” (1994, p. 40). The novelty of Sarkar’s approach lies in the fact that he uses ancient Tantric concepts to politicize subjectivity and spiritual practice.<sup>6</sup> Thus he defines liberty as “the unobstructed expression of individual rhythmic vibrations” (1993, p. 50) while linking such expression to practical engagement: “It is not enough to read books, scriptures—one will have to be practical, will have to do something in practical life” (1997, p. 64). The concept of *mukti* as liberation is therefore a concept which Deleuze would say is folded. It is both an internal and an external process. The rationality that drives this conceptual project therefore shifts from an analytic to a synthetic praxis. This shift is legitimate in Sarkar’s eyes because the struggle for *mukti* is a form of radical and transcendental empiricism as it shares all the epistemological and performative features of the empirical sciences: being practical (enactment changes the world); experiential (truth must be observed); and open to collective judgement (truth must be replicable and testable) (1997, p. 49).

## CIVILIZATIONAL DIALOGUE

The ethical dimension of Deleuze's folded world of the becoming-subject, identifies the relationship of inside-outside as the platform upon which social engagement, to be successful, must be understood. His shamanic potential lies in this reading of *becoming* and his position as a dissident who sees his task as one of "pulverizing the world, but also one of spiritualizing its dust" (1993, p. 87).

It has been the tendency of the West to depoliticize any terms that have a spiritual dimension and relegate them to the subjective realm of personal practice. For Sarkar, such dualisms are ineffective and fail to connect the inner and outer dimensions of a practice which requires both subjective and objective action. In this he is, as Inayatullah points out, both ancient and modern (2002, pp. 1–2). His shamanic potential lies in this characterization. Sarkar stands beyond the traditional Western geophilosophical constructs that have mapped, divided and conquered so much physical and ideological space. Yet his voice is one of growing relevance as the non-Western other is drawn into the global conversation about reality and social action, what Fred Dallmayr calls a cross civilizational dialogue (Dallmayr 2002). His concept of *mukti*/liberation is crucial here as it posits the possibility within any regime of truth of its immanent inversion. This is not simply a binary relationship but one rich in heterotopic possibilities. *Mukti* represents multiple pathways into the future, for liberation, as both Deleuze and Sarkar argue, is not foreclosed and unitary but uniquely situated within the lifeworlds of each being and each socio-historical context.

This analysis has taken Nandy's work on the shaman in a different direction while remaining true to his insight that while threats to categories could be contained in premodern social space, this is no longer possible. With the advent of hypermodernity all social space has been compressed or, as Zygmunt Bauman argues, liquified (2000). Thus we find the shaman standing in the wings embodying alternative categories that augment the global meltdown born of civilizational encounter.

Better categories, however, are not central to the concern of the shaman; rather it is an open-ended and ambivalent attitude to any hegemonic practice that seeks to reinstate order from above. Sarkar has offered new categories to think by and tackle the global issues we face but beyond that he represents the eternally foreign principle; Deleuze, by folding categories into personal-social (inside-outside) space, sees them not as ends in

themselves but as tools (machines/assemblages) for negotiating the real and unpacking power and dysfunctionality (schizophrenia). Both are approaches rich in intercultural possibility and, when danced with dialogically as in this chapter, the critical potentiality is exponentially amplified and provides a dynamic basis for a pragmatic philosophy of intercultural engagement.

## CONCLUSION

This is a time when the shamanic in all its alterity is deepening our critical capacity as a response to emergent conversations, such as that conducted here between Deleuze and Sarkar. The futures thinking this generates is refreshingly unfamiliar. The real melts just as Marx predicted it would. However the melting is not simply a descent into chaos and a world of signs, as Baudrillard and Lyotard argue, rather it is a leading forward into new critical categories, as yet uncharted, which offer the possibilities of renewal and re-enchantment.

## NOTES

1. The work of P.R. Sarkar is ably described by Sohail Inayatullah in his texts *Situating Sarkar* (1999) and *Understanding Sarkar* (2002).
2. Sarkar describes such a grounding in terms of each culture's *prana dharma*—its inherent characteristics, something akin to ethos and mores. “The words *prāna dharma* mean the cardinal characteristic of a person which differentiates one person from another. Just as each human being has his or her own traits, similarly an entire race living within a particular geographical, historical and cultural environment will also inhere some traits which distinguish that particular race from other. These traits or specialities are inseparably embedded in the internal behaviour of the entire population, and they help to form a particular bent of mind, expression of external behaviour, attitude towards life and society, and on the whole a different out look” (Sarkar 1998, p. 148).
3. It is worth noting here that Sarkar remained in the oral tradition of Tantra—he spoke but did not write; this task was left to his followers. His linguistic strategy was not to privilege the printed text but to embody the intellectual richness of the premodern, pretextual universe of timeless time. Though many of his talks have been recorded, and published, his concern has been—through speaking *to*—to reinforce the relational nature of spoken thought as a form of “intellect ... always associated with benevolence” (Sarkar 1978, p. 96).

4. Thus we have, from the Cosmic perspective, relative identity and eternal identity, which come with a set of rational processes that support each (i.e. personal and cultural assumptions about the real and a set of eternal verities—benevolence, mission, truthfulness, etc.) that wrap the process in an immutable context.
5. Sarkar defines *devas* as “waves ... carrying so many ideas” that create action in individuals and collectivities (1997, pp. 85–86).
6. It is useful to compare his approach with that used by Ananta Kumar Giri, who develops a social theory of agency around Vedic concepts (see Giri 2006).

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