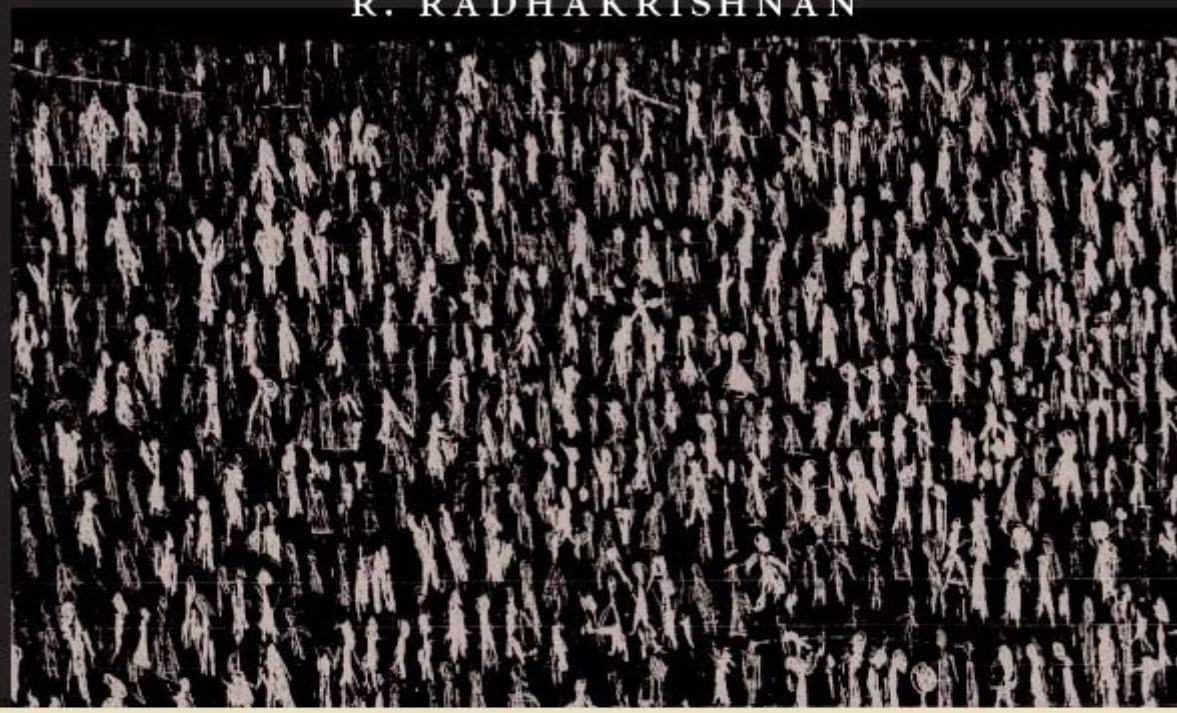
R. RADHAKRISHNAN



History, *the* Human, *and the* World Between

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To the city of Madras
that I am learning to address
as Chennai: its many ragas
and talas.

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Acknowledgments

IT WAS EASY FOR E. M. FORSTER to have exhorted the human subject to "always connect." The problem with the gestation and the production of this book was that everything seemed to connect. That, I repeat, was a problem of the highest order. I needed help in sorting out the connections to save the work from the sin of seamlessness. Fortunately, I received several invitations to present aspects and parts of this work in various venues. I am deeply grateful to my hosts and to the audiences who engaged with my work and gave me so much precious and insightful feedback. I wish to thank in particular Prafulla Kar; the Forum for Contemporary Theory (Baroda, India) for requesting that I present my work on Ranajit Guha and historiography; the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati; the dynamic informal reading group in Murray Krieger Hall, University of California, Irvine, organized by Lindon Barrett; Steve Mailloux and the Critical Theory Emphasis at the University of California, Irvine, for inviting me to present my chapter on Edward Said and humanism; Sumathi Ramaswamy and Valerie Traub at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, for having me over to present my thoughts on poetry, ontology, and historiography; to Rita

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Introduction

AS I COMMENCE THIS INTRODUCTION, I feel divided between two impulses: to attempt a direct paraphrase-like introduction, or to initiate a self-reflexive commentary on what makes an introduction before I get into the issue of what the current book is all about. The first impulse seems to emanate from a basic nontheoretical self that is interested in sharing its concerns and priorities with other selves, whereas the other push would seem to originate from a professional self committed obsessively to the task of what Jacques Derrida would call "thinking thought itself" as a necessary precondition for thinking representationally about anything. Is this second-order thinking necessary at all except as a form of professional compulsion? Does it add anything to the value of the discussion except give it a specialist dimension? How does one decide when and where metacommentaries are useful and illuminating, and when they are self-indulgent and inane? I am reminded of my undergraduate years in India as a debater when many of us would begin our orations with a de rigueur analytical riff on the very propositionality of the proposition that was under discussion. Were we doing it out of some chronic smart-aleckiness, or were we really opening up the debate to a crucial metapropositional dimension of richness and

complexity? Were we stalling for time and compensating for not having all that much to say directly and representationally about the proposition, or were we in some radical way including the very form of the issue as a latent content of the discussion to follow? Readers will remember that much of the early discussions of postmodernism and of the radicality of metafiction centered on questions such as the following: Was fiction dead? Was metafiction the inevitable consummation of the literature of ennui? Was postmodernism a shining example of a rebel without a cause until feminists, gay and lesbian theorists, subaltern and thinkers of color gave it one? In our own times, Derrida was the peerless master of the prolegomenon, the autocritical second-order riff that would come close to preempting or obviating the primary context of communication.

This book is symptomatic of this tension between the need to address a general readership on such broad issues as history, the world, and the predicament of the human subject caught between the past and the present, between knowing and being, between phenomenology and discursive systems, between nature and anthropocentrism, between a potential universality and a world structured in dominance; and the desire to complicate these themes by subjecting them to the discourse of specialization. Ringing in my ears now is the impassioned advice that Edward Said gave me years ago, "Radha, always find a way to write to a large audience without in any way sacrificing profundity of thought and conceptualization." Even as I agree with Said, a part of me is willing to entertain the possibility that there is an important connection between the complexity of expression and the profundity of thought. As I argue in my chapter on Said, humanism has to be understood both in pragmatic and commonsensical ways, but also in discursively specific ways. I also suggest that in making his decisive break with theoretical discourse, Said had both to gain and to lose. Said achieves what he calls "worldliness," but only after disallowing a number of real complications that theory brings into worldliness. The challenge with the evolution of this book has been the following: how to present and discuss themes that matter in the context of appropriate thought models, theories, or schools of thought. If I wanted to talk about history and the present, whom would I go with? If I wanted to focus on the relationship between living and thinking, which philosophy would best deal with

this problem? If the human subject both wants to remember and be benefited by the past and forget the past to avoid incapacitation by it, what are some of the ways of highlighting this problematic? If the human condition hovers somewhere between allegory and history, under what conditions can this betweenness be understood?

This book enjoys all the advantages and the disadvantages of a conjunctural piece that works through strategic intersections and juxtapositions, rather than by way of an exhaustive and one-at-a-time analysis of a particular thinker or school of thought. My interest in Friedrich Nietzsche in the first part of the first chapter is necessitated by my interest in Adrienne Rich's attitude to history and revisionism as expressed in her poem "Diving into the Wreck," which in turn anticipates my sustained critical appreciation of the theme of the return in Frantz Fanon. It is the theme of the return with its variations in a variety of contexts that keeps the chapter together. A similar rationale holds together the relationship among phenomenology, poststructuralism, and postcoloniality. Whether it is the strategic juxtaposing of systems of thoughts and philosophies, or of individual thinkers, writers, and theorists, my objective is to bring out the complex, contradictory, and unpredictable relationships between the places in which people live and the spaces in which they think. The thinkers, writers, and theorists who figure prominently in this book seek to pose epistemology as an existential question, realize the political as an ethical resolution, dramatize an epistemological challenge of the political and vice versa, and find the moment of balance between the allegorical leap and historical anchorage.

Well, who does not know what history is? We are history, part of it, as we make it, receive it, seek it, revile it, feel sometimes enabled and at other times blighted by it. My book begins with the following questions: What are some ways of thinking about history? Which approaches to history affirm life and the history of the present, and which attitudes haunt and paralyze life? What is a usable past and how does the human subject choose and construct it from the debris of dead moments? Will history cease to be if the human subject opts not to look back? What is the relationship between the past and the category we call history? If, as Nietzsche ruefully acknowledges, the human being, unlike the blissfully oblivious animal, is condemned to ruminate, how does the human

either decide to remember or forget the past? Is there a choice, and how is the choice understood and validated? The term *revisionism* problematizes any notion we might have that history is objective or just. If history is what is remembered of the past, what about the other pasts that have not been remembered? Has not history for the most part been the version of the victor? How then does the loser rub dominant history against the grain to liberate those other stories that got buried or subjugated? How does the genre called history account for the worlding of the world within its discursive parameters, and how does worlding as phenomenological process bear the burden of objective knowledge and subjective authenticity? These are some of the concerns that occupy me in this book, both as general forms of anxiety about time, temporality, and historicity; and as specialist obsessions. As a specialist I have chosen to complicate or complexify these questions in the following way: I have chosen to locate this agenda in the context of the theory versus history debates. Hard-core advocates of history in this debate would argue that since the famous linguistic turn, theory has become profoundly ahistorical, even posthistorical. Evincing a mercurial dissatisfaction with the givens of actual history, and remaining incapable of dealing with history in empirically accountable ways, theory has taken the easy and frictionless option, thanks to the inflation of language into its own autonomous ontology, of imagining and proposing reality otherwise. Consequently, in theory, problems, contradictions, and challenges are always already sublimated into various fluid and unstable states of "post-ality": post- this and post- that. Even such grounded and politically committed thinkers as Frantz Fanon and Antonio Gramsci have been thoroughly poststructuralized in alignment with Derridean dissemination or Lacanian theories of the unconscious. In this context, the ongoing collaborations between postcoloniality and poststructuralism have been particularly fraught. To those exponents of history and historiography who would consider poststructuralism to be by far a bad dream, the very term *postcoloniality* has come to signify a way of dealing with history by really not dealing with it. In the name of a purely epistemological or theoretical coalition, the "after" after colonialism and the "after" after structuralism have come together in what seems to be a rebellion without a cause. The neocolonial is hastily erased; the resistances of the third world are dismantled or depoliticized: all in

the name of a privileged ambivalence that takes the form of a metropolitan double consciousness. Rather than allow issues of the so-called third world to dictate the choice and adoption of cultural, critical, and intellectual methodologies of analysis and exploration, the very formulation of issues and problems follows the avant-garde temporality of theory, which in its deconstructive autocritical mode remains profoundly Western and Eurocentric. The high theorists come back with the readymade response that (1) by raising self-reflexivity to the level of a primary politics and (2) by paying scrupulous and critical attention to the epistemological subject (on the assumption that radical practices in the realm of epistemology automatically trickle down as answers and solutions to the level of politics), they have already taken care of history; and (3) that postcoloniality is not intended as a substitute for Commonwealth or third world or Anglophone or Francophone studies for the simple reason that the temporality of the post- does indeed collocate geopolitics along different lines and axes.

For the antitheory folks, history has been highjacked by theory into false forms of identification and recognition. The first misrecognition is brought about by the seduction of theory and theory's access to infinite discursive proliferation: new terms, jargon, terminologies, and formulations that stake their truth claims as post-representational. To put it simply, theory becomes fashionable and felicitous obfuscation. Is this really true; or are there more productive ways combining the urge for theory with the historical imperative? The other problem has to do with realities of unevenness and asymmetry. When, for example, a postcolonial cultural or literary critic chooses poststructuralism as a theoretical point of entry into the complexities of a Nigerian, Ghanaian, or Indian text, how conscious is she or he of the asymmetrical or the uneven relationship between the two worlds that she or he is seeking to bridge? What makes such a critic decide or assume that poststructuralist ways of reading and interpreting are even relevant in the context of a third world text? Why, for example, does Homi Bhabha privilege the psychoanalytic and Lacanian Fanon over Fanon the political revolutionary who is utterly and uncompromisingly committed to possibilities of Afrocentric nationalism? Here the problem is this: Which recognition precedes which? Does the larger macropolitical recognition of Fanon as a revolutionary come first, or does the micropolitical recognition

that he is a Lacanian thinker take precedence over the political determination? Which Fanon is the real Fanon, and analogously, which third world is the real third world; and which third world is deluded into false consciousness thanks to the seduction of high theory? Is the postcolonial intellectual deluded by the West by way of the erotics of theory as specialist discourse, or is she or he primarily enticed by the discourse and ergo by possibilities of metropolitan ambivalence? At any rate, this misunderstanding between theory and history brings into focus two related issues: perspectivism and the relationship between the places in which people live and the places in which they think.

Said's work could be read as a rich and layered symptom of the dilemmas and crises that I have been talking about. Indeed, one of the themes he was dealing with throughout his career had to do with the perspectival assumption of history by the human subject, both individually and collectively. Clearly, histories are created, interpreted, repossessed, and produced in response to present perils and threats. History is always contested within a dialectic tension: subjective and objective, perspectival/polemical and omniscient. Dominant, hegemonic, subaltern, feminist, postcolonial, gay and lesbian, Western, non-Western, the master, the slave: all of these are specific locations of pain or pleasure, privilege or privation, hurt, grief, and loss, or of surplus from which histories are constantly revisited, reinterpreted in keeping with whatever the present needs for the historical may be. Even as history is deemed to be objective and empirical and factual, no one approaches history in a nonpolemical, nonpartisan mode. History is precisely what different historiographies contest; and for Said, the history of humanism captures all the ambiguities despite which choices have to be made. Is humanism all good or bad? Is humanism necessarily and unavoidably Eurocentric? Even if humanism has had a negative history, can it still be reclaimed in the name of all humanity? Is humanism possible as a general and nontechnical worldview, or does it have to be considered as an –ism and therefore subjected to a specialist-discursive treatment? How can the individual use humanism in innovative and creative ways so as to escape systemic paralysis and incapacitation? How can humanism be reinvoked to address multihistorical emergencies occurring both within and among the peoples of the world? If Said is raising these questions as a postcolonial cultural critic, Ranajit Guha, the subaltern In-

dian historiographer, is raising a similar disillusionment within his own discipline, history and academic historiography. Guha, too, is agitated by the betrayal of the everyday by the historical, of existential temporality by official historiography, of poetic ways of dwelling in a world of rich possibilities by the disciplinary apparatus of a colonizing historical narrative. He then turns to poetry and to Rabindranath Tagore for an answer and a solution to a problem that is both existential/ontological and epistemological. It is by way of transgressing the givens of his genre that Guha seeks the real.

The concept of the real immediately sets in motion an exciting conversation between phenomenology as a way of life/living or method and phenomenology as a philosophical school of thought. As I make a few basic comments about phenomenology and how it effectively brings together the many flows that constitute the theme of my book, I will also be making way for the second part of my introduction, where I will be laying bare the mechanics of my authorial agenda in terms of the title of the book and with reference to the goings-on within each chapter. Phenomenology in general opens up exciting possibilities of considering the same phenomenon simultaneously from a variety of discrete but interrelated registers: the political, the aesthetic, the ethical, the individual, and the collective. It is deeply committed to the task of reconciling the binary clash between an unsituated and disembodied epistemology of omniscience and a situated and perspectival formulation of being in the world, between the real and the rational, between the world as given and the world as intended, and finally, between the "I am" and the "I think" poles of human subjectivity. As I acknowledge a little later in this introduction, it has not been easy or simple to go back (ah, that going back theme again) to phenomenology after my dense implication in poststructuralism, but I do so in the belief that the return may be of some help to me as I seek, both as a general human and as a discursive intellectual, to understand the many betweens that constitute both my world and your worlds, my readers.

Yes indeed, in three massive and prolix chapters, this book claims to be about history, the human subject, and the world between. I sincerely hope the reader notices the intended infelicity of the use of the word *between*, for it is my objective to dangle the between autonomously, that is, in transgression of its customary obligation to mark a certain

licit adjacency of some space to some other space. My argument is that the human subject and the concept of the between are mutually constitutive, that is, in thinking itself into a state of reflexive consciousness, the human subject discovers the spatio-temporality of betweenness as both ontological and epistemological. To put it simply, the only place in which the human subject dwells is between. Sure enough, there are several betweens: between ontology and epistemology, between self and other, between the one and the many, between identity and difference, between nature and culture, between the ethical and the political, between subjectivity and objectivity, between the historic and the quotidian, between temporality and historicity, between the anthropocentric and the planetary, between self-subjectivation and alterior interpellation. In other words, take away the cartography of betweenness, and along with it vanishes the human subject. With specific reference to the title of the book, I would like to make two observations: (1) the "world" is indeed sandwiched between "history" and the "human"; and (2) by way of what students of figures of speech would identify as an instance of "the transferred epithet," the very ontology of the world is rendered between, though the betweenness, properly speaking, characterizes the human and not the world condition.

The entire book is symptomatic, in the psychoanalytic sense of the term, of a dialectical tension between phenomenology and a Foucauldian and post-Foucauldian discourse analysis. I would even say that it constitutes an attempt to recover what is still salvageable, persuasive, pleasurable, existential, relevant, and poignant in phenomenology *after* the acknowledgment that Michel Foucault's work in particular has rendered uninnocent the very imprimatur in the name of which phenomenology sought to return to things themselves. Foucault has demonstrated tellingly how the phenomenological category of intentionality aestheticizes the relationship of the human to the world and furthermore guarantees to the human its meaning and significance as a natural outcome of its perspectival, but ontological *Gestalt* with nature. As Foucault puts it with ruthless trenchancy vis-à-vis Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre in his essay "Theatrum Philosophicum":

> Phenomenology, on the other hand, reoriented the event with respect to meaning: either it placed the bare event before or to the side of meaning—

> the rock of facticity, the mute inertia of occurrences—and then submitted it to the active processes of meaning, to its digging and elaboration; or else it assumed a domain of primal significations, which always existed as a disposition of the world around the self, tracing its paths and privileged locations, indicating in advance where the event might occur and its possible form. Either the cat whose good sense precedes the smile or the common sense of the smile that anticipates the cat. Either Sartre or Merleau-Ponty. For them, meaning never coincides with an event; and from this evolves a logic of signification, a grammar of the first person, and a metaphysics of consciousness.[1]

Clearly, both Foucault and the phenomenologists would agree that the so-called meaning question is an all-important one. But the question is about the modality of meaning: whether such a meaning is homely or unhomely. Foucault's impassioned critique of phenomenology à la Merleau-Ponty is that it guarantees meaning in the name of a preexisting complicity between the self and the world. In Foucault's understanding, phenomenology both as a philosophy and as a method functions primarily on the basis of primal significations that reconcile the world with the self in such a way that the intentionality of the self and the disposition of the world have to be celebrated in perfect philosophical synchrony. And Foucault detects bad faith and bad epistemology in this synchrony. A question that I find myself asking, then, is this: If I am so persuaded by Foucault's epistemological repudiation of phenomenology, and furthermore, if epistemology is what this book is primarily about, why then am I returning to phenomenology for ontological comfort and sustenance?

There is more than one way of responding to this. To start with, Foucault's own discourse, despite its self-avowed rupture from all projects phenomenological, is still haunted by phenomenological murmurs and whispers. It is not at all surprising to hear Foucault declare in one of his late interviews that he was indeed profoundly influenced by Martin Heidegger, even though there are not all that many references in his work to the earlier thinker. My hypothesis is that no human being, professional thinker or otherwise, who is interested in asking questions and seeking answers from life or existence can afford to bypass the phenomenological measure. One of the perennially enabling virtues of phenomenology has been its insistence that it is a method, a process,

and a way of living and thinking; and not an -ism, a philosophy, an ideology, or an apodictic axiology. In the context of phenomenology, it thus becomes possible to perennially play out the drama of the cogito, caught as it is, often haplessly, between living and telling and between existing and cogitating.[2] Whatever pedagogical mastery phenomenology may want to claim on its own behalf as a philosophy or as a plenary worldview, it is always already called into question or played with by phenomenology as play, as performativity. Deep questions of existence and ontology are forever alive in phenomenology, often in a nameless and ineffable modality, particularly during times in which the aggressiveness of epistemology—either in the form of instrumental reason or in the name of empiricism, positivism, scientism, or fundamentalism—seeks to enclose the mystery of the infinite and of what is to be known within the juridical and normative procedurality of the cogito and its passion for certitude as philosophical truth. In other words, phenomenology is nothing if not a wandering process open to illumination and mystification, and then again, to mystification and illumination in an ongoing measure of inexhaustibility. As Foucault's late work on self-subjectivation would pose it, and this aspect of Foucault's late thinking is indubitably phenomenological: How does the human subject change itself through processes of ascesis so that it earns the right to dwell in the domain of knowledge that it has brought into existence? How does the human subject take care of itself by way of the ethical imperative of epistemology? In other words, phenomenology exhorts the human subject to constantly think of thinking in terms of living, without at the same time attempting to conflate the two in a movement of unmediated authenticity or spontaneism.

The claim of phenomenology on the human subject, I would submit, is both systemic-discursive and nonprofessional/quotidian. It becomes incumbent on the phenomenologically inflected human subject or cogito to raise the issue of its accountability to itself, to existence, and to nature along multiple axes: the epistemological, the ethical, the political, the corporeal, the cognitive, the affective, and the aesthetic. To put it differently, the truly phenomenological thinker functions much like a generalist who in his or her very rigorous awareness of the self-entrenched legitimacy of a variety of different specialized truth claims refuses to be seduced exclusively by any one of them and resists the

temptation to fetishize or reify any one of those claims and anoint it with a representative sovereignty on behalf of life itself. How can the human subject practice ethics epistemologically? How can the cogito think ethically? How is affect to be construed cognitively; and how can thought be experienced as though it were sensible, palpable? How can human accountability, by way of a whole series of self-reflexive processes, be understood both as a specific and as an organic imperative? How are the specialist truths produced within one domain to be subjected to dialogic and dialectical interrogation from other specialized perspectives, as well as from a "lay" human perspective? These questions take on both ontological and epistemological relevance and urgency in the context of phenomenology mainly because phenomenology has the ability to function both as figure and as ground, both as what is in the horizon and as the horizon in a noninvasive and nontotalizing manner. More sensitively and more poignantly than any recent school of thought, phenomenology, particularly after the very necessary critiques it was submitted to by way of Foucault and certain strains of poststructuralist thought, remains capable of entertaining the creative and transformative possibility that there is more to life than can be dreamt of within the confines of any philosophical or scientific method, discourse, or terminology. This solicitude on behalf of the mystery of the knowable also takes certain forms of advocacy: advocacy on behalf of heterological ways of knowing; nonprofessional, nonexpert, noninvasive, naive, dialogic, and other modes of insight that owe as much to listening as they do to speaking or talking. Committed, on the one hand, to the broadly speaking Marxist ethico-politics of knowledge as a willed and agential transformation of reality, and dedicated, on the other hand, to the deep-ecological principle of letting nature be, phenomenology has to position its project of "worlding" judiciously between a pregiven nature and an unavoidable anthropocentrism.

Let us take for example the concept of subjectivation as developed by Foucault and that of interpellation as theorized by Louis Althusser. Both of these formulations are indeed subtended by a deeper phenomenological curiosity. What does it mean to think? What is thinking, as Heidegger would put it? What happens to subject-object dualism in the process of thinking? Who calls on the human subject to think? Does this hail come from within or without? What do coordinates like within

and without mean in the context of thinking that is after all human, too human? Can thinking that is in response to oneself also be realized as a form of accountability to the other and to the without? What is the phenomenological position vis-à-vis binarity? Does binarity found thinking itself, or is it possible to generate a kind of thinking that can transcend the authority of binarity? Though it is undeniable that Foucault and Althusser, as intensely modal thinkers, take us beyond a certain phenomenological naïveté, their concern remains deeply phenomenological for the very simple reason that despite all the secondarity of mediations and the *dispositif* of discourse, the issues are about life and about living. The return to things themselves or the return to the lived moment as a call or as a manifesto can by very definition never be untimely. To put it briefly, systems matter and thought matters because life matters and living matters, and not the other way around. Foucault more than Althusser, after a whole lifetime of chronicling and archiving the materiality of discourse and the workings of epistemology as disciplinarity, seeks to return to life in a postphenomenologically phenomenological mode. It is in the name of a return to life that Foucault articulates his advocacy of "subjugated knowledges."[3]

To me, one of the most bracing aspects of phenomenology is that it allows the human subject to talk about life and living in all their generality. This does not mean that phenomenology is fuzzy, poorly differentiated, or taxonomically recalcitrant. What is enabling about phenomenology is precisely its ability to deal with life both in a bounded and in an infinite way. Merleau-Ponty, as a phenomenologist, was a powerful art critic and aesthetician, and a Marxist and somewhat of a communist. So was Sartre. Thus when one hears the constant repetition of concepts like the self, the other, the body, intentionality, perception, the cogito, the world, and so on in Merleau-Ponty, it is immediately obvious that these concepts operate on a variety of registers that constitute a sometimes contradictory, but always a coherent and a signifying continuum: that sensuous totality of life that Marx was committed to explain and change. It is easy to practice Marxism as a Marxist or be a communist like a communist; but the more complex question is: how does one practice communism as a phenomenologist? Within the overarching horizon of phenomenology, the relative autonomies of the political moment, the existential moment, the ethical moment, and

the aesthetic moment are powerfully persuaded into a dialogue with one another. One of the significant consequences is that it is possible for a politically committed and ideologically partisan phenomenologist to make meaningful differentiations, for example, between temporality and historicity and between prediscursive possibility and discursive or official actuality.

A reconfigured phenomenology has a crucial role to play in the ongoing contestations between history and theory, between objectivism and subjectivism. As I attempted to demonstrate in my last book, *Theory in an Uneven World*, the opposition between history and theory has of late been crudely overdrawn, even caricatured. I even suggested, in response to the cry "always historicize," a different but related exhortation, "always theorize."[4] These two exhortations are to be articulated together productively only on condition that both history and theory reimagine themselves with respect to each other. It is here that phenomenology, with its philosophical and aesthetic focus on the category of imagination, has much to contribute. Let me develop the theme of a cartographic or worldly imagination some more; and to be able to do this, I go to the novelist Amitav Ghosh and his telling phrase from *The Shadow Lines*, "imagine with precision."[5] This phrase makes the bold claim that all realities, including the objective facticity of given reality, are nothing but imagined, and at the same time offers the evaluation that it is precisely because reality is imagined that it is valuable and worthy of perspectival contestation. Ghosh also reminds the reader that imagining is not a subjectivist, relativist, or solipsistic binge: there can be no responsible imagining without precision. The precision that is required in the act of imagining the world otherwise has nothing to do with the exactitude of positivism or the monovalent rectitude of facticity or empiricism. The precision is internal to the imagination and takes the form of a figural or aesthetic accountability to the worldliness of the imagination. I take it for granted that the objective of any activity, any discourse, or any project is to perennially overrun itself, to transcend itself toward an absence, toward some place that is as yet not there. Phenomenology would insist that such acts of transcendence would have to occur on the basis of a corporeal and embodied immanent critique that would honor the history of the present, but only with the intention of imagining it otherwise. In other words, both history and

theory have the obligation not to stay the course and to find the status quo wanting, insufficient, and unacceptable. How then does the human subject imagine a different reality that haunts the history of the present as a powerful absence?[6] Should phenomenology produce the other, represent the other, or let the other be? How does the human subject honor the givenness of reality even as it envisions a transcendence of the givenness in the name of the other? Here again, the very givenness of reality has to be inflected on two registers: that of nature and that of human history. Clearly, the human commitment to the deep-ecological givenness of nature has to be very different from its commitment to its own story, and more often than not, bloody and guilty history. To put it in Heideggerian terms, is it the responsibility of the human subject to achieve a symbiotic relationship between "the language of Being" and "the being of language," and furthermore, make possible a thinking that transcends the binary impasse of first nature and second nature?

The terms *world*, *history*, *human*, and *subject* in this work are intended to be in constant motion among different temporalities, discourses, and regimes of truth: phenomenology, feminism, postcoloniality, humanism and the variations thereof, subaltern history, nature, anthropocentrism, and deep ecology. What is revealing in this shuttle is the fact these terms/concepts take on different meanings and valences depending on their epistemological location. Thus the world to Heidegger, in the context of his poetic and phenomenological elaboration of the Earth-World nexus, means something very different than it does to Said as he critically delineates his vision of worldliness. The meaning of the stable and objective category *history* becomes radically contingent when we begin to consider that history is the function of certain modes and forms of historicizing; when we begin to talk about the politics of perspectival historicizing, we get into the complexities of different locations and the very different desires, motivations, drives, and resentments that drive the human subject toward historicizing. What is of course significant in all this is that pregiven realities such as the world, the human subject, and history are cathected in different ways in the works of different writers and theorists, each one of whom is invested in the task of semanticizing these pregiven realities in the context of his or her particular projects. In other words, the pregiven world has to undergo a process of didactic "worlding" in the context of a wide

range of human and disciplinary interests and desires. Thus the process of worlding that one encounters in Heidegger is restricted to ontology and committed to a rigorous destruction of humanism, the consequent celebration of nonanthropocentrism, and the opening up of Being to the Other; but at the same time, the Heideggerian project remains blind to its own Eurocentric negation of other histories in the name of its own *Dasein* (Being-there) that presumes to speak for all humanity. Said's secular worldly project, on the other hand, is all too secure in its human dimension and is not even interested in the kind of questions that Heidegger (or David Harvey or Murray Bookchin) raises concerning the relationship of the human to the primordiality of Being. My choice of writers and theorists is therefore based on two reasons: (1) and this is obvious: that they have meant a lot to me and my own development as an intellectual in the form of an active dialogue with them; and (2) each of them not only opens up a conjunctural space in which the different elements and variables are made to configure in one particular way and not another but also discloses candidly how and why where she or he "comes from" strongly determines the choices she or he makes toward a particular project of worlding. In other words, these are thinkers to whom epistemology cannot escape or bypass the mark of the existential, which in turn is nothing if not situated and perspectival.

REVISIONISM AND THE SUBJECT OF HISTORY

Thought through in three movements, each of which features an instance of the return motif, this chapter begins with a critical appreciation of the themes of forgetting and remembering in Nietzsche's *The Use and Abuse of History* and the Foucauldian notion of countermemory and stages a set of dialectical tensions:[7] immanence and transcendence, the history of the present and teleology, the historical impulse as biophilic and biophobic, history as flight and as fulfillment, history as given and history as the outcome of a revisionist return, historicity and temporality, and living and telling.[8] Nietzsche was one of the first thinkers to raise the possibility that the impulse toward history could well degenerate into an attitude of biophobia. When does history become an enemy to life and impede and devitalize living in the present?[9] What

indeed are the pedagogical limitations of history as teacher? Reading Nietzsche by way of Gilles Deleuze, this chapter poses the following questions: What is at stake in the Eternal Return? Is ressentiment the only force that fuels historical transformation in the name of justice? Who plays the game, and who transcends the game itself in the name of a superior *amor fati*, a love of fate? What makes Nietzsche unique as an epistemologist is that he directly addresses his knowledge questions to existential dilemmas and predicaments. It is in the name of life, of existence, and the richly embodied lived moment that Nietzsche imagines the contours of knowledge. In this he is a phenomenologist, but one who is on to the ruse that truth is "a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms,"[10] and that the will to power is constitutive of the will to truth. His solicitude for living and the human, all too human in fact leads him to postulate the thesis of nature versus nature, an antagonistic formulation in which the human finds a place on either side of the "versus."[11] A relentless deconstructor of agential theories of knowledge and an avid critic of any form of anthropocentrism, Nietzsche is yet constrained to espouse the human as the site of a profound self transcendence: a pure becoming, an eternal return in the name of life and as the return of the repressed. It is precisely because Nietzsche, as a thinker-aristocrat, has no stake in history that he plays the game of history: a game whose internal intransitive logic overwhelms the seduction of winning as the desired outcome. Nietzsche's *Übermensch* (superman) is an aesthetic and performing sensibility that would want to play with the game itself and up the ante toward the second order, rather than submit itself to the winner-loser rationale of the game that binds the ordinary human.

The second movement of the chapter is an in-depth reading of Rich's magnificent poem "Diving into the Wreck."[12] The category and the process of returning in Rich's poem work in ways both similar and dissimilar to Nietzsche's return. Both Nietzsche and Rich have a passion for the aesthetic, not merely as a modality but as the basis for strong truth claims. The idea of play, with its attendant notion of something being played for, resonates in both. Sometimes intransitive and at other times transitive, at times purposelessly purposive and at other times didactic and politically interested, Rich's dive into the wreck is a response to a double interpellation: oceanic as well as ideologically partisan. The dive,

motivated by an impulse more complex, more profound, and more generous than mere ressentiment, is at once interested in questions of power, the project of rubbing dominant historiography against the grain, a feminist destabilization of patriarchal meaning leading eventually toward possibilities of androgyny, *and* in a nonanthropocentric merging with the elemental. Whereas the Nietzschean project of transforming all values or the very value of value and of demonstrating the irony that "truth is nothing but a mobile army of anthropocentric metaphors" dramatizes the theme of nature versus nature in the human, all too human subject, Rich's revisionism and return seeks to reconcile the human with the oceanic without at the same time foreswearing the ideology of the political. Though intended phenomenologically, politically, aesthetically, and epistemologically at the same time, that is, within the synchrony of a broad and inclusive project, Rich's poem has the critical nerve to demonstrate the relative autonomy of each of these modes and allow for each mode to interrupt, question, and noncoincide with one another. Equally striking is the differentiation, within the poem, between temporality and historicity. Whereas historicity points toward purpose, an obligatory collectivity, and the all too necessary lexicalization of immanent moments of singularity, temporality seduces the poem toward the discontinuous and an experience of time as the everyday, as the every moment and instant that is always anterior to historicity. In other words, temporality suggests that there is more to time and the human experience of time than is made possible through historicity. Politically programmatic in some ways and abandoned to grammatological *jouissance* in others, the poem asks the following question: How can an epistemology figurally produced by the aesthetic reconfigure the political? How can the dive into the wreck be simultaneously purposeful and purposeless; be the end and the means to the end at the same time? How can the poem be and keep becoming at the same instant? Allegorical and historical simultaneously, the poem both marks feminist or gendered alienation as a state of being to be rectified and healed through polemical revisionism and signifies alienation as a deeper loss of self and identity to the oceanic, such that the sea is now recognized not as a question of power. In many ways, this session dramatizes feminism's double session with ontology and epistemology, with memory and countermemory, with affirmation and the deconstructive critique.

The third movement of the chapter focuses on Fanon, in particular on the theme of the return to the people by the colonized, white-washed intellectual in *The Wretched of the Earth*. If a Negro is not "any more than a white man,"[13] and if furthermore, binarity and thought are mutually constitutive, how should the native postcolonial intellectual return to the history of his or her people as it pulsated before the colonialist invasion? Fanon's return is not based on a preexisting promise: in a real sense, the return has to create what it is looking for even as it honors the anteriority of precolonial history. Deeply critical, on the one hand, of essentialist notions of autochthony and of mindless atavisms masquerading as history, and rigorously vigilant of Eurocentrism and neocolonialism, on the other, Fanon seeks to baptize the benighted intellectual in the occult instability of the free moment being given shape to by the people. In a way reminiscent of Gramsci, Fanon is compiling an inventory of the many historical traces that lead up to the present so that certain adjudications may be made among the traces and legitimate histories recognized as such. What is riveting in Fanon's return to the past is that it is characterized equally by a passion for and a distrust of history. Despite the many problems and flaws in Fanon's advocacy of a postcolonial nationalism, his gesturing toward a new humanism opens up a tenuous area of being and knowing, collapsible neither exclusively into historicity nor reducible to pure temporality. Fanon has to work his way through the very binarity that shackles him in the first place. Fanon's critical double consciousness struggles with great rigor and integrity to nominate the principle *in the name of* which a legitimate postcolonial emergence is to be baptized. The new and unprecedented humanism that his thought points toward is constrained to assume as its point of launch the very legacy of colonial modernity that thwarts possibilities of such a humanism. One cannot also afford to forget that Fanon brings to his venture a doubly coded intellect and sensibility: Fanon the political thinker, revolutionary, and mujahideen, and Fanon the psychoanalytic thinker and analyst of experience. Fanon thus has to play out the self-other thematic on both registers.

Like Nietzsche, Fanon, too, is an existential epistemologist; but unlike Nietzsche, Fanon as an intellectual is also a collectivist and a political revolutionary. It is no wonder, then, that Fanon's commitment is both to temporality and to historicity. Without ever conflating the

two in programmatic haste, Fanon allows his discourse to do justice to both within a perennially shaping dialectics of experience. In Fanon's theater of thought, the temporality of the lived, existential moment in all its immanence is in a reciprocally transformative dialogue with a politically constructed historicity and its many valences. Fanon's ethically and existentially inflected epistemology forever seeks to understand the constructed hegemony of the political with reference to the intentional anteriority of the prepolitical. Like Jacques Lacan and Judith Butler, Fanon, from within the white-hot political urgency of postcolonial emergence, deploys the future anterior to temporalize the doubleness of what we now call the measure of post-ality. Fanon's dedication to the postcolonial symptom comes in the form of a profound double session: as a political revolutionary, he identifies and historicizes the symptom as a specific pathology to be disalienated into legitimate belonging and representative sovereignty; but as a psychoanalytic thinker, he allows himself to dive into the immanent temporality of the symptom as such. He speaks from within the phenomenology of the symptom, enjoying it as it were, even as he envisions the curing of the symptom by way of political interventions and revolutions. Combining bifocally, within one and the same vision, the psychoanalytic understanding that to be symptomatic is the only way to be epistemologically explicit and productive and the political truth that a symptom warrants progressive and teleological remediation, Fanon rigorously suspends human subjectivity between psychological and psychoanalytic duration and politico-historical chronology. Even as he acknowledges the alterity of the symptom on a psychoanalytic register, Fanon will not allow postcolonial subjectivity to be interpellated by the ontology of the symptom. Fanon's deep and poignant exhortation of a new humanism is ineluctably double-voiced: existentially and ethically independent of the symptom, but politically captive to the very symptom that it seeks to transcend.

EDWARD SAID AND THE POLITICS OF HUMANISM

In this chapter, I return to that much vexed, much probed, and much maligned and celebrated theme of humanism. So what is the verdict on humanism: good or bad, innocent or guilty, relevant or thoroughly