La Comparution /The Compearance: From the Existence of "Communism" to the Community of "Existence"

Author(s): Jean-Luc Nancy and Tracy B. Strong

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LA COMPARUTION*/THE COMPEARANCE
from the Existence of "Communism"
to the Community of "Existence"

JEAN-LUC NANCY
University of Strasbourg
Translated by Tracy B. Strong, University of California, San Diego

I

The "postmodern" has already come to closure; perhaps it never hap-
pened. More accurately, that which this term may have described or reflected
(not without a certain degree of accuracy) appears to have been only the brief
and inverted appearance of another occurrence. The "postmodern" defined
itself as a strained relationship, with a mixture of anguish and gaiety, a
relationship to a general unpresentation (*imprésentation*) such that neither
sense nor truth nor a foundation could any longer be presented. The leading
target was, of course, any common substantiality, any subject for human
history and the body politic—all communism, therefore. Nothing in fact
situates the postmodern better than the polymorphic constellation of all the
"ends of communism," whether communism be taken as community-subject
or as a kind of organicism or as "Rousseauism."

However, at the same time, the common human condition turns up
everywhere, more manifest and bare than ever. Indeed, it is manifest because
stripped bare, and vice-versa. The common condition is at the same time the
common reduction to a common denomination *and* the condition of being

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absolutely *in* common. These two senses of common are both intermixed and in opposition to each other.

For us at least such a presentation of this condition is certainly as barren as an emptied space — but it makes itself available to us, it makes presence our condition for us. Certainly, the presentness of our condition is for us a riddle, or a question, or the difference of and in its "arrival": but it is a matter of presence. Perhaps one would prefer to see it as exposition: a common condition exposes itself to us, stripped bare, and exposes us to itself. We compear before it — neither "post" nor "pre." But it is the *present* that is made for us.

* * *

We compear: an old Christian-Hegelian motif (Christian, thus Hegelian). We compear before the "world court" — the court presided over by the Spirit, which judges the fit of actions to the goal that it itself assigns to history. We have discharged all that represented this goal: what was called "communism" was not one of the least. Perhaps, indeed, communism was not just the strongest representation but also that which brought them all together, exhausting the synthesis of their separate meanings.

There would thus no longer be a court to which we should compear. However, we find ourselves still in judgment. The Day of Judgment — *dies irae*, the day of divine wrath — is no longer a day at all but a night from which our days are obstinately woven, days embraced by a heavy nostalgia for light and which make us think "Greek." This day is thus an instant always in suspense, always a differed judgment that cannot be appealed. This judgment (justly) reaches a verdict in the name of the *end*.[1] This is not an End set up as an Idea on the horizon; it is rather how we approach our own *final* horizon and how we do (or do not do) justice to that horizon. This is a simple judgment, without appeal; it is not subject to any superior law (*droit*) for it proceeds from that which precedes law. Have we done right (*droit*) by that which still has no right? right by our existence itself — or since this word is subject to misuse in the singular, by our existences, by their community? Before this law without law we have never ceased to compear. *In the end* we compear there naked.

Thus we are not given over simply to a wandering (*errance*), a disorientation (so occidental) that would leave us divested of criteria. We are exposed to a criterion before all criteria, a criterion that dissolves all models of criteria without having destroyed the *fact* (transcendental?) of the *krinein*, of sepa-

ration, of a verdict (judgment). Are not we "moderns" (or whatever name we may carry) born from the original separation to which Kant and "German idealism" were witnesses: the *Ur-teil*, the judgment as origin, division as a rule (*en principe*) *because* division of the rule.

It could be that the division of the principle (*principielle*) might be nothing other than that of our common existence, of the given that we do not exist alone. Or rather, that there is no one that is only *One*. Until our time, this is what has been the stumbling block of all Western thought. This is what judges us; it is by this that we judge ourselves and that we cause ourselves to compear in court. How do we answer for existence — and to existence?

This is the old question of *meaning* (*sens*) — so old and heavy that it perhaps can no longer be formulated as the question of "meaning," not even in the logic of "question" and "answer." On the other hand, how could one doubt that what is at stake in this formulation of the "meaning of existence" (perhaps itself now confusing) cannot occur anywhere except in the dimension of the "one." Meaning is for more than one, even and especially where the "unique," the "singular" insists on "its" meaning.

Nevertheless, if one says that the in-existence of the "One" is the stumbling block of Western thought, this stone is also its cornerstone. The whole "foundation" of Western thought, with its multiple Greco-Roman-Judeo bedrock, puts a *share* of "meaning" into play, as well as the constitution or the arrival of "meaning" as a share. (This has been called dialectic, dialogue, politics, alliance, justice, love, beauty, etc.) We have issued our own subpoena.

We have made our history that of stripping the community bare: not the revelation of its essence but a stripping down of the "common" in all of its forms (the "in-common" and the "banal"), reduced to itself, despoiled of transcendence or assumption, despoiled as well of immanence. We have in fact exposed a pure space, an *areality* (area, surface) of points or movements which simultaneously define the exteriority and its common division. In particular, it is thus that *number* (under many forms: crowds, multitudes, populations, generations, distances, speeds, statistics, numbering beyond the numberable) has come to impose itself on all thought of the "common." The emptiness or the opening of this space — its very spatiality or its many spacings (*espacements*): it is the place of our compearance.

* * *

We compear: we come together (in)to the world. It is not that there is a simultaneous arrival of several distinct units (as when we go to see a film

"together") but that there is not a coming (in)to the world that is not radically *common*; it is even the "common" itself. To come into the world is to be-in-common. Everything takes place as if the constant diversion (*détournement*) of this truth (to say its repression would be too easy) were the permanent rule of Western thought (of philosophy).

Thus would the West be judged. But it would summon itself to appear: what has it done with community?

It has made of community an absolute End, *the* End, to such a degree that all of its arsenal of meaning(s) has been annihilated (including those of the Unique, the One). This does not mean that the West is "mistaken." It could also mean that the question of community has at last emerged naked and (in) common. But this way of speaking — this "at last" — would still reconstitute a finality, would redress and reorient all the "destiny" of the West and of the world. Only let the world be world and coming to the world be unmistakably common.

Common: banal, trivial. We appear before our banality, before the exceptional absence of a "condition" which one has always too quickly baptized "human." Common: not made from a single substance, but to the contrary from the lack of a substance which essentially apportions the lack of essence.

This thought of "sharing" (partition, repartition, part, participation, separation, communication, discord, cleavage, devolution, destination) has started to unravel.[2] But it has only begun to do so. After all, it is perhaps only the progressive emergence of the deepest implication — the ontological — of modern humankind, the one placed under the auspices of the fourfold name of "liberty, equality, justice, fraternity." Until now these four terms have only manifested the contradictions internal to each other and to their generality. As such, they are therefore no longer appropriate to that which the thought of "sharing" demands. This inappropriateness had already been raised by "communism," in a demand that nevertheless enfolded itself in the realm of contradictions. It is left to us — this is what is *happening* to us — to appropriate the ontology that might take us beyond this quadruple summons. The ontology of the "common" and "share" would not be other than the ontology of "Being" radically removed from all ontology of substance, of order and origin. Only at such a point will the "death of God" have been accomplished and surpassed. At first "communism" was nothing other than the bringing home (*la mise en demeure*) we undertook to think after "God." However, "communism" became confused with persistent "theological" ("onto-theological") interpretations of the "Death of God" in "Man," in "History," and in "Science." We are at the end of these interpretations. The praxis and thought of sharing points at that which comes at this end. There is no question

of anything else in a world whose entire balance is teetering, where the cleavages of wealth and identity are getting worse, where the presentations of community falter, and where the absence of meaning itself insists on being shared.

It would be too long to list all of the forms in which this constant and insistent stripping away and sharing presents itself to us: economic dependencies, the transformations of classes, of statutes, of generations, of families; the differences of the sexes, of cultures, languages; the networks and disruptions of communication; the interaction of scientific and technical interactions: organ transplants and genetic and viral recombinations, contagions, pollution, ecological entanglements, the world system of geographers, the measuring of eight billion "human-beings"; the interbreeding of plastic and musical designs; the tectonic slippage of public space, of cities, states, associations, sporting fields, spectacles and demonstrations, the blurring of war and truces; a generalized jamming (*brouillage*) of the meaning summoned out by "universal" and "particular," by "other" and the "same": all of these are not only objects for reflection, evaluations and astonishment. They are the intrinsic dimensions and necessary elements of our thoughts, of our arts, of our writings.

II

First, however, a moment of anger is needed in response to most of the discussions of the "end of communism." Anger is after all most neglected in its philosophical mode: we turn more easily to ethical judgments and aesthetic detachment.

Anger is the political sentiment par excellence. It brings out the qualities of the inadmissible, the intolerable. It is a refusal and a resistance that with one step goes beyond all that can be accomplished reasonably — in order to open possible paths for a new negotiation of the reasonable but also paths of an uncompromising vigilance. Without anger, politics is accommodation and trade in influence; writing without anger traffics in the seductions of writing. Along with Marxisms and communisms, political angers have disappeared into a huge "democratic" no-man's-land. In fact, the few who today pretend to a political anger are those who pretend to believe that "communism" is still a menace, since for them it is only menace. This alone should give us something to think about, make us angry.

Anger, then, before the ridiculous belief that floods in on us from all sides: the idea that we are done with Marxism and communism, that it is simply

over. As if history, our history, could be so inconsistent, so phantasmic, so flaky (*floconneuse*) to have carried us along for one hundred and fifty years on clouds that dissipate in a moment. As if error, pure, simple, and stupid error could be thus corrected, regulated, mobilized. As if thousands of so-called "intellectuals" were simply fools, and especially as if millions of others were even more stupid as to have been caught in the delirium of the first. Even if we agree that it was a question of error and blindness (certainly stupidity and charlatanry are never absent from human affairs), such a degree of success must in and of itself raise problems for thought. (It will be said that this is also true for fascisms and nazisms: quite so, and reflection on this existence of these is not more inevitable than it should be on the fact of communism.)

That which should make us indignant and disturb us is not that "communism" could have existed (as thought, in conception as well as "in reality") but it is rather that we can so easily abandon the question of *why it was*. Here again the same holds for fascisms and nazism: indeed, ideologically speaking, they are both forms of a very broadly conceived "communism."[3] Wherever one turns, the period of human history that draws to an end — an end that makes our history — is identified by some quality of "communism," as idea, as phantasm, as project, or as institution. One cannot think of our time unless one thinks of it as that of the "communist question." ("The impassable horizon of our time," as Sartre rightly put it.) And thought cannot move forward an inch if this question is not taken up again, rearticulated, itself questioned, and deconstructed. Even if in the end it is a matter of displacing, or transforming, even of dissolving it, none of that will happen as long as we treat it as an error or mistake.

A short time ago, one could write, with an attractive flippancy, that "Marx is dead." But if one assumes that there is a meaning to this assertion other than the biographical, one must say, in anger: Is there no *mourning*? Are we going to be easily split between the simple rejection of this supposed cadaver and a morbid and henceforth shameful identification with all that he might have incarnated? Are we to condemn ourselves to a second-rate thought or to a clear psychosis? (Both possibilities already threaten.) Will there be no anamnesis, no work of thought on that which was an event in and of thought — and even more so, an event of thought which *as no other* was at the same time philosophical and political?

There is no need to be a Marxist in the most ordinary sense (thus the sense that is the most outmoded) to think that an event in thought and politics does not happen completely by chance, as the speculative fantasies of some overheated brains would have it. (In other words, to think about what Marx

himself said: "Philosophers do not grow like mushrooms."[4]) If it is not simply a question of the "reflection" produced by the relation of the forces of production in the "infrastructure," it must be a matter of the existence of a common moment in the world. That communism was, that it was in common: only that should give us thought. With communism, something happened to all the community, something that implied and revealed a particularity of that community· there was a distress, a default (*défaultance*), a claim, and a responsibility from which nothing has exonerated us — quite the contrary. That which has here passed us by is so little *past* that its presence — the deep burrowing of its presence (the "old mole" burrows still) — indeed its still more insistent and enigmatic future (*son à venir*) is in truth that which is happening for us (*se passe pour nous*).

* * *

Communism, without doubt, is the archaic name of a thought which is all still to come.

When it will have come, it will not carry this name — in fact, it will not be a "thought," in the sense that this is understood. It will be a *thing*. And this thing, perhaps, is already here and does not let us go. But perhaps it is here in a manner that we are unable to recognize.[5]

Under this name, and despite it, communism is the paradoxical sign which at once signals the end of a whole world and the transition into another. A first world will be undone in the "real" treason or implosion of "communism." Another world will have opened itself in the new stricture — albeit obscure — of community. Between the two there will have been nothing — nothing but the pale, derisory, fleeting evasion of a "civilization of the individual" (or of the "person"), liberal without liberation, humane without the means of wresting man from man to expose him to "that of which the foundation does not reside in him," as Schelling put it.[6]

Derisory and fleeting — but also stuffed with wars and destructions, exterminations and extortions, such that one could not know what might follow them, neither for ill nor for good — and it is thus, extenuated, anemic, that "community," *as such*, has compeared, at the place which has been held up as the "dissolution of society understood as a particular state."[7] Community as such would then be that for which "society" is not a special category, or rather than which precedes and exceeds whatever "society," "individual," "relationship," "lack of relation" may mean. Community "as such": that is

to say, neither substance nor accident nor subject nor object nor communion
nor combination.

* * *

Communism, at least, does not want to claim that one should put in
common that which, by itself, would not so be. There is nothing like this in
Marx — see, for instance, his insistence on "individual property."[8] What needs
to be determined here is what "individual" means here. At least, it is surely
not the opposite of community. But "communism" means — it *wants to say*,
it has worn itself out trying to express, to yell, to bring out, to prophesy
this . . . (and this is what all has to be said over, completely differently) —
communism wants to say that *being* is *in* common. It wants to say that we
are, insofar as we "are," in common. *That we are commonly*. That each *one*
of *us*, from between us, is in common, commonly. *Between* us: what *is* it that
is "between"? What *is there* between, in the "between," as "between." This
is what it is all about.

Communism is an ontological proposition, not a political option (but what
is an ontological proposition? that is the question — to which one can longer
answer outside of the being-"*in*"-common). Communism is a political option
to the degree that "being" *itself* (the being of existence) is to be engaged, to
be chosen, to be decided: that is, to the degree that it is incommensurable
with that which is, in fact, given, if ever there is something in fact given, if
ever there is purely and simply a "fact." Being-in-common is not a "given."
That which is given with it is that which precedes and which exceeds all
"given," that by which something in general can take place and which is not
a "subject" but the in-common of being. Thus the ontology under question
is not the ontology of "Being," or of that "which is": it is that of *being* insofar
as it is a matter of that which is.

As is known, this is what one can read in Heidegger and not read in Marx
(nor in any of those in the great tradition of communist, socialist, anarchist,
or syndicalist thought). And it is not a matter of seeking out new interpreta-
tions, either of Marx or of others. These texts are pretty much closed in this
regard. It is no longer a question of rereading Marx but of what Marx must
now make us write.

"Marx": an event, as much and more than what he said. From this event,
there are without doubt two major attestations which are neither an economic
nor a political theory; in fact, they are not really "theory" at all, and thus are
not about discourse but about praxis and its event, Marx.

One of these attestations is that which Jean-Francois Lyotard has called *"différend"*: "capital" inflicts an "absolute wrong," incapable of being adequately denounced, discussed, or negotiated in the terms which the speech of capital itself imposes.[9]

The other attestation is the one which concerns me here. It is witness to that which in Marx appears as an affirmation of an *in-common* which is incommensurable with any ontology of substance and subject, which summons back into play all presence (the "thing in itself" or "phenomenon," "essence" or "existence," and all their combinations) and in a *compearance* of which the experience is before us.

These two attestations, in fact, come together in the attestation we owe to Gerard Granel of the *philosophical* character of Marx's thought, as long as we understand by that, as does Granel, the quality of engagement in the real (this has nothing to do with realism, whatever one may mean by that):

> Communists offer   the image of a community insisting on keeping a watch over the corpse of an Idea, of which they do not know that they themselves were the cause of its death for having tried to make it work at the same time *inside* and *outside* of the real. In Marx, to the contrary, the analysis of forms was a conceptual analysis which, if it extracts the apriori from the real it is concerned with, only releases hold of it because it comes neither from the heaven of ideas nor reflects content. In other words, the bite in Marx's thought (that by which it takes hold of realities) comes entirely from the philosophical character of its activity *(démarche)*."[10]

III

The thought of Marx is not quite a "thought" in the same way that of others is; in any case, we do not attach a name to this thought in the same way that we do to others: Plato, Descartes, or Hegel. Without doubt, none of these names is a "proper name" to which one single thought would attach itself. But to undo this kind of appropriation and to return by a singular feat each "thought" to a multiple compearance, we have at least to take a look at what "Marx" shows or signals. The first thing is that "Marx" is in some sense a little less a "proper name" than are the others, a little less a "style" of thought; it represents less the inimitable and hidden contour *(tracé)* of one single writing. From the beginning, "Marx" is less unique, more multiple in itself (to which without doubt is related the more *common* character of his style, a style, however, that is neither vulgar nor trivial). Or, the plurality to which a thought — a writing — sends us as well as to its uniqueness, plays with Marx a "unique" role. From many points of view, the texts of Marx are first of all

visibly, expressly, woven from a whole set of other texts (those of philoso-
phers, economists, historians) which one must go through, cite, confront,
bring together, or set back to back. "Marx" is, first of all, in one sense a
powerful machine to survey and redistribute an entire space *common* to a
whole period (common in all senses); it is, to be precise, the common space
of the investigation of these common spaces of the economic, the social, the
juridical, the political, the ideological, just as they emerge for themselves,
unclothed, in the period of "political economy" and of the *closing* down of
signification (of "metaphysics").

Rather than losing oneself in "originality," "Marx" is a matter of holding
Marx back: from such restraint the revelation of that which remains when,
once again, pretensions to reinterpret the world are uncertain of themselves.
That which remains is a common workyard (*chantier*) ("common" as a work-
yard is: a broken-up space, disordered, neither constructed nor deconstructed).
The very status of his texts show this: there are rather few "works," as one
normally thinks of them. Rather, there are many collaborations (thus
Marxisms have propagated themselves under a plural standard: "Marx-
Engels," "Marx-Engels-Lenin," "Marx-Engels-Stalin," and/or "Trotsky,"
"Mao," "Gramsci," etc. — there never has been *just* "Marxism"). Many
writings are about or against others; much is incomplete — indeed, the chief
(*capital*) work is incomplete; many writings are occasional[11]: because even
though "Marx" was periodically subjected to a "return to sources," "he" was
caught in the complex network of his polymorphic *posteriority*. This is also
certainly the origin of the strange conflicts, disputes, violent extractions,
Byzantine quarrels, and insipid reassessments that make up the teeming
whole of Marxisms. Not enough reflection has been given to this singular
configuration and to the manner that it ravishes the singularity of "Marx"
precisely from Marx himself. The internal dissensions in "Marxisms" have
been the subject of jokes and distress: there has been little questioning of
what gained it such *common* fate.[12]

These facts, although hardly contestable, have not been the subject of
enough reflection because they are not simply remarkable particularities or
curiosities of a history of "Western Thought." Rather, they respond to what
is at stake in the thought called "Marx." Once again, this thought does not
let itself be approached as a unified style; at least that is not the only way or
even principal way to approach it. In such a single-minded approach, a
"thought" most often reneges for us on what is at stake and too completely
wins back its own.

There is in "Marx" something less *proper* that that which we are used to
encountering in the thought of a Spinoza, a Kant, or a Nietzsche. Less proper,

less his own, and consequently more in "common," just where the "common" is at stake. This has to do with a general change of thought itself during "Marx's" epoch, a change in the system of thinking itself, a deep displacement of the manner in which "thought" and "historical reality" index themselves to each other, *and* in the manner in which this change allows itself to be thought. With "Marx" (and, in fact, with "Nietzsche," at the same time but completely differently), the matter of the "real" arises for thought, in thought, in a manner never before known (even if Hegel had furnished its premises). This makes for both less and more than a "thought": "Marx" is perhaps at the same time less and more than a thinker: here thought sees itself in a whole different perspective. In *praxis* and the *common* the very stuff of thought and thought itself become unrecognizable to itself.

(In addition and, as it were, axiomatically: praxis as essentially common, or in-common. To the Aristotelian distinction of praxis and *poiesis* (in terms of agent and work), one must add this corollative one: praxis is in-common, and not poiesis (be this "individual" or "collective.")

Thus in "Marx," common has at least three senses: he tries to think the "common"; with his time he shares the posture of a common praxis (which continuity and discontinuity should of course be located in the whole of the West); last, his thought unravels into a tangle of other discourses which it continually displays. In the end, "Marx" is not just one more discourse. It is the common agency of a series of discourses, indexed to and instantiated in a praxitical (*praxique*) requirement, a requirement of the "real" and the "historical" which it pushes to the limit. However, it perhaps thus requires that it not be in possession of its own concept or perhaps not be able to be. This thought emerges rather as a piece of the event (of the advent) of the "common," which deploys itself well after it. It insists on a real which requires yet more from it and requires yet more from us than we think.

* * *

Of course, it is not that thought discovers "the real" — neither as a thing nor as a category. Always and everywhere, thought thinks only of that, thinks only that (or does not think). However, one cannot here invoke a "law of history" nor even a "Marxist" law for such an occurrence. But neither is this a question of caprice. That which occurs in and *as* Marx's period is this: the "real" becomes expressly the "subject," not the object of thought. Or again: the "real" makes itself explicit as the "subject" of thought. That is, thought approaches a point where in order to manifest that which *makes* it thought

(and not only that which makes it think) and which is not "yet" "thought," it must turn back, twist around on itself. It displays and in the same gesture manifests the exteriority and excessive character of all that "thought" can designate or represent. This entails, in turn, a certain number of transformations of the thought of the "subject." Nietzsche, then Freud, then Heidegger, are not far from Marx. It is perhaps even this "promixity" (singular, to be sure) which we must learn to grasp.

For the real to be the subject and not the object of thought implies first of all that this "subject" is common, that it is the *in*-common of praxis. Above, I called this common character of praxis an "axiom": in the present state of our discourse nothing excludes the possibility of a solipsistic praxis. The definition of praxis is such that we cannot exclude an action that transforms the agent itself (and not just what the agent does) into a "world" where there would be only one sole subject or agent.[13] And still, from the very interior of this discourse, how could one understand the agent transforming "himself," or being transformed, without introducing an otherness older and more "constitutive" than his identity (and *of* his identity)? The reality of this otherness, that which makes it "other" and not just a simple provisional distance in the heart of the Same, is the *in*-common of a plurality of agents and of their compearance.

* * *

In truth, behind Marx, Hegel is first at stake. The Hegelian moment is the moment in the thought of the real as subject of thought, and it is at the same time the moment of the constitutive otherness of the "self." But by this very double quality, the Hegelian moment undertakes to require a return, a praxical transformation of philosophy such that not discourse but the real as it shows itself makes itself valued as "utterance" or as "manifestation" of truth. To come to a close, philosophy must here suppress itself. Whatever "suppress" then means is the whole task of thought up until our time; it is the common work of our time.

Insofar as "suppress" means what the Hegelian dialectic most noticeably makes of it (that is, *aufheben*, "taking up" (*relever*), keeping the same in its alteration), then the *reality* of suppression has not yet changed philosophy. What occurs between Hegel and the period of Marx is that the actuality (*effectivité*) of a "common outside" to philosophy ("work," "industry," "classes," "misery," "peoples," "the market," "money," forces," "bodies") takes over as the place, as the subject and praxis of that which Hegel called the "Idea."

Thus "suppress" comes to mean "realize."[14] The "realization" of philosophy can still appear (and can appear to itself) as exempt from alteration, as the maintenance of the same in its working (*appliqué*) version, transposed from the ideal to the real. There is no doubt that Marx is himself to some degree caught in the schematics of the passage from "theory" to "practice." But there is also no doubt that something else is driving Marx's move. Something else: not that thought is put into practice, and that the real is thus the product of the meaning that the Idea gives it, but that praxis *be* thought, and that the "meaning" appears with the real itself, as the real. In other words, not the meaning *of* existence but existence as meaning. Now existence compears.

This has been what is in question since "communism" and the "realization of philosophy" have been determined together, one by the other and one in the other. The significations of these words have perhaps lapsed, but they do not exhaust the *meaning* that is at stake: meaning as praxis, meaning *as* compearance.

IV

The appropriation of this meaning can itself only take place in community and as community. Perhaps the summary of all the questions, anguishes, enthusiasms, frenzies, tearings, and exasperations of the time that has led from "Marx" to us is how the community appropriates the meaning that it is. And this is without doubt why the present time has forsaken this concern, thinks to be able to give it up and to be able to rejoice in the "end of communism" (and also of "true communism" about which it is insidiously suggested that we can always dream of it as long as we do not want to realize it — but as we saw, the question of the real is quite another matter).

More insistent than ever in its extenuation and destitution, that which presents itself, in truth ("in reality"), that which comes to us and before which we compear, is precisely the form of the "question" which is more than a question: *how does the community appropriate to itself the meaning that it is*? How does it do so now that this "meaning" is not a particular meaning (such would be that of the "collectivity" as distinguished from that of "individuals") but is rather the signifying (*signifiance*) quality of existence insofar as existence compears; how does it do so when there is no meaning of a "One" (*un Seul*) (which does not mean that all meaning is collective, quite the contrary)? How does it do so from the time when the community

uncovers and strips itself bare as that which is not the substance of a subject, that is, is not the self-appropriation of meaning?

How (?): this is more than a question, because it comes already to us, or because we already come by it to ourselves, as if by an affirmation. This, however, does not make it an affirmation whose meaning is available to us. We have not made our own the meaning of this meaning — and we know that its "meaning" will not be appropriated by the modes that are ours but only by an *in-common* mode which still precedes us (and which perhaps can *only precede* us — and that is what should be thought).

* * *

All of our tradition has turned — or toppled — on that which thus arrives to us. But such a movement, which is the movement of the community at its own greatest depth, requires much time (it needs a slowness which all of our "speed," and our "acceleration of history," hide less and less).

All that we transmit to ourselves (including the meaning which at bottom humanity "gives itself," since our tradition has become that of the species, perhaps of all species) has begun to transmit itself in front of us, toward or coming from a "we" that we have not yet appropriated, and which has not yet received its name, if ever it should have one. But communism was something like a call coming from there: from "us."

This call does not communicate itself in the manner which we today designate as "communication" (which some "communicational" ideologies exploit in the emptied space of communism). That which calls from the in-common, that which calls "us," is perhaps the least "communicable" in this sense.

There must be some "common" stuff (*il y ait du commun*), whatever it be, for there to be communication. This is evidence (*évidence*). But communication is not an end, at least not in the way we might first mean it. One should rather say that if "it communicates" (whatever or how much or how poorly that may be) it is because there is some common stuff. And if there is some common stuff, whatever it may be, its meaning is undetachable, inalienable, as the obverse is from the reverse. To deal with the condition of the possibility of meaning, one must undertake a transcendental ascent toward this double-faced unity, toward this double side of our absolute district (the two sides of the demarcation of the area of our existence, and which unbounds (*illimite*) it in its meaning). This is the ascent which is in actuality since "Marx" and which is particularly apparent in Husserl and then in Heidegger.[15]

To "communicate" could then constitute an end — perhaps *the* end[16] — in the sense that the end precedes in the origin to which it withdraws. But the origin, here, is grasped as multiple. The end, clearly, confuses itself with "us." By "us," the end multiples itself from its origin, by the *in* and the *between* of the common. This is not a transcendental subjectivity, neither of meaning nor of the community (there is no substance to the community of meaning nor to the meaning of community); but it is, however, a share by which (by the *by* of a means, and by that of a crossing) can occur something of a "subject," individual or collective, some singularity, something of meaning.

(Here, all that philosophy can have thought under the name of "common sense" is inevitably put back on the table.)

Now the apportioning "itself" does not communicate "itself": it is the passing and the partition of communication. It does not communicate itself as one communicates some thing or some signification. This does not mean that it is foreign to any presentational logic, nor to any coming into presence. Without doubt, nothing other happens to presence but from sharing. That is: if there is presence in general, this is what happens to it; and, reciprocally, if anything at all comes into presence, this is again it. There is no presence that is not (in its being, not as an attribute) *exposed* to sharing. It is no accident that among the remote predecessors of Marx we find those who were called the "sharers" (*les partageux*).[17]

* * *

"Sharing" does not constitute a presupposition in the same way a common original substance might (for instance, "humanity" or a given "people"); nor is it like a subjectivity. It neither "underlies" nor is "anterior." And if one may say, provisionally at least, that it occupies a transcendental position, it does so in no way with the value of an "overhang" (*surplomb*) that this term more or less implies. One would then do better to say that sharing — the "reason," in the mathematical sense, of the "compearance" — is not a "transcendental presupposition." It has rather to do with another move to the "pre-" in general, toward the "origin" or "foundation." One does not go looking here in order better to discover its nature. One will only note the following: something of "sharing" is already at stake in the gesture that "comes back up" toward this "condition of possibility," at stake in the thought that finds itself engaged in thinking of "the compearance" as a limit and/or as the opening of "being" itself. In thinking thusly, in speaking of it, in writing of it, in seeking to communicate its tenor (first of all, to myself), I am soliciting a communica-

tion of speech, a community of concepts, of culture, of history, *as well as* that which is not identified with any of these, perhaps even escapes them, or displaces them. With one word, I could say: sharing writes itself; compearance writes itself. But this word must never give the illusion of being an "answer." It gives — it gives *us* — a program of work.

Here, and for the time being, I will only add this: why does the *common* make itself valued above all in literature and as literature? And why does literature — precisely that which we generally engage in more or less since the period of "Marx" — seem devoted to communicate the common and to offer itself thus as its own space, as the *in* and the *between* of the common?

This is, of course, not about the general question of "communist" or "socialist" or "revolutionary" literature.[18] It is a wholly different matter, one in which "literature" cannot be the generic name of a kind of representative practice, susceptible to the most diverse missions, each with a different coloring. It is a matter of that which requires and permits that "ordinary" be presented, not as the extraordinary (by some sleight of hand) but *in* the extraordinary. It is a matter of that which *makes an event and makes it come about* from the common. And it is a matter, at the same time, of the communication of a sharing so common that without literature it goes unnoticed. But literature does not let it be "seen" like an Idea: rather, it propagates the nonideality of a compearance as its own quality (*trait*).

In this sense (does it have another?), "literature" offers the in-common (its only reason to be) as a completely buried memory, a memory also totally, invincibly, present. The amnesia of a total anamnesis, in the whirl of which a quality doubles back on itself, insists, cedes, and resists — tracing and retracing the codeless number of its own score (*partition*).[19]

For example (literature knows only examples), why, how, is this written in Malcolm Lowry?

> The political exile in the corner discreetly sipping orange crush, the accountant arriving, accounts gloomily surveyed, the iceblock dragged in by a brigand with an iron scorpion, the one bartender slicing lemons, the other, sleep in his eyes, sorting beer bottles. And now, he wanted to go, aware that the place was filling with the people not at any other time part of the cantina's community at all, people eructating, exploding, committing nuisances, lassoes over their shoulders.[20]

Or this, in John Updike?

> I write this on the beach. Let us say, then, that I am a writer on the beach. It was once considered bad manners to admit anything of the sort, just as people walking to and from the bathroom were supposed to be invisible; but this is a rude age. Nothing is hidden. Yet everything is.[21]

Or again:

> The shapelessness he had thought to outrun took hold of him again, not as the indiscrim-
> inateness of the herd-beginning, but directly, almost palpably, as the chaos of severance,
> and as a dissolution which by no hearkening or grasping could ever be conformed to
> unity; the demonic chaos of all separated voices, all separated perceptions, all isolated
> things, regardless of whether they belonged to the present, the past, or the future, this
> chaos now assailed him, he was given over to it, yes, this is what it had been since the
> roaring, indiscriminate noise of the streets had begun to change to a maze of separate
> voices.[22]

Or still again:

> He had no other name than Georges Louis, but because, as he grew older, he became
> singularly intelligent, with tastes and native graces that his comrades did not have, he
> was nicknamed "the bourgeois"; and he was no longer called anything else. He had a
> reputation as particularly skilled in his chosen vocation of woodworking. He even did
> some sculpting in wood. He was thought very excitable, a partisan of communist and
> even nihilist doctrines, a greater reader of adventure novels, novels with bloody dramas,
> an influential constituent, and a skilled orator at the public gatherings of workers or
> peasants.[23]

One has only to string together four examples: the general and common
exemplary nature of literature is there, and it is also, in one way or another,
that of a compearance. These four examples emphasize (perhaps with a
certain deliberate weightiness) the theme of being-in-common. But one
knows that all "literature" follows a "common" design, whatever its theme
(for example, autobiographical, lyric, or historical; the philosophical is no
exception: all "genres" have this in common just as they have their portion
common).

In multiple modalities, "art" as a whole responds to this design. This does
not mean that it cannot pervert it; but it does mean that, if there is something
such as "art," it is *because* of the in-common, and, on the other hand, that art
retains something of the in-common, something that perhaps it alone does.
That which has been called the "beautiful" and the "sublime" are indissoci-
able. We will have to come back to this.

V

Marx and Engels wrote: "Men create themselves reciprocally both phys-
ically and spiritually." In the same passage, they indicate that this mutual

creation should not be understood "in a speculative-idealist, i.e. fantastic, way," which is what occurs when one reads into the representation of "a single individual who accomplishes the mystery of generating himself."[24] Reciprocal generation is not the mystery of a hypothetical Subject but is the real condition of a real multiplicity of real relationships. This does not mean — contrary to what Marx thinks, or seems to think — that, when substituted for "mystery," the "real" offers itself as the object of a positive knowledge, according to the criteria of an objective rationality. We only have here the program and the to-come (*a-venir*) of the ontology of being in-common.

In any case, this means that such a program must at the same time be one with a political problem — not political in the sense of theses and partisan projects, but rather in the sense that the political itself must completely "re-program" itself, must register a to-come that hides neither program nor conception of a politics consubstantial with another or all of our ontologies.

For Marx, and for all the kinds of communisms that we have known, this could only be determined in aiming to end the "political" — that is, the end for which the "withering away of the state" was for so long the basic formulation. The political realm was a realm "separated" from the real activity of humans, and necessarily confiscated by the ruling class (this is the politics of "political economy" understood as that of which Marx's entire work is critique); as such, the political sphere must come out from its separation. In contrast to the religious sphere, the fantastical character of which was simply to dissipate, the political was to *realize* itself — as was philosophy.

This design of Marx — never forsworn in his work — has not without reason elicited the critique that Marx had missed the political question as such and thus opened the paths that would lead Lenin to the theses of *State and Revolution*, as well as open the entire communist movement to the policies that have just collapsed.[25]

Still, it is not certain that we are not to return to something — to "re-program" something — which had come to the surface of this thought of Marx.

The "realization" of politics is for Marx his nonseparated future, and its effectuation, by impregnation, in all the spheres of human activity. In other words, it is the *polis*, coextensive to the whole of the real life of the community. But this coextension can be understood in two ways. Either the *polis* is in the end the same as the sum or the combinatorial of all the activities (but what is a sum? or a combinatorial? which? a resultant? a factorial? a confusion?) — or that which is here called "polis" represents something that does not let itself be confused with any combination of activities or assumedly

distinct relationships. In this case, *polis* or "politics," designates precisely this element that is distinct from all others (in this, then, "shared") which is nothing other than the "in-common" of all the rest — and compearance.

In other words: that which Marx, (and, without doubt, with him all communism until now) irresistibly thinks the *nexus* or the superior (substantial, in principle, final) *plexus* of an organicity, designates the space of the *in*-common (that has) become vacant, of its inappropriatable propriety — and of its appropriation, or "re-"appropriation, nevertheless, and correctly, declared necessary.[26]

Thus we can no longer escape this question: can one think, practice, the "disappearance" of politics in any other way? Can one think, practice, how politics leaves us without absorbing oneself in a common subjective body — by the very movement of the self-appropriating common subject? How can politics retreat as subject *the better to distinguish itself otherwise* and even more otherwise validate the *political* as such?[27]

Can one think of the disappearance of the political as a "retreat" without absorbing it in an organism of which it would be the subject, everywhere present, everywhere absent, and thus always present to itself? Can one think of it rather as a "retreat" that would dissolve or overcome it *precisely as subject*, and consequently, "withdraw" it to "retrace" it and open up once again and completely anew the configuration of the *in*-common of which *polis* is for us the name?

* * *

There is no question of overlooking that "politics" also designates the order of power, of rules and the regulation of the relations of forces, and of all sorts of *police*. But it is also not possible to isolate this aspect and make it all of politics: with this, one has already in effect "separated" it. One would have to retrace how, at least since the beginning of the modern world, a simultaneous double movement has not ceased separating and estranging a politics of power, with its calculations and constraints, from a politics of the common subject, with its substance and its autotelism.

Nor is it a matter of bringing these two aspects together.[28] In their simultaneous and repulsive production, one and the other respond to the eclipse of the *in*-common in its own "essence." However, as I have tried to say here, this "eclipse" represents also the emergence in the same modern history, *as* this history, of the instance and the insistence of this "essence,"

of its question or its requirement. If "politics" is to regain a meaning which is not to be that of its two sides in alternation and/or the conflagration of their reunion, it can only be in a determinate relation to the essence of the "in-common." (Nothing is more like a self-evident truth: that which should surprise us and mobilize us is precisely that politics has to (re)find or (re)ground its sense of "the political." But this is what it is about: *polis* no longer signifies the "city" except in a historical fashion. For everything else, its "meaning" is to be (re)taken, (re)appropriated.)[29]

It thus can no longer be a question of better or worse regulation of the exercise of power — of political economy — by focusing on a "right" that is constantly menaced and rectified. The necessity of such "right" cannot hide the fact that it still does not touch the "essence" of the "common." For this "essence" — which is not an essence and which deals with the ontology of the in-common as *existence* — has to do with a right before all right, with the "right that is right without right."[30]

If politics is again to mean something, and mean something new, it will only be in touching this "essentiality" of existence which is itself its own "essence," that is to say, which has no essence, which is "arch-essentially" *exposed* to that very thing. In its structure and nature, such an exposure contains at the same time the finitude of all singularity and the *in*-common of its sharing. This "at the same time" does not imply a juxtaposition: but finitude and in-common are the same thing. Finite existence is necessarily shared. "Politics" must designate what interests each point of existence in the "common." The stake is the interest (that which matters) of the *interesse* (at once: "to be between," "to be separate," "differ," "be between," participate").[31]

Thus that which interests is necessarily that which is the most common.[32] But that which interests is most common because it is not given. It is a matter of the interval, of the "in" of "in between." Even its presentation is multiple and expansive: art, thought, love, glory, the body (to remain with only a few examples, of which the very names perhaps no longer apply) are dazzling shards (*éclats*) (not modes, for there is no substance). "Politics" would be the fragments whose particular property would be to diffract the "in" as such, or the compearance, without attribution or properties. (This does not mean "without historicity": historicity, on the contrary, is of the "essence" in the non-essence of existence). Thus the differences in the makeup of society and in political stakes, the successions, the overlap and the disparities between, for example, problems of state, class struggles, differences or quarrels of other civil groups (*registres*), are not accidents that have happened "*to*" a common substance, but are the chance arrivals (*le sur-venir*) of the "in-common" itself.[33]

There would be nothing more uncovered (*nu*) than the political. Nothing more exposed: exposed to dispersion, to the interest to which the in-between (*interêtre*) withdraws, to the finitude of all destination and to the destitution of existence. Thus there is also no place where the requirements for the possible accession of existence to a meaning are better grasped: an impracticable access, acceding in spite of all, hiding in its very art, never present, always offered to presence, and thus always common to the point of passing unnoticed, as if at the point of being blinding by hate or dazzled by glory.

Nothing more naked: nevertheless, politics will not come to bring together, to order, and to melt into its hypostasis all extremes where existence yields to meaning. To say it again: among the multiple shards of these "accesses," each of which implies community and communication, politics would propagate that of the *in*-as such. Without hypostasis, that is without a substantial presentation: and still, not without a recognizable form. But what would be a form of the *in*-and the *between*. A form from between *us* which would neither dominate (*surplombe*) nor tear us apart? Compearance, surely, is not appearance and keeps itself back from the phenomena (without being thereby noumenon but only the very actuality of existing). "Communism" thought to be able to designate the absolutely distorted form of a "class with radical chains, a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class that is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a particular redress because the wrong which is done to it is not a particular wrong but wrong in general."[34] From its "complete loss" was to come the "complete reconquest of man." From the radical disfiguration to this absolute transfiguration, the appropriation of meaning condemned itself to its own implosion.

There is left a flash (*éclat*), which does not make a "figure," which no longer belongs to this logic—or which places before us the task of a completely other role (*figuration*), which would be that of the compearance.

(Would it be—a writing? Without doubt, but only on the condition of agreeing on this word, on this thing, and of giving up nothing from political requirements while taking up all that which was begun above in the offer of a "literature." There is much to do—but first of all that which remains is to be determined.)

There remains, then, in spite of all, the hard flash of *absolute injustice*, of that which contravenes the "sharing of justice and injustice" in which consist the nature of the "political animal." It is the hard flash of the "denaturation" of politics inscribed in the heart of politics and as one of its own possibilities. It is interest that gnaws at or shatters the in-*be*tween (*interêtre*)—it is called

exploitation, oppression, extortion, extermination. Without doubt, no figure still represents this to us: not the "proletariat," not the "people," not the "nation."

And still: a body dying of hunger; a tortured body; a broken will; an emptied look; a mass war grave; a ridiculous, frustrated, condition; and also the dereliction of the suburbs, the wandering of migrants; and even a confusion of youth or of old age; an insidious deprivation of being, a wasting (*bousillage*); a stupid scrawling: *all this exists*. It exists as a denial of existence. And there is nothing beyond existing (*l'exister*), and the existence to which one denies a sharing is itself a denied existence. This denial, wherever it appears, reaches all existence, for it touches the *in* of the in-common. And thus we compear and respond to it, that is, to ourselves.

* * *

The working of injustice is always, in some manner, an exclusion. And as one knows well, community (in its organic or mystical conception, that is, essentially, in its known philosophical and political forms) always *excludes* and on principle. Such exclusion can be named distinction, exile, banishment, sacrifice, disdain, marginal distinction, exile, banishment, sacrifice, disdain, selection, election, roots, and so on. At the bottom, that which the community wants to exclude is that which does not let itself be identified in it. We call it the "other." But this "other" is nothing other than the *in*-, if the *in* of the "in-between" forms the intimate doubleness, or sharing, of the association/dissociation where "sociation" is formed. *Community excludes its own foundation*—because it wants to disbar *the concealing of the ground* which is its essence: the *in*-common, the between-us of the compearance.

We cannot just allow ourselves to submit this gesture to a hasty reproof. On the contrary, we must first understand how this gesture, in its absolute contradiction, imposes itself generally on the community. It responds to the "double feature" of its structure.

But to exclude, exclusion must designate: it names, identifies, gives form. "The other" is for us a figure imposed on the unpresentable (*infigurable*). Thus we have for us — to go to a heart of the matter — the "Jew" or the "Arab," figures whose closeness, that is their in-common with "us," is no accident. Countertest — the "Black," who is not so close, does not carry the same type of exclusion. That of the "Yellow" is still another case, or was one, for history displaces and transforms this assignations of exclusion.

Figuration itself cannot simply be condemned. It too is part of the structure. The crucial double question of the in-common would thus be: how to exclude without fixing (*figurer*)? and how to fix without excluding? Exclusion without fixing is to legitimate (*faire droit*) the absence of grounding, or of presupposition, to legitimate being together. Fixing without excluding is to uphold the lines of exteriority, the two sides of a same edge. If "politics" is "management," as political economists pretend it to be, then it is the management of this unmanageable edge. For ontological, not moral, reasons, this management cannot be assimilation: no Leviathan's belly awaits. This is why "communism" was the name of a great adventure, of the great drift, a great shipwreck, and the foundering and stripping naked of "politics."

Thus a nonfigurable contour begins to show itself, from "us," from our compearance, but not abstractly or fictitiously. We will certainly have to learn how to trace its edges. We have no model, no matrices for this tracing or for this writing. We even think that the novel (*inédit*) or the unheard of can no longer come about. But perhaps it is precisely when all signs are missing that the unheard of becomes again not only possible but, in a sense, certain. Here is the historicity of our history and the oncoming of the suspended meaning of the old word "communism."

NOTES

1. For an analysis of this position, see my "Dies irae," in *La faculté de juger* (Paris: Minuit, 1985).

2. Forgive me for recalling that this topic is first raised in my *Le partage des voix* (Paris: Galilee, 1982) as well as in several subsequent works. I do so because of a usage of the word "share" (*partage*) (as also with "community") that became current — a significant fact in itself — and which has consequently faded: sometimes, these words are baptized with pious intentions which take over precisely the locus of the difficulty that besets us in thinking of being-in-common. This difficulty comes from the fact that as soon as it becomes necessary to deconstruct all philosophical wordings of "community" (its metaphysical, anthropotheological, political, even affective and aesthetic terms) all that is left to start thinking afresh is the *in* (which I had also called the "inoperative" (*desoeuvrement*). Here as elsewhere, we have to rebuild a language from its infrasemantic, infrasyntactic, and infraconceptual qualities. This is why this work is formidable. This said, there is more than one sharing out of the difficulty of this work. One has to note what is owed, in particular to Gérard Granel, and to a certain number of adventurous, audacious, provocative, and brave claims about the "people" — another word (one of the most loaded) for the *common*. Neither the contractual bourgeois people nor the productive proletarian people nor even the "true" people that the word proletarian designates (as Marx's metaphysics accomplishes and surpasses the two previous meanings) contains or liberates an atom of the peo-

ple in its popular acceptance. The popular is excluded from *any* modern politico-philosophical discourse, for it is the waste of *any modern* political practice, capitalist or "Marxist" (in the sense of "actual Marxisms" who had set camp on the metaphysical slope of "Marx" only to slide down into the base without basis (*le fond sans fond*) of the Horrible). Deprived of speech and reduced to waste, the popular offers nothing except that which calls down on its head the disdain of the *Gebildeten*. This is why, Granel concludes, we have "nothing to report to except to popular patience, popular impatience, to the passion suffered by the popular in its ashes." See Gérard Granel, *Ecrits logiques et politiques* (Paris: Galilee, 1990), 370, 382. I would also like to recall here the name of Giorgio Agamben, especially his reflection on the "Whichever" of/in community: "The Whichever of which it is question here does not in fact acquire its singularity in its indifference to a single property (to a concept, for instance: Red, French, Moslem being); it acquires it only in its being *as it is*. Singularity thus renounces the false dilemma which constrains the knowledge to choose between the ineffable character of the individual and the intelligibility of the individual." See Giorgio Agamben, *La Communauté qui vient* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 10. And also, Michel Deguy, for these lines among others: "And we who are neither Jew nor German, but similar to them 'feature *for* feature,' by a communal feature not visible in the visible, held in thought as the *as* of analogy, entrusted to the art which makes it work (*qui le figure en oeuvre*)   we hope to make a *we* (as in the wish of Ducasse that 'poetry should be made by all')" so thus that only perhaps   there would be " 'neither man nor woman, neither Jew nor Gentile,' but one *as* the other." See Michel Deguy, "Une oeuvre après Auschwitz," in *Au sujet de Shoah* (Paris: Belin, 1990), 47.

　　3. This is the starting point for a consideration of the haunting or the fantasy that communisms and fascisms represented to intellectuals during the period of Weimar and the Popular Front. The pablum of the "cases" on which good "democratic" souls have for sometime been feeding (of these those of Heidegger and Pavese are the most interesting) must be put back into this context; it is first of all testimony (to the point of absurdity and odiousness) of this dizzying stripping down of that which is in common. To say this is no concession: one might at least start by understanding that.

　　4. See Marx's *Rheinische Zeitung* article of July 14, 1842. (I thank Philippe Choulet for his cryptogamic memory.) *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (New York, 1975), 195.

　　5. As to the word "communism," it seems right to let someone better placed than I speak of its "paleonymy" (in the sense that Derrida has given to this neologism): "Mildew has grown on the word "communism," that is for sure. But the roses, the gladiolas and the chevelures, the sirenes and the consoles were eaten by the moths of fin de siècle poetry, poetry which had been named 'symbolism' and which overall was a catastrophe. / Let us try to be no more communist in the manner of Breshnev than Mallarmé was a symbolist in that manner of Ville-Griffin. / If otherwise he has gloriously held strong with the swans and the stars, let us know to do the same with revolution and communism. / It is because we take the exact measure of their power, thus of their share, that words may be innocent." Alain Badiou, *Théorie du sujet* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), 115.

　　6. Schelling, *Les ages du monde,* translated by Bruno Vancamp (Bruxelles: Ousia, 1988), 324. This could be said in other tongues — that of Spinoza: the "knowledge of the third sex" and "joy"; or that of Marx: "the true reign of freedom."

　　7. Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Collected Works*, vol. 3, 121.

　　8. See, e.g., *Capital*, I, 8, chap. 32. This is not to imply that one can undertake without reservations and discussion an interpretation of Marx founded on the "individual" such as that of Michel Henry.

　　9. J. F. Lyotard, *Le différend* (Paris: Minuit, 1983) and *Pérégrinatins* (Paris: Galilée, 1988), 132-34.

10. "Qui vient après le sujet," in *Cahiers Confrontation*, no. 20 (Paris: Aubier, 1989), 138. What Granier says about the "people" is not without relation with the "différend."

11. Patrice Loraux has well brought out this particularities of an *oeuvre* that works in such a manner that "the materials leave Marx less and less space to write by himself." See Loraux, *Les sous-mains de Marx* (Paris: Hachette, 1986).

12. It has this in common with other "texts" or "thoughts" which are not appropriated by anyone: Judaism or Christianity, perhaps even, stretching things, Platonism. All differences set aside, such an analysis finds a pattern in which the "author" or the "master" are left in the shadow. In this type of configuration (in this compearance) it is finally a matter of nothing less than that which *thinking (in common) seeks to mean (and to do)*.

13. Up to a certain point, we in fact meet this in Aristotle, where the perfect state of nonpoietic action is the "act of immobility" *(energeia akinesias)* of the "First mover" and which remains in the end immanent to it *(Nicomedian Ethics* VII, 14, 1154b 27). It is thus a very profound grasp of metaphysics that leads one to consider the *eupraxis* as the autosatisfaction of a subject rather than as its "sharing." Aristotle, however, also assigns being-in-common to the "nature" of the human. For the *zoon politikon*, *eu zein* (living well, according to the Good) consists in the community, which "precedes" its members or parts. It is all here in these two Aristotles, even before it comes down to us: it is all a matter of the necessity (as clear as day but the most difficult) of *not making the in-common into a substance or a subject, and of understanding the indissolvable praxis of sharing*.

14. "One cannot suppress philosophy without realizing it." Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 187.

15. In Husserl, this can especially be seen in the *Krisis*, in the motif of the epoche which withdraws to the "world given in advance" and thereby "reduces humanity to the phenomenon 'humanity' " *La crise des sciences européenes et la phenomenologie transcendentale*, translated by G. Granel (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 173-74. It is also in the notion of a community prior to any particular community (and even to the "whole of the historical life of the community" — which marks the unfilled place of Marx in Husserl). This Marx, however, one would better introduce through Derrida: in his first work in phenomenology, he could conclude that "historicity is *meaning*," and that consequently, well beyond the history to the transcendental "live present," we found the "question of the origin of Being as History," that is of the "originating difference of the absolute origin." On this score, it becomes possible to "take seriously pure facticity," that is, to envisage *"the originating unity of meaning and fact"* In Husserl, *L'origine de la géometrie*, translated by and introduction by Jacques Derrida (Paris: PUF, 1974), 165-71. This "unity" is precisely that which is in question in the demand that the "real" be "subject" of though, as is also is in being-in-common, where the "in" certainly carries the most original structure of the general "meaning-fact."

As to Heidegger, it would be a question of the primordial unity of the world, always (re)covered and always unveiled (and unveiling) — this in all *common* meanings — as well as the unity of the "one" *(on) and* of the "authentic" "decision" by which the existent puts (itself) into play (as) the *meaning* of being. See my essay, "La décision de l'existence," in *Une pensée finie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990). There are a good number of other references to touch on in order to complete the distance from Marx to us, the insistant and impressive trajectory of this effort stretched out to a "transcendental community," coupled to an equally transcendental "reality" *(réel)* (or to an "experience," even an empeiria, or again to a "praxis"). We could easily also find this in Bataille and Benjamin, as well as in Wittgenstein, as well as in the work of ethnology and sociology, as well as in psychoanalysis. Here one would also naturally have to reconstruct a longer journey, this one from the beginning of philosophy (which was also, as has been often

noted, that of politics). One could distinguish four successive stages (diachronically, but also in terms of various synchronic combinations): (1) community as the object of a general problematic of order and disorder, tending toward a political *eupraxis* (this would be more or less Antiquity and the Middle-Ages); (2) community as the locus of an "unsocial sociability" (Kant's term), tending toward regulation (Hobbes to Kant — thanks to Francois Zourbichvili for a conversation); (3) community as the subject of a history (and of) itself; and (4) community as duty and as ontological responsibility of *being*-in common.

16. Also in the sense of a finitude, which I cannot develop here. Cf. Nancy, *Une pensée finie*.

17. The followers of Babeuf, among others. After all, this vulgar form of sharing was to mark disdain, without a doubt for the stance itself and for the common extraction of its partisans.

18. Nor of any aesthetic which carries these designations, for it goes without saying that the examination here should move also to the other arts. On the question of "revolutionary litterature," see the path-breaking study by Jean-Pierre Morel, *Le roman insupportable: L'internationale littérature et la France 1920-1932* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985). It is worth citing a few lines with which the author closes his book and the "general stake in the debates" about "revolutionary literature"· "What should one do with the modern novel which seems particularly unbearable to the militant spirit? The rejection of this novel, in the name of a superficial "realism" (which in the end would only produce even worse consequences) is not only a literary choice: it is the refusal to admit that the 'free artistic interaction between men' (Bakhtine) forms an important dimension of the social." One should add that the "common" (vulgar, popular) literatures do not respond to the same categories and should be subject to their own examination, given that they are a constant common phenomenon. This does not mean that one should run after naive (and often strained) reevaluations that one may have known in relation to comic strips and to science fiction or in the "lesser" genres. However, the very fact of these reevaluations and the whole cultural climate that comes with them merit our interest. Rock, both in words and music, in all the variants of its world-scale communication, (unfurling? contagion? banalization?) is not to be denied.

19. The image of amnesia is suggested by the film of Nanni Moretti, *Plombella rossa* (1988): following an accident, a communist militant only remembers being a communist, in a world where everything makes for the forgetting of what that might mean.

20. M. Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (New York: Plume, 1971), 90.

21. John Updike, *Museums and Women and Other Stories* (New York: Vintage, 1972), 159 ("The Sea's Green Sameness").

22. Hermann Broch, *The Death of Virgil* translated by Jean Starr Untermeyer (New York: Pantheon, 1945), 88.

23. Guy de Maupassant, "Un Parricide," in *Contes et nouvelles* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1964), vol. 2, at 475 [my translation].

24. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 4 (New York, 1976), 52. See the work of Michel Henry in *Contes et nouvelles* (esp. vol. 2, chap. 6 at 1) on the Marxist critique of any conception of "species" as subject, and on the correlative insistance on the "real" individual, itself opposed to the abstract monadic individual of the eighteenth century.

25. This passes too quickly over questions tied to the first Soviets, over Lenin's relations with them, as well as other claims or experiences derived from "conciliarism," "anarcho-syndicalism," and "self-management." I am aware of this omission. It does not seem to me, however, that one can invoke any of these models as that of a more authentic form of communism, which "actual" communism would have turned aside and destroyed, each time almost at birth, and to which one should return. It is certainly the case — at least after Lenin — that the communist powers determinedly rejected and deliberately crushed all "soviet" forms. But nothing indicates

that these forms would have been viable or would now be: thus it is the whole question and weight of capital that is at stake.

26. To speak of a reappropriation of that which cannot be appropriated obliges one to venture into that which should be a calling into question of Heidegger's thought of the *"Ereignis/ Enteignis,"* that is of the occurrence of a "disappropriating appropriation" (as "ex-appropriation," as Derrida was led to call it). In this matter, there is a risk of bringing about a new avatar of dialectical sleight-of-hand. But to tell the truth, although subtle, this trap is well known. Its vaguely mystical clothing is undone. One must therefore rethink the "proper" from top to bottom, that is first, as that which has neither top nor bottom. We do not cease from having to deal with that which has neither foundation nor finality (of subject, of sense, of propriety, of principle, of unity, and so on). At the shore of this, all of discourse fails, but, right into this difficulty that takes our voice away, it is also that which gives thought its own opportunity.

27. This line of questioning was started ten years ago by Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe and myself, most centrally in the founding of and the work conducted at the Centre de Recherches Philosophiques sur le Politique, which is housed at the École National Superieur, rue d'Ulm, in Paris. In 1984, we voluntarily broke off the work of this center because we were becoming aware of the weight of a growing consensus which concerned "in the end the political itself," designated as "the absolute danger of the definitive impasse of thought and praxis." To this we added: "The end of marxism, curiously and modestly baptised the 'end of ideologies' has been insidiously transformed to deny any consideration or transaction having to do with the identity of the collectivity, its destination, the nature and exercise of sovereignty. A slowly accredited intellectual attitude privileges ethics or the esthetic, even the religious (and sometimes the social) over and against the political." Two consequences seemed to us to follow: the suspending of any questioning of that which we were then calling the "essence of the political" and the suspension of any necessity, indeed any legitimacy, of effective political choices (see the Center's memo of November 16, 1984). One sees that nothing has changed in any essential manner. As to the question of the "retreat" from politics, such as we have introduced it, see two publications of the Center: *Rejouer le politique* (Paris; Galilee, 1981) and *Le retrait du politique* (Paris; Galilee, 1983).

28. In this sense, the Terror — and all that ressembles it — represent the brutalized reunion of the two sides, all the more disastrous in that it brings together and attempts to dialecticize that which precisely was defined by separation, opposition, and reciprocal exclusion.

29. This is why even alongside a thousand historical-theoretical studies of very great richness, a certain political and philosophical weakness has been manifest, especially in the past twenty years and in the face of the erosion, then the destruction, of actual communisms. It manifests itself in a repeated invocation of the Greek *polis*, that is, in the Idea already at bottom held to have been "lost" by the Greeks themselves.

30. A formulation that I had suggested in *L'impératif catégorique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983) (cf. "Lapsus judicii").

31. Emanual Levinas has already used *interesse* to designate the interest which, in his language, makes up the being of essence: the perseverence in being, the *conatus* which first of all pushes "the ego in struggle one with the other, all against all"; he mediates himself by a "reasonable" peace in "politics", in "exchange and commerce." But the "interbeing" (*interessement*) remains, and politics is not the order where might be dramatized the "other than being" which is the same as "the beyond of essence," in Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-dela de l'essence* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1978), 4. I would rather suggest a politics beyond "the reasonable," implicating its calculation and negotiation, but indexed to another "reason," that of an "interest" in the "common" which is not the "common interest," nor that of the *ego*. But to come

to an end, if there is an end, a politics that does not exhaust the access to this other "reason" without reason, and which *tranverses it without being absorbed in or impregnating* "all the spheres of human activity," of which each offers the spark of an access.

32. Taking up the language of the *analogia entis,* one might say that the *interesse* is the *communissimum.* Cf. here Thomas Aquinas on the universal preference of the being of God, without this affecting His transcendence: "Ipsum enim est communissimum effectus primus et intimior allis effetibus," in *(De potentia,* qu. 3, a 7, cited by Jean Francois Courtine in *Suarez et le systeme de la metaphysique* (Paris: PUF, 1990) 523. The passage occurs in the midst of an inquiry into being, existence, and individuation where the ontology of the *in*-common might find more than one premise. But the *interesse* which is not that of God is only the communissimum of the "inter" itself, or space, or share, of the exposition of essences.

33. See Etienne Balibar, *La proposition de l'egaliberte* (Paris: Les conferences du Perroquet, no. 22, November 1989).

34. Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,* in *Collected Works,* vol. 3, 186.

Jean-Luc Nancy is Director of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Strasbourg. He is author of many books, among them The Inoperative Community *(University of Minnesota Press, 1991),* L'oubli de la philosophie *(1986),* Une pensée finie *(1990), and, with Philippe Lacoue Labarthe,* The Literary Absolut: A Theory of Literature in German Romanticism *(SUNY Press, 1988). A translation of "Le partage des voix" by Gayle Ormiston appeared in* Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy *(SUNY Press, 1989). Nancy's* The Birth to Presence *will shortly appear from Stanford University Press and several other translations are in progress.*