

**COMMUNITY AT  
LOOSE ENDS**

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**COMMUNITY**

# Communism, the Proper Name

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I would like to speak about names, about the politics of names, and about the politics of a particular name.

Section 92 of Jean-François Lyotard's *Differend* brings to a provisional close a long development, which in light of its debt to Saul Kripke could be entitled "Naming and Contingency." As part of a general strategy to counter those revisionist historians like Robert Faurisson who would deny the existence of the Holocaust, Lyotard seeks to reorient the criteria for historico-political reality away from the easily refutable and vulnerable testimony of eyewitnesses and toward the rigorous triangulation of phrases that identify the existence of a referent to the extent that it is not only displayed but also signified and named (no. 65). The assertion of reality cannot be, as it no doubt was for Dr. Johnson in his "refutation" of Bishop Berkeley (Boswell 1: 471), simply a function of a deixis that points to an *object of perception* in a phenomenological *field*. For that assertion to occur with validity, an ostensive phrase must be linked onto a nominative one, i.e., one whose referent is an *object of history* situated in a *world* (no. 81). While deixis is only valid for the phrase in which it occurs (one's *here* is another's *there*; my *you* is your *I*, etc.), names, which are "a pure mark of the designative function," remain the same across phrases, from whose actualizations they accordingly remain "independent" (no. 57). They are, to use Kripke's phrase, "rigid designators," and as such, function as what Lyotard calls "quasi-deictics":

Networks of quasi-deictics formed by names of "objects" and by names

of relations designate “givens” and the relations between those givens, that is to say, a world. I call it a world because those names, being “rigid,” each refer to something even when that something is not there; and because that something is considered to be the same for all phrases which refer to it by its name; and also because each of those names is independent of the phrase universes that refer to it, and in particular of the addressors and addressees presented in those universes. This is not to say that something which has the same name in several phrases has the same meaning. Different descriptions can be made of it, and the question of its cognition is opened and not closed by its name. (no. 60)

That a name can receive any number of meanings introduces a certain contingency into the relations between field and world. If reality occurs as a “swarm of senses light[ing] upon a field pinpointed by a world” (no. 82), then “reality is not a matter of the absolute eyewitness, but a matter of the future” (no. 88). In contradistinction to essentialist notions, which understand “the referent of the name as if it were the referent of a definition” (no. 88)—that is, as a shorthand for a bundle of preinscribed qualities—Lyotard sees the number of possible senses ascribable to a named referent as bounded only by the contingency of the future (no. 89). The predicate, *passes the Rubicon*, is not, as Leibniz thinks (310–11), necessarily preinscribed in the notion of Caesar, since the “referent of the name *Caesar* is not a completely describable essence, even with Caesar dead” (no. 88, cf. no. 74). It cannot be determined in advance how many or which meanings can be validated for a particular name. The senses of a named referent refer us not to the *field* of perception but to the *world* of history, and as such, to an agonistic locus of debate, litigation, antagonism, and differend. That the (historically contingent) link between name and meaning ushers in the political is what section 92 brings to the fore:

Reality entails the differend. *That’s Stalin, here he is*. We acknowledge it. But as for what *Stalin* means? Phrases come to be attached to this name, which not only describe different senses for it (this can still be debated in dialogue), and not only place the name on different instances, but which also obey heterogeneous regimens and/or genres. This heterogeneity, for lack of a common idiom, makes consensus impossible. The assignment of a definition to Stalin necessarily does wrong to the nondefinitional phrases relating to Stalin, which this definition, for a while at least, disregards or betrays. In and around names, vengeance is on the prowl. Forever?

What does it mean, though, for vengeance to be “on the prowl” in and around names? The answer is elaborated in Lyotard’s long essay “Judiciousness in Dispute, or Kant after Marx.” There, we read:

[Vengeance] can invoke no right, for right is always “right” according to a tribunal that is unique and that demands proofs, names, and measurements. What cries out for vengeance are the forbidden phrases of defense, phrases that have suffered a wrong because they can only make an appeal to feelings. . . . The authority of the idiom in which cases are established and regulated is contested. A different idiom and a different tribunal are demanded, which the other party contests and rejects. Language is at war with itself, and the critical watchman posts guard over this war. The name “Palestine” belongs to several worlds of names. Within each of these worlds, several regimes of phrases quarrel over the name “Palestine.” Here we have an analogon of language: not simply the complexity of a large city but the complexity of a large city at war. In 1956, at Budapest, the names of the streets were changed to mislead the Soviet tanks; the government doesn’t change peoples, the people change names: this is the clandestine. And this is why philosophy must remain in arms. (64–65)

It would not be difficult, at this point, to multiply examples, and hence to disclose a very rich terrain of historico-political analysis. One would have to consider, among others, the invention, attribution, substitution, effacement, and appropriation of names.

I’m reminded, for instance, of a recent British film entitled precisely *Naming the Names*, in which the Irish heroine responds to her interrogator’s request for the names of IRA members by enumerating the streets of Belfast. And as the very sense of names remains indefinite, the struggles in question may not, by any means, be resolved. Consider the case of the autochthonous inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere, variously termed Indians or Native Americans, terms that reveal either Columbus’s reductive misprision or the projective appropriation of the name of his colleague Amerigo (cf. O’Gorman, Todorov 1–50). To underscore the point, consider if the first European explorer of the North American coastline, Giovanni da Verrazanno, had been better received by his benefactor, Francis I of France. In the latter’s honor, Verrazanno called what is now the Eastern seaboard of the United States, Francesca. We would be speaking today of the United States of Francesca, and its indigenous peoples would be called Native Francescans. Or, consider the name of Miami University of Ohio, always at pains to distinguish itself from the Floridian city of the same name. In their currency today, however, both names occlude even as they designate the historical passage of those from whom this name was taken, as do so many other indigenous place-names in the Western Hemisphere, unwitting signs of an absence no longer even felt as absent. As for the once mighty Miami Indian nation that ruled a vast territory between the Alleghenies and the Mississippi, its members were progressively subjugated, annihilated, assimilated, or deported to those places that received the name of that people as the tearful trail of their passage: the county of

Miami, Kansas, and still farther off, the town of Miami, Oklahoma (Anson, Carter).

Before what court could the autochthonous dweller of America bring the claim of a wrong done to him or her on account of being *called* "American"? An international jury would have no jurisdiction since the case would be seen to involve a dispute between two Americans, and so, the case would be sent back to an American court, who would by definition see no grounds for the complaint since the so-called American Indian would be viewed as but a duly enfranchised American. In *The Differend*, Lyotard elaborates this dilemma in the case of the Martinican (no. 36), but the same could also be said of the Québécois or so-called French Canadian, the Palestinian, the Basque, the Namibian, the Azanian, the Katangan, and countless others with or without names.

But if we are thus led to understand the political through a generalized agonistics of the name, then the stakes involved in what meanings can or cannot be attributed to a proper name, in how that name can or cannot occur in certain phrases, become very high. And the philosophical stakes in knowing what constitutes a proper name become just as high. Are there not certain common nouns that are also at issue in differends? In other words, how is the proper name as contested in a differend to be distinguished from debate over the meaning and usage of any word or concept? This was the question I posed to Jean-François Lyotard some time ago, and to which he answered as follows:

Proper names have that property of attracting to themselves phrases belonging to different regimens and to heterogeneous genres of discourse: *Caesar, for pity's sake! Down with Caesar! Caesar was at that time consul. Was Caesar a great writer? Your Caesar annoys me.* It is for this reason that the differend flourishes in and around proper names. A "debate" over the signification of a common noun is a genre strictly regulated in its end (the establishment of a definition) and in its procedures (dialogue). The difference between one and the other is the one noted by Aristotle at the beginning of the *Rhetoric*, shall we say: the difference between School and political life, which tears apart the man of knowledge or of litigation, at the tribune, at the tribunal or out in the street, the agonistical places. ("Interview," 20)

Clearly, the allocation of sense to a common noun *can* take place as a regulated debate within disciplinary boundaries. The agonistics of academic "dialogue" already presupposes the existence of a set of common idioms, practices, interests, and institutional parameters, which frame disagreement, for instance, over what anthropology is or what the liberal arts are. Whether phenomenological or ontological, such disagreements enter the political and the historical only with the advent of names. Hence, academic debates over deconstruction as a practice of literary criticism link up with heterogeneous genres of discourse, say journal-

ism, when questions (of a different order) are raised as to what sense should be granted the named referent, Paul de Man.<sup>1</sup> This is not because the meaning of this name cannot be determined by and within the genre of academic discussion (hence, the anxiety and/or outrage felt by many literary professionals that the discussion is not restricted to this genre), but because the name *can* always attract other senses by its ability to stay the same while being situated differently according to *different* phrase regimens and genres of discourse. A debate over the composition of a molecule, however, can only occur within a discourse that allows such an object to emerge as an object of perception: chemistry, for instance. As such, “there are no true discussions” (no. 152).

It seems important at this time to refine the notion of the name further by deflecting any anthropologizing that would view the distinction between proper name and common noun as if it were one between persons and things. For Lyotard, the name is a “pure mark of the designative function” (no. 57)—hence whatever in language refers rather than signifies—in Peircian terms, the indexical rather than the symbolic (2: 156–73), or *Bedeutung* rather than *Sinn*, to use the Fregian terms that have informed Lyotard’s thinking on language since at least *Discours, figure*. To quote again from *The Differend*: “Names transform *now* into a date, *here* into a place, *I, you, he* into Jean, Pierre, Louis. . . . Names grouped into calendars, cartographical systems, genealogies and civil statutes are indicators of possible reality. They present their referents, dates, places and human beings as givens” (no. 58). Names are quasi-deictics that designate rigidly across phrase regimens and genres of discourse, and the network of names pinpoints the world of *historical* objects. But are there not historical objects that arise from this world and that are not names, or at least not names in the usual sense of the word?

I must admit that when I put to Jean-François Lyotard the question of the limits of the proper name, I had something particular in mind, something whose definition as object was not readily containable within the framework of a disciplinary debate, and hence was—indeed still is—very much a matter for differends; something, though, which carried along a considerable amount of *Sinn* in its *Bedeutung* and thus was not merely designative. I had in mind the name of a historical movement or event that was also a theory, if not a vision. This historical and political movement bore a name that was also a common noun, indeed the noun of commonality itself or of what is held in common, namely communism.

That communism is not just a “concept” or even “the *sense* of a word” is corroborated by Jean-Luc Nancy near the beginning of *La Communauté désœuvrée* (12) when he refers to the word communism as an “emblem,” one that has gone out of circulation. At one time, however, it would have emblemized “the desire for a locus of community found or refound over and beyond social divisions and over and beyond subjection to techno-political domination” (11). Such a desire, according to Nancy, would invariably maintain a view of human

community as a “community of beings in essence producing their own essence as their work and, what is more, producing this essence precisely *as community*” (14). To the extent, then, that the community is based on the self-production of itself as community, communism would remain entrenched in exactly the same immanentism as that which plagues humanism with its essentialist supposition of man giving birth to himself. To the extent that this immanent view of the social reduces individual differences (or singularities) to the mere expression of an essence subtending the community, the resulting allegory of tautology, or “tautegory” (130), would issue in a totalitarian state. The historical apparition of such states that have manifestly betrayed the revolution would mean that the assertion Nancy imputes to Sartre that “communism is the insuperable horizon of our time” will have lost all currency.<sup>2</sup> In what we could then call the “current” situation or climate of resignation, everything would be, to quote Nancy, “as if the disappearance, impossibility, or condemnation of communism . . . had formed the new insuperable horizon” (28). Nancy justifiably rejects such a view: “That’s why, while positing that communism is no longer our insuperable horizon, it is also necessary to posit, with just as much force, that a communist exigency communicates with the gesture according to which we ought to go beyond all horizons” (28).

It would seem to be in accordance with such a “communist exigency,” then, that Nancy seeks to formulate an alternative not only to the problem of community as an essence immanent to itself but also to that other immanence, which would view community as but the (harmonious or disharmonious or contractual) aggregate of preexisting and self-generating “individuals.” Radically rejecting the priority of either individual or community to the other, Nancy proposes instead to develop a communitarian logic derived from the *relation* of “being-in-common” (see also his text by that title in this volume).

This relation, as inescapable as it is indeterminate, is not just a relation of commonality (i.e., what we all have in common) but more significantly, what we share in common at the limit of commonality or community, namely the incommunicable commonality of our finitudes: birth, death, and no doubt a good deal in between. It is from this “community at loose ends,” produced in its unproduction or instituted in its destitution (*dés-oeuvre*) that the social and political must be thought. What Nancy thus calls, in a combination of eloquence and provocation, “literary communism” (a term he has since renounced) is precisely not some mythic community or communion that would have been lost in some Golden Age. Nor is it something that is ours yet to invent through some kind of immanent expression. Rather, it is what inaugurates the communal relation, what precedes us not as our foundation or destiny but precisely as our being (in common) at loose ends (*La Communauté désoeuvre*, 169–98). Nancy’s communism is thus neither a past nor a future classless society but precisely the *neces-*

sary liminality of the social, which is also a point of resistance that inscribes the ineradicable contingency of difference.

Such a literary (or perhaps it should be called liminal) communism would, then, be the name of a limit as well as a limit of the name. Undecidably concept and name, communism is also historically the name of a struggle to overcome a set of property relations, specifically the relations of production under capitalism. Hence, its call for the abolition of private property in order to arrest the extraction of surplus value by those who own the means of production from those who have nothing to sell but their labor power. The name of the struggle is also the name of the relation that the struggle desires to institute: communism.

In order to do this, however, this name of a relation must also become a relation of names. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (who, by the way, alternate their spelling of communism, now with a capital, now with a small *c*) analyze what at first seems like a merely amusing epiphenomenon of official communist rhetoric, namely the practice of enumeration. But, as they warn us, “to enumerate is never an innocent operation; it involves major displacements of meaning” (62–63). The practice of communist enumeration (or rather, the communist practice of enumeration) arose during the 1930s and 1940s, that is, during the great era of Popular Fronts and struggles for decolonization, when, as they explain, the “common ground of democracy was not open to exclusive absorption by any one social sector” or class (62)—that is, when the fight against the various fascisms and imperialisms required a mobilization beyond what could be mustered by the specific interests of any single group, none of which could claim itself to be the sole representative of democratic aspirations. As Laclau and Mouffe further specify: “Communist enumeration occurs within a dichotomic space that establishes the antagonism between dominant and popular sectors; and the identity of both is constructed on the basis of enumerating their constitutive class sectors. On the side of the popular sectors, for example, would be included: the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the progressive factions of the national bourgeoisie, etc.” (63). The enumeration of elements allied in the popular struggle is not, however, “the discursive expression of a real movement constituted outside discourse; on the contrary, this enumerative discourse is a real force which contributes to the moulding and constitution of social relations” (110). Communist enumeration is not, if one likes, constative but virulently performative in character: it marshals or articulates the social forces engaged in a common struggle in a way that potentially undermines or blocks the dominance of any one group in leading the struggle. As such, the enumerative practice of communism is of crucial import to Laclau and Mouffe in their reconceptualization of the Gramscian notion of hegemony on a basis that is no longer class specific.

It also provides them with one of their most important theoretical concepts, the “expansive logic of equivalences,” a notion whose first mention and defini-



tion occur right on the heels of the discussion of enumeration, and which appears then as a logical clarification of that practice:

This enumeration, however, does not merely affirm the separate and literal *presence* of certain classes or class fractions at the popular pole; it also asserts their *equivalence* in the common confrontation with the dominant pole. A relation of equivalence is not a relation of identity among objects. Equivalence is never tautological, as the substitutability it establishes among certain objects is only valid for determinate positions within a given structural context. In this sense, equivalence displaces the identity which makes it possible, from the objects themselves to the contexts of their appearance or presence. This, however, means that in the relation of equivalence the identity of the object is split: on the one hand, it maintains its own "literal" sense; on the other, it symbolizes the contextual position for which it is a substitutable element. This is exactly what occurs in the communist enumeration: from a strictly classist point of view, there is no identity whatsoever among the sectors of the popular pole, given that each one has differentiated and even antagonistic interests; yet, the relation of equivalence established among them, in the context of their opposition to the dominant pole, constructs a "popular" discursive position that is irreducible to class positions. (63)

The constitution of the hegemonic bloc through the logic of equivalences soon enters, however, into the same dilemma as that raised by Nancy in his critique of community, namely the dilemma between the immanence of each part to itself within a loose or contractual aggregate, on the one hand, and the immanence of the whole reducing each part to but a manifestation of itself, on the other hand. Residual definitions and categories appear in ensuing distinctions between equivalence and "total" equivalence (or the collapse of all difference between equivalential terms into an identity built on their effacement; cf. 127–34) and later in the book's closing dialectic between the logic of equivalence and its counterpoised logic of autonomy (181ff.). The earliest formulation of the problem occurs as the split, on pages 64–65, between democratic and authoritarian forms of communism, between a liberating and differentiating practice of "articulation" that "accepts the structural diversity of the relations in which social agents are immersed" (65) and a repressive and reductive practice of "representation" that "denies all opacity and density to political relations" (65) by grasping each enumerative instance as but the representation of another "until a final class core is reached which supposedly gives meaning to the whole series" (65). In those states, then, that have come to be called "communist," the logic of equivalences has tended to be subtended by the state bureaucracy of a "party" representing itself as the vanguard of a particular class (the proletariat) that, in turn, is understood to be the representative of all other social sectors. However, this collapse

from equivalence into *total* equivalence entails the abandonment of equivalential logic for the representational one that both supersedes and subtends the set of differing elements, which are ipso facto reduced to being mere *moments* within the ultimate suturing of a closed society, transparent unto itself.

To translate the problem into the idiom that is Lyotard's, the phrasing of the social as enumeration places the entities it names simultaneously in the positions of addressor, addressee, and referent. The tautegorical risk of this construction is inscribed in the possibility of the sense component being seen as identical with a meta-addressor who would speak for the whole of those named and who would then name itself as the *sense* of their identity. This is recognizably the moment of Stalinism, and a source, no doubt, of differends and of the vengeance that hovers about that particular name. But if the repressiveness of this mechanism stems from its inability to articulate differences within it, is this purely and simply the result of an equivalential logic gone too far—or, not far enough? The *communism* of the communist enumeration can be guaranteed only if each member of the coalition can name itself and be named as difference within the commonality of their differences, if each addressee and referent can also have its turn as addressor. There is no relation of equivalence unless the egalitarian demand of *communism* is met. It is not met when a meta-instance bureaucratically arrogates to itself the right to speak for all and as all, and hence asserts an explicit or concealed autonomy (or self-naming) that is precisely the *end* of democratic equivalence and the institution of new inequities.

The “expansive logic of equivalences” has also been repeatedly checked in another way ever since the Stalinist retrenchment of socialism “within one country” and the rise of movements in quest of specifically *national* liberation—checked, that is, by the geopolitical limits of the nation-state, whether its frontiers be the legacy of imperialist convenience or of bourgeois revolution. In these cases, the phrasing of national unity as such runs the risk of a reactionary collapse back onto the localized names and traditional narratives of a nation conceived in its exclusivity from all others. As Lyotard warns on the very last page of *The Differend*, “Proud struggles for independence end in young, reactionary States” (no. 262). At the other extreme would be the cosmopolitan or “great” narrative that imperialistically subsumes all particular names under a universal one. This pessimistic alternative, adumbrated near the end of Lyotard's book (nos. 221–35), phrases the problem of the international community (and no thought of community is valid unless it can also rise to the global level) according to the same dilemma we have already noted between an immanence of the whole subtending the parts and an immanence of the parts unto themselves. To pursue the direction indicated by Nancy, reflection on this question must begin from the difficulty of thinking the relation, here international relations, as inaugural. In terms of the name, the issue is not the alternative between respecting the name in its particularity, on the one hand, and subsuming it into a universalizing history,

on the other. As Lyotard would be the first to argue, the issue is not the name, but rather *how to link onto* the name in a way that responsibly challenges the contingency of its sense(s).

As such, it should be noted that contemporaneous with the rise of the “new social movements” discussed by Laclau and Mouffe, new and unprecedented possibilities have arisen for the articulation of equivalences that form hegemonic blocs *transnationally*. This seems to me, in fact, to be one of the most important and least understood of the legacies left by the sixties, in particular the Vietnam War, as fought not along a traditional front but in and around a dispersed set of positions, of place-names, reaching from Indochinese jungles to American university campuses, its guerrilla actions spilling over frontiers in ways that betrayed solidarities across national lines, thus questioning the traditional labeling of patriot and traitor. Today, for example, struggles by and in solidarity with the peoples of Central America or southern Africa have little to do with the sovereignty of national frontiers, and the attempt to phrase such struggles within the existing framework of international legality is often misguided or dangerously regressive to the extent that it upholds the geopolitical status quo and easily risks an essentialist view of the nation. The violent perniciousness of such an essentialism, typified by the politics of blood and soil that refuses all humanity to “outsiders,” has repeatedly been demonstrated in this century. In fact, it is at this very point that we rejoin the differends discussed earlier concerning various “dispossessed” ethnicities, for while autonomy may be a necessary goal, it is hardly a sufficient one: the self-naming of the name (auto-nomy) is but *one* way of phrasing it, one that can easily neglect the urgency and difficulty of linking it onto other names and within other phrases. The necessity of what Lyotard, after Kant, calls a “cosmo-political” point of view (*Differend*, no. 217), which would *critically*—that is, differentially—articulate particular names within a radically democratic *and internationalist* politics, is also the possibility of a hegemonic rejoinder to that most recent and insidious phase of capitalism, multinationalism, which, as Lyotard notes, already well understands the value of a play between equivalence and autonomy in its urgent need to establish new markets (*Differend*, no. 255).

Likewise, the struggle, adumbrated by Laclau and Mouffe in the final pages of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, to reappropriate and redefine the “*meaning of liberal discourse*” (176) in the wake of its appropriation by the New Right should not forget also to reclaim those words disparaged by the same forces. Thus, alongside the discursive repossession of terms such as liberty, equality, justice, and democracy, shouldn’t we also think about rearticulating the word communism by stepping over and beyond its current affects of either diminished hopes or preternatural dread (at least, in a post-1950s American context) and by listening to what as yet remains unheard or smothered under this concept-name that once energetically mobilized the “*enthusiasm of peoples*” (to quote Kant’s

phrase about the French Revolution [“An Old Question,” 144]), and that remains stilled, as Sartre noted already long ago in *Questions de méthode* (24–32), even by the theoretical purity of an academic Marxism (not the same name!) that often views “communism” with embarrassment as the failure of practice?

Is it possible, in other words, and at the risk perhaps of offending *our* deconstructive sensibilities, to “breathe new life” into that old specter that, in Marx’s famous line (*Communist Manifesto*, 6), once haunted Europe and that continues somewhere, somehow, to *haunt* us today, well after its time and in an age when so-called communism offers but a ghost image of its former self, one whose materiality seems to vanish into insubstantiality upon closer inspection?

What is communism, though, if not a call for equality that foregrounds issues of social value and worth on a terrain not covered by the merely political “rights” of democratic liberalism? Can this communism not be radicalized by extending its appeal beyond the rectification of the (very real!) exploitation in the workplace to include, at the very least, a comparable critique of exploitative relations in the field of the symbolic economy with its capitalization of cultural “value,” and beyond that for an end to all inequities whatsoever, wherever they may be found? As such, communism would be formulated perhaps less as a political project than as an ethical demand or imperative. It is, if you like, and as numerous attempts at communism have shown, a call that can never be *fully* answered. Just as the name has no final sense, or history a predetermined end, so there will always be inequalities and injustices to be righted. There is not and cannot ever be a purely communistic state. Perhaps this is the sense of Maurice Blanchot’s remark about communism that it is “what excludes (and is excluded by) every already constituted community” (32; cited in Nancy, *La Communauté désœuvrée*, 25). The revolution can only be betrayed by the irrepressible rise of new social stratifications, antagonisms, and differends, but this is no argument against political action, even revolution, *so long as* we understand communism as naming what Lyotard calls, after Kant, an “Idea of reason.” Belonging to practical reason, such an Idea is conceivable but never presentable: “It is a sort of horizon that performs a regulatory role with respect to action” (*Just Gaming*, 46). As an Idea, communism is the name of an egalitarian horizon, not the “insuperable” one of our time, but one to which we can never fully accede. Communism is irretrievably over (or under) the horizon, what orients obscurely and from afar an ethics of radical egalitarianism that is ever, but never solely, critical. Incapable of ever being fully actualized, like the Kantian community of the aesthetic judgment (cf. Lyotard, *Peregrinations*, 38), the ghost of communism names something “intractable” or “unmanageable” (Lyotard in this volume; Blanchot, 32) that no community can ever treat, manage, or conjure away to the extent that it irrepressibly returns to haunt that community by the urgency of its call (irredeemably *utopic* in character)<sup>3</sup> for egalitarianism with regard to all rights, privileges, and properties (including symbolic capital), and at its limit,

the equality of sharing what cannot be shared, the incommunicable community of our finitudes (to speak the language of Nancy). Hence, its vengeance, which, to answer our initial reprise of Lyotard's eminently rhetorical question, can only be: *forever*.

If, as Blanchot writes citing Lenin, the "soul" of communism lies precisely in "what makes it *intolerable, intractable, unmanageable* [ce qui le rend *intolérable, intraitable*]" (32), then rather than a ghost whose intractableness needs to be laid to rest (by repression or even by litigation), the liminality of communism is a differend perpetually to be renewed, so as, at the very least, in the words that close *The Postmodern Condition*, to "save the honor of the name" (82).

### Notes

1. The example of journalism is, of course, not an idle one. Nor is it even simply an example in the context of the polemics surrounding the surfacing of de Man's "wartime writings," for the ethics of journalism as a public discourse is the very matter of the argument not only with regard to de Man's contributions to Belgian newspapers from 1940 to 1942, but also with regard to the way the recent "discovery" of those texts has been presented by contemporary American and European journalists. The theme of journalism is also very much at the heart of Jacques Derrida's long essay, "Paul de Man's War" (*Critical Inquiry* 14 [1988], 590–652).

2. As Richard Terdiman points out in his contribution to this volume, Nancy misquotes or "misremembers" Sartre's statement in the preface to the *Critique de la raison dialectique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 9, which refers not to communism as such but to "Marxism" as a philosophy, a move crucial to Sartre's justification for a Marxian existentialism that is independent and distinct from what he sees as the reified, formalized, and doctrinal thinking of the "official" Marxism spoken by intellectuals publicly affiliated with the Communist movement. In any case, Nancy's "mistake" notwithstanding, his ensuing remark about the "disappearance, impossibility, or condemnation of communism" as the "new insuperable horizon" seems difficult to contest in the wake of a cold war ideology that has distinguished between a "bad" or "flawed" communist world and a "good" or still recuperable Marxist theory, a distinction that seems to be universally held, in the West at least, by left, right, and liberal alike. In place of the utopic dream (or dread) of worldwide Communist revolution that reigned in the mid-twentieth century, current discourse about the "demise" of communism seems to pervade political thinking of all persuasions as an unquestioned *presupposition* that indeed turns it into the (very questionable) horizon from which the political is thought today.

3. I use the term "utopic" in the precise sense attributed to it by Louis Marin in *Utopiques: jeux d'espaces* (Paris: Minuit, 1973), for whom it designates a radical and resolutely critical *practice* of fiction that, on the one hand, "neutralizes" the bipolarity of an ideological construction to reveal its constitutive gaps and contradictions. On the other hand, the irrepressibly concomitant formation of a "utopia" as a theoretical model that exhausts the social cannot help but resuture the exposed gaps and contradictions into a new ideological form, into a "utopian" *myth* legitimating new forms of social oppression. On this same problem, also see Fredric Jameson's "Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse" (*Diacritics*, 7 [1977], 2–21).