

DIES IRAE

JEAN-LUC NANCY

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With an introduction by Carlo Grassi



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Dies Irae

Jean-Luc Nancy¹

for Hélène

One must have confidence that the court allows the majesty of the law its full scope, for this is its sole duty. Within the law all is accusation, advocacy, and verdict; any interference by an individual here would be a crime. (Kafka)²

Those two races still preserve pagan terms. They have no word for Christmas (which they call 'Jul') or for the Last Day or General Judgment. This they call 'Ragnarok.' (Joyce)³

¹ This document is a transcription of the paper presented by Jean-Luc Nancy at the conference 'Comment juger? À partir de Jean-François Lyotard' ('How are we to judge? Building on the work of Jean-François Lyotard'), directed by Michel Enaudeau and Jean-Loup Thébaud, at Cerisy-la-Salle, 24 July – 3 August 1982, at the Centre Culturel International de Cerisy-la-Salle, directed by Edith Heurgon. We wish to thank Jean-Luc Nancy and Edith Heurgon for permitting us to publish this text in English translation. The bibliography was created by Carlo Grassi.

² Franz Kafka, *Advocates*, trans. Tania Stern and James Stern, in *Collected Stories*, ed. Gabriel Josipovici (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 417.

³ James Joyce, *Letter to James Stephen*, 7 May 1932, in *Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking, 1957), 318.

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