Vaclav Havel's Federalist Papers: Summer Meditations and the Genuine Concept of Politics

Vaclav Havel's Summer Meditations will remind an American reader, especially a political scientist, of our Federalist Papers. Havel sees his country as undergoing a time of critical transition, of root-and-branch rebuilding, as being at a decisive crossroad. All-important for Czechoslovakia's future is a new, solid constitution, "the cornerstone" of a prosperous future. He offers his reflections on his country's current situation, optimal future, and feasible and desirable means to it, in the short compass of a book written in 1991 during a ten-day summer holiday.

As striking as are the parallels to Madison and Hamilton are the differences. One can see in Publius the crowning articulator of modern constitutionalism, the reflections on free men and free government developed by Enlightenment thinkers of, chiefly, the British isles, and then perfected by American statesmen. Havel writes at what he considers the end of the modern period. He is an explicit advocate of a spiritually renewed "post-modern" world. While he expressly accepts "the idea of human rights as understood by modern humanity" (98) as a necessary basis for a civil society and genuine politics, he also aims to undergird the rights-bearer with a conception of responsible freedom, of conscientious responsibility "to and for the whole of society." His constitutionalism accordingly is an expression of a chastened modern man who through the crucible of totalitarianism has learned, or rediscovered, essential truths about himself obscured or ignored by modern thought, by systematic rationalism.

Havel's personal experience of "living in the truth" under the regime of the Lie, communist ideocracy, his insight that scientific
materialism of all sorts (not to mention merely cynical and manipulative politicians) misses fundamental dimensions of human and political life, the domain of “consciousness and conscience,” leads him to challenge as unrealistic (as well as immoral) powerful forces in modern life and thought. In particular, he challenges certain forms of political science that refuse to consider human life and human thought as essentially matters of conscience, of freely accepted (or refused) service to one’s fellows and to the various greater wholes within which we late-modern men and women lead our lives. Or, put more positively, Havel encourages all those who see human beings as persons, as incorporate spiritual beings, always and everywhere to guide their lives—whether as citizens, politicians, shopkeepers, businessmen, artists, or political scientists—in the light of this recognition. Having discovered this truth about man in the midst of the regime that most systematically denied it, having seen its power in toppling this regime of the Lie, Havel cannot fail to speak and to act on its basis as he attempts to assist his country and the world rebuild after the fall of communism and the failure of the modern project.

In what follows I aim to take a first cut at Havel’s *Summer Meditations*. My procedure will be as follows. First, I will provide a quick overview of the book’s contents, themes, and argument. This sketch will provoke immediately a question or two whose initial answers will serve as a transition to a more detailed and sustained consideration of the book’s teaching. In all of my presentation and reflections, I will be guided by the thought that my audience is a particular audience, composed of professional students of politics. This means that my chief focus and guiding question is: What are “genuine politics” in Havel’s view? How does he conceive of this domain and form of human activity?

*Summer Meditations* is a rather short book—132 pages—initially written in a fortnight, perfect for a quick read, with clear prose. Its subject matter and claims, however, add the utmost gravity to the book and its demands on the reader. The combination of gravity of matter, breadth, depth, and elevation of consideration, and its author’s graceful clarity of expression makes reading the book
by turns an exercise of insight and admiration, and a frequent occasion of reflection.

There are basically eight distinct parts to the whole: an Introduction, five chapters, an Epilogue, and an Afterward.

The Introduction does what it names and announces it will do: it introduces the subject matter and intent of the book to follow. It also, and quite prominently, introduces the author of the book, retraces his "political" career, and roots the book in that life. All his adult life Havel has worked to help his country move from totalitarianism to democracy, from a command economy to a free market economy, from satellite status to independence. This book is a natural continuation, a logical development, of the responsibility of public service its author has long assumed. First a dramatist, then a "dissident," Havel now, as President, feels that it is incumbent upon him at this crucial juncture in Czechoslovakian history to explain to his fellow citizens exactly where he stands on issues of public, common concern, and the vision of the future he is committed to bring into being, insofar as it lies with him. In this book his "thoughts, opinions, and intentions" are presented "in a single coherent whole." (xviii)

The three-fold transition announced in the Introduction serves as a structuring device for the five intermediate chapters. Chapter 2, "In a Time of Transition," considers at some length the "new constitution" that a democratic, bi-national, multi-ethnic Czechoslovakia needs to adopt to ensure its stability and prosperity. The next chapter, "What I Believe," reveals Havel's thought about the economic order Czechoslovakia should adopt, a free market one, and the steps that the federal government should take to assist in its creation and early development. "The Task of Independence" reflects upon the "idea" or "spirit" that should inform Czechoslovakia's foreign policy, its independent existence, and its distinctive contribution to a new Europe and a new global civilizational order.

These three chapters, however, are sandwiched between two remarkable chapters. The first chapter of the work is entitled "Politics, Morality, and Civility." Its teaching is fundamental for all that follows. In it, Havel testifies that in his view, his chief respon-
sibility as President and as a man is stating, repeatedly, and living and acting in accordance with this teaching: " . . . to emphasize, again and again, the moral origin of all genuine politics, to stress the significance of moral values and standards in all spheres of social life, including economics, and to explain that if we don't try, within ourselves, to discover or rediscover or cultivate what I call 'higher responsibility,' things will turn out very badly indeed for our country." (1) The rest of this twenty-page chapter spells out what he means by moral politics and a civil society.

The last chapter of the book is entitled "Beyond the Shock of Freedom." In it, Havel gives his imagination free scope to "dream" of the kind of Czechoslovakia he would like to see in "ten, fifteen, or twenty years." Not only does such a dream serve to guide reflection and action undertaken to bring it into reality, but it inspires such reflection and action, and it also gives a foretaste of the pleasures of its reality to those living today in troublesome transition times. In this way the President continues to be a dramatist-now, a dramatist about, and for, his country.

The penultimate part of the book, its Epilogue, touches "on the question of what [Czechoslovakia's] intellectual and spiritual potential is, and whether it has any distinctive features at all." (125) This investigation is required for a realistic estimation of the country's capacities to realize the vision and dream of a future that Havel earlier has limned. In Havel's view Czechoslovakia's long tradition and recent experience center around the "value" of "truth." "[T]he idea that a price must be paid for truth, the idea of truth as a moral value, has such a long tradition." (126) On this basis, drawing from this spiritual well, Czechoslovakia has a distinctive contribution to make to Europe and to mankind.

The Afterward returns full circle to the Introduction's focus on the author, Havel the President. In it, Havel candidly informs his fellow Czechoslovaks about his current thinking about whether to stand for the Presidency again. Most likely he will, but again, as always, his guiding thought and question will be what responsible service to the truth and to his fellow Czechoslovaks dictates.

One central feature of Havel's mode of thinking throughout
these considerations should be noted from the outset: its dialectical or "contrastive" character. Havel characteristically presents and develops his views by way of contrast with other views and viewpoints that bear upon his topics and issues and which oppose his own. For example, in Havel's view the authentic character and legitimacy of a free market economy is best seen against the foil of its ideological opponent, the command economy of Marxist-Leninism. The personal responsibility inherent in private ownership, the latter's capacity and calling to contribute to the common good, and the entire economic order's consonance with the plurality, unpredictable spontaneity, and mysterious course of individual and social "life" were most deeply and therefore most revealingly denied by ideologically-based state ownership and central planning. Ideology, at great cost, revealed the truth. *Ex tenebris lux.*

Two issues or questions, at least, come to mind upon hearing the foregoing synopsis. First, what is Havel's articulation of "the personal and the political"? As we duly noted, he begins and ends his reflections upon, and vision and dream for, Czechoslovakia with reflections upon himself. And throughout the book Havel himself—his deeds, and the fact that these are his reflections—resurface at regular intervals. This self-prominence, however, is not the typical politicians' self-promotion; it is inextricable from his conception of genuine politics and authentic human life, and is intended to embody and to exemplify his general teaching about personal responsibility. Moreover, this self-exemplified teaching about personal responsibility and a personal point of view is part and parcel of an even wider teaching about "life and Being." The entire universe and the entirety of human life individually and collectively are characterized by *individuality,* by what Gerard Manley Hopkins called "inscape," what one could call the distinctive, somewhat idiosyncratic "face" that each being, each locale, each community, each nation possesses. Havel the person has a personalist view of man, life, and Being. And above Being is One who remembers and judges the deeds of each and all.

One does not have to be a Machiavellian to be struck by Havel's insistence upon the fundamental importance of morality to political
life, to "genuine politics." Doesn't he know, all think to themselves and some say out loud, that it's a tough world out there, that there's evil abroad, that politics requires compromise and even, from time to time, choosing between two evils? That sometimes, in order to fight the bad, the good have to use the bad guy's techniques?

What does Havel have to say to such queries and challenges? Initially, three things. First of all, he is fully aware that his insistence on moral concerns and the moral dimensions to all human life, including political and economic life, strikes many as odd, even imprudent. He regularly states that with such talk he will appear "ridiculous," "quixotic," unrealistic, a visionary and a dreamer. Aware of the figure he cuts in many quarters, his moralism has a healthy element of self-awareness.

Havel however is undaunted by such quibbles and whispers. He has a decisive experience, an enormous political success, upon which he bases his "moralism" and which he counter-proposes to the soi-disant realists. Communism was toppled, when all is said and accounted for, by human "life" in all its unsystematic, spiritual pluralism, by "consciousness and conscience." "Truth", and the moral imperative of "living in the truth" defeated their opposites, the ultimate "realisms" of dialectical materialism and Machiavellianism. He, Havel, knows more about human and social reality than the Marxists who denied the human spirit. And he knows more about human moral and political reality and needs than the merely manipulative politicians or the political scientists who abstract from such considerations. He is the true realist and he has the data to prove it.

Moreover, recognizing the fundamental moral dimensions of man and of social life is not equivalent to what ordinarily is termed moralism. Havel, the former chain-smoking, rock-and-roll-loving man is not a dour moralist. Nor is he as a political thinker and leader. For one thing, evil will be always with us. He is fully cognizant of the presence, the current and ineradicable presence, of evil in his country, in man, and in himself. Two passages make these points. "The return of freedom to a society that was morally unhinged has produced something it clearly had to produce, and something we
therefore might have expected but which has turned out to be far more serious than anyone could have predicted: an enormous and dazzling explosion of every imaginable human vice."  (1) Havel is quite cognizant of, and candid about, "our present social marasmus." (3)

A second passage, in tones of Solzhenitsyn:

A heaven on earth in which people will love each other and, everyone is hard-working, well-mannered, and virtuous, in which the land flourishes and everything is sweetness and light, working harmoniously to the satisfaction of God: this will never be. On the contrary, the world has had the worst experiences with utopian thinkers who promised all that. Evil will remain with us, no one will ever eliminate human suffering, the political arena will always attract irresponsible and ambitious adventurers and charlatans. And man will not stop destroying the world. In this regard, I have no illusions.

Neither I nor anyone else will ever win this war once and for all. At the very most, we can win a battle or two-and not even that is certain. . . . It is an eternal, never-ending struggle waged not just by good people (among whom I count myself, more or less) against evil people, by . . . people who think about the world and eternity against people who think only of themselves and the moment. It takes place inside everyone. It is what makes a person a person, and life, life. (16)

Havel's "moralism" is, therefore, quite realistic: morality is real, but not easy to realize. Nor does it obviously predominate in the world. And immorality, latent and actual, will be with us always. But most importantly, one must see that reality is moral, both in the actuality of deeds and character traits and as attractive ideals, high standards, and inner imperatives "from above." Not to see this is to discredit oneself as a realist.

The personal and the political, the moral and the political: these are two sets of topics that Havel himself insistently brings to our
attention. We have to explore them much more fully. In addition, we must take a longer, closer look at the contents of the book, its arguments, and the conclusions to which its author comes. To these tasks we now turn.

Chapter One: Havel's "Genuine Politics," Moral Realism, and the Moral Drama of Czechoslovakian Politics

The Title and the General Teaching

Havel's first chapter, as we said, is entitled "Politics, Morality, and Civility." The three main words indicate broadly its topics and thesis. Politics in truth ("genuine politics") is a particular, and particularly important, form of morality. Morality in turn is understood formally and generally as freely accepted, conscientious "higher responsibility" for, and services to, one's fellows and the various wholes within which we live, move, and have our being. Havel's designation for such a politics is a politics of "culture" or "civility." Civility is personal action and, ultimately, an entire society, informed by a specific view of the proper character of individuals' "relations" (14) to themselves and others, to the natural and man-made orders, and to the ultimate Spectator and Judge of men's deeds. It is a world-view and an anthropology habitually expressed in conscientious action that has in mind and bears upon the collective life of the national community.

Havel's term "civility" has important points of contact with the French moeurs, especially as used by the farsighted explorers of democratic man and society, Rousseau and Tocqueville. These authors noted that various peoples' "characters," their bent of mind and cast of heart, and the general tenor of their interpersonal relations, were decisive for the quality and viability of their social-political orders. Like all sorts of regimes, democratic orders require suitable, sustaining public and private mores. The legislator, the statesman, the politician, all leading figures in the community, including artists, should be aware of this need and work in their various ways to meet it.

Havel, too, prefers and encourages certain "habits of the heart."
Chiefly, he calls for each individual’s personal “respect” and “responsibility” for the well-being of all the individuals of one’s national community, both past and future members as well as present ones, not to mention brutes, mother earth and starry cosmos, and ultimately humble, grateful acknowledgment of the mysterious Source of Being, life, and consciousness. Modern man’s hubristic, reductionistic, unduly “systematic,” technological attitude toward Being, life, and (worse) to man himself must be replaced by a more “authentic” attitude of humility before life and its mysteries. The modern attitude must be replaced by a freely assumed care for all that is.

Because “responsibility” frequently has a leaden cast to it in today’s parlance, it is important to recognize that for Havel it has no dull gray edge; it is as far from a mechanical and unimaginative operation as is possible. It requires discernment, tact, taste, invention, eutrapelia (“good adjustment”). It aims at and yields an individual life, and a human and natural world, characterized by the beautiful, the fitting, the decent, the charming, the clean, even the wonderfully idiosyncratic and plural. The world of individuals that responsibility recognizes and responds to, toils in, enhances, and luxuriates in, is a garden of pleasures large and small, rare and regular.

This said, one also must note that it is based squarely on reason and rational discernment, appreciation, and assessment. Havel’s romance of responsible being-in-the-world is reason’s and Being’s, not the creative self’s. Respect for the rational dignity of one’s fellows, for the mysterious, profuse variety and harmony of Nature’s individual creations, and for both’s Source, is based on a rational recognition of each life’s individuality and dignity within the admittedly “mysterious order of Being.”

In Chapter 5 Havel will sketch at greater length the anthropology that grounds and contains this “civil,” responsible character. In Chapter 1 the ground is merely asserted: each human being’s rational freedom and dignity, and the spiritual conviction that there exists a Supreme Spirit above who judges and retains for eternity the quality of men’s deeds.”
The personal cultivation and practice of this form of human existence and its encouragement throughout society are always imperative and desirable, but they are now particularly urgent because Czechoslovakia is currently experiencing a "general crisis of civility." (2)

The Czechoslovakian Particulars, Articulated in Political-Moral Terms

The foregoing succinct rendition of his topics and thesis, however, fails to capture major elements of Havel's thought and the full panorama he surveys during the course of this opening chapter. The presentation has been too abstract; too anonymous, as it were. Havel's general teaching is always about individual human beings and is addressed to them in particular. Therefore we must note the one grand "individual" he considers during the course of the chapter—his country, Czechoslovakia. He does so, however, via two tripartite schemas. On one hand, he locates Czechoslovakia on a temporal grid. He considers Czechoslovakia's recent totalitarian past, its current, transitional present, and limns its futures, desirable and otherwise. On the other hand, Czechoslovakia is populated by three segments or sorts of human beings: Havel himself (and a few like-minded friends); "politicians" (unfortunately many of whom are short-sighted, weak, and worse); and the "people" who are a reservoir of "goodwill," but are rather confused and in danger of serious disorientation and discouragement in the face of the dismal scene and daunting tasks they and the political class confront.

Havel's picture of his country is emphatically politically minded or focused. He speaks of regimes, citizenry, political class, and partisanship of all sorts. This is not surprising coming from a President, but it is worthy of note and reflection, nonetheless. Would other perspectives and categorizations yield different results? Of course. How then should they be integrated, prioritized? Is the political perspective sovereign, authoritative, as in Aristotle? There will be evidence to this effect later.

What unites each, and both, of these trios is Havel's moral concern and the moral categories he employs and detects in his
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The consideration of each and all. A brief survey makes this clear enough. Totalitarian Czechoslovakian society was "morally unhinged" (1) and "the former regime systematically mobilized the worst human qualities." (4) Today Havel is compelled to refer to and to outline "our present social marasmus," (3) in large part consisting in an "enormous and dazzling explosion of every imaginable human vice." (1) The future, in contrast, should see the erection of "a new order that would limit rather than exploit ... vices, an order based on freely accepted responsibility to and for the whole of society." (ibid.) And in the same vein, while speaking of "our political scene," (2) he notes that, among other ills, "demagogy is rife," (3) and that "citizens are becoming more and more disgusted with all this," (ibid.), their latent "goodwill" is in danger of becoming discouraged. (Later we will consider Havel's insistence upon the importance of courage in the moral life.) Nonetheless, Havel intends to remain firm and true to himself: "If a handful of friends and I were able to bang our heads against the wall for years by speaking the truth about Communist totalitarianism while surrounded by an ocean of apathy, there is no reason why I shouldn't go on banging my head against the wall by speaking ad nauseam, despite condescending smiles, about responsibility and morality in the face of our present social marasmus." (3)

Havel's political vocabulary is emphatically, inexhaustibly, moral. The various modes and strands of his discourse-analysis, encouragement and exhortation, sarcasm, prediction, judgment, praise and blame, the limning of desirable and undesirable futures—all draw continually from a moral lexicon of virtue and vice, values and standards, ideals, good and evil. While particular Havelian judgments may be questionable, who would want to call into question totally the realities such a vocabulary describes? Political reality is through-and-through moral reality, Havel reminds us most insistently.

The Dialogic and Dramatic Character of Havel's Thought

Even these somewhat extended initial reflections fail to grasp the deepest character of Havel's first chapter and the thought constructing it, the kind of thinking that runs throughout it. The first sentence
of the chapter, however, begins to indicate its deepest character and concern. His doctrine, an unabashed defense of moral politics, of "politics subordinate to conscience," will appear to some as "quixotic" and "ridiculous," Havel declares from the outset. He is acutely aware that his is not the only view of politics, of the political arena, and of political action. Aware of how he and his moralizing view appear to some others, he is also aware of other views of the relationship between politics and morality.

Accordingly, Havel's presentation and apologia of his view is a discrete confrontation with other forms of political thought and action. For example, the ideologist par excellence, the Marxist who denies not only the primacy but even the independent reality of conscience and consciousness in human life appears in these pages. So too does the cynic for whom "morality" is always in scare-quotes and is not an elevating master to serve, but rather an instrument to employ, chiefly in deceptive appeals and protective coverings. The power-hungry, "unadulterated[ly] ambitious" (2) politician; the mere partisan (including the mere nationalist); the political scientist attached to a view of science that has no room to recognize, much less educate, conscience: these, and others, appear in Havel's ostensibly prosaic description of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakian reality produces morally distinguished characters aplenty.

That is, they appear as characters in the current drama of Czechoslovakian and Havelian politics. Havel's, of course, is the chief point of view looking upon, and the most prominent agent on, the scene he depicts, but he lends his voice to others and articulates their views and viewpoints, as well as their character. He is a partisan of morality who knows what is going on around him, who does not flinch before morality-in-politics deniers, and gives them their due role in the action.

The upshot of this incorporation and confrontation with others is to present contemporary Czechoslovakia as a morality play, constituted by a cast of agents contending with one another for ascendancy in the country, contending over the fundamental issues of what kind of constitutional order and country they will bring into being and what type of human being will predominate therein.
Havel himself has a script of the future he would like to see realized, but he is not the sole author of Czechoslovakia’s future. Its citizens and political class have their considerable roles to play. At best, this president-playwright can duly note and describe each actor, appeal to the best in all, and warn of the evil with which each has to contend, both within and without. The future is open, precisely because man is a rational being of conscience; the drama is a work-in-progress for the same reason. The citizens of Czechoslovakia share with Havel the dual roles of dramatist and actor in their own play.

*Havel’s Script, the Initial Version*

So how would Havel write, or script, Czechoslovakia’s best course of action and its optimal future? The rest of the book, and especially Chapter 5, plots the course’s main lines and details the last scene. But Chapter 1 gives more than an initial hint and assigns to each major actor his “better-self” role. Havel describes the characteristics and duties of “politicians” who act after his image and likeness. These, as is required and proper in a democratic society, serve the “people,” whom they both reflect and improve. And interacting with both is the president-dramatist, who presents himself as a model for both, and provides the indispensable assistance of articulating the moral vision of the whole they are and ought to be, what he calls “the moral state.” (9) Havel plays a leading role as the exemplary cause of a moralized political class and a decent citizenry.

One therefore needs to start with the exemplar, Havel himself, and how he sees and practices his role as a conscientious President. The foundation is ever the same: political office is an opportunity to serve his fellow Czechoslovaks. But the political arena and the Presidential office are a special venue and particular opportunity for this service. What are its special traits?

“What can I do, as president, not only to remain faithful to [my] notion of politics, but also to bring it to at least partial fruition?” Havel asks.

He answers, “As in everything else, I must start with myself. That is: in all circumstances try to be decent, just, tolerant, and understanding, and at the same time try to resist corruption and deception.
In other words, I must do my utmost to act in harmony with my conscience and my better self. (6-7) The convinced preacher first must live his convictions and practice what he preaches. His public teaching was first intended for himself. *Contemplata alis tradere.*

There is another reason why he must walk the walk he exhorts others to march. A general principle requires that means be proportionate to their ends, that ends dictate their necessary and fitting means. If he envisages a certain result of his (and others') activity, which is a political class and a social order of conscientious agents, then he now must act in the way he hopes the future to be. "There is only one way to strive for decency, reason, responsibility, sincerity, civility, and tolerance, and that is decently, reasonably, responsibly, sincerely, civilly, and tolerably." (8)

What does he do, however, in this mode? As President, Havel's chief activity, remarkably, is speaking. This is not so surprising if we remember or believe that man is the political animal because the talking one. (22) The President's talk naturally is directed to two sorts of audiences, the populace as a whole and his fellow members of the political class, especially those involved in "so-called high politics." To the former he incessantly reiterates the truth that all social and political issues, coming as they do from men and intended to benefit them, have moral dimensions and involve the search for and realization of values, standards, ideals. He says this endlessly because he himself never fails to rediscover this truth as he analyzes the endless succession of problems that he confronts in his office and in his country during this difficult time of transition. He knows this truth and he constantly rediscovers it in his work. The same will be true for others.

Even in the best of times this truth is true and would bear repeating. But now in the face of daunting tasks of reconstruction and the baleful examples around and above them, the people's goodwill especially needs reassurance on this point. Not merely the reassurance that "the good and right" (17) things are good and right-the people basically know this. Rather, the people need to be reminded that doing the good and right "makes sense," even in the face of the opposition of "evil-minded" men. If they put their minds
and muscles to it, he reassures them, they may win a victory over these hostile forces. It is premature to declare defeat at the mere sight of enemies; and it is cowardly to withdraw. Living in the truth regularly requires the exercise of courage. This truth about morality's vulnerable status in human life, its need for risky assistance, is an essential element of Havel's own hard-fought, hard-won wisdom. The people need to hear it. And from him they do.

While speaking to his fellow politicians, Havel, of course, does not change this tune. But he does modulate his rhythm and delivery. Against those who claim that negotiations and the like require "intrigue" and, worse, "lying," (10) he is adamant: Not so. The truth does not need to be so compromised at the highest levels of politics, nor does one's integrity as a speaker or truth-teller need to be. However, do not then assume that one must be a naif among wolves. Tact, a sense of timing, what he calls "good taste," an ability to shift topics from serious to light and back, knowing when to be silent—the moral politician can and should possess and exercise all these qualities. General knowledge, of economics for example, is useful, even "an invaluable asset to any politician," (11) but it cannot supply the feel for particular times, individuals, and situations that the working politician has to have, and to which he responds.

The same is true in the field of deeds—"how to plan your official journeys judiciously and to know when it is more appropriate not to go somewhere"—for instance. (ibid.) All of this emphasis on particulars as circumscribing speech and deed, and on eutrapelia to face varied individual situations, flows from Havel's general (sit venia verbo) philosophical, even metaphysical, view that Being and life have infinite distinct individuals, each with a unique face and form. To be sure, they can be put in classes, but deeper thought recognizes the reality of individuality, especially human individuality. Tocqueville shared this view of the slight, but definite, tipping of scales towards the individual over the general or class. Moreover, human individuals and the lives they lead, the social life they compose, change dramatically, mysteriously, unfathomably. The "flow of life . . . is always taking us by surprise[; it remains an ongoing.] permanent challenge to the human spirit." (67) Havel therefore is
always keen to assess and to respond appropriately to the particular.
As a politician, he still has need to exercise the dramatist's sense of
the individual, of timing, and of staging.
In Chapter 5 Havel envisages a "new generation of politicians"
in Czechoslovakia who were not malformed by the totalitarian
system. Chapter 1, however, already seeks and addresses them and
states their chief qualities and qualifications. The list he provides
both is and is not surprising. Unsurprising because it embodies what
we already have seen and heard in Havel himself. Surprising
because of how conventionally "unpolitical"—for example,
undesirous of power—these are said to be.
To sum up: if your heart is in the right place and you have good
taste, not only will you pass muster in politics, you are destined for
it. If you are modest and do not lust after power, not only are you
suited to politics, you absolutely belong there. The *sine qua non*
of a politician is not the ability to lie; he need only be sensitive and
know when, what, to whom and how to say what he has to say. It
is not true that a person of principle does not belong in politics; it
is enough for his principles to be leavened with patience, deliberation, a sense of proportion, and an understanding of
others. (11-12)
The foregoing character sketch and advice to others is, we see, first
of all a self-portrait, or at least the image and standard to which the
President holds himself.
What is wrong with lust for power? Quite simply, it, as does any
other lust, eclipses conscience in its subject. He is "bound" by it and
not by conscience. Following conscience means that one is "essen-
tially freer" than those subject to other gods or demons.
One can wonder why Havel thinks that conscientious younger
men and women will put themselves forward to serve their country
as politicians? In large part he trusts in youthful idealism, the mode
of moral imagination that imagines oneself and others as participants
in a higher mode of existence, without too close a look at the
obstacles to its realization, to the costs it may require. Havel,
however, does his best to instruct them about the risks and dangers
Vaclav Havel's Summer Meditations 1993 presents the greatest sorts of temptation of any career. (10) And it always will attract immoralists of various sorts. The political arena is one of combat. Havel’s youthful (and other) readers thus are deftly instructed about the moral greatness and misery of man. They should be confident in the rightness of their aspirations and not surprised by, but rather fully aware of, obstacles and pitfalls inherent in this high vocation.

Havel walks a fine line between encouragement and tempering. Finally, however, he does not believe the politician’s task and way of life is impossible, much less intrinsically disreputable. In good conscience he can seek to attract the better sorts, to appeal to their sense of higher responsibility, by speaking of the moral grandeur and challenge, of the great import and general focus of the politician’s work. "Those in politics have a heightened responsibility for the moral state of society." (4) Why so? "It is largely up to politicians which social forces they choose to liberate and which they choose to suppress, whether they rely on the good in each citizen or on the bad. It is their responsibility to seek out the best in that society, and to develop it and strengthen it." (ibid.) With love of their country and countrymen burning in their breasts and a deep desire to serve others, politics are their natural arena, their natural outlet.

One also may wonder, what more specifically this new generation of politicians is to be and, especially, to do? Havel’s general view is conveyed in the "deed"17 which is Summer Meditations as he provides moral encouragement and practical proposals, constitutional and economic, to his fellow Czechoslovaks. But one can detect it also indirectly, in terms of his description and criticisms of current bad politicians. I’ll simply translate the contrary of their bad traits. Good ones work for a truly "civil society" based on the citizen and recognizing all fundamental civil and human rights in their universal validity, equally applied.” (31-32) They therefore fight bad nationalism, racism, and Fascism. Good ones work for "the common interest of society" and thus transcend "purely particular interests.” (2) Good ones are moderate, not fanatical. Good ones work with politicians of "different political parties” to arrive, consensually, at
"pragmatic," "reasonable and useful solutions to problems." *(ibid.)* Good ones hew to "a set of established, gentlemanly, unbendable rules." *(103)* Intrigue and deceit are left to the vulgar and the charlatans, to those who merely seek office, not service.

Havel concludes this chapter with a sketch of the kind of future he envisages for Czechoslovakia, the sort of country, state, and citizenry he is working for. The end in mind has two basic dimensions, captured and conveyed in an ambiguity in his use of the term "state." On one hand, the "state" is the various democratic and constitutional forms and procedures, a market economy, and other "mechanisms" devised by the human spirit—the modern human spirit one could add—that aim at expressing that spirit’s dignity and ensuring its security. On this basis, Havel sees no contradiction between the free market and democratically decided social provision "for those who, for various reasons, find themselves at the bottom of society." *(18)*

This "democratic state based on the rule of law," however, is not and cannot be self-sustaining. "The best laws and the best-conceived democratic mechanisms will not in themselves guarantee legality or freedom or human rights—anything, in short, for which they were intended—if they are not underpinned by certain human and social values." *(ibid.)* This truism leads Havel to call upon his fellow Czechoslovaks therefore "at the same time [to] build a state that is—regardless of how unscientific they may sound to the ears of a political scientist—humane, moral, intellectual and spiritual, and cultural." *(ibid.)* In other words, we need "to remind ourselves of the meaning of the state, which is, and must remain, truly human which means that it must be intellectual, spiritual, and moral." *(19)*

In this regard Havel is particularly keen to remind his readers that such a state requires a citizenry that "is willing, if necessary, to fight for [it] or make sacrifices for [it]." He insists that the "law and other democratic institutions ensure little if they are not backed up by the willingness and courage of decent people to guard against their abuse." *(ibid.)* Clarity of moral vision and discernment is not enough. Courage is "the good and the right[’s]" necessary attendant.
Given that the end is a certain kind of citizenry and a certain sort of politics, and not merely proper vehicles of collective action, the means to the end share in the latter’s character, as we have already seen. “A moral and intellectual state cannot be established through a constitution, or through law, or through directives, but only through complex, long-term, and never-ending work involving education and self-education. . . . It is a way of going about things, and it demands the courage to breathe moral and spiritual motivation into everything, to seek the human dimension in all things.” (20)

How exhilarating! How enticing! Politics as a form of education and self-education. Political activity at its responsible core requires, and enables, one to come to self-knowledge, and knowledge of one’s fellows, and to distribute these fruit to others.

Happily, at this point in human history, some precious fruit has been harvested. We now are in possession of certain “ideas” that “extricate human beings from the straitjacket of ideological interpretations, and . . . rehabilitate them as subjects of individual conscience, of individual thinking backed up by experience, of individual responsibility.” (128) One of these ideas, however, is the humbling (and awe-inspiring) view of “life [as] infinitely and mysteriously multiform.” (62) As such, “the flow of life . . . is always taking us by surprise; it is a] permanent challenge to the human spirit.” (67) We must be continually alert to update and to deepen what we already know, and to find ways to apply this “knowledge of life” to and to realize what we learn in-regularly shifting situations and circumstances.

The Moralist’s Caveats

The central point has been made, perhaps overemphasized: Havel’s political vision is a moral vision. He appeals to man’s better nature, all the time, in all things.

Yet he disclaims being a “dreamer”—that is, someone who believes that the pie in the sky can be brought down to earth and each and every one of us can have whatever slice he desires. He knows the difference between a beautiful dream and the full moral range of reality, which includes immorality of various sorts and intensity. The
moralist is girded for "struggle" and battle and alerts his actual and potential allies to dangers that lie before them.

"My experience and observations confirm that politics as the practice of morality is possible. I do not deny, however, that it is not always easy to go that route, nor have I ever claimed that it was." (12)

"[P]olitics is not essentially a disreputable business; and to the extent it is, it is only disreputable people who make it so. I would concede that it can, more than other spheres of activity, tempt one to disreputable practices, and that it therefore places higher demands on people." (10)

Watch and judge your peers: "the vain, the brash, and the vulgar .. such people, it is true, are drawn to politics." (12) In fact, "the political arena will always attract irresponsible and ambitious adventurers and charlatans." (16)

And finally, the most sober, yet manly words:

If I talk here about my political-or, more precisely, my civil-program, about my notion of the kind of politics and values and ideals I wish to struggle for, this is not to say that I am entertaining the naive hope that this struggle may one day be over. A heaven on earth in which people all love each other and everyone is hard-working, well-mannered, and virtuous, in which the land flourishes and everything is sweetness and light, working harmoniously to the satisfaction of God: this will never be. On the contrary, the world has had the worst experiences with utopian thinkers who promised all that. Evil will remain with us, no one will ever eliminate human suffering, the political arena will always attract irresponsible and ambitious adventurers and charlatans. And man will not stop destroying the world. In this regard, I have no illusions.

Neither I nor anyone else will ever win this war once and for all. At the very most, we can win a battle or two-and not even that is certain. Yet I still think it makes sense to wage this war persistently. It has been waged for centuries, and it will continue to be waged-we hope-for centuries to come. This must be
done on principle, because it is the right thing to do. Or, if you like, because God wants it that way. It is an eternal, never-ending struggle waged not just by good people (among whom I count myself, more or less) against evil people, by honourable people against dishonourable people, by people who think about the world and eternity against people who think only of themselves and the moment. It takes place inside everyone. It is what makes a person a person, and life, life.

So anyone who claims that I am a dreamer who expects to transform hell into heaven is wrong. I have few illusions. But I feel a responsibility to work towards the things I consider good and right. I don't know whether I'll be able to change certain things for the better, or not at all. Both outcomes are possible. There is only one thing I will not concede: that it might be meaningless to strive in a good cause. (16-17)

Chapter Two: Havel's "Authentic" Constitutionalism

Chapter 2 is entitled "In a Time of Transition." The current crop of elected federal officials is midway through its two-year term of office. Their general task has been indicated, even determined, by the fact that they find "themselves in a transitional period, when everything—from a constitutional and legal system to a pluralistic political spectrum—[is], in fact, being reborn." (21) "The main task of Parliament" (ibid.) is "the creation and ratification of a new constitution" (24) which will be "the cornerstone of our democratic state." (21)

During the course of this chapter Havel contrasts his views against those of two others. On one hand, the people fail to see the fundamental importance of a good constitution for their future well-being and prosperity. This is understandable. Under the previous regime, the constitution and its structures and guarantees meant nothing, they were the wax nose of authority that could be pulled and twisted in any direction by the Party and its lackeys.

On the other hand, and more ominously, are the "separatists," chiefly Slovaks, who desire and are working towards the dismember-
ing of unified Czechoslovakia. The constitutional order they seek is one with two independent nation-states. Not a federation at all.

In opposition to both Havel presents the case "that in our situation almost everything depends on the nascent constitutional system-or is at least related to it in some way." (25; italics added) And he states at length his reasons for being "unequivocally in favour of the federal state." (34) Such a state, though, must be an expression of "authentic federal[ism]." "An authentic, democratic federation" "is the expression of a common will and a free decision; it is something created together, a common job to be done, a structure that exists to help the republics, to augment their sovereignty and their potential. It is a bond that exists because it is to the advantage of both sides." (42) Havel's chief task in this chapter is to instruct all concerned parties in what such constitutionalism is, and why it is fully consonant with their legitimate aspirations and better selves.

The outline of his argument in this chapter is structured by his assessment of the character and needs of his two main audiences. A first part seeks to convince the people of the great import of the constitutional order in, and as an instrument of, their lives. They ought to be vitally concerned about the "form" or "shape" given to the federal state, as it will decisively bear upon the quality of their lives as nationalities, homines economici, and most importantly, as democratic men and women fundamentally responsible for their country's condition.

A second part instructs fervent nationalists that national sovereignty is only legitimate when expressly subordinate to universal norms of human rights. Moreover, such sovereignty can be enhanced when yoked to a partner and collaborating in a federal structure. The historical union of the Czechs and Slovaks can, and should, be strengthened for their common benefit.

A third section sketches Havel's proposed federal state, its organs, their powers, and interrelations, and the principles informing this layout. His structures and principles are by and large quintessentially modern ones-including separation of powers and a strengthened executive to resist legislative tyranny and to ensure governmental stability and continuity. In advocating them Havel
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displays his awareness that structures must help to check human vice. A mere dependence upon human virtue in politics is unrealistic.

However, in no way does Havel depend on structures for good government. These structures are the homage virtue pays to vice, but virtue remains in the ascendency in Havel's view. Or it would be, if we listened to Havel's teaching, or men listened to their consciences.

Not surprisingly, Havel sees many dimensions to the task of building such structures. "This is not just a legislative task. It is a great political task." And because Havelian politics are always matters of conscience and the spirit, it is "therefore a psychological and moral task." (43) His discussion in Chapter 2 accordingly moves between the poles of consideration of such apparently technical questions as the number of representatives in each representative body or the electoral law, and profound reflections on "the category of `home` which belongs to "what modern philosophers call the `natural world.´" (30)

In this chapter Havel continues the description and the political education of the people that he began in Chapter 1. "Many people ... may see a constitution as something highly theoretical, abstract, out of touch with reality, of interest to politicians but with no direct effect on their own lives." (24) How telling. The people think that they are "realists." They are concerned with "reality." What exists or goes on outside them is merely abstract, theoretical, i.e., of no interest to them-the sort of thing people who have leisure or who aren't serious about real life concern themselves with. *De gustibus non disputandum est.*

Or perhaps it's their job. Politicians, of course, have to be "interested" in such things. But even here, their dealings have next to no impact or "direct effect" on "reality," the people's lives. So they believe.

Between Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 Havel has presented a people who distinguish and relate themselves to those set above them, the political class. They are afraid that those above them are immorally getting away with murder, or at least lining their pockets at the public's expense. Afraid of being taken for moral fools, they need
and seek the reassurance of the prominent, political "world" for the
rightness—and possible victory—of their "goodwill." (9)

They also are rather enclosed in their immediate material
circumstances and concerns. They consider these to be "reality."
Whatever is outside is less real, and really doesn't strike home. In any
event "what is more important to people" is their economic condi-
tions and prospects.

In short, the people are too narrowly materialistic and too
diffidently moral. They are human, to be sure-for to have con-
sciences and needy, working bodies is to be human. But they seem
not to be especially political—in Havel's sense of conscientious
service to the greater community. Rather too much immediate or
proximate material concern, not enough moral confidence and
political savvy: this is the populace Havel limns, addresses, and
instructs. "[O]ur society needs to learn how to think of itself in
political terms once more." (61)

Constitutionalism thus is the perfect topic to widen their hori-
zons, to show them a higher way of existence, one that is political or
civic, not merely economic or narrowly moral (a la Tocqueville's
"individualism," in which the narrow-minded, narrow-hearted demo-
ocratic individual focuses almost exclusively on self and a narrow
circle of family and friends). Having presented his first audience in
this way, Havel not surprisingly connects the issue of the constitution
to both dimensions he discerns in them, somatic and psychic. Man,
after all, is an angel in the form of a brute.

Havel makes an initial, quick case for the import of the new
constitution, one conveyed on one page of text. (25) In it he seeks
everyone's attention, at several levels. Will Czechoslovakia remain "a
single country" or not? The Constitution will express this choice.
National feelings and national realities, Czech, Slovak, and Czecho-
slovakian, are clearly more than material concerns and dimensions,
yet they are but the rough blocks of politics as Havel conceives them.
Certainly they are not, as such, subject to conscience, the sovereign
of sovereigns. 35 The Constitution will be the deliberate expression
of how the citizens of the two republics articulate these three: nation,
conscience, and politics.
The Constitution will bear, importantly, upon the process of "economic reform." Both Czechs and Slovaks desire to eat and to prosper. Their material concerns naturally link them to constitutional ones.

The last two areas that Havel points to in connection with the constitutional decision are expressly political. They indicate the centrality of the political articulation of nations and their members, and of *homines economici* in their various economic roles and contributions. "What kind of people will lead our country and what powers they will have; what influence citizens will have on how they are governed." Both "depend . . . on the nascent constitutional system." Nations need leaders, the better the latter, the better the former. Producers and consumers are also citizens, not totalitarian slaves or administrative subjects. The Constitution is the authoritative articulation of leaders and led, of politics and economics. Well composed, its elements will be, too.

Two last points in Havel's quick case press home the initial lesson of the import of the constitutional "form" or "shape" given to the political order. The constitutional question (and answer) of "the division of powers" touches each and all. "Nothing in a citizen's everyday life is unaffected by this." Particularly important is the level at which decisions are made. Havel in Chapter 5 states his preference for "a highly decentralized state with confident local governments." "People's primary interest [should] be in local elections rather than the parliamentary ones." (103) This preference is for the sake of good government and good citizens. Once again, the parallel with Tocqueville recommendations to democratic citizens and politicians is striking. Genuine politics, authentic federalism, mean that sub-federal politics are vigorous. This preference, to be sure, goes hand in hand with a recognition of legitimate federal concerns, powers, and tasks.

Finally, all realize that "the rule of law is back." A little reflection reveals that the quality of such laws "depends above all on the constitution, from which all laws are derived." The structure of offices and powers, the forms and procedures of election: these will filter, somewhat, those who ascend to power and further guide and
shape their performance once there. These obvious remarks obviously leave much to be further specified, especially the specific forms Havel would like to see in place, and his account of how they do their all-important work. These issues and Havel's addressing of them resurface shortly. For now, he has his reader-populace thinking politically, taking with utmost seriousness constitutional questions.

As he reveals his thinking on these constitutional questions Havel continues to guide and to instruct his fellow citizens. Now however, after these preliminaries, the burning question must be confronted and addressed at length.

"The basic question around which the drafting of a federal constitution revolves today . . . is what constitutional form our country will adopt, or, more precisely, what relationship will exist between the two peoples-the Czechs and the Slovaks-and the two republics that now form the federation." (26)

Havel tackles this question at its most problematic point, which is the Slovakian national desire for autonomy, the desire of the Slovaks to be "a completely autonomous community that . . . make[s] decisions about its own affairs at home." (29) Havel claims to understand this desire, in its de facto historical roots and actual aspects and in its de jure principled dimensions. In their "historical existence . . . the Slovaks have always felt that they were an overlooked and forgotten smaller and weaker brother, condemned to live in the bigger and stronger brother's shadow." (27) Now, with the collapse of Communism and with "the democratic revolution" they especially feel "an aversion to the fact that the centre of power over Slovakia is somewhere outside its territory-and is, moreover, on the territory of its bigger and older and rich brother." "This Slovak attitude" Havel "understand[s] completely." (28) Moreover, "such a will to autonomy is, of course, entirely legitimate." (29)

What Havel adds to this sympathetic understanding is a further range of thoughts, all adding up to what one could call "mature, responsible nationalism," which combines recognition of and respect for particular historical characteristics and allegiances together with universal principles of communal life. In general it is
true that "all nations must go through a phase of national self-awareness and, related to that, a phase of struggle for a state of their own, and they must experience national sovereignty before they can mature to the point of realizing that membership in supranational bodies based on the notion of a civil society not only does not suppress their national identity and sovereignty, but in a sense extends it, strengthens it, and nurtures it." (ibid.) The unified state of Czechoslovakia is one such supranational body that Slovaks and the Czechs should belong to.

Havel's principles center around the concepts of "home" and "civil society." Mature, responsible nationalism finds its proper place within the context provided by these two doctrines of philosophy, the former initiated by Husserl, the latter grounded in "modern humanity's" understanding of "universal human and civil rights." "For everyone, home is a basic existential experience ... home (in the philosophical sense of the word) can be compared to a set of concentric circles, with one's 'I' at the center." (30) These circles range from one's abode, village, workplace, family, and friends to one's country, one's nationality, and to one's citizenship. "Beyond that, my home is Europe and my Europeanness and ultimately-it is this world and its present civilization and for that matter the universe." (31)

The guiding principle is this: "Every circle, every aspect of the human home, has to be given its due. It makes no sense to deny or forcibly exclude any one stratum for the sake of another; none should be regarded as less important or inferior. They are part of our natural world, and a properly organized society has to respect them all and give them all the chance to play their roles. This is the only way that room can be made for people to realize themselves freely as human beings, to exercise their identities. All the circles of our home, indeed our whole natural world, are an inalienable part of us, and an inseparable element of our human identity. Deprived of all the aspects of his home, man would be deprived of himself, of his humanity." (ibid.)

The "proper" way to respect all the dimensions of the human person and his home is to establish a "civil society" and state that are
informed by the great idea of the individual and his inalienable rights. The nationality-based state perforce must deny the deep truth about men that all are persons worthy of respect, all sovereign centers of conscience and agency. Certainly "civil society" must be "based on the universality of human rights." (32) But to deny citizenship on the basis of nationality is to fail to see that the sovereignty of the human being "finds its primary, most natural, and most universal expression in citizenship, in the broadest and deepest sense of that word." (33) Men are naturally, universally, called to be citizens, in virtue of their "individuality" and personal nature, not their nationality.

Here Havel comes near to Aristotle's affirmation and understanding of man's political nature. Left behind are Hobbes' and Locke's notion of man the artificial citizen. Being a conscientious participant in a political community's self-rule and ongoing life is natural to man. Citizenship is a deep expression of what we are, responsible caretakers of others, and not principally an external necessity, one owing to threats to self and some other like-minded others with whom one contracts.

Chapter Three: Ideas versus Ideologies; The Free Mind versus Ideological "Mentalities"

Chapter 3's ostensible and substantive topics are the free market economy and what the federal government can and should do to bring it fully into being. Here too, as elsewhere, Havel conceives of the economic order (and government's relationship to it) in distinctive terms, the terms of "conscience" and "responsibility." These topics, however, elicit from Havel additional new thoughts and emphases, thus enlarging his presentation of the core terms of his vocabulary.

The new terms are "natural," "life," and the apparently prosaic "ownership." These terms are appropriate in the context of economics because Havel wants to distinguish his views from two other views of the economic order. These terms and concepts, these realities, are set in contrast to both Communism's centrally planned
command economy and doctrinaire free market economics. The latter two share in the genus, ideology, any "closed, ready-made system of presuppositions about the world." (60) "Systematically" or "chemically pure" "theory" is Havel's *bête noire*, especially when any such thinking is used as a warrant to force "life," individual and social, into its mold.

Against self-satisfied, strait-jacket systems, Havel opposes certain "ideas": of "human nature" and what's "natural," of human "life" and its mysterious plurality and "flow," and of personal, that is, conscientious, "ownership." These ideas have in common that they acknowledge that the realities they point to elude systematic grasp and regimentation. They have in common the view that man is a person with conscience, the capacity and call for "higher responsibility." The Marxist-Leninist command economy, of course, was the chief version of this denial and assault on the naturalness of personal ownership and on life's dramatic, unpredictable character. But the free market itself, which at its best instantiates these truths, can be viewed through ideological lenses, too.

Fundamentally, then, in this chapter Havel continues his phenomenology of intellectual and social life, his depiction and analysis of various "mentalisties" and how they view the world, in this case, economic life. Against two dogmatic mind-sets, sure of the validity of their systems of thought, of their grasp of the "laws" of economic and social life, he presents a free mind: in fact, he embodies it. Neither ideologies, nor labels, nor party-positions capture his "independent," "open" mind and dictate its revisable "picture of the world." (60) Insofar as he conceives general ideas, these ideas are predicated upon the view that men are persons, "subject of individual conscience, of individual thinking backed up by experience, of individual responsibility." (128) His general ideas never lose sight of the reality of individuality and of each person's "consciousness and conscience.

Havel's commitment to a free market is second to none. "I am as aware as the most right-wing of right-wingers that the only way to the economic salvation of this country, to its gradual recovery and, ultimately, to real economic development, is the fastest possible
renewal of a market economy.” (63) It is of long standing. “I have always known that the only economic system that works is a market economy.” (62) The short answer to the question of why he believes this is because “it is the system that best corresponds to human nature.” (65) But such an answer leaves unaddressed what this system is in Havel’s view, and how it is suitable to what we are.

A market economy is one “in which everything belongs to someone—which means that someone is responsible for everything. It is a system in which complete independence and plurality of economic enterprises exist within a legal framework, and its workings are guided chiefly by the laws of the marketplace.” (62) This explanation of what he means by a market economy begins to explain why he believes that it is the only workable one. Ownership entails responsibility. (69) This Havelian observation comes as no surprise. Aristotle made the same observation many centuries ago.

Likewise, the “plurality” (and independence) of economic enterprises of all sorts and scales is consonant with the pluralism inherent in spiritual life, the tremendous and legitimate variety of individual, idiosyncratic talents, dispositions, and behaviors.

Finally, “This is the only natural economy, the only kind that makes sense, the only one that can lead to prosperity, because it is the only one that reflects the nature of life itself. The essence of life is infinitely and mysteriously multiform, and therefore it cannot be contained or planned for, in its fullness and variability, by any central intelligence.

“The attempt to unite all economic entities under the authority of a single monstrous owner, the state, and to subject all economic life to one central voice of reason that deems itself more clever than life itself, is an attempt against life itself.” (ibid.)

The contrasts could hardly be more sharp and vivid. State ownership versus personal property; central planning versus an uncountable host of personal initiatives; comprehensive, systematic reason versus a myriad of personal points of view; life’s mysterious mosaic versus uniformity and enforced conformity. The virtues of a free market economy shine in contrast to disastrous Marxist-Leninist pretensions.
These virtues do not need merely to be explained to the market’s former opponents. They also need to be explained to its current partisan friends, “the orthodox supporters of the market economy.”

(71)

Given that the goal is a free market, there are those who claim that only market mechanisms of the purest sort can lead to this end. These Havel calls “right-wing dogmatists.” Havel disagrees with them. In fact he dissents from both their conception of the end and the necessary means to its realization. Their articulation of goal and means is dictated by an ideology or “cult” (63) of the market. We should be clear about the proportions here: right-wing free market dogmatism is but a relatively poor cousin of “left-wing prejudices, illusions, and utopias.” (66) Its ideological character is far less encompassing than Marxist-Leninism, but it still bears many of the marks of characteristically modern thinking. It possesses the “certainty that operating from theory is essentially smarter than operating from a knowledge of life.” (ibid)

Not so. Against the foil of “chemically pure theory” Havel displays the character of this more appropriate “knowledge” and its consonance with life. Havel is no “know-nothing,” no disdainer or dismisser of “science,” economic or otherwise. On the contrary, “science [is] a remarkable product and instrument of the human spirit.” (67) And “scientific knowledge can serve life.” (ibid.) General knowledge of economic theory, including the laws of the marketplace, is an “invaluable asset” to the working politician. And there are times and situations when a “textbook” or theoretically pure solution is workable.” (70)

But priorities must be acknowledged and respected. “Life is certainly not here merely to confirm someone’s scientific discoveries and thus serve science.” (67) “Life is-and probably always will be-more than just an illustration of what science knows about it.” (66) We must never forget that “systems are there to serve people, not the other way around.” (71) And service of others always is a matter of conscientious reflection, deliberation, and decision, which goes beyond “textbook” formulae and precepts.

In Havel’s view “science” or “pure science” has two characteris-
tics that need to be kept in mind if its limitations as well as its illumination are to be seen. Science is cast in "general precepts" and it typically assumes that its subject matter is of a certain character-

regular, predictable, the closed expression of general principles, causes, factors, or forces. On both the theoretical and the practical planes these traits have their limits as well as advantages.

Generally speaking, "social life is not a machine built to any set of plans known to us." (ibid.) A mechanistic model, whether static or dynamic, whether of doctrinaire free market progressivism or, worse, dialectical materialism, denies that "life" "flows" in an unsys-
tematic way, that it "is always taking us by surprise," and is thus a "permanent challenge to the human spirit." It is because of this latter characteristic that "new theories are constantly being fashioned." (67)

"General" "theoretical precepts," as such, will always have something "that goes beyond them." (66) Therefore, something real and valuable will have to "be rejected" or ignored in their formulation. "The complexities of life" always will escape any general system.

On the practical plane, general doctrines or precepts as such fail to comprehend or address the complexities of "specific problems." The latter are appropriately and best considered from an attitude of "judgment unprejudiced and unfettered by doctrines, from a sense of moderation, and last but not least, from our understanding of individual human beings and the moral and social sensitivity that comes from such understanding. (ibid.)

Here and now, the dogmatists' "general laws" of the market and their general theory of economic production, exchange, and distribution do not contemplate "our special historical situation," (77) "the unprecedented task" (63) of converting a command economy into "a normal market system of economics." (ibid.) Given this theoretical lacuna, they fall back upon a general distrust of govern-

ment intervention in, of government "planning" of, the economy.

While Havel agrees that "the less the state is required to have a say in everyday economic matters, the better," (78) and says that it is clear that "the state will play a diminishing role in guiding the
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The current situation, "a historical juncture" (78) "when the entire system of state ownership [is] being broken up in a revolutionary way," (68) demands that "there must be something I would call a specific vision of an economically prosperous Czechoslovakia, something that goes beyond mere knowledge of the general laws of market economics and an interest in rapidly bringing them to life." (77) It is only against the "background" of "such broad conceptual aims" that the government's present and future "legislation, decrees, and micro- and macro-economic decisions [will] have a common logic, consistency, and meaningful inner architecture."

(93) "Energy and agricultural policies, ideas about a better industrial structure, ecological aims, foreign policy-all of these must be carried out in a co-ordinated fashion." (ibid.) And this can only be done in the light of a comprehensively considered view of the future. This specific vision in turn entails or dictates certain "principles of ... reform." (63) Not surprisingly, "the cornerstone of reform is privatization." (64)

The limits of merely economistic thinking-and the necessity of "responsible thinking" (101)-show up clearly in connection with the present and future issues connected with energy production. This area can serve as a synecdoche for the entire economic domain.

"One doesn't need to be an expert to understand that the marketplace alone cannot decide which direction Czechoslovakia should take in the matter of energy production. It is not just that, at this time, no one but the state can decide on the future of such monstrous products of Communist megalomania as the Gabcikovo Dam or the Temelin nuclear power facility. There is also the question of future energy sources. How can we ensure that the production of energy will not destroy our environment, that it will be efficient, that we will have a variety of decentralized energy sources that will not bind us economically and thus politically to anyone? Only the state can make such fundamental decisions." (72)

The continuities and legacies binding succeeding regimes require political determinations. Aristotle was fully aware of this, as his discussion of regime debts at the beginning of Book 3 of the Politics makes clear.
Havel's chief concerns in this area, however, are ecological and political. Individual businessmen and companies are called upon and encouraged by Havel to consider the relationship they presuppose and foster between themselves and the natural order and between themselves and their fellow citizens. Pollution, for example, strikes both men and the natural environment. Businessmen in no way are exempt from civic and ecological considerations, concerns, and responsibilities.

However, Havel does not simply leave matters to the goodwill of small- and large-scale economic units and their owners, managers, and workers. To do so would be remiss; politicians would fail in their civic responsibilities "to and for the whole of society." The environment has several protectors, in Havel's view: farmers, interest groups, conscientious industrialists, etc. But as a common interest, those especially charged with the common interest, politicians, have distinctive tools to employ in the fulfillment of their duty. Therefore, legislation and "economic policy" should require and promote "ecological soundness," (73) the "protection of the environment." (78)

Energy production touches upon other aspects of the community and its complex good, for which the political class has assumed an especially responsibility. The political independence of the country requires considerable economic autarchy. In the field of energy, this requires "a variety of decentralized energy sources that will not bind us economically and politically to anyone." (72) With independence a vital national interest, the state legitimately supports endeavors that keep it from economic blackmail. Once again, the responsible moralist has a tough-minded side to him.

Chapter 5, as we said, adds to the picture Havel draws of the free market economy he envisages for his country. The person and his capacity for responsible ownership continue to be the touchstone of his economic thinking. In these pages, he draws portraits of individuals—farmers, businessmen, shopkeepers, etc.—and depicts a society infused with a multisplendid disposition, "respect," "respect for work," (105) "respect for the soil," (112) for entrepreneurs, (107) and so on—and which consequently is aware of the debilitating
effects of dependency, that is, "of the distressing social and psychological consequences of living on unemployment insurance." (109)

If there were to be one Havelian index for gauging the moral health of a society, it would be the depth and active quality of its members' respect.

All in all, Havelian "ownership" is the person conceived as called to care for self, property, and others-as contributing "value" to society and the world. Hardly anything could be further from the Rousseauian or Marxist portraits of the alienated, degraded bourgeois. Thus, "ownership is not a vice, not something to be ashamed of, but rather a commitment, and an instrument by which the general good can be served." (107)

The Beginning and the End of Genuine Politics, The Person Chapter 5 likewise, as we said, articulates in greater detail the alpha and omega of Havel's thought: the person. The person and his "spiritual and intellectual life" are "the most important" (115) theme for him.

What makes one "a person" is his "spirit," "intellect," his "consciousness." As such, each one is "a creature with . . . a conscious mastery of his own fate." (Ibid.) Moreover, as "people, [we are] conscious beings with . . . a sense of responsibility." (116)

The person in toto is a psycho-somatic being, an "integral being in whom every [corporal] part is intimately interrelated, and in whom everything is mysteriously connected to the spirit." (120) The spiritual dimension of the person, we see, is constitutive and primary. But it is not exhaustive. One must acknowledge "the body in which the spirit resides." (118)

The "integrity" or integration of our being, however, does not preclude, but rather mysteriously coexists with, a split within between "good" and "evil," between high thoughts and low, between noble and base sentiments, between attentiveness and distraction, between "goodwill" and perversity, between humility and hubris. These struggles "take place inside everyone. [They are] what make a person a person, and life, life." (16)
Havel illustrates his conscientious personalism with two examples: health care and education. The former “is perhaps the most important indicator of the humanity of any society.” (119) The latter is the “most basic sphere of concern” for the humane state. “Everything else depends on [it].” (117) The former discussion reveals how conscientious men should consider and treat their bodies and health, the latter how they and their teachers should view and develop the mind and spirit. They are two sides of the same coin, however, because each recognizes and respects the mysterious integrity and dignity of the human person.

Because of this mysterious but recognizable unity of our being, health care can serve as a paradigm for all fields and endeavors that have to do with man. Or at least its central core can. “The most important aspect of health care . . . is the same as in everything else: the personal relationship between doctor and patient.” (119-120) The reason for this is that the doctor knows that “we are not just anonymous biological mechanisms, but individual, unique, and familiar beings.” (ibid.) The doctor knows more fully than most the marvelous, complicated “interrelations” of our body’s parts, and he regularly confronts their “mysterious . . . connection to the spirit.” (ibid.) We all can learn a lesson from the appropriate medical attitude and response to us as somatic spirits or persons, because it is a reciprocally personal one.

In its own way, teaching is as personal an activity and relation as medicine. So Havel’s “concept of education” insists that the “basic component [of schools] must be the human personalities of the teachers, creating around themselves a ‘force field’ of inspiration and example.” (ibid.) And the teacher is not the only person in the room. The aim of education “at all levels” is to “cultivate a spirit of free and independent thinking in the students.” (ibid)

This freedom does not preclude rigor and content: “technical and other specialized education” have their demands, which must be met. But technical education must be “balanced by a general education in the humanities.” (ibid.) And both sorts of learning “must somehow be touched by basic human questions such as the meaning of our being, the structure of space and time, the order of
the universe, and the position of human existence in it." (118) In brief, all education should have a philosophical spirit, it should be open to ultimate considerations. In this way, "the individual capacities of . . . students [will be developed] in a purposeful way, and [they will be sent] out into life thoughtful people capable of thinking about the wider social, historical, and philosophical implications of their specialities." (117)

Havel's students are not only philosophically-minded, they are also citizens. And their education should address and help to cultivate this important facet of their identities. "The schools must also lead young people to become self-confident, participating citizens." (118) Without it, many youth will fail to acquire "an interest in politics" which then "will become the domain of those least suited to it." (ibid.) This reason is not the sole, or highest, though, according to Havel. Civil consciousness is a perfection of conscience. Havel's own example and teaching in Summer Meditations thus pose the awkward question to us as teachers of politics and its science: Do our views and practice of political science have room for conscience, both as an element of our subject matter and as the intended recipient of our discourse?

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NOTES


2. Of course Montesquieu has a central place in this list.

3. "I think that the world of ideologies and doctrines is on the way out for good—along with the entire modern age" (SM, 128).

4. "In searching for the most natural source of a new world
order, we usually look to the traditional foundation of modern justice: to a set of values that—among other things—were first declared in this building [in Philadelphia] and that are a great achievement of the modern age. I am referring to respect for the unique human being and for his or her liberties and inalienable rights, and the principle that all power derives from the people. I am, in short, referring to the fundamental ideas of democracy.

"What I am about to say may sound provocative, but I feel more and more strongly that not even these ideas are enough, that we must go further and deeper. The point is that the solution they offer is still, as it were, modern, derived from the climate of the Enlightenment and from a view of man and his relation to the world that has been characteristic of the Euro-American sphere for the last two centuries. Today, however, we are in a different place and facing a different situation, one to which classically modern solutions in themselves do not give a satisfactory response" (AI, 169).

5. Other non-Enlightenment, post-modern features of his thought include his adoption (via Jan Patocka) of Husserl’s "life world" concept and his acceptance of Heidegger’s critique of technological "world-framing."

By "modern enlightenment rationality,“ Havel has in mind thinkers from Machiavelli and Descartes on, who conceived of thought and politics as "techniques of power." He is thinking of a style of systematic rationalism that claimed to be able to create utopia by comprehending and mastering Being and human being. In a word, he agrees with Solzhenitsyn that modern thought and its progenitor, modern man, both denied God and attempted to replace Him. "Modern man thinks of himself as the lord of creation." (AI, 121)

6. Writing of "the personal relationship between doctor and patient," he affirms that "people are not just racks on which to hang various organs-kidneys, stomach, and so on—that can be repaired by specialists, as you would repair a car. They are integral beings in whom every part is intimately interrelated, and in whom everything is mysteriously connected to the spirit . . . . [W]e are not just anonymous biological mechanisms, but individual, unique, and familiar human beings." (120)
The philosophically minded physician Leon Kass has explored in a most illuminating way the interconnections between our physique and psyche, and his findings confirm Havel's view. See Kass's "Thinking about the Body" and "Is There a Medical Ethics?" in Toward a More Natural Science (New York: The Free Press, 1985).

7. Writing of a "certain Czech [Marxist] philosopher who lived in California," Havel says that "the idea that the world might actually be changed by the force of truth, the power of a truthful word, the strength of a free spirit, conscience, and responsibility-with no guns, no lust for power, no political wheeling and dealing-was quite beyond the horizon of his understanding. Naturally, if you understand decency as a mere "superstructure" of the forces of production, then you can never understand political power in terms of decency." (5)

Havel's chief expression and exploration of the notion of truth's power is "The Power of the Powerless" an essay of 1978. (OL, 125-214) It also remains one of the best analyses of the nature of the regime of the Lie, communist ideocracy.

8. "For years I criticized practical politics as no more than a technique in the struggle for power, as a purely pragmatic activity whose aim was not only to serve people selflessly and responsibly in harmony with one's conscience, but merely to win their favor through a variety of techniques, with a view to staying in power or gaining more.

"As an independent intellectual and on principle a lifelong opponent of the ruling regime, I continually expounded on my notion of politics-politics as selfless service to one's fellow human beings, as morality in practice, based on conscience and truth. I tentatively termed this kind of politics "nonpolitical politics." I wrote about it because I felt the need and the obligation, as a writer, to take a stand on the immoral nature of the totalitarian system I lived in and the policies pursued by those who embodied that system. I would have betrayed my mission as a writer had I remained silent in the face of all that." (AI, 82)

"[I]ndependent intellectuals ... their essential mission, which is to hold up a critical mirror to their surroundings." (AI, 97)
9. "Dreams" and "to dream" are almost technical terms in Havel's lexicon. To dream is a necessary consequence, or component, of his notion of "genuine politics," of politics conceived in terms of personal responsibility. Speaking of "all of us in the Charter [Charter 77]," "We thought, and hence we also dreamed." "We dream, as it were, on principle." (AI, 33-34)

At the end of his first address as President to his newly liberated country, he said. "You may ask what kind of a republic I dream of. Let me reply: I dream of a republic independent, free, and democratic, of a republic economically prosperous and yet socially just; in short, of a humane republic which serves the individual and which therefore holds the hope that the individual will serve it in turn. Of a republic of well-rounded people, because without such it is impossible to solve any of our problems, human, economic, ecological, social, or political." (AI, 9)

Dreaming is essential to the task, the conscientious task, of "thinking about how to make the world a better place." (AI, 33) This thinking took place in the dark days of totalitarianism and was rewarded by seeing the bright day of its collapse. "Everything started to change— at a surprising speed, the impossible suddenly became possible, and the dream became reality." (ibid.) It continues today during the gray days of rebuilding, for who is to say that the bright dreams Havel imagines cannot be largely realized? In any event, "Everything seems to indicate that we must not be afraid of dreaming the seemingly impossible if we want the seemingly impossible to become a reality." (AI, 46)

10. "Life and the world are as beautiful and interesting as they are because, among other things, they are varied, because every living creature, every community, every country, every nation has its own unique identity." (124)

11. Because of considerations of length, I will limit the exposition of Havel's thought to the first three chapters, which treat, respectively, his fundamental views of "genuine politics," "authentic" constitutionalism, and the "free market economy" informed by general ideas of personal responsibility and life's mysterious pluralism.
12. The phrase, of course, is Tocqueville’s. Havel, too, finds the heart central to his articulation of human being. “The specific experience [of living under totalitarianism, utopia in power] I’m talking about has given me one great certainty: Consciousness precedes Being, and not the other way around, as Marxists claim. “For this reason, the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human modesty, and in human responsibility. (AI, 18)

13. Havel’s dream of a better Czechoslovakia is that of a society shot through and pulsating with "respect.” Self-respect and respect for others, for the soil, for conscientious work and entrepreneurship, for the institutions of its common life, and so on.

14. "The responsibility we bear now goes beyond this moment. It is not just a responsibility to our contemporaries, but to those who came before us and, above all, to those who will come after us. I am deeply persuaded that, if we were to separate today, future generations would see it as a fatal error, and would never forgive us.” (35)

15. Once again, Communist ideology-in-practice revealed deep truths. As the culmination and perverse mirror-image of modern rationalism, "this ideological illusion, this pseudo-scientific utopia," was characterized by a "loss of a sense of the enigma of life, and lack of humility before the mysterious order of Being," by a "turning away from moral imperatives `from above’ and thus from human conscience." (63)

"Pride, however, is precisely what will lead the world to hell. I am suggesting an alternative: humbly accepting our responsibility for the world.” (AI, 226)

16. Consider the following sequence of texts, in which Havel envisions the artificial world produced by conscientious work and kept up by responsible labor. “Life in the towns and villages will have overcome the legacy of greyness, uniformity, anonymity, and ugliness inherited from the totalitarian era. It will have a genuine human dimension . . . . Thus the streets and neighbourhoods will regain their unique face and atmosphere . . . .

"The houses, gardens, and sidewalks will be clean, tidy, and well cared for, because they will belong to someone; for every piece of
real estate, there will be someone with a reason to look after it...

"In short, the villages and towns will once again begin to have their own distinctive appearance, culture, style, cleanliness, and beauty... We will not have to feel ashamed—either before ourselves or before foreigners—of the environment in which we live. On the contrary, that environment will become a source of quiet, everyday pleasure for us all." (104-106)

This feature of responsibility may be its ultimate objective. "After all, is there anything that citizens—and this is doubly true of politicians—should be more concerned about, ultimately, than trying to make life more pleasant, more interesting, more varied, and more bearable?" (15-16)

17. I would reconstruct the elements or steps of Havel’s thought concerning "responsibility" or "conscience" in the following way. Communism or utopia in power revealed the deep truth about man that he is a being of independent (i.e., not determined by material conditions, structures, forces, or status) "consciousness and conscience;" in a word, a person. On the level of consciousness, mind, or reason, he recognizes this about himself and his fellows. Likewise he recognizes the individuality and dignity characteristic of Nature’s other creations. Collectivization violated both the personal character of man and "the nature of things." This recognition of the truth about men and Nature grounds, or is coextensive with, a recognition of their goodness and beauty.

Concomitant with these acknowledgments of truth and goodness is the realization that these features of the human and natural world dictate appropriate responses, fitting modes of interaction. Service, rather than mastery, is the authentic mode of human being in the world.

Simultaneously we discover our freedom to respond appropriately, or not, to what we know about man and Being. We either can live up to what our reason reveals and what we really know, or we can decline from this knowledge. Yet we inescapably "feel" the pull of the values and obligations that persons' and things' natures bring to the world and our lives—and we continually judge the quality of our attentiveness and responses to the golden opportunities and high
demands of right action posed by the truth of things. We are beings of "conscience."

Regardless of the short- or long-term "success" of conscientiously dictated action, we know, maintains Havel, that there are "good and right things" to do. Their goodness or rightness is reason enough to do them, and to fight evil in order to bring them into being or to preserve them, if need be. The true success of action is its contribution to making "the world better."

However Havel does not rest content with this articulation of the domain of moral values and human agency. In his view the moral man and his conscience are grounded in a metaphysical "certainty." "Genuine conscience and genuine responsibility are always, in the end, explicable only as an expression of the silent assumption that we are observed 'from above,' that everything is visible, nothing is forgotten, and so earthly time has no power to wipe away the sharp disappointments of earthly failure: our spirit knows that it is not the only entity aware of these failures." (6)

Several letters written to his first wife while he was in prison, originally published in 1983 and known as Letters to Olga, treat the themes of conscience and responsibility.

18. Czechoslovakia at the time of Summer Meditations was "a unified state," composed of "two nations" and several ethnic groups. Havel's penultimate purpose in the work was to argue for a new constitution that would unite the "two republics" even more effectively and "authentically."

Czechoslovakia, of course, is no more. The majority of the Slovak National Council voted on July 17, 1992, for Slovakian independence, which was officially effected on New Year's Eve of that year. John Keane writes about the episode in a chapter, "Velvet Divorce," of his recent book, Vaclav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts (Basic Books: New York, 2000). I must register the claim that the book, while informative and fascinating, in my judgment reveals a bit too much about its author, much too much about the sexual activities of its subject, and not enough about Havel's enduring legacy, his thinking and writing about politics and the condition of late-modern man.
19. Demagogy is both a "fact" and a "(dis-)value," is it not? And generally it is recognizable as such. Hobbes was wrong to claim that to express such a judgment is merely to express one's subjective antipathy to another's speech, policy, and/or person. Demagogy is not another's speech "misliked."

20. "It is not that we should simply seek new and better ways of managing society, the economy, and the world as such. The point is that we should fundamentally change how we behave. And who but politicians should lead the way? Their changed attitude toward the world, toward themselves, and toward their responsibility can in turn give rise to truly effective systemic and institutional changes.

"And where else could that something happen but in the sphere of the spirit, of human consciousness and self-knowledge, of man's relationship to himself and to the world? What else must be changed but the way modern man looks at himself? Where but in politics should such a change begin if it is to bear fruit? And how else should it begin but by changing the very spirit and ethos of politics?" (AI, 93, 100)

21. This is the Dominican Order's motto: "To deliver to others [the fruits of one's] contemplation." It was Thomas Aquinas's summary formulation of the *raison d'être* of the "mixed" life.

22. Nor should it be surprising that the erstwhile playwright focuses on language and its function in responsible human and political life. An explicit treatment of Havel's views on language and its connection with authentic human existence is outside the scope of this essay. To pursue the matter further one could turn to his essay "A Word About Words," written in 1989. (OL, 377-389) Consider the following two passages.

"Spirit, the human soul, our self-awareness, our ability to generalize and think in concepts, to perceive the world as the world (and not just as our locality), and lastly, our capacity for knowing that we will die-and living in spite of that knowledge: surely all these are mediated or actually created by words?" (377)

"But that is not all: thanks to the miracle of speech, we know,
probably better than the other animals, that we actually know very little, in other words, we are conscious of the existence of mystery." (378)

23. The distinctive character of the particular "moment" and situation, of "the times" and their requirements, and the "qualities" that enable one to assess them and respond appropriately, are a basic Havelian theme. It is his version of political prudence. A florilegium of Havelian passages is quite instructive in this regard.

Two previous periods of his Presidency were dramatically different. "My first term as president was brief, from December 29, 1989, to June 5, 1990.... I became an instrument of the time.' That special time caught me up in its wild vortex and-in the absence of leisure to reflect on the matter-compelled me to do what had to be done.

"Today the situation is radically different. The era of enthusiasm, unity, mutual understanding, and dedication to a common cause is over. For a long time now I have no longer felt like a bemused plaything of history who is drawn in the same direction as others are .... Time have changed, clouds have filled the sky, clarity and general harmony have disappeared, and our country is heading into a period of not inconsiderable difficulties.

"The time of hard, everyday work has come, a time in which conflicting interests have surfaced, a time for sobering up, a time when all of us-and especially those in politics-must make it very clear what we stand for." (xvi-xviii)

What has he learned concerning how to proceed when in conference with other members of the political class, domestic and foreign? "All you need is tact, the proper instincts, and good taste. One surprising experience from 'high politics' is this: I have discovered that good taste is more useful here than a postgraduate degree in political science. It is largely a matter of form: knowing how long to speak, when to begin and when to finish; ... how to say, always, what is most significant at a given moment, and not to speak of what is not important or relevant.

"But more than that, it means having a certain instinct for the time, the atmosphere of the time, the mood of people, the nature of
their worries, their frame of mind—that too can perhaps be more useful than sociological surveys." (11)

Concerning "the present historical moment" in which the former Soviet satellites exist he writes, "I think the Slovak will to emancipation is an integral part of the present historical moment in Central and Eastern Europe. In their modern history, the nations here—unlike the nations of Western Europe—have had very little opportunity to taste fully the delights of statehood. They are merely trying to make up for lost time, and everything must be done to allow them to go through this phase—in which such exaggerated stress is placed on all things national—as quickly and in as civilized a manner as possible. Both in their own and in the general interest, they must be allowed to catch up with countries with a happier history." (29-30)

"Today" he is aware of "this world and its present civilization." (31) "Today's planetary civilization" requires "an existential revolution" if it is to have "any hope of survival." (115-116)

And finally, concerning timing-staging, Paul Wilson, Havel's indefatigable translator, writes that "[German] President von Weizsacker's visit to Prague [on March 15, 1990] was timed, with typical dramatic flair, to coincide with the fifty-first anniversary of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia." (Al, 257)

24. Havel's address to the French Academy of Humanities and Political Sciences in 1992 is a meditation on patience in politics. It is a natural outgrowth and accompaniment of responsibility. "The world, Being, and history have their own time. We can, of course, enter that time in a creative way, but none of us has it entirely in his hands. The world and Being do not heed the commands of the technologist or the technocrat, and they do not exist to do his bidding ... .

"If I consider my own political impatience, I realize with new urgency that a politician of the present and the future—allow me to use the expression "postmodern politician"—must learn, in the deepest and best sense of the word, the importance of waiting. I don't mean waiting for Godot; his waiting must be the expression of respect for the inner dynamics and tempo of Being, for the nature
of things, for their integrity and their independent dynamics which resist coercive manipulation. He must have the will to open events to the possibility of manifesting themselves as they really are, in their essence. His actions cannot derive from impersonal analysis; they must come out of a personal point of view, which cannot be based on a sense of superiority but must spring from humility." (AI, 250)

25. Among my many bad qualities there is one that happens to be missing—a longing or love for power.” (8) “Qualities like fellow-feeling, the ability to talk to others, insight, the capacity to grasp quickly not only problems but also human character, the ability to make contact, a sense of moderation; all these are immensely ... important in politics. I am not saying, heaven forbid, that I myself am endowed with these qualities; not at all!” (11)

The issue of the “qualities” requisite to the new form of politician Havel seeks to embody and to elicit is a regular theme in his speeches and writings. The most telling passage, perhaps, comes from a speech he delivered at the World Economic Forum in 1992. “Soul, individual spirituality, firsthand personal insight into things, the courage to be oneself and go the way one's conscience points, humility in the face of the mysterious order of Being, confidence in its natural direction, and, above all, trust in one's own subjectivity as the principal link with the subjectivity of the world-these, in my view, are the qualities that politicians of the future should cultivate.” (AI, 93)

26. One can turn to Havel's acceptance speech for the Sonning Prize (AI, 69-74) for his extended reflections on "the phenomenon of power as I have been able to observe it so far from the inside, and especially on the nature of the temptation that power represents." (69) Men seek power for three distinct reasons: to serve and to realize some spiritual idea or cause, to affirm the worth, value, and effective influence of their own existence, and to enjoy the trappings and perquisites of office. The latter are necessary for the effective functioning of an official, but they can become ends-in-themselves and deprive him or her of existential authenticity. Therefore the conscientious politician always must be about scrutinizing his use of and dispositions toward them. In the same vein, "power [itself]
should not be an end in itself." (AI, 101) It is a privileged platform for service.

27. I am thinking of Blackstone's dictum, *Scribere est agere*, To write is to act.

28. A few Havelian words about parties and politicians. There is a legitimate range of political, social, and economic opinion. "Political parties and tendencies always have differed, and always will differ, chiefly in the relative importance they give to economic and social phenomena, in how they approach them and how they explain them, and in their opinions on the best way to organize economic life. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that." (66) Parties expressing these differences are integral features of genuine democratic life. "One of the most sophisticated kinds of association-and at the same [time] an integral part of modern democracy and an expression of its plurality of opinion-is association in political parties. It would be difficult to imagine a democratic society working without them." (53)

In the future Czechoslovakia Havel imagines "we will have two large parties with their own traditions, their own intellectual potential, clear programs, and their own grass-root support. They will be led by a new generation of young, well-educated politicians whose outlook has not been distorted by the era of totalitarianism. And of course there will be several smaller parties as well." (102) It would be interesting to speculate why Havel thinks that two major parties will emerge-the requirements of majority coalition formation, or the Jeffersonian or Tocquevillian thought that there are two natural "parties" or "humours" inherent in each society are two that come to mind-but Havel does not spell out his reasons for this expectation.

Havel is particularly keen to emphasize and to validate parties' function as organizing and representing the various legitimate opinions and "interests" found within society. Therefore, in discussing the electoral laws he favors, he is willing to qualify his preferred principle of "a majority system, where people vote for particular candidates and Parliament consists of those who win in the various electoral districts" with an admixture of "proportional representation." In the latter system "electors vote for parties which are then
represented in Parliament in numbers proportional to their share of
the total vote. (56) Why does he accept this qualification? Because
it overcomes the difficult that under the pure majority system "it
would be difficult or impossible for small but worthy parties to win
any seats in Parliament. Thus various minority views or interests (an
animal-rights party, for instance) would not be present at all in
Parliament, which is not good: a democracy is recognized by, among
other things, the degree to which it gives a voice to minorities." (57)
29. See above, note #4.
30. "No state—that is, no constitutional, legal, and political
system—is anything in and of itself, outside historical time and social
space . . . . Every state, on the contrary, grows out of specific
intellectual, spiritual, and cultural traditions that breathe substance
into it and give it meaning." (18-19) "Nations" are the chief embodi-
ment, depositories, and conduits of this complex "meaning": "Na-
tions have their own identities—spiritual, intellectual, cultural, and
political—which they reveal to the world each day through their
actions." (114)

Havel never says or implies that nations' spiritual and other
traditions are merely, or even primarily, particularistic in content, or
intent. On the contrary, the Czechoslovakian "tradition stretches
from Saints Cyril and Methodius, who brought Christianity to the
region in the ninth century A.D. [to] the philosopher Jan Patocka."
(126-127) Nor, as one can tell from these two illustrations, is it
monolithic. Czechoslovakia is rather "like a sponge that has gradu-
ally absorbed and digested all kinds of intellectual and cultural
impulses and initiatives." Therefore "many European initiatives
were born or first formulated here" and "many admonitory visions
of the future—Kafka's and Capek's, for instance—have come from
here." (126) Havel himself participates in this tradition of limning
both dark and bright futures, for his country, for Europe, and for
today's global humanity. In his view a "good Czech" is a "good
European" and a "good human."

For the individual, his (or her) nationality is an essential ingre-
dient in his personal identity, it is constitutive of the reality of
"home." "My home, obviously, is also the country I live in, and its
intellectual and spiritual climate, expressed in the language spoken there. The Czech language, the Czech way of perceiving the world, the Czech historical experience, the Czech modes of courage and cowardice, Czech humour—all of these are inseparable from that circle of my home. My home is therefore my Czechness, my nationality, and I see no reason at all why I shouldn't embrace it since it is as essential a part of me as, say, my masculinity, another stratum of my home." (31)

Fully aware of the dangers of xenophobia and other faulty expressions of nationalism, Havel nonetheless insists upon the unique humanizing contributions the nation and national affiliation make. In order to do so, however, they must recognize and be subordinate to the universal norms of conscience, of human rights, and be willing to integrate themselves into various supranational bodies. Simple- or single-minded partisans of the nation and national identity must be led to recognize that "a state based on citizenship, one that respects people and all levels of their natural world" (32) is the best expression and guarantor of what they cherish.

31. "Many years of living under communism gave us certain experiences that the noncommunist West fortunately did not have to live through. We came to understand (or, to be precise, some of us did) that the only genuine values are those for which one is capable, if necessary, of sacrificing something .... Without intending to, the communists taught us to locate the truth of the world not in mere information about it, but in an attitude, a commitment, a moral imperative.

Then come the hard words of a true friend: "I have the impression that precisely this awareness is sadly lacking in the present-day West ...." Naturally, all of us continue to pay lip service to democracy, human rights, the order of nature, and responsibility for the world, but apparently only insofar as it does not require any sacrifice. By that I of course do not mean merely sacrifice in the form of fallen soldiers. The West has made, and continues to make, such sacrifices, though some instances may be more meaningful than others. I have in mind, rather sacrifice in a less conspicuous but infinitely broader sense—that is, a willingness to sacrifice for the
common interest something of one's own particular interests, including even the quest for larger and larger domestic production and consumption. The pragmatism of politicians who want to win the next election, for whom the highest authority is therefore the will and the mood of a rather spoiled consumer society, makes it impossible for those people to be aware of the moral, metaphysical, and often tragic dimensions of their own program.” (AI, 137-138)

32. Havel’s writings regularly report his self-scrutiny and discoveries. For examples, consider his speech at the Salzburg Festival in 1990 and the above-mentioned acceptance speech for the Sonnig Prize in 1991. (AI, 48-54, 69-74)

33. As we will see when we consider Havel on the free market, he fundamentally and regularly contrasts “ideas” with “ideologies.” Early in his Presidency (1990) he declared, “Our state has no ideology. The only idea it wants to instill in its domestic and foreign policy is a respect for human rights in the broadest sense of the term, and respect for the uniqueness of every human being.” (AI, 34)

34. Medieval wags used to note that “authority” had a wax nose which could be pulled in any direction, since an authority could be found espousing and expressing any view under the sun.

35. “The sovereignty of the community, the region, the nation, the state-any higher sovereignty, in fact-makes sense only if it is derived from the one genuine sovereignty: that is, from the sovereignty of the human being, which finds its political expression in civil sovereignty.” (34) The “sovereignty of the human being” is not that of the autonomous individual. The former sovereign is constituted precisely by his capacity for coming in contact with, and subjection to, an inner, and higher, authority, conscience, which in turn heeds “the nature of things,” Being’s mysterious order, and the true Master of all.

36. Chapter 5 contains some relevant developments of the concept of ownership, so I have taken the liberty of bringing them forward in my consideration of Havel’s economic views.

37. “The miracle of human thought and human reason is bound up with the capacity to generalize. It is hard to imagine the history of the human spirit without this great power. In a sense, anyone who
thinks generalizes. On the other hand, the ability to generalize is a fragile gift that has to be handled with great care. It is all too easy to overlook the hidden seeds of injustice that may lie in the act of generalization. We have all made observations or expressed opinions of one kind or another about various peoples. We may say that the French, the English, or the Russians are like this or that. We don't mean ill by it; we are only trying, through our generalizations, to see reality better. But there is a grave danger hidden in this kind of generalization. A group of people defined in a certain way—in this case ethnically—is, in a sense, subtly deprived of its individual spirits and individual responsibilities and endowed with an abstract, collective sense of responsibility. Clearly, this is a wonderful starting point for collective hatred. Individuals become a priori bad or evil simply because of their origin. (AI, 61)

38. "The market economy, in which companies become legal entities under particular and responsible ownership . . . ." (108)
39. A central feature of his "dream" for Czechoslovakia is that the "houses, gardens, and sidewalks will be clean, tidy, and well cared for, because they will belong to someone; for every piece of real estate, there will be someone with a reason to look after it . . . . Best use will be made of every square metre, since it will once again have a value and an owner." (105) The human joys of property ownership and care is perhaps more keenly experienced by those long denied it.

40. Havel is fully aware that "people have, and always will have, different degrees of industriousness, talent, and, last but not least, luck." (17)
41. Moderation, in Havel's lexicon, is always set in opposition to "fanaticism," ideological or otherwise.
42. "Whenever human instinct and unprejudiced considerations (if no statistics are available) tell us a pure solution is workable, it is obviously proper to choose it. But how are we to know when the solution will work—or when it isn't working any longer? How are we to know when a policy might prove suicidal, economically and politically? On what scales can we weigh and compare arguments based on economic theory with arguments based on practical
economic policies? How are we best to collate all the points of view: scientific, political, social, and moral? In the end, it is always people who decide, backed by their personal responsibility, their personal thoughts, their personal assessments of the situation, their foresight. The less they are blinkered by ideology, with its tendency to transform theory into dogma, the better." (70-71)

43. My conscience would bother me if I did not extend thanks to Daniel J. Mahoney and to Peter Augustine Lawler. The former introduced me to Havel, the latter to the notion of "postmodernism rightly understood," the thought that dissidents like Havel and Solzhenitsyn have earned the right to be heard in their criticisms of "modernity" and "the West" because of their penetrating insight into, and moral courage against, Communism. My interest in and understanding of totalitarianism and its importance for understanding modernity stem from them, their writings, and endless conversations.