



Political Action in Václav Havel's Thought: The Responsibility of Resistance

Delia Popescu

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Political Action in Vaclav Havel's Thought: The Responsibility of Resistance, by Delia Popescu, examines resistance to oppression and individual responsibility in political action, all in the context of Vaclav Havel's political philosophy. The famous anti-communist dissident, acclaimed playwright, former President of the Czech Republic, and eminent political thinker argues that there is a certain tendency in modern humanity towards the creation, or at least toleration, of a political system that is invasive and controlling. Not unlike Tocqueville and Arendt, Havel claims that modern liberal democracy contains potential tendencies toward a new form of despotism that capitalizes on modern alienation and social atomization.

Political Action in Vaclav Havel's Thought suggests that Havel's theory of individual opposition can be used to secure political freedom under the conditions of modernity. Popescu demonstrates that Havel's idea of attaining true political participation and freedom requires a strong connection between an individually constructed ethics and the realm of politics. On this basis she reveals that a thick notion of morality can be usefully integrated into an account of both private and public accountability. Vaclav Havel's essays, plays, speeches, and letters can therefore be integrated into a coherent political theory which contributes significantly to some of the central debates in modern political thought. Delia Popescu concludes that Havel's theory of individual opposition to totalitarianism may also serve as the foundation for a conception of responsible participation in modern liberal democracies.

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