

A Magnificent Gift: Jan Patočka and Vaclav Havel on Dissident Sacrifice

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The paper compares and contrasts Jan Patočka and Vaclav Havel's respective thoughts on dissent. Using Aristotle's thoughts on the magnanimous man as a sounding board, the paper argues with Patočka that dissent is best undertaken as a gift to a community made with sound philosophical reflection. The paper also argues with Havel that dissent is also a task for every citizen who is caught in an oppressive political situation –that is dissent is not the sole responsibility of the reflective philosopher but every citizen whose actions contribute to the sustenance of ideology. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2017 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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INTRODUCTION

In considering the meaning of a dissident sacrifice, there is a tendency to associate the meaning of the act with how the public receives the sacrifice. For example, the self-immolation of an individual, if it incites a riot, is remembered and praised; if it receives no public attention, then those who hear of it may say 'what a waste'. How a public perceives a

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