



**univ** 2010

CAN CHRISTIANITY INSPIRE A GLOBAL CULTURE?

**UNIV Forum 2010**

**PRESENTATIONS**

—  
***COMUNICACIONES***

***Forum UNIV 2010***

UNIV Forum Scientific Committee, *Can Christianity Inspire a Global Culture? UNIV Forum 2010 Presentations / ¿Puede el cristianismo inspirar una cultura global? Comunicaciones Forum UNIV 2010*, Universidad de Navarra, 2010

© UNIV Forum  
[www.univforum.org](http://www.univforum.org)

ISBN 84-8081-208-7

The UNIV Forum is a forum on the principal questions affecting the human person and contemporary society: it is a place for communication and academic debate. Created in 1968, the Forum is currently enjoying its fifth decade of service to university students. The goal of the UNIV Forum is to help students perceive their studies not only as a time of intellectual learning but also as a means of personal dedication to the bettering of society. Among other activities, participants of the forum (most of them freshmen or sophomores), under the direction of a professor, may submit a presentation on the proposed theme for that year. This book contains a selection of the papers delivered in 2010.

*El Forum UNIV es un foro de diálogo sobre las principales cuestiones que afectan a la persona y a la sociedad de nuestro tiempo: un punto de encuentro para la comunicación y el debate universitario. Creado en 1968, cuenta ya con más de 40 ediciones. Con esta iniciativa se quiere sensibilizar a los universitarios para que sean capaces de valorar esos años de estudio como un tiempo no sólo de aprendizaje intelectual, sino también de compromiso personal en la mejora de la sociedad. Entre otras actividades, se puede participar en el Forum UNIV elaborando, bajo la dirección de un profesor, una comunicación sobre el tema propuesto para cada año. El presente libro recoge una selección de las comunicaciones presentadas en 2010, la mayoría realizadas por estudiantes de primeros cursos.*

UNIV Forum Scientific Committee  
Universidad de Navarra



## TABLE OF CONTENTS ÍNDICE

The Christian Alternative ( <i>University of London</i> ) . . . . .	7
Liderazgo-servidor. Hacia una comprensión antropológica de la empresa ( <i>Universidad de Navarra</i> ) . . . . .	19
BRAVAL. Los valores puestos en práctica ( <i>Universitat de Barcelona</i> ) . . . . .	30
¿Puede el cristianismo inspirar una cultura global? Una aproximación a la lusitanidad ( <i>Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brasil</i> ) . . . . .	39
Tonos cristianos, consensos posibles ( <i>Universidad del Rosario, Colombia</i> ) . . . . .	47
Neuroética y neuroteología. Cristianismo, mente, alma y cerebro ( <i>Universidad de Navarra</i> ) . . . . .	53
Design and Globalization. Can Graphic Design in Mass Communication Inspire a Global Culture? ( <i>University of Notre Dame</i> ) . . . . .	63
The Modern Concept of Economic Development in the Economic Science and the Church's Social Doctrine ( <i>Universidade de São Paulo</i> ) . . . . .	69
Población y desarrollo. Visión de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia (DSI) y el denominado Desarrollo Sostenible ( <i>Universidad de la Sabana, Colombia</i> ) . . . . .	77
El quinto pilar ( <i>Universidad de Navarra</i> ) . . . . .	85
An Exploration and Critique of Vaclav Havel's <i>The Power of the Powerless</i> ( <i>University of Notre Dame</i> ) . . . . .	95
Anorexia espiritual y búsqueda de la autenticidad en una cultura global ( <i>Universidad Politécnica de Madrid</i> ) . . . . .	99
Preparing Students as Globally Competitive Nation-Builders: A Key Driver of Internationalization at the Ateneo de Manila University ( <i>Ateneo de Manila U.</i> ) . . . . .	105
Laicidad positiva en el nuevo orden internacional: ¿contingencia o necesidad? ( <i>Universitat Internacional de Catalunya</i> ) . . . . .	113
The Day the Music Died. Una revaloración íntima del ocio en la juventud posmoderna ( <i>Universidad de Navarra</i> ) . . . . .	121
La aventura tailandesa de José Luis Olaizola. Un puente entre Oriente y Occidente ( <i>Universidad Complutense de Madrid</i> ) . . . . .	131
CINEMANET. Cine con valores ( <i>IESE Business School</i> ) . . . . .	137

# AN EXPLORATION AND CRITIQUE OF VACLAV HAVEL'S *THE POWER OF THE POWERLESS*

Ybarra, R.  
*University of Notre Dame (USA)*

Supervisor:  
Prof. J. Langan  
*Holy Cross College, South Bend, IN (USA)*

## ABSTRACT

In 1978, Vaclav Havel wrote "The Power of the Powerless" criticizing the cruelty of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The regime pressured its citizens to betray themselves and their true beliefs through repressive measures. I explain three aspects of Havel's speech and political theory: first, economic and political models can only be good if they give the greatest priority to the individual over theory, theoretical rights, etc. Two, such models should rely on a coherent understanding of the common good, which can be explained as a set of social conditions which enable citizens to flourish. Third, law by nature is limited and cannot be expected to fix society. Havel spends most of his work critiquing Communism but he also has incisive concerns for citizens in Western Democracies. Havel questions whether Western Democracies have truly given the individual greatest priority. Also, he thinks that the wide freedom Western Democracies provide may ironically be problematic for citizens. Last, Havel offers a solution that calls for a greater sense of responsibility that goes beyond oneself for others and the world

## PAPER

The first part of this paper will briefly describe the cruelty of over forty years of Communism in Czechoslovakia, a nation that no longer exists after its division in 1993. My description gives necessary background information for the rest of the paper. My paper relies mostly on Vaclav Havel's "The Power of the Powerless", a work written in 1978 that criticizes Communism in Czechoslovakia and global matters. Vaclav Havel was a leading figure in Czechoslovakia's rise to independence over the Communist regime. Through his writings, Havel fought boldly for the rights and liberties of his fellow countrymen. He later became the President of his country.

In his "The Power of the Powerless", Havel uses an anecdote that he returns to multiple times throughout the work. The anecdote is about a shopkeeper. The manager of a little store places in his window a sign that states, "Workers of the world, unite!" This is the phrase that Karl Marx used in his *Communist Manifesto* to call workers for a revolution that would destroy Capitalism. Even though the manager puts such a revolutionary message up, he does not put much thought into his action. He puts the slogan up because everyone else does and if he didn't

he could get into trouble. The shopkeeper does not have a choice in putting up the sign. He must declare his obedience and loyalty to the State or he will suffer. What does the anecdote tell us about Communism? It tells us that fear forced ordinary people to lie to their beliefs in declaring loyalty to a bad regime.

Why was the regime bad? Havel lists the various wrongs: “the complete degradation of the individual”, “depriving people of information”, “the use of power to manipulate”, “the lack of free expression”, “farcical elections”, and “banning independent thought” (IV). I list these wrongs to remind you of Communism and to put your feet into the shoes of Vaclav Havel who boldly speaks out under a Communist regime. Havel was put in jail three times for a total of almost five years.

Now, I explore the political theory of Vaclav Havel in his work “The Power of the Powerless” as it relates to the individual, the Common Good, and law. Havel provides invaluable insights for the way we view ourselves, ourselves in relation to others, and ourselves in relation to the government.

My first major point is that the foundation for good economic and political models must be the individual. Havel states, “If a better economic and political model is to be created, then perhaps more than ever before it must derive from profound existential and moral changes in society” (XI). In other words, a new economic or political model will not be any good unless it gives priority to the most important things. We will see that Havel believes the individual to be the most important part of economic or political models.

It is interesting that in speaking of economic and political models Havel mentions “existential and moral changes.” For Havel, economic and political systems should improve the well-being of people. A system should be judged on whether it has made life better for people.

Furthermore, the starting point for politics is individual people. Is theory, theoretical concepts, or even theoretical rights subordinate to individual lives? What’s more important? Rights or people? In my country, some think that the right to choose to have a baby is more important than the baby’s life.

My second major point is that good economic and political models should be organized around an understanding of the common good. Although Havel never explicitly mentions the phrase “common good”, his work is full of language and ideas that point to the common good. In “The Power of the Powerless”, Havel comments on the efforts of a politician named Tomas Masaryk to improve Czechoslovakia. Havel states, “Humanity’s first task was to create the conditions for a more human life” (XIV). This strikes me as the Common Good as explained by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The common good is, as point 1906 states, “the sum total of social conditions which allow people...to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.”

To explain the common good more precisely, it has three essential elements: first, The person must be valued by the state, others, and himself because of his human dignity. Second, the state must provide the conditions that allow people to live well. Each person should have the opportunity and help to acquire “food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on” (CCC, 1908).

Third, the state must ensure peace and order for the persons that comprise it.

The common good focuses on the well-being of the individual which returns us to the second part of Havel's quote: "in Masaryk's view, the task of transforming the stature of the nation began with the transformation of human beings" (XIV).

My third major point is that the limits of law call for something more. I begin with a quote from Havel on law: "the law is only one of several imperfect and more or less external ways of defending what is better in life against what is worse. By itself, the law can never create anything better" (XVII). The law is imperfect. It cannot prevent every single crime because there are always loopholes. Law itself cannot improve people's lives because Havel thinks that it is by nature superficial: "[laws] limit or permit, they punish, tolerate, or defend, but they can never give life substance or meaning" (XVII).

Law is inherently limited and cannot save us. It is not the solution to our problems because the solution is beyond the reach of law and in the heart of man.

Here, I give Havel's articulation on major problems in Western democracies, and offer his solution. It is striking that Havel not only criticizes his Communist regime but also Western Democracies for its significant failures.

First, Western Democracies have significant problems too. Havel tells us, "In the democratic societies, where the violence done to human beings is not nearly so obvious and cruel, this fundamental revolution in politics has yet to happen" (XVI). The fundamental revolution in politics that Havel is speaking of is making the individual the starting point. Western democracies too have failed to make individuals the starting point for politics.

Havel mentions that in Western Democracies "violence done to human beings is not nearly so obvious and cruel" (XVI). One may ask: what is Havel referring to? We have a better sense for violence done to human beings in Communist regimes (elimination of the unloyal, suppression of freedom). But, what about the wrongs in Western Democracies? Havel does not make clear the wrongs and leaves it open to speculation.

Second, citizens- in Western Democracies- do not know what to use their freedom for. Havel states, "It may even be said that the more room there is in the Western democracies (compared to our world) for the genuine aims of life, the better the crisis is hidden from people and the more deeply do they become immersed in it" (XX). Alasdair MacIntyre, my former professor, hit upon this train of thought in one of my classes. According to Professor MacIntyre, in Western democracies we have gained our rights and freedom through our civil rights movements. Given that I am no longer constrained, what do I do now? With my freedom?

We have no more civil rights campaigns to conduct anymore but what threatens us is our complacency. We do not know what to use our freedom for. And, if everyone is free to make up their mind on what they are to do, then it is not clear if there is a rational answer to how we should use our freedom.

Third, Havel encourages us to gain a sense of responsibility. This is what he sees to be a major problem, both in Western Democracies and his world. He explains, "A person...who has no roots in the order of being, no sense of responsibility for anything higher than his own personal survival, is a demoralized person" (IX). Havel suggests the need for a sense of responsibility for others, for truth.