

Václav Havel

Monologue from a Play, *The Garden Party*

Translated from Czechoslovakian by Vera Blackwell

HUGO

Me? You mean who am I? Now look here. I don't like these one-sided questions, honestly I don't. You think you can put the question in such a simplified way? No matter how one answers this kind of question, one can never encompass the whole truth, but only one of its limited parts. Man—that is something so rich, complicated, changeable, many-sided—there is no word, no sentence, no book, nothing that could describe and contain him in his whole extent. In man there is nothing fixed, eternal, absolute; man is continuous change—a change with a proud ring to it, of course! Today the time of static and unchangeable categories is past, the time when A was only A, and B always only B is gone; today we all know very well that A may be often B as well as A; that B may just as well be A; that B may be B, but equally it may be A and C; just as C may be not only C, but also A, B, and D; and in certain circumstances even F may become O, Q, Y, and perhaps also R. I'm sure you yourselves must feel that what you feel today you have not felt yesterday, you do not feel today, but might perhaps again feel tomorrow; while what you might feel the day after tomorrow you may never have felt before. Do you feel that? And it is not hard to understand that those who today understand only today are only another version of those who yesterday understood only yesterday, while, as we all know, it is necessary today somehow to try and understand also that which was yesterday, because—who knows?—it may come back again tomorrow. Truth is just as complicated and many-sided as everything else in the world—the magnet, the telephone, the poems of Branislav, the magnet—and we all are a little bit what we were yester-

day and a little bit what we are today; and also a little bit we are not. Anyway, we all are a little bit all the time and all the time we are not a little bit; some of us are more and some of us are more not; some only are, some are only, and some only are not; so that none of us completely is and at the same time each one of us is not completely; and the question is only when it is better to be more, and to not-be less, and when—on the contrary—it is better less to be and more to not-be; anyway, he who is too much may soon not be at all, and he who in a certain situation is able to a certain extent to not-be may in another situation be all the better for that. I don't know if you want more to be or more to not-be and when you want to be and when you want to not-be, but I want to be all the time and that's why all the time I must a little bit not-be. You see, man when he is from time to time a little bit not does not diminish. And if at this moment, relatively speaking, I am rather not, I assure you that soon I might much more be than I've ever been—and then we can once more talk about all this, but on a completely different platform. [*He has been vanishing during the soliloquy; now he disappears completely, singing a Czech folksong.*]

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