
Waiting for the Existential Revolution in Europe (Abstract only)

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This essay argues, contrary to the widespread beliefs that prevailed after 1989, that the experience of post-communist countries and their peoples, both before and after 1989, can bring something new to our understanding of Europe's present predicament: sometimes as an inspiration, sometimes as a cautionary tale. The lessons offered by post-communist Europe concern some deeply held convictions about the very nature of the EU and its constitutional structure. Only if this experience is absorbed in Europe as its own will post-communist countries truly return to Europe – and Europe become united. The cautionary tales of post-communist Europe concern the worrying consequences of the suppression of social conflicts 'in the name of Europe'. Such conflicts often get translated into identity politics, which in the context of European integration often turn against the Union. The second lesson concerns the ill fate of Havel's existential revolution. The attempts of some European constitutionalists to reform individualistic emphasis of the integration project are problematic for the same reason: they turn attention away from politics, where real solutions need to be found. This relates to the third suggestion made here: that the experience of living in a collective dream of socialism can be used as an inspiration rather than as something that needs to be erased from the collective memory of Europe.

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