

“The post-totalitarian system touches people at every step, but it does so with its ideological gloves on. That is why life in the system is so thoroughly permeated with hypocrisy and lies....Because the regime is captive to its own lies, it must falsify everything. It falsifies the past, it falsifies the present, and it falsifies the future...

“Individuals need not believe all these mystifications, but they must behave as though they did, or they must tolerate them in silence, or get along well with those who work with them. For this reason, *they must live within a lie*. They need not accept the lie. It is enough for them to have accepted their life with it and in it. For by this very fact, individuals confirm the system, fulfill the system, *are* the system....

“[But] it is built on lies. It works only as long as people are willing to live within the lie....In the post-totalitarian system, this line runs de facto through each person, for everyone in his or her own way is both a victim and a supporter of the systems....[A]lienated humanity supports this system as its own involuntary masterplan, as a degenerate image of its own degeneration, as a record of people’s failure as individuals....

“Living within the lie can constitute the system only if it is universal. The principle must embrace and permeate everything. There are no terms whatsoever on which it can coexist with living within the truth, and therefore everyone who steps out of line *denies it in principle and threatens it in its entirety*....If the main pillar of the system is living a lie, then it is not surprising that the fundamental threat to it is **living the truth**. This is why it must be suppressed more severely than anything else.

“Living within the truth...is...an attempt to regain control over one’s own sense of responsibility...A better system will not automatically ensure a better life. In fact the opposite is true: only by creating a better life will a better system be developed.”

-Vaclav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless”

