



Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness: Essays, a Play, Two Poems, and a Prayer

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In this first collection of writings by Tony Kushner, including his latest play *Slavs!*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright grapples with the timeless issues of bigotry, war, faith, love, as well as tackling the contemporary topics as AIDS, gay rights and the moral horrors of the Gulf War.

Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness: Essays, a Play, Two Poems, and a Prayer Details

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From Reader Review Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness: Essays, a Play, Two Poems, and a Prayer for online ebook

Rob Wolman says

Okay this book is definitely spotty and in a way not deserving of five stars except MAN CAN THIS GUY WRITE!!! The essays on sex and sexuality are stunning, worth the price of the book alone--must reads!!! The poem at the end is amazing. Kushner is a national treasure.

Moirra Burke says

" As with any of the members of this list, I really recommend any book by these authors, and this is especially true of Tony (Angels in America) Kushner. His moving commentaries on gay life, Russian politics, and the meaningfulness of art stick with you, inspiring weeks of deep thoughts and only slightly blurry optimism."

Matt says

A book of essays and stuff from one of my favorite playwrights. Kushner's intelligence and personality come through in every word, and his essay pretension is worth the price of admission alone.

Ari says

I had to read the essay in this book for a class in college. I sat there with dictionary.com open all night, trying to follow along, but utterly moved.

Jordan says

This book comprises several of Tony Kushner's smaller works in the mid-90's. The most substantial portion of the text is Kushner's Slavs! play, which acts as something of a sidenote to 'Angels in America.' It's not exactly an easy burden to accompany one of the greatest American plays of the 20th century, but Slavs! brings up some interesting overlapping points on the nature of change in the context of the fall of the Great Experiment of Socialism. Kushner seems to be at his most fluent writing prowess when referencing matters of politics, and even though the ghost of the Soviet Union doesn't haunt the world with such a resounding spectral presence as it did a decade and a half ago, the political thoughts are still seemingly eternal questions of the nagging between progress in the brain and the grief of the heart begging us to stay behind.

The essays waver between the profound (as is almost typical with Kushner) and a bit of an exacerbated bit of

wordage. Kushner makes some revealing references to his childhood growing up in Louisiana (latter to be explored in *Caroline, or Change*) and somewhat amusingly, to the veil of assumed pretentiousness that some accuse of surrounding his work.

By far my favorite section of this volume is the prayer that closes the book. Delivered by Kushner in 1994 on the National Day of Prayer for AIDS, the plea for a cure is still as urgent today as the epidemic spreads ceaselessly overseas. The prayer's frustration with the absence of God during crisis despite continued pleas for assistance is one of the most revealing and personal works Kushner has published. The one thought permeating all of the works throughout the book, but most especially the prayer, is Kushner's continual belief in the continuance of hope despite all obstacles.

ML Delaney says

This remains my favorite Kushner, and my most gifted choice for graduates.

Dave says

As other goodreads members have commented, the essays are a little uneven, though particularly important is Kushner's concept of tolerance in "Some Questions About Tolerance." His prayer is emotional, his poems are seductive, but, for me, the crowning achievement of this collection is *Slavs*. It's funny and scathing. As usual, nothing is sacred, and no social or economic system is safe, not even love or hope. What's more, this play probably wins the prize for characters with the longest names (for example, our old friend Aleksii Antedilluvianovich Prelapsarianov). I hope he used Ctrl+C/V when he wrote it.

Parvoneh says

I skipped the play (gasp) but was so happy to spend time with Tony Kushner via essay, poem, prayer. So impressed by how he manages to predict, 12 years ago, the sad state of assimilationist queer politics in America while also being so warm, witty, hopeful. Tony if you're reading this please lmk when you want to carry our distasteful selves around New York and share snacks.

Dan says

"The hope offered by the identity-politics movements has collided catastrophically with the counterrevolution, and the temporary deferral of that hope has given birth to frustration and desperation; which in turn has given birth to a politics based on nationalism. Nationalism... brings with it moral blindness and heavily defended, bristling boundaries... Before we can lay claim to our common humanity, we must learn to recognize and respect Difference and what it tells us about the infinite complexities of human behavior- recognize and respect Difference, not just tolerate it. The foregrounding of such respect is social justice." -p.46

Will says

This collection is very uneven, but contains what's probably my favorite essay ever, a brilliant response to Andrew Sullivan's assimilationist politics called "A Socialism of the Skin." This essay, which is brilliant, hilarious, and beautifully written, makes the book worth checking out, even though the rest of the book wasn't particularly memorable. But I've returned to that essay probably a dozen times since I first read it and can't recommend it highly enough. It's astonishing.

Rosalind says

So insightful, almost scarily so. Really interesting from this fangirl's point of view, to glimpse how many of Kushner's thoughts are outlined, sometimes in embryonic form, and constitute significant themes in 'Angels in America'. Still convinced Kushner is in fact a prophet (to which I'm sure he would reply, 'F*** you!').
