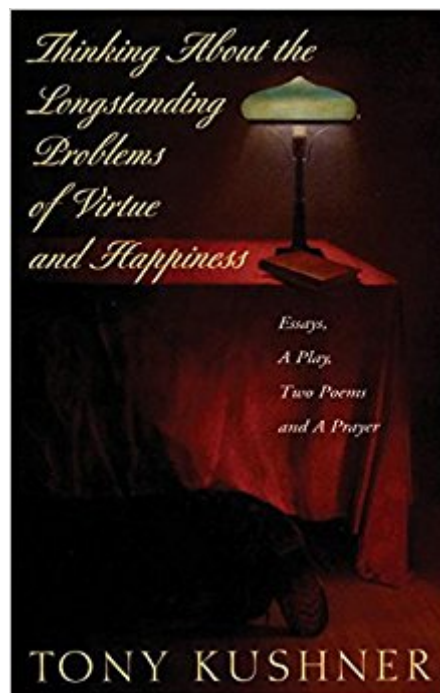




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Thinking About The Longstanding Problems Of Virtue: Essays, A Play, Two Poems And A Prayer



Synopsis

A collection of writings from the Tony Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Angels in America*. This volume by Tony Kushner features the play *Slavs!*, a comic, mordant and marvelously provocative look at the crumbling of the Soviet Union (*SF Chronicle*), as well as several essays, two poems and a prayer. Kushner is an intense and poetical writer, a great shaper of words. — Laurie Winer, *LA Times*; Tony Kushner is drunk on ideas, on language, on the possibility of changing the world. His talent and his heart and his head are incendiary, combustible, explosive, heartbreakingly vital and on-target. This extraordinary new compendium contains enough haunting notions to keep anyone who cares sleepless for eternity. I want everyone to read him and listen to him and, yes goddamnit, think about what he says. — Larry Kramer; Terrific: his riff on the political and the personal, the theater of the ridiculous and the theater of the fabulous, synthesizes humor and commitment into wisdom. — Publishers Weekly; Tony Kushner's *Slavs!* just might be the best out-take of a Pulitzer Prize-winning play ever written. — Greg Evans, *Variety*; Bracing; original; rambunctiously funny; seriously moving; part buffoonish burlesque and part tragic satire; Mr. Kushner's words dazzle, sting and prompt belly laughs. — Vincent Canby, *New York Times* Tony Kushner's plays include *Angels in America*; *Hydriotaphia, or the Death of Dr. Brown*; *The Illusion*, adapted from the play by Pierre Corneille; *Slavs!*; *A Bright Room Called Day*; *Homebody/Kabul*; *Caroline, or Change*, a musical with composer Jeanine Tesori; and *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures*. He wrote the screenplays for Mike Nichols's film of *Angels in America* and for Steven Spielberg's *Munich* and *Lincoln*. His books include *The Art of Maurice Sendak: 1980 to the Present*; *Brundibar*, with illustrations by Maurice Sendak; and *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, co-edited with Alisa Solomon. Among many honors, Kushner is the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize, two Tony Awards, three Obie Awards, two Evening Standard Awards, an Olivier Award, an Emmy Award, two Oscar nominations, and the Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2012, he was awarded a National Medal of Arts by President Barack Obama. He lives in Manhattan with his husband, Mark Harris.

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Customer Reviews

"If you do political theater," says Kushner, author of the play *Angels in America*, "you are starting out with one big strike against you. You will have to be better than most, not just as good as." He also adds that in "becoming humorless we lose connection to the most vital parts of our culture." In this collection of nine essays (taken from addresses and articles), two lukewarm poems, a play and a moving prayer, he proves the validity of his own maxims. The initial essay, "Notes About Theater-My STUMP Speech," is terrific: his riff on the political and the personal, the theater of the ridiculous and the theater of the fabulous, synthesizes humor and commitment into wisdom. But the further Kushner's writings get from the personal, and the closer they get to the political, the less interesting they are. None of his pieces is exactly tightly argued, but his politics taken neat are a loose conglomeration of familiar rhetoric generally lacking an individual imprint. His most cogently argued position is that gay liberation must be linked to a fight against oppression of any stripe. Less convincing is his screed against the Gulf war, of which he says, "No single event during the course of my lifetime [Kushner was born in 1956], nothing that I can remember has occasioned such depression and despair as has the Gulf War." The play, a funny, insightful piece set in post-glasnost Russia, explores an ultimate crisis of faith, and in one of its best scenes, the old revolutionary Aleksii Antedilluvianovich Prelapsarianov exclaims "For ninety years I have wondered... WHY is the Good Cause always defeated by the Bad.... Because God... is a Menshevik!" Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Tony Kushner's plays include *Angels in America*; *Hydriotaphia, or the Death of Dr. Brown*; *The Illusion*, adapted from the play by Pierre Corneille; *Slavs!*; *A Bright Room Called Day*;

Homebody/Kabul; Caroline, or Change, a musical with composer Jeanine Tesori; and The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures. He wrote the screenplays for Mike Nichols's film of Angels in America and for Steven Spielberg's Munich and Lincoln. His books include The Art of Maurice Sendak: 1980 to the Present; Brundibar, with illustrations by Maurice Sendak; and Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, co-edited with Alisa Solomon. Among many honors, Kushner is the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize, two Tony Awards, three Obie Awards, two Evening Standard Awards, an Olivier Award, an Emmy Award, two Oscar nominations, and the Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 2012, he was awarded a National Medal of Arts by President Barack Obama. He lives in Manhattan with his husband, Mark Harris.

So I am not sure if I misunderstood but I was under the impression the play Slavs! Was in this book. However, upon wireless purchase to my kindle I have not been able to find it :(the rest of the book is a wonderful read (especially if you are a Kushman fan) I just wish I could find the play.

This book, a compilation of many short works, is truly one of Kushner's gems. And though, certainly, none of these pieces attains the truly unique, Kushnerian glory of "Angels" (but Good God, does *anything*?) they are most definitely not to be put aside too hastily. His essays are enlightening, witty and thought-provoking, reminiscent of his drama. And though there are a few that I, admittedly, skip over periodically, most of them are fun, if slightly heavy, short reads. "Slavs!" is not one of Kushner's best plays, but I must recommend spending some time with it. Like "Angels" and "Bright Room" (and indeed, everything he writes or says), "Slavs!" is dense with political theory, history and humanity. And while it may seem forgettable at first glance (and even second... I acted in it a few months ago, and trust me, it takes a few readings to truly appreciate it) it proves its worth. Now I come to my favorite parts of the book: Kushner's poems. "An Epithalimion" holds a place (in my mind, at least) among his best writings. This poem is absolutely *alive* with imagery, both visual and emotional. To risk sounding like the cheesiest person ever, reading it just makes me happy; I can't recommend it highly enough. "Second Month of Mourning," too, is beautiful, but in exactly the opposite way: it's truly heart-breaking. Kushner's prayer that concludes the compilation is one of my favorite pieces ever, ever. It thrills me to read it. It, like all the other works in this book, fits Kushner's mold perfectly: it is joyful and heart-breaking, political and scientific, historical and philosophical. It is the perfect end to this collection. I have recommended this book to all of my friends, whether or not

they are fans of Kushner (though everyone should be a fan of Kushner), and do the same to you. Buy it, read it, love it.

Kushner (perhaps the greatest poetic/playwright genius of our time) has assembled some of his more marginal works (though few of his works actually are marginal) and some of his most brilliant in this collection of "essays, a play, two poems and a prayer." having read all of his plays, including his Tony Award Winning "Angels in America" two part masterpiece, i have to say that SLAVS, while it present a brilliant message, isnt the best of his works. Sometimes, also, these essays can be repetitive. however, some are brilliant, spiced with new meaning and metaphor, different ways of viewing the evils of capitalism and our society. They concern sex and life (as one? as a duality?), love, politics and food. (can we live without any of the above. the answer is never presented, but it must be a resounding no). best of all is Kushner's prayer, at the end of the book, which was delivered on the national prayer for aids day. full of anger and grace, compliance and vengence, this prayer eloquently asks and reasks the questions within all of us, directly to "God." this book provides one of the most provocative and brilliant commentaries that i have seen in recent years.

Mr. Kushner's compassion never comes off as sentimental but feels true and above all his writings, regardless of the mode, make one think.

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