



Human Predicaments: And What to Do about Them

John Kekes

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In his latest book, esteemed philosopher John Kekes draws on anthropology, history, and literature in order to help us cope with the common predicaments that plague us as we try to take control of our lives. In each chapter he offers fascinating new ways of thinking about a particular problem that is fundamental to how we live, such as facing difficult choices, uncontrollable contingencies, complex evaluations, the failures of justice, the miasma of boredom, and the inescapable hypocrisies of social life.

Kekes considers how we might deal with these predicaments by comparing how others in different times and cultures have approached them. He examines what is good, bad, instructive, and dangerous in the sexually charged politics of the Shilluk, the Hindu caste system, Balinese role-morality, the religious passion of Cortes and Simone Weil, the fate of Colonel Hironmichi Yahara during and after the battle for Okinawa, the ritual human sacrifices of the Aztecs, and the tragedies to which innocence may lead. In doing so, he shakes us out of our deep-seated ways of thinking, enlarging our understanding of the possibilities available to us as we struggle with the problems that stand in the way of how we want to live. The result is a highly interesting journey through time and space that illuminates and helps us cope with some of the most basic predicaments we all face as human beings.

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