



The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics

By Christopher Lasch

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"A major and challenging work. . . . Provocative, and certain to be controversial. . . . Will add important new dimension to the continuing debate on the decline of liberalism." ?William Julius Wilson, *New York Times Book Review*

Can we continue to believe in progress? In this sobering analysis of the Western human condition, Christopher Lasch seeks the answer in a history of the struggle between two ideas: one is the idea of progress - an idea driven by the conviction that human desire is insatiable and requires ever larger production forces. Opposing this materialist view is the idea that condemns a boundless appetite for more and better goods and distrusts "improvements" that only feed desire. Tracing the opposition to the idea of progress from Rousseau through Montesquieu to Carlyle, Max Weber and G.D.H. Cole, Lasch finds much that is desirable in a turn toward moral conservatism, toward a lower-middle-class culture that features egalitarianism, workmanship and loyalty, and recognizes the danger of resentment of the material goods of others.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The thrust of Lasch's polemic is that progressives mistakenly cling to a faith in progress, i.e., the belief that a steady, indefinite rise in living standards is possible. The world's diminishing resources and America's shrinking middle class effectively doom the idea of such progress, he suggests. Lasch identifies a constellation of thinkers--Carlyle, Emerson, William James, Reinhold Niebuhr, syndicalist Georges Sorel, American populists--who were skeptical of material progress and its presumed benefits. He links their views to the "petty-bourgeois sensibility" of the lower-middle class, said to be rooted in family, neighborhood, respect for workmanship, loyalty, thrift, self-denial and a recognition of human limits. As self-appointed champion of lower-middle-class values, Lasch is less cogent than in his jeremiad, *The Culture of Narcissism*. He uses liberals as a whipping-post to advance his debatable thesis, accusing them of unrealistic optimism and a shallow secularism.

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From Library Journal

Lasch (*The Culture of Narcissism* , LJ 11/15/78) condemns those on both the right and left who continue to believe in progress, i.e., the idea that the American economy can continue to grow indefinitely and lead the way to "the true and only heaven" (Hawthorne's phrase) of increasing wealth and ever-higher standards of living. Instead, he argues, we must recognize the environmental limits to economic growth and begin lowering our expectations. (He believes the middle class is already on the verge of extinction.) Lasch analyzes the thought of those who have dissented from the idea of progress and warned of human limitations--Emerson, William James, Reinhold Niebuhr, Martin Luther King--and concludes that the solution is a conservative morality that accepts limits but "asserts the goodness of life in the face of limits." Recommended for academic and large public library collections. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 9/1/90.

- Jeffrey R. Herold , *Bucyrus P.L., Ohio*

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Review

"Christopher Lasch has written a great book about the most important things. As a major contribution to public discourse, *The True and Only Heaven* will be at the center of discussion for years to come." (Robert Bellah, coauthor of *Habits of the Heart*)

"Powerful and moving. . . . A magisterial synthesis." (Michael Stern - *San Francisco Chronicle*)

"A profound and intellectually honest work of breathtaking historical scope that could easily set the terms of political debate in a post-cold-war world in which the ideologies of right and left seem totally exhausted. . . . A cleareyed study of our usable past." (Kirkus Reviews)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Linda Pillar:

Book is to be different for each and every grade. Book for children until finally adult are different content.

As you may know that book is very important normally. The book *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* has been making you to know about other understanding and of course you can take more information. It is very advantages for you. The book *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* is not only giving you much more new information but also being your friend when you really feel bored. You can spend your current spend time to read your publication. Try to make relationship with all the book *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics*. You never really feel lose out for everything in the event you read some books.

Teresa Ealy:

Typically the book *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* has a lot of knowledge on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of profit. The book was authored by the very famous author. The author makes some research just before write this book. This book very easy to read you can get the point easily after scanning this book.

Marianne Haglund:

Precisely why? Because this *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will surprise you with the secret that inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such incredible way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning thoroughly. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book have got such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking technique. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I were you I will go to the guide store hurriedly.

Robert Ross:

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