



A Moment on the Earth: The Coming Age of Environmental Optimism

By Gregg Easterbrook

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An award-winning investigative journalist presents an in-depth exploration of the concept of ecorealism, predicting that the Pollution Age is nearing its end and that environmentalism offers humanity a chance to transform society for the better. 20,000 first printing.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

This is a well-documented examination of the effects of human society on the global environment. Easterbrook's conclusion: Things are getting better, not worse. Not surprisingly, this book has generated considerable controversy in many circles of environmentalists and ecologists, and many of his arguments only apply to overly-developed nations. For example, he stumbles *badly* when dealing with tropical rainforests, completely ignoring the fact that clearcutting in tropical environments leads to essentially irreversible loss of soils and a sterile clay pan. But all in all, I recommend this book highly to everyone interested in the proper interpretation of long-term ecological trends. In my opinion, he is as often right as wrong, and habitual doomsday-sayers would do well to seriously consider and possibly adopt some of his positions on ecorealism.

From Publishers Weekly

At last, an optimistic view of environmental progress! On the 25th anniversary of Earth Day there is cause for celebration, argues the author; we have achieved solutions for many problems. There has been vast improvement in air and water quality, industrial pollution has lessened and we have virtually stopped ocean dumping. A contributing editor for Newsweek and the Atlantic, Easterbrook offers a comprehensive survey of ecological progress since 1970; he suggests that pollution in the West has already peaked and will be satisfactorily ameliorated within decades. He first looks at earth history, noting that the planet has always recovered from cataclysm. Part two analyzes the major issues: acid rain, toxic waste, radiation, global warming, air, water, land, economics, population and politics. Easterbrook finds some problems less severe than predicted, with corrective measures less expensive than expected owing to unanticipated technical discoveries and free-market innovation. He chides doomsayers of the environmental movement for their scare tactics and calls for activists to move from toxin-ringing to rationality.

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From Library Journal

A contributing editor to Newsweek and The Atlantic, Easterbrook offers a new approach to environmental thinking characterized by confidence in the ability of human reason and technology to work with nature to create a healthy habitat for humans, plants, and animals. He contrasts his optimistic approach, termed "ecorealism," with the pessimism and doomsaying he finds in current environmentalism. In the first part, Easterbrook attempts to look at the condition of the modern earth from the perspective of a personified nature, reassuringly resilient and resourceful through eons of time. The second part assesses in separate alphabetized chapters the current status of various environmental problems, while the brief third section explores a melange of visionary futures for life on Earth and in space. Although Easterbrook supports valid criticisms of alarmist environmentalist tactics, particularly in cases of radiation dangers and chemical safety, his book is likely to provoke controversy because, especially in Part 1, his stance is polemic, his language often satiric, and the viewpoints of environmental spokespersons oversimplified and sometimes distorted. The journalistic practice that omits complete documentation of sources also undercuts the effectiveness of Easterbrook's arguments. Still, this may prove to be an influential book that libraries with environmental collections should consider acquiring.

Joan S. Elbers, formerly with Montgomery Coll., Rockville, Md.

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