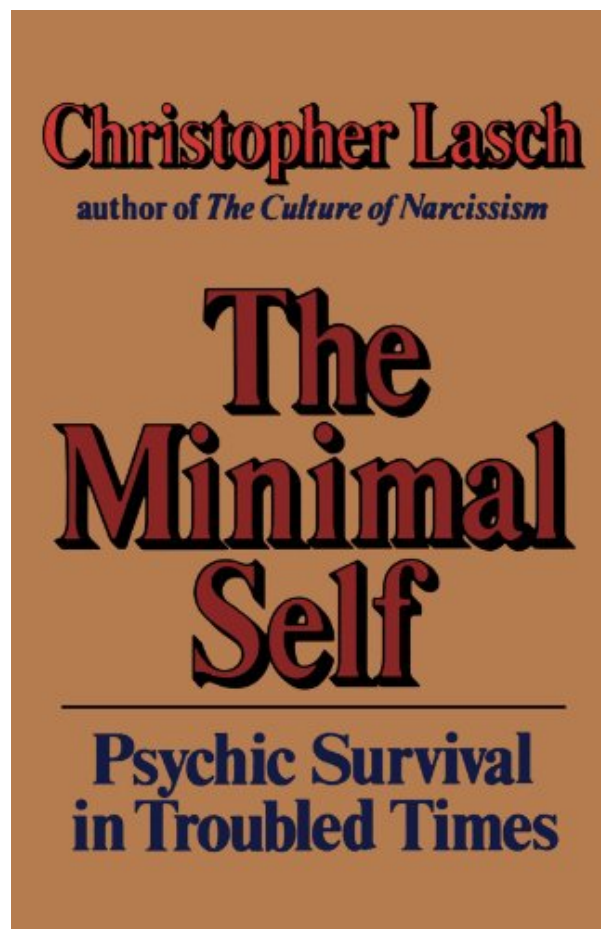


**THE MINIMAL SELF: PSYCHIC SURVIVAL
IN TROUBLED TIMES BY CHRISTOPHER
LASCH**



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Christopher Lasch

author of *The Culture of Narcissism*

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About the Author

Christopher Lasch (1932–1994) was also the author of *The True and Only Heaven*, *The Revolt of the Elites* and *the Betrayal of Democracy*, and other books.

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"Even more valuable than its widely praised predecessor, *The Culture of Narcissism*." —John W. Aldridge

Faced with an escalating arms race, rising crime and terrorism, environmental deterioration, and long-term economic decline, people have retreated from commitments that presuppose a secure and orderly world. In his latest book, Christopher Lasch, the renowned historian and social critic, powerfully argues that self-concern, so characteristic of our time, has become a search for psychic survival.

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- 320 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

60 of 65 people found the following review helpful.

A Genuinely Great Mind

By A Customer

Lasch has a great intellect: he's read deeply and though he's strong-minded, he's also compassionate. Here he examines faulty ideas, often finding the grain of truth that's given them wing. In *THE MINIMAL SELF*, still deeply relevant to our times, he explains two urges in light of man's destructiveness and our lack of faith in a future: a regressive, narcissistic wish to merge with the environment, in a timeless solipsism that negates the past and the present; or else, a strict adherence to rules and regulations that demand obedience by threat of punishment and retribution, and which harken back to false nostalgia for a simpler past.

Lasch shows us that it's much more complicated than that: that our obsession with survival, our lack of faith in language to communicate commonalities (and its exploitation not just by the media but by activists trying to counter the media's insidious influence), and our confusion about how to structure, or de-structure (destroy) our lives leads us back to Freud, back to humility, and back to separation, away from narcissistic

fantasies of either merger or omnipotence.

In brilliant, thoughtful, complex prose, Lasch argues for an enlightened dependence, a reliance on the cultural sphere to give meaning to our inner drives and our recognition of the objective outside world, and thoughtfulness and sobriety in place of infantilism and fantasy. Lasch argues for mature play, and his is a convincing argument.

24 of 27 people found the following review helpful.

The Minimal Self

By M. McKasson Morgan

The book is disturbing and insightful. Though written in the 80s, this social/psychological/political/aesthetic critique describes today's disconnect between self and society: the lack of humanistic glue; the sad (and secret) nihilism of religions that can no longer keep the genie of destruction corked up; the merging of mass culture with mass destruction. Just as it must've been two decades ago, the book is an amazing wake up call. My copy, however, was in poor shape. The binding is upside down and the pages are falling out.

10 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Toward A Psychology of Non-Being

By Phyllis Antebi Ph.D

For anyone familiar with Abraham Maslow's classic, "Toward a Psychology of Being", my title will seem particularly relevant. While Maslow was interested in studying self-actualized and self-actualizing people, Lash tells us about minimally actualized people. Lasch tells us that as a culture, we have become infantile, childish adults who won't grow up! He suggests that a paradigm shift away from our merger fantasies could help us to individuate more as moral agents and less as consumers of mass culture. Individuation and radical self awareness are not new themes, but in this book the concepts are conceptually abstract. Many readers may find Lasch's argument particularly difficult to follow. He uses language that is quite technical and specialized.

Maslow's thesis is far more accessible to the interested reader. Both authors address our needs for status, security and love. The message in Lash's, "The Minimal Self", is far less optimistic than the message from Maslow. Reaching our full potential is quite unlikely in a culture consumed by materialistic sources of gratification. Lash's message is that personal accountability is not synonymous with utilitarian morality. Utilitarian morality tells us that the ends justify the means, any means. It's the goal oriented style minus consideration for or of others. Implicit in Lasch's book, is the belief that secular societies breed discontent. Actually, Lasch's message, put simply, is that we are becoming more and more a culture which breeds and fosters narcissistic psychopathology. However correct, as a theme, this idea is not that new. While I agree with the message, the vehicle itself is difficult to get through. I am, therefore, recommending two other books on the topic of narcissism. The first published in 2007, is written by Paul Smith. It is titled: "Primitive America: The Ideology of Capitalist Democracy". The second recommendation, written in 2009, is titled: "The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in an Age of Entitlement". The authors are Twenge and Campbell. The subjects of all three books, including "The Minimal Self", overlap. It might prove interesting to compare and contrast the similarities and differences of these various authors. Also consider two Frontline reports I recently watched on PBS. The first, "Consumed". The second, "Generation Like".

See all 5 customer reviews...

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