



After Progress: American Social Reform and European Socialism in the Twentieth Century

Norman Birnbaum

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The twentieth century witnessed a profound shift in both socialism and social reform. In the early 1900s, social reform seemed to offer a veritable religion of redemption, but by the century's end, while socialism remained a vibrant force in European society, a culture of extreme individualism and consumption all but squeezed the welfare state out of existence. Documenting this historic change, *After Progress: European Socialism and American Social Reform in the 20th Century* is the first truly comprehensive look at the course of social reform and Western politics after Communism, brilliantly explained by a major social thinker of our time.

Norman Birnbaum traces in fascinating detail the forces that have shifted social concern over the course of a century, from the devastation of two world wars, to the post-war golden age of economic growth and democracy, to the ever-increasing dominance of the market. He makes sense of the historical trends that have created a climate in which politicians proclaim the arrival of a new historical epoch but rarely offer solutions to social problems that get beyond cost-benefit analyses. Birnbaum goes one step further and proposes a strategy for bringing the market back into balance with the social needs of the people. He advocates a reconsideration of the notion of work, urges that market forces be brought under political control, and stresses the need for education that teaches the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Both a sweeping historical survey and a sharp-edged commentary on current political posturing, *After Progress* examines the state of social reform past, present and future.

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