



The Revolt of the Elites: And the Betrayal of Democracy

Christopher Lasch

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In this challenging work, Christopher Lasch makes his most accessible critique yet of what is wrong with the values and beliefs of America's professional and managerial elites. The distinguished historian argues that democracy today is threatened not by the masses, as Jose Ortega y Gasset (*The Revolt of the Masses*) had said, but by the elites. These elites - mobile and increasingly global in outlook - refuse to accept limits or ties to nation and place. Lasch contends that, as they isolate themselves in their networks and enclaves, they abandon the middle class, divide the nation, and betray the idea of a democracy for all America's citizens. The book is historical writing at its best, using the past to reveal the roots of our current dilemma. The author traces how meritocracy - selective elevation into the elite - gradually replaced the original American democratic ideal of competence and respect for every man. Among other cultural trends, he trenchantly criticizes the vogue for self-esteem over achievement as a false remedy for deeper social problems, and attacks the superior pseudoradicalism of the academic left. Brilliantly he reveals why it is no wonder that Americans are apathetic about their common culture and see no point in arguing politics or voting. In a powerful final section Lasch traces the spiritual crisis of democracy. The elites, having jettisoned the moral and ethical guidelines provided by religion, cling to the belief that through science they can master their fates and escape mortal limits. In pursuit of this illusion they have become infatuated with the global economy. Their revolt, the author warns, is diminishing what is worthwhile about American life. This volume, completed just before the author's death, continues in his tradition of vigorous and original thought and should stir soul-searching among readers concerned about the future of America and its democracy.

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