

# The Revolt of the Elites: And the Betrayal of Democracy

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Taking aim at the values and beliefs of America's professional and managerial elites, a historian argues that global mobility and refusal to identify with one nation has caused them to betray the idea of democracy for all Americans.

Christopher Lasch (1932-1994), professor of history at the University of Rochester, wrote, among many other works, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* and the best-selling *Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*. A sure sign that Lasch's latest (and, sadly, last) book deserves wide acclaim is that it will infuriate those who cling to conventional notions of left and right. Lasch remains as relentless a critic of liberal progressivism as he is of unfettered capitalism. In many ways, this sharp and penetrating study culminates his career as a social critic of the highest order. It's an articulate challenge to the anti-democratic notions of both market and statist liberals: Both, in Lasch's view, share an exalted sense of the professional and managerial class, thereby diminishing a vital middle class in this country. Throughout his many books, Lasch (*The True and Only Heaven*, 1991) notes, from his early work on liberals and the Russian Revolution through his biting analysis of self-styled radical intellectuals, he has always concerned himself with one overarching question: Does democracy have a future? More so than his earlier, often naysaying books, this wonderfully vigorous and urgent set of essays makes explicit Lasch's hope for a renewal of our best democratic values: the civil arts of public discourse and debate; an educational system that stresses commonality, not difference; and, quite simply, religion--one of the best disciplines against professional arrogance. For Lasch, to accept our inability to master a God-given world is the first step to a more realistic vision for humanity. The course of our century, as he argues with great historical nuance, has steered us from a sense of the "common good." Our public spaces continue to dwindle, and the language of politics, journalism, and the academy no longer invites the average person into the argument, as democracy once promised. The "democratic habits" of "self-reliance, responsibility, and initiative" have degraded into a mad rush for social mobility. The common wellsprings for a civil society--families, neighborhoods, traditions--are now seen as impediments to financial success or as oppressive representatives of sexism and racism. This brave piece of social criticism answers Lasch's critics with a message so simple and obvious, it's sublime. (First serial to Harper's) -- Copyright © 1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

#### Other Books

*The Emerson Dilemma*. This gathering of eleven original essays with a substantive introduction brings the traditional image of Emerson the Transcendentalist face-to-face with an emerging image of Emerson the reformer. *The Emerson Dilemma* highlights the conflict between Emerson's philosophical attraction to solitary contemplation and the demands of activism compelled by the logic of his own writings. The essays cover Emerson's reform thought and activism from his early career as a Unitarian minister through his reaction to the Civil War. In addition to Emerson's antislavery position, the collection covers his complex relationship to the early women's rights movement and American Indian removal. Individual essays also compare Emerson's reform ethics with those of his wife, Lidian Jackson Emerson, his aunt Mary Moody, Henry David Thoreau, John Brown, and Margaret Fuller. The Emerson who emerges from this volume is one whose Transcendentalism is explicitly politicized; thus, we see him consciously mediating between the opposing forces of the world he "thought" and the world in which he lived. © © © © © . See Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*

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( New York : Norton , 1995 ) , pp . 162-63 . 30. Josiah Royce , The Philosophy of Loyalty ( New York : MacMillan , 1924 ) , p . 245 . 31."