



Alexis De Tocqueville

Tocqueville's studies of democracy in the United States led him to the conclusion that American society is characterized by five key features:

1. Love of equality: Americans love equality even more than we love individual liberty or freedom (Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 1).
2. Absence of tradition: Americans inhabit a landscape largely without inherited institutions and traditions (family, class, religion) that define their relations to one another (Volume 2, Part 1, Chapter 1).

3. Individualism: Because no person is intrinsically better than another, Americans begin to seek all reasons in themselves, looking not to tradition nor to the wisdom of singular individuals, but to their own opinion for guidance (Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 2).

4. Tyranny of the majority: At the same time, Americans give great weight to, and feel great pressure from, the opinion of the majority. Precisely because they are all equal, they feel insignificant and weak in contrast to the greater number (Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 7).

5. Importance of free association:

Americans have a happy impulse to work together to improve their common life, most obviously by forming voluntary associations. This uniquely American art of association tempers their tendencies towards individualism and gives them a habit and taste for serving others (Volume 2, Part 2, Chapters 4 and 5).