



The Republic of Choice: Law, Authority, and Culture

Lawrence M. Friedman

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In this imaginative exploration of modern legal culture, Lawrence Friedman addresses how the contemporary idea of individual rights has altered the legal systems and authority structures of Western societies. Every aspect of law, he argues--from civil rights to personal-injury litigation to divorce law--has been profoundly reshaped, reflecting the power of this concept.

The new individualism is quite different from that of the nineteenth century, which stressed self-control, discipline, and traditional group values. Modern individualism focuses on the individual as the starting and ending point of life and assumes a wide zone of choice. Choice is vital, fundamental: the right to develop oneself, to build up a life uniquely suited to oneself through free, open selection among forms, models, and lifestyles. With striking clarity and force, Friedman demonstrates how the new individualism results from changes in the technological and social framework of society. Loose, unconnected, free-floating, mobile: this is the modern individual, at least in comparison with the immediate past.

Written for the general reader as well as lawyers and legal scholars, *The Republic of Choice* offers keen and original observations about legal culture and the public consciousness that informs and expresses it.

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