

Individualism: A Reader

By George H. Smith - editor, Marilyn Moore - editor

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Individualism is one of most criticized and least understood ideas in social and political thought. Is individualism the ability to act independently amidst a web of social forces? A vital element of personal liberty and a shield against conformity? Does it lead to or away from unifying individuals with communities?

Individualism: A Reader provides a wealth of illuminating essays from the 17th to the early 20th centuries. In 26 selections from 25 writers, individualism is explained and defended, often from unusual perspectives. This anthology includes not only selections from well-known writers, but also many lesser-known pieces - recorded here for the first time - by philosophers, social theorists, and economists who have been overlooked in standard accounts of individualism.

The depth and complexity of ideas about individualism are reflected in the six sections in this collection. The first examines individuality generally, with the following five detailing social, moral, political, religious, and economic individualism. Throughout, individualism is analyzed and defended through the lenses of classical liberalism, free market libertarianism, individual anarchism, voluntary socialism, religious individualism, abolitionism, free thought, and radical feminism.

Both richly historical and sharply contemporary, *Individualism: A Reader* provides a multitude of perspectives and insights on personal liberty and the history of freedom.

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