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The Cult of Individualism: A History of an Enduring American Myth

Aaron Barlow

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Why do Americans have so much trouble seeing eye to eye today? Is this new? Was there ever an American consensus? *The Cult of Individualism: A History of an Enduring American Myth* explores the rarely discussed cultural differences leading to today's seemingly intractable political divides. After an examination of the various meanings of individualism in America, author Aaron Barlow describes the progression and evolution of the concept from the 18th century on, illuminating the wide division in Caucasian American culture that developed between the culture based on the ideals of the English Enlightenment and that of the Scots-Irish "Borderers." The "Borderer" legacy, generally explored only by students of Appalachian culture, remains as pervasive and significant in contemporary American culture and politics as it is, unfortunately, overlooked. It is from the "Borderers" that the Tea Party sprang, along with many of the attitudes of the contemporary American right, making it imperative that this culture be thoroughly explored.

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