



Sources of the Self: Making of the Modern Identity (Cloth)

By Charles Taylor

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'Most of us are still groping for answers about what makes life worth living, or what confers meaning on individual lives', writes Charles Taylor in Sources of the Self. 'This is an essentially modern predicament.' Charles Taylor's latest book sets out to define the modern identity by tracing its genesis, analysing the writings of such thinkers as Augustine, Descartes, Montaigne, Luther, and many others. This then serves as a starting point for a renewed understanding of modernity. Taylor argues that modern subjectivity has its roots in ideas of human good, and is in fact the result of our long efforts to define and attain the good. The modern turn inwards is far from being a disastrous rejection of rationality, as its critics contend, but has at its heart what Taylor calls the affirmation of ordinary life. He concludes that the modern identity, and its attendant rejection of an objective order of reason, is far richer in moral sources than its detractors allow. Sources of the Self provides a decisive defence of the modern order and a sharp rebuff to its critics.

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Sources of the Self: Making of the Modern Identity (Cloth) By Charles Taylor Bibliography

- Rank: #845379 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Harvard University Press
- Published on: 1989-11-01
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.60" h x 6.80" w x .50" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 608 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

This book is primarily a historical account of the modernist protest against the disengaged and instrumental modes of thought and action that arose when theistically grounded morality crumbled, but that themselves focused too little upon our inner life, i.e., our powers of creative imagination and the substantive goods of ordinary life, which Taylor alleges give meaning to human life. Associating each ideology with a particular conception of our identity as selves, he defends the modern view, keeping in mind that self-realization must recognize that some things are important beyond the self. Taylor rambles somewhat and often talks about "the good," as though human beings were fungible in their capacities for appreciation and action; but the wealth of illustrative material and frequent insights are thought-provoking. For scholarly collections.

- Robert Hoffman, York Coll., CUNY

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Review

Taylor has taken on the most delicate and exacting of philosophical questions, the question of who we are and how we should live...and he has made this an adventure of self-discovery for his reader. To have accomplished so much is an important philosophical achievement. (*New Republic*)

Sources of the Self is in every sense a large book: in length and in the range of what it covers, but above all in the generosity and breadth of its sympathies and its interest in humanity...Few books on such large subjects are so engaging. (Bernard Williams *New York Review of Books*)

A magnificent account, full, fair, well read, well written, complicated and high spirited--a credit, one might say, to the modern self that is capable of plumbing the depths of its own heritage in such a generous way. (Jeremy Waldron *Times Literary Supplement*)

Surely one of the most important philosophical works of the last quarter of a century. (Jerome Bruner)

For sociologists, there is no more important philosopher writing in the world today than Charles Taylor. (Alan Wolfe *Contemporary Sociology*)

Undoubtedly one of the most significant works in moral philosophy and the history of ideas to appear in recent decades. (Frances S. Adeney *Theology Today*)

From the Back Cover

In this inquiry into the sources of modern selfhood, Charles Taylor shows that the modern turn inward is not disastrous but is in fact the result of our long efforts to define and reach the good. At the heart of this definition he finds what he calls the affirmation of ordinary life, a value that has decisively if not completely replaced an older conception of reason as connected to a hierarchy based on birth and wealth.

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