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# Review of "Modern Social Imaginaries," by Charles Taylor

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sponse in which the lover (I) affectively affirm the beloved (you) for yourself (as a radical end), in yourself (on account of your intrinsic lovable actuality), directly and explicitly in your personal act of being, implicitly in your total reality, by which affirmation my personal being is consonantly present to you and in you and yours is present to and in me, by which I affectively identify with your personal being, by which in some sense I am you affectively" (163).

The first three chapters of *Personal Friendship* summarize and build on the argument and conclusions of *The Experience of Love*, and go on to develop a philosophical phenomenology of friendship, the communing that is our ultimate goal as human persons.

Concrete examples in this work are sparse. T. is a philosopher's philosopher, but those not skilled in T.'s careful, penetrating, philosophical reasoning, might find this text difficult, challenging, tedious, and, dare one say, boring? Like a Rorschach test that reveals more of the perceptive than of itself, however, one's judgment of T.'s work will ultimately be a judgment of oneself.

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MODERN SOCIAL IMAGINARIES. By Charles Taylor. Public Planet Books. Durham, N.C.: Duke University. 2004. Pp. 215. \$64.95; \$18.95.

At various points in his magisterial *Sources of the Self* (1989), Taylor adumbrated important connections between his analysis of "the ensemble of (largely unarticulated) understandings of what it is to be a human agent" (*Sources*, xi) and the social dynamics that helped form a culture of unbelief within Western modernity. T.'s current work explores some of those connections under the heading of "social imaginaries." This concept, developed from the work of Benedict Anderson, includes both "the way people think of their social existence . . . and the deeper normative notions and expectations that underlie [their] expectations [of one another]" (23).

T. contends that a new vision of moral order, traceable to the natural law theories of Locke and Grotius, played a fundamental role in shaping the social imaginary constitutive of modernity in the West. Society is thereby envisioned as an order of mutual benefit for its members, who are tied to one another in terms of rights and obligations. T. traces a "double expansion" of this order: "in extension (more people live by it . . .) and in intensity (the demands it makes are heavier. . .)" (5). These processes have involved a "great disembedding" of individuals from the cosmic, social, and religious contexts that previously had been constitutive of their identities (chap. 4). The outcome has been the creation of "three important forms of social self-understanding crucial to modernity . . . the economy, the public sphere, and the practices and outlooks of democratic self-rule" (69).

Since *Sources of the Self*, T. has been assembling an account of secularity counter to ones that make the elimination of God and religion from the public sphere its main trajectory. He takes secularity to consist, instead, in a shift to a "radically purged time consciousness . . . [in which] associations are placed firmly and wholly in homogeneous, profane time" (99). Rather than eliminating God, this notion opens space for God to be "central to the personal identities of individuals or groups" (193). While *Modern Social Imaginaries* offers more elements of T.'s account, its complete articulation awaits publication of his 1999 Edinburgh Gifford Lectures, *Living in a Secular Age*.

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RELIGION AND RATIONALITY: ESSAYS ON REASON, GOD, AND MODERNITY. By Jürgen Habermas. Edited with an introduction by Eduardo Mendieta. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2002. Pp. 176. \$19.95.

Habermas's treatment of religion in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981, ET 1984–1987) can easily suggest