



Meaning and Authenticity: Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor on the Drama of Authentic Human Existence (Lonergan Studies)

Brian J. Braman

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The language of self-fulfilment, self-realization, and self-actualization (in short, ‘authenticity’) has become common in contemporary culture. The desire to be authentic is implicitly a desire to shape one’s self in accordance with an ideal, and the concern for what it means to be authentic is, in many ways, the modern form of the ancient question what is the life of excellence? However, this notion of authenticity has its critics: Christopher Lasch, for instance, who equates it with a form of narcissism and Theodor Adorno, who views it as a glorification of privatism.

Brian J. Braman argues that, despite such criticisms, it is possible to speak about human authenticity as something that addresses contemporary concerns as well as the ancient preoccupation with the nature of the good life. He refers to the work of Bernard Lonergan and Charles Taylor, thinkers who place a high value on the search for human authenticity. Lonergan discusses authenticity in terms of a three-fold conversion—intellectual, moral, and religious—while Taylor views authenticity as a rich, vibrant, and important addition to conversations about what it means to be human.

Meaning and Authenticity is an engaging dialogue between these two thinkers, both of whom maintain that there is a normative conception of authentic human life that overcomes moral relativism, narcissism, privatism, and the collapse of the public self.

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