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**Review: *Jesuit Higher Education in a Secular Age*  
by Daniel Hendrickson, S.J.**

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Daniel S. Hendrickson, S.J. *Jesuit Higher Education in a Secular Age*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2022. 208 pp. \$44.95 (hardcover and ebook).

Daniel Hendrickson's *Jesuit Higher Education in a Secular Age* provides a powerful argument for the merits and potential of Jesuit higher education to help humanity flourish in increasingly secular Western societies. Hendrickson's book contributes to responsive academic discourse concerning philosopher Charles Taylor's magnum opus, *A Secular Age* (2007). In his introduction, Hendrickson describes his book as "a bridge between Jesuit higher education's reality and Taylor's existential cultural concerns" (2). Hendrickson focuses on Taylor's diagnosis that Western secularism is leading to an increasing loss of capacity for people to experience fullness. For Taylor, fullness is a philosophical-anthropological construct articulated as "a kind of experience when life seems purpose-filled, connected, driven and genuine" (8). Hendrickson is a proponent of Taylor's theories and shares in Taylor's concern that there is a "crisis of fullness" which is manifesting within Western societies as fragmentation, isolation, and feelings of general malaise and meaninglessness.

Hendrickson responds to Taylor's "crisis of fullness" by arguing that Jesuit education has "the opportunity to restore fullness in our increasingly and more resolutely secular age" (1). His response offers three pedagogies of fullness: study, solidarity, and grace as a specific vision of a "Jesuit imaginary." A Jesuit imaginary refers to a way of viewing the world and one's place in the world, and is one that envisions the personal and social milieus as interrelated. Hendrickson argues that "Study, solidarity, and grace move students of Jesuit higher learning toward themselves, others and an Other" (10). Hendrickson uses the language of *moving toward* to emphasize the relational quality of the pedagogies of fullness, complimenting Taylor's insistence that a "stepping

beyond" oneself is a necessary move to experience fullness.

One does not need to be intimately familiar with Taylor's work to grasp the historical and philosophical arguments to which Hendrickson is responding. Hendrickson's introduction clearly outlines his thesis and foreshadows the book's flow as an engaging, richly theoretical and exceptionally well-researched treatise. In fewer than 200 pages, Hendrickson persuasively manages to connect Taylor's concept of fullness with the philosophical and historical foundations, values, and possibilities of Jesuit higher education.

In Chapter One, Hendrickson provides a brief overview of *A Secular Age* in which Taylor takes on the herculean task of addressing the 500-year process of secularization of Western societies. Hendrickson points out Taylor's focus on the existential ramifications of secularism in contrast to exploring a mere subtraction theory that Western societies have simply grown out of religion. In the latter part of Chapter One, Hendrickson introduces, in more detail, his three pedagogies of fullness: study, solidarity, and grace. The pedagogy of study expresses the formative nature of Jesuit education (11). Responding to Taylor's concept of fullness as yearning for meaning and purpose, Hendrickson notes that the "Jesuit pilgrim disposition" expresses an approach to study as a life-long focus on learning, inquiring and discerning (13). A pedagogy of solidarity insists on a "moving towards" others and aligns with the Jesuit mandate to adapt (16). A pedagogy of solidarity implores students to be agents of social change and to have meaningful associations with other people, places and perspectives. A pedagogy of grace is defined in "its openness to revelation, to the personal nature of phenomenal

awareness, and to a kind of knowing that permits a metaphysical possibility” (23). In other words, a pedagogy of grace allows for an openness to another source beyond oneself and towards an Other.

In Chapter Two, Hendrickson shows how Taylor’s concept of fullness is echoed in the works of other contemporary thinkers. The chapter proceeds with Hendrickson expounding on Taylor’s meaning of fullness. Chapter Three provides a review of how specifically educational theorists engage with Taylor’s work. Both Chapters Two and Three buttress Hendrickson’s assertion of Taylor’s relevance in diverse academic discourses, namely in philosophy and education. Yet, these two chapters are unlikely to be easily accessible to non-specialist readers. Hendrickson assumes his reader to be well-versed in philosophy and educational theory to make clear sense of the significant amount of briefly cited theorists.

The following chapters prove stronger in serving Hendrickson’s goal of bridging Taylor’s concept of fullness with the history, mission and values of Jesuit higher education. Chapter Four unearths the Renaissance humanistic origins of Jesuit pedagogy. Hendrickson highlights the humanist influence on Jesuit education which has long emphasized holistic education and forming “upright persons” in contrast to training professionals. Chapter Five focuses on the origins of Jesuit education, including interesting insights into the transformative educational experiences of St. Ignatius of Loyola. An interesting point to note here is Hendrickson’s use of Jean Lacouture’s insight that Ignatius’ conversion did not take place, as commonly argued, as he convalesced from a battle wound, but when he was a student

in Paris. It was through Ignatius’ educational experience that he gained skills and credentials to influence others. Chapter Six turns to the contemporary realities of higher education by discussing three specific challenges Hendrickson sees institutions facing: institutional fragmentation, superficial subjectivity and instrumental epistemics (143). Hendrickson draws connections between these named realities and Taylor’s articulation of the “malaises of modernity.” He does not end with this critique, and thankfully offers a suggested way forward in his conclusion. The hope-filled conclusion suggests that the pedagogies of fullness can form a common “Jesuit imaginary” that can help “rejuvenate a sense of fullness” (167). Hendrickson suggests that the pedagogies of fullness can (and hopefully will) help form individual and collective imaginations within Jesuit institutions. The conclusion reads as an invitation for those invested in Jesuit higher education to a continued conversation filled with possibilities.

Hendrickson’s articulation of the pedagogies of fullness offers a tangible and promising path forward for Jesuit higher education. This book will capture the interest of a breadth of constituencies: scholars interested in discourse about Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, those interested in the history, philosophy and mission of Jesuit higher education, and higher education professionals guiding their students through existential questions of meaning and purpose in an age of secularism. Hendrickson’s work is a superb interdisciplinary scholarly contribution that also provides a practical strategic approach for Jesuit institutions of higher education to better articulate and embody a common mission of supporting and enabling human flourishing. 卍