

I recommend the book as a conversation starter on campuses wrestling with mission, especially with the difficult “balancing act” (chap. 5) of teaching, research, and fidelity to a distinctive Catholic mission. S.’s frankness will likely receive criticism, but his clarity in addressing neuralgic issues may provide important food for thought about what sustaining a commitment to Catholic higher education entails.

Timothy P. Muldoon
Boston College

Master Thomas Aquinas and the Fullness of Life. By John F. Boyle. South Bend: St. Augustine’s, 2014. Pp. xv + 85. \$14.

Boyle’s brief but profound volume, his 2013 Aquinas Lecture at the University of Dallas, would serve as a useful introduction for a class on Aquinas. B. begins with a reflection on wisdom and how a wise teacher passes it on. The wise teacher has a good grasp not only of some particular area of knowledge but also of “the whole of the universe” (9), and is somehow able to convey her grasp to others. The medium of her teaching reflects the ordered splendor of reality. B. not only explains how Aquinas teaches what it means to be alive in a beautifully ordered manner, but he models that wisdom and splendor in his own writing.

B. examines the meaning of the term “life” by turning to Aquinas’s *Prima pars* examination of God as living, with its ascending levels of the term “life.” In so doing, B. explains exactly how humans, through the interaction of intellect and will, are able to be self-movers in a manner greater than plants and animals, but still in a way more limited than the God who is life. This allows B. to turn to Aquinas’s account in the *Secunda pars* of how virtuous human activity allows a person to live more fully, and most fully through the graced-infused theological virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit. What began as the simple question of what it means to live flows seamlessly into an account of virtue, the graced life, and, ultimately, the beatific vision.

B.’s conclusion turns to Aquinas’s Scripture commentaries, which B. likens to a biologist’s “field work,” as distinct from the more analytic “lab work” of Aquinas’s different *Summae* (56). B. points to Aquinas’s wisdom in grasping the order of the Gospel of John to then teaching it. For Aquinas, John intends to show the divinity of Christ, the divine Wisdom who has ordered all things (74), and who himself comes as teacher to give life. A book that begins with a simple question on plants and animals culminates in the claim that “life, and specifically human life, . . . [is] inextricably linked to the second person of the Trinity and the redemptive Incarnation” (70).

William C. Mattison III
The Catholic University of America, Washington