



Embracing Our Complexity: Thomas Aquinas and Zhu Xi on Power and the Common Good (SUNY series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture)

Catherine Hudak Klancer

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Using the thought of Christian thinker Thomas Aquinas and Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi, explores how to exercise and limit authority.

This book discusses what a religiously grounded authority might look like from the viewpoints of the European Catholic Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and the Chinese Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi (1130–1200). The consideration of these two figures, immensely influential in their respective traditions, reflects the conviction that any responsible discourse on authority must consider different cultural perspectives. Catherine Hudak Klancer notes that both Zhu Xi and Aquinas conceive wisdom as including, yet surpassing, human reason. Both express an explicit faith in the moral order of the cosmos and the ethical potential of human beings. The systematic, idealistic approach common to both provides the cosmic, anthropological, and ethical elements needed for a comprehensive exploration of how to exercise and limit authority. Ultimately, Klancer writes, authority requires a particular virtue, hitherto latent in both scholars' work and in their lives as well. A person with this virtue—humble authority—is properly grounded in the sacred order, and fully cognizant in theory and in practice of the parameters of human nature and the responsibilities attendant upon the human role.

Catherine Hudak Klancer is Lecturer in the Core Curriculum at Boston University.



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