were established, constructed, and secured in accordance with the foundation of the Board of Rites in the Qing court. The book exists in an intersecting zone of institutional, political, and legal histories of Imperial China while dealing with various primary sources in Manchu and classical Chinese. As he concludes his book while locating the specific Qing institutional history in world history, it will also provide a useful backdrop not only for historians of Imperial China but also for researchers conducting comparative studies of the political system of East Asia, including Chosŏn Korea (1392–1910), which also adopted the Six Boards System with the Board of Rites.

## NOTE

1. Gazi Islam and Macabe Keliher, "Leading through Ritual: Ceremony and Emperorship in Early Modern China," *Leadership* 14.4 (2018), 435–459.

*The Wrong of Rudeness: Learning Modern Civility from Ancient Chinese Philosophy*. By Amy Olberding. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 200 pp. $29.95 (cloth).

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In *The Wrong of Rudeness*, Amy Olberding argues that the increasing incivility of modern life (specifically American life), in both private and public spheres, is eroding the potential for interpersonal dialogue and connection. Using the theories of the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) and the *Xunzi* 荀子, Olberding argues that Confucian practices of "civility" and "good manners" (modern translations that capture different shades of the broader concept of "ritual" *li* 禮) are effective means for combatting those problems and becoming a better person (pp. 4–5). Olberding's goal in the book is to defend that claim against what makes rudeness and incivility seem so appealing: the release from cognitive effort and emotional strain that poor manners provide and the belief that incivility is a moral act of resistance against those who would toxify daily life and public discourse (pp. 2–3 and 14–15).

To make this argument Olberding builds on a virtue ethics interpretation of Confucian ritual theory that is shared by many in the field of early Chinese studies. The central tenet is that rituals are morally valuable because they inculcate pro-social dispositions (such as respect, tolerance, and humility) that operate in both public and private spheres (thus erasing the distinction between civility and good manners) (p. 28). Rituals cultivate these dispositions through behavioral feedback loops, for example acting as though one is humble helps generate the feeling of humility (pp. 71–72 and 90). At the same time, rituals signal one's dispositions to others, triggering further positive reactions of reinforcement (p. 90). By acting as an accessible method for cultivating pro-social feelings, sincerely expressing those feelings, and fostering connection with others, rituals thus fulfil and refine the basic human need to connect with other people (pp. 65 and 51–56).

In presenting this interpretation, and arguing for its contemporary relevance, the book builds upon Olberding's past specialist publications, primarily journal articles, that engaged in detail with primary texts and secondary literature. As a result, this work addresses a non-specialist audience and is written as a first-person philosophical reflection that connects the findings of contemporary psychological and sociological studies with Confucian ideas and the personal experiences of the author.

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Chapter One lays out the basic goals of the book. It also historicizes and refutes the contemporary distinction between public civility and private manners. However, Chapters Two and Three retain the distinction as a heuristic, with the former focusing on the difficulties of civility and the temptations of incivility and the latter addressing the difficulties of good manners and the temptations of everyday rudeness. These two chapters are among the strongest in the book, offering insightful diagnoses of the problems inherent to contemporary valorizations of rudeness. Chapters Four and Five form another paired set, which explores the relationship of good manners to "big values" like tolerance and respect (Chapter Four) and how the mechanics of ritual actualize and cultivate those values on a daily basis (Chapter Five). Chapters Six and Seven further detail those mechanics by exploring the rules of etiquette and the importance of bodily communication (particularly facial expression) respectively. Chapter Eight revisits the temptations described in Chapters Two and Three and refutes two obstacles to civility: its apparent powerlessness and the desire for aggression that comes from witnessing others' incivility (pp. 138–143 and 143–150). Chapter Nine concludes with a somber consideration of the fact that, by encouraging engagement with others, civility can intensify the pain one feels at others' behavior. The chapter offers the consolation that, while difficult, such feelings help motivate one to better oneself and the world.

The book's argument is provocative and compelling, and it ably accomplishes its goal of demonstrating and defending the value of civility and good manners against the temptations of incivility and rudeness. The work's personal style adds a level of accessibility and relatability to seemingly abstract notions and its frank acknowledgement of the difficulty of self-betterment is at once empathetic and encouraging. Perhaps even more importantly, the work demonstrates the value of early Confucian ritual theory and, by extension, early Chinese thought in general. In doing so, it works against contemporary views that Confucianism is an irrelevant, and even hypocritical, example of "traditional" thinking and encourages future applications of early Chinese thought.

Indeed, the book raises a number of questions that could be explored in future works, particularly in relation to the extent of Confucianism's value. For the most part, the book emphasizes the commonalities between early Confucianism and modern thinking such as the shared values of respect and humility, as well as common insights into human behavior that can be found in both Confucian texts and contemporary social-psychology studies (pp. 51–56, 86, and 101–108). Because the book tends to give more weight to the modern than the ancient (p. 79), it raises questions such as the following: Is Confucian theory valuable in and of itself or only insofar as it supports contemporary ideas? What are we to do with those aspects of Confucianism (such as its overt emphasis on hierarchy) that seem unpalatable to modern sensibilities? Must those aspects be stripped away, or can we derive even greater insight by considering the application of seemingly incommensurate values to a modern context? Conversely, if we must ignore certain aspects of Confucian theory, how do we decide which ones to disregard? And do we lose anything by doing so?

A different line of questioning arises from current debates over the nature of ritual. If Confucian ritual theory is less about inculcating pro-social dispositions than working with the tensions between subjunctive spaces (Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences*, 2008), is it still valuable for modern self-cultivation? Would such a model be compatible with the virtue ethics vision presented in this volume? What benefits might be derived from a dialogue between the two models?

That these questions arise is a testament to the value and contributions of *The Wrong of Rudeness*. Not only does it offer an insightful and accessible defense of Confucian theory that should appeal to a wide range of audiences, it also reveals new questions that scholars might explore to continue learning from early Chinese philosophy.

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