cases (Nesossi), migrant workers’ use of law (the chapter by Xin He, Lungang Wang, and Su Yang), and in the punishment of prostitution (Biddulph). The public appropriates justice in ways that at once appeal to and yet differ from the official discourse. Within China, netizens, labor activists, legal scholars, and migrant workers present their versions of justice. Some of these alternative visions of justice are rights based that harken back to the tradition of liberalism. Others, drawing from the Chinese idea of yuan (grievance), enunciate a vision of justice that is more personal and vengeful (Eva Pils).

As with many edited volumes, some chapters more closely fit the theme of the book than others. The analytical focus on discourse and performativity is most effectively brought out in discussions of judicial debates, events, and spectacles, where the public most readily participated, either as performers or simply as audience. That focus becomes less recognizable, in my view, in the discussions of the more formalistic aspects of the legal system and the various philosophical notions of justice found in China.

*Justice* makes a timely contribution to the growing literature on law and society in China. Despite considerable differences in subject matter, the volume as a whole shows vividly that justice is a social discourse that cannot be discussed in isolation. The exigencies of political and social struggles about the role of law in governing China should remain at the center of any debates about the meaning of Chinese justice. It also shows that the justice discourse goes far beyond the texts of party-state slogans and black-letter law.

Finally, is there a particularly timely message with a critical ring that the editors attempt to convey? In China, as elsewhere, justice is an old concept, and it is also a newly relevant concept. The continuity between the old and the new should not be overlooked. As they observe, “It is perhaps not surprising that Xi Jinping has chosen justice as a core value since . . . this traditional idea of justice as ‘a product of moral-political order embodied in the ruler’ has endured into the twentieth century” (381). The new discourse promoted by the party-state is not at all new. It is just the latest expression of a centuries-old theme.

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Wisecracking political economists quip that “the Chinese economy works in practice, it just doesn’t work in theory.” Yuen Yuen Ang has spoiled the fun with a wonderful, complex, yet eminently readable book that develops the missing theory in-
ductively, looking at what China actually did. She takes issue with deductive theories of development, with their a prori, often Weberian assumptions that do not fit China. They have produced the perplexity expressed in the epigram, and also all manner of finger-wagging arguments about what China has lacked. Ang, by contrast, sees these “lacunae” as the secrets of China’s success.

She boils it down: “Poor and weak countries can escape the poverty trap by first building markets with weak institutions and, more fundamentally, by crafting environments that facilitate improvisation among the relevant players” (16–17). Rational governance either is unattainable or would straightjacket the innovative processes necessary for growth if it is applied too early in the developmental process. But once the economy begins to take off, growth creates both the conditions and the need for bureaucratic rationalization. Ang terms this “coevolution.”

China relied on the central government’s strategy of “directed improvisation”—a combination of setting the overall strategy and, significantly, the boundaries of market transition, while also encouraging and, indeed, demanding improvisation by local governments to make it happen on the ground. Ang follows Elizabeth Perry and Sebastian Heilmann in seeing here the legacy of Maoist guerrilla strategy. The central government set relatively broad limits of what local leaders could do in order to promote variation, it picked winners by rewarding success, and it promoted complementarity among different locations to create developmental niches. All this depended precisely on the weakness of local institutions at the outset—anathema to Weberian analysts, of course.

Ang’s stylized example of this process is the hypothetical Glorious County’s investment promotion program. Rather than putting one agency in charge, it adopted the “beehive” approach, in which every cadre in the county—she reminds us that there are 20,000 of them on average—was mobilized for the task, seeking out all their available contacts, networks, and expertise. Institutionally, it would be anathema to the Weibarian emphasis on specialization and impersonality. Here the affinities are with the Party’s historical practice of all-out campaigning. Like many of those large-scale movements, it worked, bringing in masses of investment but producing an industrial structure that was a bit of a “mess.” At that point, this hypothetical county government would step in to clean things up, making strategic choices to shape and upgrade the local economy by picking winners and losers. This would require strengthened governance à la Weber: a rational plan, specialized agencies, and real expertise, all of which it now has the resources to deploy—a process Ang likens to “franchising the bureaucracy.” While the Glorious County is itself, ironically, a Weberian ideal type, it actually has significant affinities with the patterns of development that Vivienne Shue and I found in a 2001 China Quarterly article on the development of a county’s fur and leather sector.

In theoretical terms, Ang rejects linear theories—that “good governance” leads to growth or vice versa—as well as path-dependent ones emphasizing institutional
stickiness. She also gets normative: this is not Krasnerian “good enough” governance, but governance that positively encourages innovation and flexibility.

Substantively, Ang reinterprets the long pathway of China’s structural reforms from their inception in 1978 (chap. 3) and analyzes in detail the ways the central government has managed its complex relationships with local officials (chap. 4). Chapter 5 moves from the macrotheoretical to the substantively grounded, tracing in rich detail the coevolutionary development of a Fujian city she calls Forest Hill. In this same vein, chapter 6 turns to a paired comparison of Blessed and Humble Counties. The former was an early and rapid developer, the latter a laggard. Each of them also evinced the coevolutionary pattern she is theorizing, but her main point here is their complementarity within the center’s strategy of shifting growth nodes from the coast to the interior. A concluding chapter sketches applications of her coevolutionary theory to cases as far flung as medieval Europe, the antebellum US, and the modern Nigerian film industry(!). Her point is that while China offers no exportable model, it does show us how to reinterpret other and substantively very different cases of successful development. There is a policy angle here, too: development agencies ought to take heed by encouraging not specific modalities of development but appropriate forms of coevolution.

How China Escaped the Poverty Trap is a big, powerful, challenging work. Its argument is intended to travel, and it will. My seminar students recently read several of the best new books on China’s structural reforms, and Ang’s was the one that showed up the most in their research papers. It is a book that should reorient scholarship on Chinese political economy in profound ways.

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Red Swan is a complicated book. The first four chapters focus on the system of local experimentation that Sebastian Heilmann credits as the foundation of China’s rapid economic growth. Chapters 5 and 6 shift to a focus on China’s economic planning. The epilogue allows that centralization under Xi Jinping threatens the advantages of prior practices.

The book’s most important strength is its consistent attention to the question of why the Chinese model has promoted economic growth. It could be classified as another study in authoritarian resilience. Heilmann allows that local experimen-