Jiang Qing. *A Confucian Constitutional Order: How China's Ancient Past Can Shape Its Political Future.* Edited by Daniel A. Bell and Ruiping Fan. Translated by Edmund Ryden. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013. 272 pp. 5 illustrations, table. Hardcover $39.50, ISBN 978-0-691-15460-2.

"In recent years, China's political development began to go astray. Every current of political thought in China assumes that democracy is the way ahead for China. A glance over China's current world of thought shows that the Chinese people have already lost their ability to think independently about political questions. In other words, Chinese people are no longer able to use patterns of thought inherent in their culture—Chinese culture—to think about China's current political development. This is a great tragedy for the world of Chinese thought."

This statement by China's controversial intellectual Jiang Qing 蔣慶 (b. 1952) is taken from the opening remarks of the first of his three essays that stand at the core of *A Confucian Constitutional Order* (p. 27). The book, coedited by Daniel Bell and Fan Ruiping, collects, in addition to Jiang's essays, critical responses by four Chinese intellectuals, a counterresponse by Jiang, and a highly informative introduction by Daniel Bell. Read together, they provide readers of English with an excellent introduction to Jiang's thought and, more broadly, to some recent developments in the Chinese intellectual scene.[1] Bell and Fan should be congratulated for their efforts, and Edmund Ryden should be proud of his translations. Minor technical misgivings (e.g., the omission of Chinese characters) notwithstanding, *A Confucian Constitutional Order* should surely take pride in its place among the Princeton-China Series publications.[2]

Jiang Qing is a self-avowed cultural and political conservative. He proclaims, "[I]n my view, political modernity is precisely the chief cause of political problems"; modernity is blamed for the "loss of historical nature, continuity and national spirit"; "loss of sacredness, prestige and value"; and "loss of loyalty" (pp. 89–90). China's embrace of modernity brought about "serious chaos and lack of order" (p. 44). Worse, it caused severe cultural disruption, since, fascinated with it, Chinese intellectuals—even traditionalists and Confucians, such as Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869–1936) and Kang Youwei 康有爲 (1858–1927)—failed to address "China's own historical and cultural specificity" in proposing a new post-monarchic order (p. 45). Having adopted Western values, most notably the idea of popular sovereignty as the single source of political legitimacy, these intellectuals brought about cultural and political disaster. The embrace of democracy, according to Jiang Qing, leads to "extreme secularization, contractualism, utilitarianism, selfishness, commercialism, capitalization, vulgarization, hedonism, mediocritization, this-worldliness, lack of ecology, lack of history, and lack of morality" (p. 33).

Moreover, it creates a dangerous void of legitimacy, which threatens to bring about "a crisis of political authority" (p. 28).

Even those readers who do not subscribe to many of Jiang's claims may agree with some of his diagnoses, especially regarding the weaknesses of internal legitimacy of China's current political system. Only a few, however, would accept the remedies that Jiang prescribes to China's current illnesses. Jiang Qing wants to cure China through a revival of what he believes to represent the Way of the True Monarch (*Wang Dao* 王道, translated, somewhat problematically in my eyes, as "The way of humane authority"). Jiang claims that his view of the Way is rooted in Confucian tradition, particularly in the Five Classics, among which the *Gongyang Commentary* 公羊傳 on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) is singularly important for him. Jiang believes that the Five Classics should be taken as "a norm" (p. 191), according to which the political, social, and spiritual system should function. Yet his concrete proposals are not exactly for the restoration of a traditional monarchy; rather, they are a curious attempt to create an entirely novel political structure that would implement ideas of the classics as Jiang interprets them.

Jiang Qing envisions China as a sort of constitutional monarchy run by a tricameral parliament under the supervision of a Confucian academy. The three houses of the parliament should reflect the "sacred legitimacy" of Heaven, represented by the House of *Ru* 儒, that is, of Confucian scholars; the legitimacy of Earth (interpreted as related to culture and history), represented by the House of the Nation; and the popular legitimacy represented by the House of the People. The last of these houses will be elected "according to the norms and processes of Western democratic parliaments" (p. 41). The first will be led by "a great scholar proposed by Confucian scholars" and will be staffed according to the traditional examination-cum-recommendation system. The second will be led by a direct descendant of Confucius, who will select members "from among the descendants of the great sages of the past, descendants of the rulers, descendants of famous people, of patriots, university professors of Chinese history, retired top officials, judges, and diplomats, worthy people from society, as well as representatives of Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Tibetan Buddhism and Christianity" (p. 41).

The three houses are supposed to counterbalance each other, but clearly the House of *Ru* will have precedence, as it is supposed to enjoy a permanent power of veto. To this—already very complex—political system, Jiang adds two more elements. First is the Academy, staffed by Confucians, which will sit above the parliament and represent the true source of sovereignty in an age when sage kings are no longer present, namely the sovereignty of scholar-officials (p. 52). "The Academy should be the highest supervisory body in the state, the highest body in training and examining scholars, and the highest body for ceremonial and ritual." It will also enjoy "the highest right of recall, of mediation, and of upholding

religion" (p. 57). Atop the Academy and the parliament, Jiang adds another institution: a symbolic monarch who should be a direct descendant of Confucius. His role should be similar to that of British or Japanese monarchs: He can "effectively uphold the stability, continuity, and eternal nature of the state" (p. 86). It is not clear to the present reviewer how this symbolic emperor is related to the other descendant of Confucius heading the House of the Nation.

It is all too easy to ridicule some of Jiang Qing's proposals, pointing at their cumbersomeness, impracticality, and obvious flaws in design. Each of the four respondents criticizes different aspects of Jiang's ideas: Joseph Chan (University of Hong Kong) attacks Jiang's "perfectionism" and his attempt to turn Confucianism into a comprehensive doctrine rather than a set of negotiable values; Li Chenyang (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) dismisses Jiang's view of transcendent Heaven as "misguided and counterproductive" (p. 129); Wang Shaoguang (Chinese University of Hong Kong) tackles Jiang's cavalier attitude toward the legitimacy of China's current political system. In a lengthier reply, a sympathetic Bai Tongdong (Fudan University, Shanghai) presents arguably the most systematic and penetrating refutation of many of Jiang's claims and suggestions. Jiang Qing responds to his critics at length, but somewhat stubbornly, causing Daniel Bell to comment, with much unease, that Jiang "fails to make even one concession to his critics" (p. 15).

The current reviewer does not subscribe to Bell's effusive designation of Jiang as "the most prominent Confucian political thinker of our day" (p. 1), nor do I share many of Jiang's views and observations, but Jiang surely deserves praise for his originality, intellectual boldness, and commitment to his cause. His current position as head of a privately funded Confucian academy in remote Guizhou reminds one of Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) and, more broadly, of Song 宋 (960–1279) dynasty Neo-Confucians who similarly disseminated their views from below for generations before their ultimate political triumph.[3] Jiang Qing's indignation against the cultural hegemony of Western values in modern and current Chinese political discourse is fully understandable, as is his criticism against China's sweeping modernization during the twentieth century and the resultant cultural nihilism. One can surely admire Jiang Qing's desire to revitalize indigenous cultural traditions and to restore the cultural pride, or at least cultural self-confidence, of the Chinese people. That said, I think Jiang's approach suffers from too many substantial flaws to be an attractive alternative to China's current political system. Many of these flaws have been duly noticed by the critics whose views are presented in *A Confucian Constitutional Order.* In addition to these criticisms from philosophers and political scientists, I would add another, given from a historian's angle. From this reviewer's point of view, Jiang's attempt to speak on behalf of China's tradition is simply too shallow or too manipulative to merit serious political engagement.

Let us focus on the text that Jiang invokes as the major ideological foundation of his approach, namely the *Gongyang Commentary* on the *Chunqiu.* Jiang's selection of this text as a repository of Confucian political wisdom reminds one immediately of the eminent reformer Kang Youwei, who clearly served a source of inspiration for Jiang. After Kang Youwei, few, if any, political thinkers in China paid attention to the *Gongyang Commentary.* The reasons for this are not hard to find. At the basis of the *Gongyang* tradition stand two fundamental premises: first, that Confucius is the single most important political thinker in Chinese history and, second, that his most significant message was skillfully encoded in the *Spring and Autumn Annals,* a text that overtly presents a laconic chronological account of major events in the life of Confucius's home state of Lu 魯 during the years 722–481 B.C.E. The *Gongyang Commentary* purportedly reveals the "great meaning" (*da yi* 大義) hidden behind the highly formulaic accounts of the *Annals*. Unless one accepts Confucius as the supreme sage and the *Annals* as his most important work, one can hardly be attracted by the *Gongyang* speculations.[4]

The *Gongyang Commentary* was composed in the second half of the Warring States period (453–221 B.C.E.), but it was not very influential until the second century B.C.E. Then, quite suddenly, it gained prominence in the court of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 B.C.E.), providing ideological justification for some of this activist monarch's domestic and foreign policies. Following this (relatively short-lived) elevation to the position of foundational political text, the *Gongyang Commentary* acquired rich exegesis, associated primarily (but by no means exclusively) with Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 195–115 B.C.E.); this exegesis radically expanded the original meaning of the *Gongyang Commentary*, adding cosmological and religious dimensions to the text. After the Han dynasty, the *Gongyang Commentary* lost much of its popularity, but it was rediscovered in the Qing dynasty (清, 1636/1644–1912), becoming one of the essential texts of the newly thriving new text (*jinwen* 今文) school of classical learning. It was in the late Qing that Kang Youwei put forward his highly controversial (and extremely weak, in scholarly terms)[5] interpretation of the *Gongyang* exegetical tradition, using this text for support of his reformist program. Historically, this was the third layer of *Gongyang* studies, which was imposed on the secondary (Han) and primary (Warring States period) layers.[6]

Jiang Qing appears to be curiously unaware of this complexity; hence, his supposedly direct references to the *Gongyang Commentary* or the *Spring and Autumn Annals* actually refer to the late Qing (or, rarely, Han) exegetical tradition, which has little to do with the primary text. Jiang argues, for instance, that "the *Gongyang Commentary* . . . says that to rule one must 'share in the realms of heaven, earth and human beings,' or that 'the Way of the Humane Authority [i.e., *Wang Dao*—YP] links three spheres'" (p. 28); that the term *guoti* 國體 (national body) "comes from the *Spring and Autumn Annals*" (p. 215 n. 21); that "the

Gongyang Commentary says that the sage king is someone who can link heaven, earth and the human" (p. 51); that "the *Spring and Autumn Annals* prescribed investing a surviving relative of the previous dynasty with the duty of continuing to offer rites to his ancestors" (p. 82); that the *Annals* advocate "choosing the worthy and elevating the capable" (p. 216 n. 24), and the like. Actually, none of the above statements appear either in the *Gongyang Commentary* itself (in distinction from its exegesis) or in the *Annals.* A closer look at the *Gongyang Commentary* would suggest that even an idea of transcendent Heaven, so pivotal to Jiang Qing, is all but absent from the text.[7] Actually, from my reading of the original *Gongyang Commentary,* I can find no relevance of the text to any of the major political proposals put forward by Jiang Qing.

The *Gongyang zhuan* does contain many interesting (albeit highly controversial) ideas, which Jiang Qing never addresses. What should be made of the highly pronounced Sino-barbarian dichotomy in the text? How should the idea that nothing is external to the True Monarch (*wangzhe wu wai* 王者無外) be related to the modern system of international relations? Is preemptive war against barbarians legitimate? What should be done about the text's approval of blood vengeance?[8] Jiang Qing remains silent with regard to all these. Does this silence reflect Jiang Qing's unawareness of these messages, or is he just glossing over them? How can this misuse of a text that is supposedly foundational to his theory be reconciled with his claim that he adopts Confucianism as embedded in the Five Classics in a comprehensive and holistic form? Jiang Qing accuses some of his opponents (such as Joseph Chan) with what he calls "specific and piecemeal" adoption of Confucianism (p. 180), but in eliding some of the most basic messages of the text, is he not guilty of this himself?

My quibbles regarding Jiang Qing's treatment of the *Gongyang zhuan* are related to what I perceive as the major weakness in Jiang's vision. Having repeatedly proclaimed his desire to restore the glory of Confucianism "after the past hundred years in which it has been thoroughly beaten and deconstructed" (p. 180), Jiang Qing seems to create an entirely novel (and modern) political construct that bears only a very superficial relation to the tradition in whose name he takes upon himself to speak. Most of his ideas are grounded neither in traditional ideology nor in traditional political practice. Primacy of constitution, a symbolic monarch, tricameral parliament, and the like are all products of modernity, which Jiang despises, not of the classics, which he considers sacrosanct. The only real traditional feature of his thought is the emphasis on the superiority of scholar-officials over the rest of the populace. The idea that worthy Confucians should speak on Heaven's behalf and hold political power in its name does reflect, to a certain extent, the millennia-long aspirations of segments of the traditional Chinese educated elite. This goal may be objectionable for some and laudable for others, but it does not constitute the whole of the tradition; it is just one of its aspects.[9]

Jiang admits that Confucianism may suffer from "flaws"; "however, what those flaws are is for Confucianism itself to point out" (p. 179). Fair enough. Yet why does Jiang himself, as a self-appointed speaker on behalf of Confucianism, refuse to address these flaws directly? What does he have to say about gender inequality? Of the idea of China's cultural superiority over barbarians? Of the crime of great irreverence (*da bu jing* 大不敬) toward the Son of Heaven? Are these flaws or essential elements of the tradition? Jiang remains silent about these and many other problematic issues in China's past. This silence strongly undermines his credentials as a promoter of traditional values, at least in the eyes of the current reviewer.

Restoring China's cultural confidence and looking to the past for guidelines for the future may be a glorious task, indeed. Yet to attain this goal, it is not enough just to pick up a few citations, nor is it useful to speak of the perfect rule of the "sage kings of antiquity" as historical "fact" (pp. 31, 52, 63, and on many other occasions). With all due respect to Jiang Qing, Chinese tradition is neither a "mystery" nor "the sacred" (p. 207). Rather, it is a complex historical phenomenon that should be professionally studied and thoroughly analyzed without either demonization or blind adoration. Like other great world cultures, Chinese traditional civilization had many impressive achievements: not only noble pronouncements, but also practical attainments, among which the creation and maintenance of the world's most durable imperial polity figures prominently. Surely, many lessons can be learned from this and other successes. However, no less should be learned from traditional China's manifold weaknesses, which caused the collapse of the imperial enterprise in the early twentieth century. One, indeed, should face China's tradition in a holistic and comprehensive way, soberly distinguishing the positive and utilizable from the negative and moribund aspects. Jiang Qing's current work falls short of such a treatment, but his boldness may encourage many other thinkers to ponder the importance of China's past to its present history, and thereby some of Jiang's goals may be, indeed, realized.

Yuri Pines

Yuri Pines 尤锐 *is a visiting Professor at the Beijing Normal University, School of History and the Michael W. Lipson Professor of Asian Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His major publications include* The Everlasting Empire: Traditional Chinese Political Culture and Its Enduring Legacy *(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012) and* Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era *(Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).*

NOTES

1. A special issue of *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 45 no. 1 (Fall 2013) edited by David Elstein was published shortly after the reviewed book. A French translation of one of Jiang Qing's articles by Sébastien Billioud was published in *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 31 (2009).

2. There are some minor flaws in the book, such as misspelling the surname of Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738–1801) as "Zheng" in Joseph Chan's article (p. 108), but overall, their

number is limited. The omission of Chinese characters, however, is truly regrettable: I believe that they should have been included at least in the index and bibliography.

3. For Wang Yangming's career, see, e.g., Carsun Chang, *Wang Yang-ming, the Idealist Philosopher of Sixteenth-Century China* (Jamaica, NY: St. John's University Press, 1962); for a good introduction to the so-called Neo-Confucianism, see Peter K. Bol, *Neo Confucianism in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

4. The most important study of the *Gongyang Commentary*—from which I borrow much of the analysis below—is Joachim Gentz, *Das Gongyang zhuan: Auslegung und Kanoniesierung der Frühlings und Herbstannalen (Chunqiu)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001). For an analysis of the ideology of the *Gongyang zhuan* in English, see Gentz, "Long Live the King! The Ideology of Power between Ritual and Morality in the *Gongyang Zhuan*," in *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China,* ed. Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

5. For the weakness of Kang Youwei's scholarship, see the excellent study by Hans van Ess, "The Old Text/New Text Controversy: Has the 20th Century Got It Wrong?" *T'oung Pao* 80 (1994): 146–170.

6. The evolution of the *Gongyang zhuan* exegesis is thoroughly discussed in Huang Kaiguo 黃開國, *Gongyang xue fazhan shi* 公羊學發展史 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2013); see especially pp. 85–150 for Dong Zhongshu's contribution to the *Gongyang* studies, and pp. 651–730 for Kang Youwei.

7. There is a single reference in the entire *Gongyang zhuan* to Heaven using portents to "warn" the power-holders (Xi 15.9); another potential invocation of transcendent Heaven is Confucius's lament, recorded in the last entry of the *Gongyang zhuan:* "Heaven had forsaken me" (Ai 14.1).

8. For the idea of the "Sino-barbarian" dichotomy in the *Gongyang zhuan* and for an overall introduction to the *Gongyang zhuan* political ideology, see Liu Zehua 劉澤華, ed., *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi* 中國政治思想史, vol. 2 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1996), pp. 65–78. For the idea that "nothing is external" to the True Monarch, see *Gongyang zhuan* Yin 1.6; Huan 8.5; Xi 24.4; Cheng 12.1. See also Cheng 15.13 for the desire of the true monarch to unify "All-under-Heaven" including the barbarian periphery. For the concepts of war in the *Gongyang zhuan,* including justification of preemptive war against the barbarians and justification of war in terms of blood vengeance, see Yu Kam-por, "Confucian Views on War as Seen in the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals,*" *Dao* 9, no. 1 (2010): 97–111. The *Gongyang* justification of the blood vengeance was invoked as late as in the 1930s to justify the act of Shi Jianqiao 施劍翹 (1905–1979), who avenged the murder of her father by assassinating the murderer, General Sun Chuanfang 孫傳芳 (1885–1935). See more in Eugenia Lean, *Public Passions: The Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). I am grateful to Paul R. Goldin for directing my attention at this study.

9. For my treatment of the imperial literati and of their aspirations, see, e.g., Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: Traditional Chinese Political Culture and Its Enduring Legacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 76–103.