

## Communications to the Editor

### TO THE EDITOR:

Apparently I stirred up the dust. Little did I expect that my brief review of Jeffrey Mass's *Antiquity and Anachronism* (*JAS*, February 1993) would elicit a response from a third party (Gordon Berger, May 1993) and yet another from another source (Neil McMullin)—twice as long as the original review—a year and a half later (May 1994). When Berger sent in his letter a year ago, I was given a chance to rebut it in the same issue, and I did. This time I hadn't been told about McMullin's letter, and it was printed without my response. It is my understanding that the reviewer is customarily given the right to respond to rebuttals, and I am glad of this opportunity.

I wrote in my response to Berger that there was no sign in his letter that he had read the book himself. Before anyone forms an opinion about a review, shouldn't he or she first read the book in question as well as the review? Is Mass's analysis of dyarchy new? Is his appellational research significant enough to go beyond an annotated *Who's Who*? Does his investigation of the idea of anachronism contribute anything to the speculation on time in history? Aside from Mass's "dedication to a painstaking scholarly examination," his "stature in the field," or his "great store of knowledge," McMullin, too, has nothing whatever to say about the book. So if my review is "unwarrantedly harsh," harsh on what particular merits, or demerits, of the book? He is mum.

Had Mass's friends and colleagues persevered to read a few pages of the book, they would have known that in chapter 1, where Mass salutes his mentor John Hall, he himself laments the deficiency in Hall's "critical theory." "The charge can hardly be refuted, but it can, in part, be explained." Mass's developmentalist explanation is that Hall could not be theoretical because English-language materials were not available at his time (p. 9). A dubious explanation, indeed, since in many newly opened fields—such as studies of African oral literature—English materials are scarce, and yet "critical theory" is fully engaged. At any rate, I could only surmise from this that Mass thinks that Kamakura historiography is still in a pre-"critical-theory" stage, but eventually it will evolve to be "theoretical." Had Mass's cohorts kept the book open long enough, they would have also found that my shopping list (Kamakura intellectual history, religious development, women's life, gendered history, everyday life) was not a suggestion of what *Antiquity and Anachronism* should have dealt with, as McMullin says it was, but a response to Mass's own call to fill "some of the gaps" in Kamakura history. While Mass proposes a "future" agenda that merely repeats what he has been doing all these years with obsession (which McMullin admires), I thought something unredundant might serve as a refreshing project. As long as Mass, McMullin, and Co. sit on the same old ground, these gaps, too, will remain forever open.

McMullin's unfamiliarity with and fear of theory lead him to identify theory with "mental construct" and "fashion" and with "relativism" and "virus." In its place, he wants to claim a theory-free territory of "realism." But what on earth does he mean by realism? Something that is unmediated by language, idea, and

discourse? Even an almanac chronology has its own logic and ideology. So what is McMullin's "realism"? Thoroughly vulgarized Rankeanism?

McMullin also blames me for being "thought-controlish," and charges that my review "prohibits Mass from doing" institutional history. Two absurdities: First, a review has no power whatever to "prohibit" anyone from anything. It only makes comments. Second, a review is by definition a negotiation of what is with what is not. Disapproval is at least inherent in every review.

In a review one writer's ideas coalesce with another's. If an author and his/her reviewer only collude in mutual adulation, criticism would deteriorate into an avowal of collegiality (Berger's "good taste"). Criticism, as I see it, is discernment, without which even the pleasure of reaching a genuine agreement would be thoroughly moot. Friendship and camaraderie, on the other hand, are wonderful things in life, and if Mass has loyal friends, he ought to be congratulated. But isn't there something exclusory and segregative about this old-guard networking? Isn't there a near panic about the perceived threat to the clubhouse? An uppity outsider should be kept in his place?

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NOTE: Professor Miyoshi's letter has been abridged by the editor.

TO THE EDITOR:

A subject as controversial as Hirohito is bound to provoke sharp debate, but Takashi Fujitani's rather short review of my book, *Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan: A Political Biography* (JAS 53.1 [February 1994]:218–19) is very misleading, to say the least. To begin with, the fact that postwar elites were motivated by political expediency to sell Hirohito as "a man of peace" does not in itself necessarily mean that he was really a warrior king, which I sense is Fujitani's perspective. Nor should it mean, as Fujitani implies throughout his review, that it is somehow irresponsible for experienced historians to argue, nearly fifty years after the Pacific War, that Hirohito privately sought to prevent war but was powerless to do so, especially when there is very strong evidence in many Japanese primary sources (and not just Hirohito's "Monologue") for this view. In this connection, the fact that my book was mostly based on a wide range of primary sources is not made clear in the review.

Fujitani refers to one of my main themes, that Hirohito was constrained by his self-image as a constitutional monarch whose main formal function was to sanction policy, whether or not he personally agreed with it. However, he entirely neglects to mention that I also paid much attention to the web of external constraints in Hirohito's complex political context, which largely negated whatever leverage the emperor had to influence government decisions on national policy. Indeed, so eager is Fujitani to infer that I have tried to whitewash Hirohito that he conveniently neglects to mention my other key points: that Hirohito was at best a mediocre sovereign; that he was not a pacifist but a nationalist who in 1941 accepted the government's contention that war was unavoidable; that he arguably should have tried harder to prevent war even though the chances of success were remote; and that by "absolutizing" his strict interpretation of constitutional monarchy, he sanctioned virtually every decision for war in the 1931–1941 period and therefore shared responsibility for war.

Moreover, without offering any concrete evidence to the contrary, Fujitani misleads the reader by greatly simplifying my analyses of Hirohito's interventions in 1929 and 1936, Hirohito's occasional outbursts, the political ramifications of his scientific outlook, and other matters. In particular, for the reviewer to claim that Hirohito's interventions in 1929 and 1936 belie his constitutional self-restraint is to overlook the unusual circumstances of these particular interventions and their combined effect on Hirohito when it came to the quite different, and far more complex, issue of war.

Concerning Hirohito's postwar career, I may have missed his 1946 statement on Okinawa but not the emperor's other remarks cited by Fujitani, which, along with still others that I cite in the book, speak for themselves and do not need the sort of polemical gloss the reviewer seems to think is necessary. Finally, his casual comment, that I accept "the legitimacy of the postwar imperial institution" and celebrate "the monarchy's contribution to the postwar transformation" (p. 219), deliberately obscures my theme, in the last three chapters and the conclusion, that the much-contested postwar monarchy has both legitimized and put a brake on progressive change, in the latter instance owing to sustained efforts by neonationalists to co-opt the monarchy for their own political purposes, which even he admits I have criticized. Those conservative efforts notwithstanding, I still maintain that in comparison with early Shōwa, the postwar Shōwa monarchy was more "open," just as postwar Shōwa was more "democratic."

In sum, Fujitani's review is objectionable, not because he disagrees with the book but because of the ways in which he significantly misrepresents the balance of my interpretations. The debate about Hirohito surely deserves a higher level of discourse than this.

STEPHEN S. LARGE  
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#### TO THE EDITOR:

The dust jacket blurb for Stephen S. Large's book, *Emperor Hirohito and Shōwa Japan: A Political Biography*, announces that some of the work's most notable features are its "scope," its "objectivity," its "balanced appraisal of Hirohito," and its "comprehensive review of an era." Likewise, the publisher's insert preceding the title page maintains that while the debates around the Shōwa emperor's life and reign have been quite impassioned, this book's author is unique for his "impartiality." From his book and response to my review (*JAS* 53.1:218–19), I gather that Professor Large genuinely believes all of this—that he has written a balanced, comprehensive, and objective historical account of Hirohito and the Japanese monarchy during the Shōwa years.

But what I have argued in my short review—and I might add that the length of the review was not determined by me but by the number of words I was allotted by the *JAS*—is that whether Large is conscious of it or not, there is a teleology to the book in which the evidence is made, often in tortured ways, to point toward an overall defense of Hirohito. I touched on the way in which, in his rush to clinch his conclusions, Large sometimes makes the evidence say exactly the opposite of what it would suggest. Thus he interprets the emperor's leading role in the dismissal of Tanaka Giichi and the suppression of the officers in the February 26 Incident as moments when the emperor strengthened his determination to remain a "passive"

constitutional monarch, above the fray, rather than as evidence of his willingness to intercede in important political and military matters. I might also have mentioned the necessity of considering Hirohito's intervention in other high-level personnel matters, such as when he ordered Abe Nobuyuki to follow his imperial recommendations concerning the selection of Abe's Army Minister, his approval of expansion into Manchuria because, as he put it in his "Monologue," it was a mere "backwater" ("*inaka*") that the U.S. and Great Britain were not much concerned about, and that he intervened to end the war, but only after the Battle of Okinawa and the two atomic bombings.

It is true that because of the review's length I did not consider what Large describes in his response as some "key points," so let me briefly take up a few of them here. First, Large feels that one of his "key points" was that Hirohito was "at best a mediocre sovereign." It is amazing to me that a conclusion as analytically imprecise as this one could be "key" to any serious discussion of the monarch and the monarchy's place in modern and contemporary politics. That is why I did not have much to say about it. What, after all, would have been the qualities that would have made Hirohito a superb sovereign? Is there an ideal of the sovereign that Large has in mind, such as Meiji, Go-Daigo, or perhaps even Nintoku, some of the favorites of modern imperial ideologues? Or perhaps he has some world historical standards in mind.

Another of the "key points" concerns Large's qualifications of Hirohito's personal responsibility for Japanese expansionism in the period from 1931 to 1945. Large casts Hirohito as having a responsibility for accepting decisions that others had already made; in that sense, Large argues, he "shared responsibility for war." Such a position does not account for the evidence suggesting Hirohito's direct and active involvement in decision-making. The teleological drive of the book—culminating I might add in justification for Hirohito's exemption from the Tokyo War Crimes Trial on the grounds that he would probably not have received a "fair trial" (p. 139)—should not be overlooked simply because the author mentions some deficiencies in Hirohito's character or attributes to him a kind of passive responsibility. "In the last analysis," Large has written in his conclusion, "the Shōwa Emperor was the unwilling symbol, not the maker, of chaos and catastrophe" (p. 216).

So eager is Large to make a case for Hirohito's innocence that he has padded his version of the "facts" with every scrap of evidence he can find, regardless of how dubious the reasoning or source. I have already mentioned some of these in my review, but let me expand on just one point that I think is of particular importance in re-examining the Asia-Pacific War in a more sophisticated way. Large agrees with the reasoning that Hirohito's inclination toward scientific and rational thought, in large part fostered by his studies in biology, pushed him toward a defense of a limited constitutional monarchy and predisposed him toward peace. There is no necessary reason why an emperor who discovered a certain species of prawn and perhaps had some doubts about his own divinity cannot also have been directly involved in critical decisions concerning war and domestic politics.

But perhaps even more importantly, Large has obviously not thought for a moment, except in his reservations about the legitimacy of the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, that we need to question the dominant narrative of the Western powers (which would include the United States and Great Britain) wherein their warmaking has always been portrayed as rational while that of their enemies is necessarily irrational. This is a perspective that governs Large's reasoning throughout the book and it reflects his complete unwillingness to rethink conventional and Cold War frameworks

for assessing the Asia-Pacific War. If Large is serious about wanting us to raise our "level of discourse," I would suggest that rather than simply adding an uneven barrage of more "facts" to fit the dominant postwar discourse on Hirohito and the monarchy, he should have reflected more deeply on the basic assumptions that have framed mainstream interpretations of Hirohito, the monarchy, and the Asia-Pacific War.

Finally, I do not agree that I have distorted Large's characterization of the postwar years. I wrote that despite the fact that "he wisely warns against neo-nationalist usages of the emperor," his portrait of Hirohito is "basically positive." I also said that along with being a "defense of Hirohito for the trial he never faced," the book is "an affirmation of Japan's allegedly more 'democratic' and 'open' postwar monarchy." It seems to me that Large merely repeats my summary in a slightly different way in his response except that he appears to deny that, as I put it, he "celebrates the monarchy's contribution to the postwar transformation." To make a judgment on this latter point we need to consider Large's contention that in the postwar years the Emperor "contributed to three long-term developments since 1945," including "adaptation of the imperial institution to democracy," involvement as a "proponent of Japanese capitalism" in economic development, and encouragement of "Japan's political and military, as well as economic (sic), cooperation with the United States" (pp. 217–18). If he wants now to deny Hirohito's "contributions," why did he make such efforts to highlight them in his book? Perhaps an accurate summary of the book's arguments, without the numerous minor qualifications, has even surprised its fair-minded author.

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