

Communications to the Editor

TO THE EDITOR:

At the outset of his brief review of *Liberating Intimacy: Enlightenment and Social Virtuosity in Ch'an Buddhism*, John R. McRae states that although the book "offers an intriguing new look at some extremely interesting material, ultimately [it] is rendered useless by methodological shortcomings" (*Journal of Asian Studies* 56.2:475). Granted that in academic circles, it is much worse to be called useless than wrong, Professor McRae must be commended for the candor of his opening remarks. Far more interesting, however, are the implications his criticisms have for the relationship between Buddhist scholarship and Buddhist practice.

McRae's critique of the book can be summarized as follows: (1) it is not referenced to any ongoing, scholarly discussion of Ch'an Buddhism and focuses on a relatively few primary sources; (2) while its translations are "generally reliable," they are "entirely devoid of annotation" and seem to evidence the translator's tendency to "read his own ideas into the original"; (3) no distinction is made between Ch'an masters and the texts attributed to them, evidencing a grave naiveté about the historical processes by means of which the few cited works of early Ch'an actually came about; and (4) while narration appears to be a pivotal philosophical term in the book's treatment of enlightenment, it remains at best tenuously related to the early Ch'an sources with which the book is apparently concerned.

I'd first like to address McRae's concerns about the uniquely broad uses to which "narration" is put in the book. In the preface to *Liberating Intimacy*, I admit that there is very little direct precedent for the vocabulary I advance in arguing for the sociality of Ch'an enlightenment. Terms like "narration," "sociality," "societality," "virtuosity," "indirection," "partnership," and "intimacy" are not central to any lexicon of the Buddhist Canon. Nor are there any clear precedents for the uses to which I put these terms in the mainstream of either Western philosophy or contemporary Buddhist scholarship. In fact, it is a vocabulary "improvised at the confluence of traditional Ch'an and our contemporary world—indigenous to neither and yet curiously at home in both" (p. xv). As used in *Liberating Intimacy*, terms like "narration" and "sociality" are not supposed to capture the literal content of any given teachings or texts, but to facilitate conversation about their meaning for us as practically engaged Buddhists. Thus, the formulation of the book's novel terminology continues a diverse process that "began" when Indian and Central Asian forms of Buddhism entered into lively interaction with China's indigenous cultural, philosophical, and religious systems. And in this sense, it is not substantially different from the unique teaching vocabularies being developed by contemporary Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Ch'an masters as they respond to the practical needs of their Western students.

Of course, it may be that the vocabulary forwarded in *Liberating Intimacy* fails to open up the meaning of Ch'an for its intended audience. To that possibility, one can only respond that "time will tell." But as it happens, McRae's concerns lie at a rather different and more methodological level—one that presumes a schism between Buddhist practice and Buddhist scholarship. According to McRae, the book's

“intriguing” new perspective on enlightenment is useless, not because it might precipitate “wrong turns” on the Buddhist path, but because it fails to serve the needs of academically-committed scholars. Missing are the kinds of scholarly apparatus that would allow a reader adequately to connect the novel terminology and arguments presented in the book with the wider field of Buddhist studies. A necessary step in establishing these connections and convincingly supporting the book’s conclusions would be the inclusion of both substantial and careful references to the growing secondary scholarship on Ch’an and a wider selection of primary, Ch’an/Buddhist sources.

On the face of it, these are not unreasonable demands. Annotated translations, careful citations of parallel passages, a thorough exploration of the historicity of the texts studied, and the testing of one’s findings against those of the wider community of Buddhist academics—these are the benchmarks of good scholarship throughout the academy. But if a failure to meet these standards can render “useless” a perspective that is otherwise philosophically and practically valuable, it would seem that “good scholarship” is consistent with maintaining an objective distance between studying Buddhism and practicing it. While this might be considered both natural and necessary in some areas of study, it deeply violates the most basic of the Buddha’s teachings and raises significant questions about the utility of “Buddhist” scholarship.

Many Buddhists over the past 2,500 years have held that there are no justifiable grounds for segregating theory and practice, but the original and most succinct expression of this belief can be found in the recursive structure of the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Path. The Four Noble Truths are, in actuality, a system of corrective perspectives and not a set of doctrinal claims about what ‘is’ or ‘is-not.’ Together, they invite a responsive transformation of attention itself. Thus, the fourth truth—the availability of a path for realizing the resolution of all trouble (*dukkha*)—links the system of Four Noble Truths to the Eightfold Path of Buddhist practice. The first step on this path is, of course, that of a complete and appropriating view—the transformative attentiveness that arises with understanding the system of the Four Noble Truths. Like all things, understanding and practice arise interdependently. To segregate theory and practice is to reduce knowledge to the literally meaningless apprehension of ‘facts.’

At the very least, then, an avowed commitment to the practical Buddhist project of alleviating all suffering is part of what it must mean to be a Buddhist scholar rather than a scholar of Buddhism. If one is a Mahayanist, it means aspiring to the full realization of *bodhisattva* conduct. Paraphrasing Ma-tsu, in the absence of such a practical commitment of our attention and energy, even if we study and discuss the Buddha’s expedient teachings for billions of years, we’ll never finish and all our explanations will be like unsevered barbs and chains. If we are to understand Ch’an Buddhism, good scholarship and a “comprehension” of its histories and theories are not enough.

Especially in respect of the Ch’an traditions, it is not altogether clear that current scholarly standards and tools are compatible with learning *from* rather than only *about* exemplary Ch’an teachers and the texts attributed to them. There is particular irony in strenuously undertaking to preserve and reconcile various versions of key texts, detailing the historical transformations of doctrines, and making a familiarity with the extensive primary and secondary literatures a singular necessity for useful work in understanding Ch’an. While it is “only” hagiography—and a hagiography that clearly developed over a period of some centuries—the story of Hui-neng is highly instructive in that it traces the origin of a truly Chinese form of Buddhism to an

illiterate wood-hawker whose only formal exposure to the tradition came through overhearing a few stray verses from the *Diamond Sutra*.

Hui-neng is the antithesis of scholarly erudition, and the Ch'an tradition has long taken this as a cause for celebration. Hui-neng "proves" that great learning does not come from the past or from some specified set of ritual activities but rather from our own unconditional readiness to awaken (*tun wu*). In sharp contrast with the standards of scientific research, Hui-neng proves that even a novice can make fathomlessly important contributions to the vitality and growth of the inseparable trinity of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. After him, Huang-po exults that supreme enlightenment means "responding without any fixed perspective," and Lin-chi vigorously exhorts his students to realize what it means to be a "true person with no rank." What is essential to realizing the meaning of Ch'an enlightenment is not knowledge about an esoteric system of beliefs, a detailed grasp of the history of Buddhism in China, or—as evidenced in Ma-tsu's famous tile-rubbing realization—an unswerving commitment to some particular psychophysical, meditative techniques. What is required is simply an unhesitating readiness to accord with one's situation and respond as needed: the realization of unlimited skill-in-means (*upaya*).

Of course, as Professor McRae and many others would likely insist, such stories and sayings are all found in versions of texts which presumably derived their authority through some form of competition with others of their kind. Ch'an may well describe itself as a way beyond words and letters, but the failure to acknowledge and take account of the textuality of this claim and its historical context is—in his estimation—a scholarly negligence as damaging as the failure to acknowledge and take account of the work of fellow Buddhist scholars. In the absence of such efforts, what logically consistent grounds are there for warranting the validity of a given translation or interpretation and evaluating its usefulness? How do we come to know what the texts—much less the teachers to which they are attributed—actually mean?

Questions like these have clearly troubled more than the past few generations of Buddhist scholars. For example, a well-developed account of Buddhist hermeneutics can be found in the medieval *Catuhpratisaranasūtra*, where it is said that there are four refuges (*pratisarana*) to which we may appeal in interpreting a text: the teachings and not the alleged author; the meaning (*artha*) and not the letter; the sutra of precise meaning, not that the meaning of which requires interpretation; and finally, *jñāna* or realization, not discursive consciousness or *vijñāna*. In the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, a telling commentary runs as follows: *vijñāna* is capable of generating knowledge of the letter, while meaning (*artha* or fruit) is attained only by *jñāna* (BB 257). Now, *vijñāna* arises on the basis of either listening (*śruti*, the resort to existing authority or scholarship) or reflecting (*cintā* inference and extrapolation). According to the *CPS*, however, the realization of meaning is not a mental process, but rather a function of *bhāvanā* or practice. In his discussion of this passage, Etienne Lamotte correctly and emphatically concludes that it is wisdom arising from practice that "constitutes the single and indispensable instrument of true exegesis" in the Buddhist world (in *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, ed. Donald Lopez, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988, p. 24).

The Ch'an tradition takes up this hermeneutical strategy with unparalleled zeal and one wonders whether it is really possible to understand Ch'an without also entering the life of Ch'an practice. In fact, the single most common response to "theoretical" questions posed to Ch'an masters is simply: "practice." In *Liberating Intimacy*, I make the case that in Ch'an it is essential not to confuse various meditative and ritual techniques with practice as such. I argue that Ch'an practice arises when we begin relinquishing all impediments to social virtuosity, all of our horizons for

relevance, responsibility, and readiness. Ch'an practice means radically endangering one's 'self' through entering into boundless intimacy with all things.

I also argue that this is very unlikely to be something undertaken on our own. In addition to insisting that it is a way beyond words and letters, Ch'an says of itself that it is a special 'narration' or 'transmission' (*chuan* 轉) from mind to mind. As evidenced in numerous collections of enlightenment tales and *kung-an* (公案), or "public cases," this did not mean a kind of "telepathic" or "mystical" transfer of insights and authority. To the contrary, it referred to the critical importance of a genealogical relationship with Ch'an practice—a "partnership" through which one enters into and dramatically contributes to an improvised and meaningful relationship with a master. That is, realizing the meaning of Ch'an entails conduct or shared narrative movement with an exemplar of the tradition—a partner who both mirrors and challenges us, at once disillusioning us and demanding appropriate responses to crises with which they confront us. In the absence of such a master—a not altogether uncommon circumstance—one is obliged to endeavor at practically dissolving the distinctions between *buddha*, *dharmā*, and *sangha*, thereby transforming both our chosen texts and our chosen circumstances and communities into true teachers. Through this, all things becomes useful. We may even realize something of what Huang-po meant when he implied that, with practice, "all by itself there is no place that is not the place of enlightenment." (T 2012.380c)

Nothing could be more unprecedented, more surprising. There is no way of predictably arriving at this place; no way of ultimately defining it. And in this lies the greatest danger of universally applying current academic standards of scholarship to determine the usefulness of new Buddhist philosophical works. These standards are derived from experimentation and research protocols first developed in the natural sciences and later adapted to scholarly activity in the social sciences and humanities. As such, they emphasize accuracy, predictability, repeatability, and universality. Thus, an unsupported thesis is discounted as irrelevant; results that cannot be duplicated are dismissed; personal realizations are subordinated to group verification; purely improvised solutions are reviled as merely ad hoc; and so on.

I believe that a case can be made for seeing any prescriptive adherence to such regulations as evidence of a "colonization" of Buddhist (and particularly Ch'an) studies by quite foreign values. And my use of "colonization" here is not purely histrionic. "Beneficent" colonial powers have at times done a great deal to preserve the literature, artifacts, and architecture of their colonies, infusing indigenous cultures with the critical tools (some material, some logical or conceptual) needed to solve a variety of quite real political, economic, and social problems. In much the same way, the research protocols and standards of validation and verification that first developed in the sciences have made substantial contributions to the field of Buddhist studies. But, the preservation of a culture and its works is a quite different process than their vigorous conservation through meaningfully responsive extension. And that, in a nutshell, is the responsibility shouldered by *Liberating Intimacy*. While preserving food enables us to effectively store and use it for long periods of time, the process also renders that food sterile. We should worry, perhaps, that the same might be true of Buddhist insights subjected to the rigors of scholarly possession.

Professor McRae implies that I am substantially ignorant of the body of work—both primary and secondary—related to Ch'an and the interpretation of eighth and ninth century Chinese religion. He apparently draws this conclusion from the noted absence of any references to the secondary literature and the citation of only a handful of texts from the early period of Ch'an. The inclusion instead of an eclectic set of

references to Western philosophers and theorists seems to be taken as an additional insult to the standards of careful scholarship. By itself, the absence of references to secondary sources or a wider range of canonical materials does not, of course, logically warrant concluding an ignorance of these sources and materials. It does warrant concluding that they were not deemed essential to the practical success of the book as a bridge between early Ch'an theory and practice and our current ways of understanding and so embodying enlightenment. As stated in its preface, *Liberating Intimacy* is not intended as a commentarial or exegetical work *about* early Ch'an, but rather a philosophically guided attempt to learn *from* it.

In the end, Professor McRae's criticisms remind me of the famous Ch'an anecdote about adding legs to a snake. There is no doubt that a different book might have been written in which something akin to the perspectives on Ch'an enlightenment offered in *Liberating Intimacy* had been combined with careful references to current scholarship, annotated translations, and so on. But that would have required a different author—an author who spent many more hours in the library and many fewer in the meditation hall, who spent many more years honing a fine grasp of the Chinese language rather than in improvised conversation with contemporary exemplars of Ch'an. Such an alternative book would be a painstakingly constructed and very useful contribution to Buddhist scholarship. I hope, indeed, that Professor McRae or someone of his considerable talents and academic commitment undertakes writing it. But it must also be allowed that such a book would be buddhological rather than practically Buddhist in nature—the equivalent of a work in jazz musicology and not a work of free improvisations in a local club.

Before ending, I would like to illustrate how a focus on standards—met or unmet—can obscure the usefulness of an apparently unprecedented perspective. According to Professor McRae, the main thesis of *Liberating Intimacy* is that “spiritual cultivation and the experience of enlightenment itself in early Chinese Ch'an Buddhism are quintessentially social in nature” (p. 475). By contrast, the expressed purpose of the book is to argue that “Ch'an enlightenment should not be seen as private and experiential in nature, but as irreducibly and intimately social.” Far from being something experienced or attained by an individual, “enlightenment” designates a liberating quality and orientation of our relationships as such. It is for this reason, I would argue, that the Buddha insists in the *Diamond Sutra* that even as a bodhisattva saves all sentient beings, he or she must realize not a single ‘sentient being’ is being liberated and then also states that in attaining *anuttara samyak sambodhi* he didn't attain one single thing (DS 22). What is liberated and liberating is our intimacy as such, our dramatic interdependence, our world-story, and never some identifiable ‘me’ or ‘you.’ Enlightenment means the manifestation of a horizonless buddha-realm.

Liberating Intimacy argues that “the experience of enlightenment” should be seen as a purely verbal fiction. Nevertheless, it does insist that Ch'an Buddhist practice is profoundly social. But correctly understanding the use of “social” here depends on fully appreciating the “Copernican revolution” that follows with taking quite seriously the teachings of impermanence, emptiness, and interdependence. Such basic, early Buddhist teachings disallow seeing ourselves as individuals in anything but an abstract sense. In the absence of any abiding and essential self, personhood can only be construed in terms of complex and irreducibly dynamic patterns of our interdependence. In the terminology forwarded in *Liberating Intimacy*, we should see ourselves as given directly in conduct, in the movement of our narration as such. Thus, it is not that some pre-existing selves enter into relationships of one or another type

and quality. To the contrary, our 'selves' arise as a function of discrimination among those patterns. Granted this, the experiencing self should not be seen as central to who we are, much less central to our worlds.

But because the (at least Mahayana) Buddhist cosmos is not factually given but rather karmically configured, neither should the world we live in be taken as an objective given—as something into which we are “thrown” in a Heideggerian sense. To the contrary, it should be seen as a profoundly meticulous expression of who we have been and are becoming, continually resulting from our combined desires and dispositions, our interwoven likes and dislikes, our creativity and habits, our successes and failures, our promises kept and our promises broken. As such, our world should be understood as irreducibly dramatic—not as a merely factual state of affairs, but as an always ongoing and meaningful narration which may be oriented toward either *samsara* or *nirvana*, toward either bondage or liberation.

Now in light of the teachings of impermanence and interdependence, it should be clear that conduct—while it constitutes our true original nature (*pen hsing* 本性)—is not ‘something’ existential but rather dispositional. For this reason, sociality and societality are referred to as orientations of conduct itself: that is, as cardinal directions for changes in our meaningful interdependence. Very briefly, societality marks a bias toward regulated and regulating relationships and universally applicable institutions. Control, certainty, and objective security are definitive values of such a narrative bias. By contrast, sociality means an orientation toward improvised relationships and enhancing unique and local potentials in keeping with the valorization of contribution, ambiguity, and intimate vulnerability.

Ch'an enlightenment and practice should, indeed, be seen as irreducibly social. But it is crucial that—in keeping with the “Copernican” displacement of the central, experiencing ego—we refrain from seeing either enlightenment or practice as something brought about by the efforts of our individual ‘selves’, whether alone or along with others. Instead, enlightenment arises as unprecedented and emergent quality of our conduct as such. It is for this reason that Hui-neng insists that, “It is precisely Buddhist conduct/practice (*hsing* 行) that is the Buddha” (*Platform Sutra*, 42), and then vehemently denies the need for repetitive cultivation (*hsi* 習). Ch'an practice is not ‘social’ because we undertake it in the company of other individuals, but because it consists of a liberating orientation of our dramatic interdependence, the enlightening of our conduct as such.

McRae would have us believe that new perspectives on the nature of Ch'an enlightenment can be rendered useless by methodological shortcomings. From this it follows that how a perspective is developed means more than the new vistas it opens up for us, and that its pragmatic value can be pre-judged using existing, procedural standards. As a practicing Buddhist, I find such suggestions quite problematic. In the Mahayana, the bodhisattva life serves as the compass of Buddhist practice. The most prominent of its cardinal points is, of course, the realization of unprecedented skill-in-means (*upāya*)—an unprecedented capacity for enlightening conduct in even the most apparently unfavorable conditions. The *Vimalakīrti Sutra* includes a passage in which visitors to this world from another buddha-realm are astounded at the aesthetic poverty of Shakyamuni Buddha's environs. They are castigated for not understanding that in a buddha-realm, even the most noxious substances and odors are able to do the buddha-work of enlightening all beings. In the oral tradition of Ch'an, a common injunction is that to live the bodhisattva life, one must be able to discern ‘when to keep the precepts and when to break them.’ Together, these suggest that living as a bodhisattva means that any material or situation can be useful and that no rules or

standards are utterly and universally applicable. That is, methods should be understood as secondary to meaning. Forgetting this means confusing scholarship about Buddhism with truly Buddhist scholarship and so losing sight of the ways in which the latter can help situate and inspire practice.

PETER D. HERSHOCK
East-West Center

TO THE EDITOR:

One of the both amusing and frustrating manifestations of the popular interest in Ch'an and Zen Buddhism is the spate of "Zen and the art of anything" books and articles that have appeared. Zen is reduced to a single-minded concentration upon a single endeavor, whether it be windsurfing, surfing the Internet, motorcycle maintenance, fly fishing, or the like (or indeed anything one enjoys). Many of these publications are excellent in their own right, but they do not have much of anything to do with the East Asian traditions of Ch'an, Sōn, or Zen Buddhism. I have already criticized Peter Hershock's *Liberating Intimacy* for a lack of scholarly understanding of the Ch'an/Zen traditions, but now it seems I should have judged the book as an exercise in creative Buddhist philosophy, an original work of Buddhist theology, as it were. Would the readers of *The Journal of Asian Studies* be interested in such a volume, or in a review of this volume from such a perspective? I doubt it. Such an undertaking would be better placed in some other journal, and a *JAS* review should not be any less useful because it adopts the perspective of the *Journal's* readership rather than that of the author. However, now that Hershock has redirected my attentions to this aspect of his work, I will add a few comments here on what I would now characterize as his book on "Zen and the art of Buddhist philosophy."

Actually, I am entirely sympathetic to the goals of philosophical analysis that Hershock espouses, and I will certainly testify to his abundant gifts in this regard. He explains certain fundamental perspectives of Buddhism very well. But, however pedestrian the following dichotomies may be, I believe that the same types of criticism applied to the book *as scholarship* apply equally well to the book *as creative Buddhist philosophy*. That is, just as a scholarly book on the Ch'an tradition should be aware of previous work within the field of historical scholarship, so should a philosophical book (please pardon the abbreviation from "book of creative Buddhist philosophy") be aware of previous work within that field. I am surprised, therefore, that Hershock does not reflect on the insights found in Sung Bae Park's *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983). I could also mention works less specific to the Ch'an tradition, by Stephen Batchelor and others, let alone the *vast* number of Buddhist philosophical works in modern Chinese and Japanese. Although the terminology of Hershock's explanations is fresh, the understanding he presents is derived from a very widely accessible interpretation of early Buddhism, and it has little or nothing specifically to do with the Ch'an tradition.

In his response Hershock explains how he understands the "social" nature of Ch'an religious practice, but in applying this understanding to seemingly the entire Buddhist tradition he demonstrates just what I found so disappointing in the book itself. That is, he began the book (and I suspect the dissertation project that underlies it) by setting up a contrast between characteristically Indian and Chinese views of life and death, and I hoped that he would explore how Chinese Ch'an practice was "social" in a manner that parallels such cultural differences. This, or a closely related issue, is in fact a subject I have written on myself, in "Encounter Dialogue and the

Transformation of the Spiritual Path in Chinese Ch'an," in Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello, eds., *Paths to Liberation: The Marga and its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), pp. 339–69. I was looking forward to extending my understanding of Ch'an through Hershock's analysis, but he does not fulfill the promise of his opening pages. Incidentally, Hershock's simplistic characterization of the legend of Hui-neng might also be tempered by my "The Legend of Hui-neng and the Mandate of Heaven," *Fo Kuang Shan Report of International Conference on Chan Buddhism* (Kao-lisiung, Taiwan: Fo Kuang Publisher, 1990), pp. 69–82. (Admittedly, this is not a widely accessible volume.) I could also mention the writings of Bernard Faure, chiefly *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), which are obligatory reading for anyone attempting to apply new perspectives to the Ch'an tradition.

Finally, let me add that, whether in the pursuit of historical scholarship or philosophical inquiry, competence matters. Whether one wants to learn *from* or "only" *about* (Hershock's emphasis) "exemplary Ch'an teachers and the texts attributed to them," one must first be certain one understands what they are saying, at least on a basic semantic level. (The linguistic demands on those who want to engage in philosophical discourse are in fact even greater.) I must therefore point to two usages in Hershock's response that imply to me a lack of facility with the language of Chinese Ch'an texts. First, he refers frequently to a "Ma-tzu," which to me evokes bags of hemp seeds sold on street corners rather than the famous Ch'an teacher Ma-tsu Tao-I. (Based on the abstract of his dissertation, he had the spelling right there. I wonder why he changed it?) Second, in both the book and his rejoinder to my review, Hershock introduces the character *chuan* 轉, "revolve," when he means *ch'uan* 傳, "transmit." These are minor, even trivial, points that I did not mention in the review (where, after all, there was a 750-word limit), and the overall treatment of Chinese citations in his book seems reliable. However, in conjunction with Hershock's limited citation of Asian-language works about Ch'an they are troubling.

JOHN R. MCRAE
Indiana University

TO THE EDITOR:

Unless there is another essay by Liang Qichao bearing the same title, the location of which Mr. Young-tsu Wong does not disclose, I do discuss Liang's "Zhongguo shi xulun" quite extensively in my book *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity* (pp. 33, 43–45). As the centrality of this essay to my discussion of Liang's spatial imagination is obvious, I am greatly puzzled by Mr. Wong's caution that it "should not be overlooked."

Judging by his rather ready comment on my "diligently citing Kant, Hegel, Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida, Habermas, and Chatterjee," I have the distinct feeling that this unsympathetic reviewer did not bother to read much of my book except the table of contents and the conclusion that he conveniently found offensive. A quick glance at the index will show that all these thinkers, with the exception of Kant and Chatterjee, are introduced in the conclusion where I try to put Liang's historical thinking into a global context. (The few references to Kant actually have to do with Liang's own writing; the difference between quoting Chatterjee and referring to Levenson, or Wong himself, is a matter on which Mr. Wong fails to enlighten us.) Further, the complex questions of nationalism and historical consciousness seemed to

be of little interest to the reviewer, since he apparently was waiting for a full-length “biography.”

The disservice that Mr. Wong rendered the *JAS* by not treating his review with professional rigor goes beyond belittling my book, which he sarcastically renamed “Liang Qichao and the Mind of Tang Xiaobing.” His inattention to the task at hand may also mislead readers of the *JAS* when he erroneously states that Liang Qichao died in 1927. The reviewer did not have to go beyond the blurb of the book to find out the correct dates: 1873–1929.

XIAOBING TANG
The University of Chicago

TO THE EDITOR:

I was surprised to read Xiaobing Tang’s letter regarding my review of his book on Liang Qichao. My few “unsympathetic” comments were made after I had praised his “admirable erudition” and judged his work “a major contribution to the field.” Perhaps Tang thinks his book is free from shortcomings, but his letter ignores much of my criticism and assumes that I only read his table of contents and conclusion! Anyone who reads my review (*JAS* 56.3:786–88) can see that such an accusation is groundless and unfair. In fact, I wrote in the margins on almost every page. Only limited space prevented me from raising all the issues I would have liked to raise.

Tang was “puzzled” by my suggestion that Liang’s “*Zhongguo shi xulun*” should not be overlooked. But is it not true that he overlooked Liang’s periodization of Chinese history in this essay, which reveals not only the clear influence of Western historiography but also an evolving sense of global space? He also objects to “Liang Qichao and the Mind of Tang Xiaobing;” however, as a postmodernist he should perhaps be proud of it. The year 1927 is obviously a typographical error, as the correct dates 1873–1929 are given prominently at the beginning of my review.

YOUNG-TSU WONG
Cheng-chih University