

Reflections on the Three Ultimates and the Mystery of Creativity: In Dialogue with John B. Cobb, Jr. and Bob Mesle*

Tokiyuki Nobuhara

Introduction:

I have just completed my Japanese translation of C. Robert Mesle, *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction*.¹ As is kindly manifested in the Preface to the Japanese Edition, I have had the honor of receiving a request from Dr. Bob Mesle, the author of this book (whose Japanese translation is re-entitled *The Basis of Process Theology: A Novel and Intelligible Introduction*), to write a response to two additional essays contained in the Japanese edition: Chapter 19, written by John Cobb, “On The Three Ultimates: God, Creativity, and the World,” and Chapter 20, written by Bob Mesle himself, “A Spiritual Autobiography.” I was more than willing to respond with all my capabilities to this thoughtful request which is expressive of an open stance of theologizing peculiar to him.

Thus, I have written Chapter 21 “Reflections on the Three Ultimates: From the Perspective of a Theology of Loyalty,” which is the original essay out of which I am in the process of producing the present one. As the translator, I am thinking of writing my summary of the major contents of the book in the Translator’s Postscript. But presently in the original essay, I intended to confine myself to writing succinct reflections on the “three ultimates” from “the perspective of a theology of loyalty,” which is a long-standing theological thesis of mine. With this intention in mind, I have then proceeded to concentrate on the focus of my recent academic concern, which is to find a solution to “the mystery of creativity.”

I am basing the present essay on the original one but want to make it more articulate in order to pursue and elucidate as much as possible the question as to why what I call “the mystery of creativity” is internally related to the adequacy of reflections on the three ultimates (i.e., God, creativity, and the world). My intention at the final stage of this essay is to carry out this task.

I. Preliminary Considerations: From the Perspective of a Theology of Loyalty

In Chapter 19, Cobb has eloquently evidenced that one of the most important questions in interreligious dialogue in general and in Buddhist-Christian dialogue in particular is how we might be able to consider the distinction between the two ultimates, God and the metaphysical ultimate, such as the Whiteheadian notion of creativity and Buddhist Emptiness. I myself began being concerned with this question with my own unique perspective in mind, one which not very many thinkers involved with interreligious dialogue are observed to hold. It is the perspective from which one questions how our “trust in the ultimate” would emerge in our minds and hearts in the midst of our religious self-awareness whether in the form of theistic belief, Christian faith, or in the Buddhist enlightenment to Emptiness.

As is well known, in Jodoshinshu (Pure Land Buddhism) this issue of the emergence of trust is considered only in terms of “Amida’s sincerity or loyalty.” It doesn’t lie in our human (or sentient) capacity of whatever kind (including reason, the will, and sentiment or imagination) which is heavily contaminated with wickedness and depravity. Originally, it only lies in the purity and truthfulness of Amida’s causal religious practice in the person of Bodhisattva Hozo (Skt., *Dharmakara*). Consequently, we solely rely upon Amida’s directing of virtue in order to procure the emergence of trust. At the core of the issue of the emergence of trust as it is embodied in “Amida’s sincerity or loyalty” is Amida’s Primal Vow, especially the 18th Vow which runs to the following effect:

(18) If, after my obtaining Buddhahood, all beings in the ten quarters should not desire in sincerity and truthfulness to be born in my country, and if they should not be born by only thinking of me for ten times, except those who have committed the five grave offences and those who are abusive of the true Dharma, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.²

This willingness of *non*-attainment of the Highest Enlightenment by Amida for the sake of saving sentient beings is peculiar to Amida’s sincerity or loyalty.³ It implies the salvific meaningfulness for us sentient beings of

what Cobb in his essay on the three ultimates refers to as the standpoint of *Sambhogakaya* (Body of Bliss, or Amida) in relation to *Dharmata Dharmakaya* (Dharma-nature Dharma-body, or Emptiness), namely, the standpoint as it is qualified with wisdom and compassion.

Inasmuch as Amida expresses his will of salvation for the sake of us sentient beings who are not enlightened, in saying, “May I not attain the Highest Enlightenment, if they should not be born by only thinking of me for ten times,” those in the Pure Land Buddhist Sect founded by Shinran in the 13th Century have been perceiving “Amida’s sincerity or loyalty.”

A parallel case is found among those Christians who believe in the “righteousness of God by virtue of the faith of Jesus as the Christ (*dikaiosune de theou dia pisteos Iesou Kristou*)” as espoused by the Apostle Paul (see Rom. 3: 22). Most translations of this text (as found, for instance, in NRSV and NKJV), however, are mistaken in rendering it as: “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.” The original intention of Paul was to say that the “righteousness of God” emerges in the very faith of Jesus as the Christ who believes, whereas we don’t believe, in God.⁴ In this case, what Paul means by the “righteousness of God” is, primarily and fundamentally, a rightful mode of human existence appearing in the God-man Jesus who was sent by God; while, secondarily and derivatively, it signifies the righteousness by which God justifies us sinners (*iustitia qua nos iustus faciens*—Martin Luther) insofar as we entrust ourselves to Jesus the Christ and “put on him”? (Rom. 13: 14) because God views us through him and reckons us as righteous although we are faithless and unrighteous in the presence of God. The righteousness of God in and through Jesus the Christ, in a nutshell, is forgiveness.

With this twofold structure of the righteousness of God in Jesus the Christ in mind, Karl Barth puts the motif of the obedience of the Son of God (der Gehorsam des Sohnes Gottes) at the center of his doctrine of reconciliation (i.e., the Incarnation) as developed in *Church Dogmatics, IV/1*. What is inherent in the notion of “obedience” for Barth is that there are in God “an above and a below, a *prius* and *posterius*, a superiority and a subordination.”⁵ In fulfilling his obedience vis-à-vis the Father to the full, Jesus has lived up to the inner principle of the Incarnation, thus going through and beyond its outer principle, suffering.

II. Learning from Cobb's Theory of "The Two Ultimates": A Proposal of Three Principles in My Theology of Loyalty Owing to the Elevation of "The Emergence of Trust"

As is clear in the above, my theology of loyalty gets started from the viewpoint of a fusion of Eastern and Western civilizations as they encounter each other around the issue of the "emergence of trust" by bringing together Shinran's Pure Land Buddhist notion of "Amida's sincerity or loyalty" and the Apostle Paul's idea of "faith of Jesus the Christ" lying at the core of his theology. However, if it is to be endowed with the authentic quality of a philosophical theology there has to be a leap in it. Here the leap must connote the elevation of Jesus' locus of obedience to the locus of the Deity's attitude as such.

It is at this juncture that I have learned much from Professor John Cobb's thesis of the "two ultimates." Cultivating this outstanding thesis in his celebrated 1982 book *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism*, Cobb vigorously promotes Buddhist-Christian dialogue based on Whitehead's distinction between God and Creativity. He holds that Creativity as the metaphysical ultimate is ultimate reality while regarding God as the religious ultimate, with the consequence that neither is superior to the other in the matter of ultimacy. When it comes to speaking of Buddhist-Christian dialogue per se, Cobb opts for the distinction between Buddhist Emptiness and the Christian God whom he designates as the Empty One.⁶ Cobb's proposal for this distinction is an eye-opener, going straight into the core of Buddhist-Christian dialogue.

What would happen if I brought in my motif of a theology of loyalty mentioned above to Cobb's proposal for the distinction between God and Creativity/Emptiness? Naturally, I would regard it as very important that I have prized God's loyalty to Creativity. In my case, the idea of God's loyalty to Creativity is put forward as a philosophical-theological thesis on the basis of Whitehead's dictum to the effect that "the primordial nature of God is the acquirement by creativity of a primordial character."⁷ My major concern here is to see how we can obtain the emergence of trust in this locus of theology in which we are related to God as the one who is related to Creativity in terms of "acquirement of a primordial character" by it. I interpret Whitehead's notion of "primordial characterization" as implying "God's loyalty to Creativity."

Combined with this is the fact that my studies of Josiah Royce's *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (1908) have led me to seek the sense in which we use the word "loyalty" generally in the voluntary, self-expressive relationship between some particular individual self and the Universal. According to him, "Loyalty is the will to manifest, so far as is possible, the Eternal, that is, the conscious and superhuman unity of life, in the form of the acts of an individual Self."⁸

Yet, in my case, since what is at the center of my concern is the relationality between God and Creativity/Emptiness, Royce's philosophy of loyalty must be put within and substituted for the context of this *theo*-logical relationality, thereby undergoing an elevation. What is at stake here is, in Whitehead's words, the "Apotheosis"⁹ of loyalty. And what is now transposed to the "individual Self" is God while the "Eternal" or the "conscious and superhuman unity of life" corresponding to Creativity. It is in this manner that Royce's philosophy of loyalty is to be elevated to the position my theology of loyalty occupies. In my theology of loyalty, God plays the role of the "individual Self" vis-à-vis Creativity or the "Eternal Unity." Hence, this theology is one whose ultimate agent is God, not any one of us theologians.

Thus far, I have disclosed a reflection on the first principle of my theology of loyalty, one which I might designate: "God is loyal to Creativity or Emptiness." To this I must add a second principle from the side of Buddhist Emptiness and say, "Emptiness empties itself." Or, in Whiteheadian terms, "Creativity is characterless in such a throughgoing way that its characterlessness is not another character." Further, a third principle is to be designated: "God is the only one in the universe who can and actually does evoke a loyalty in us creatures."

In my theology of loyalty mentioned above, the ultimacy of God (which I might call the "evocative power") is actually to be looked upon as a different type of ultimacy than the ultimacy of ultimate reality which Creativity or Emptiness is. For in order that one might be able to call upon us, saying, "Be loyal!" one should have experienced one's own loyalty; however, Creativity or Emptiness lacks such an experience of loyalty, with the consequence that it is not qualified to call forth our creaturely loyalty. The locus of God as the "One Who Calls"¹⁰ in the universe is unique. By contrast, the ultimacy of Creativity or Emptiness lies in its being "without a character of its own"¹¹ or in its "non-bhava" (Jpn., *mujisho*) state of affairs.

Now, the unique locus of God in the universe liberates us from a concern about the subordination of God to Creativity/Emptiness—a concern that Professor Cobb might have. The ultimacy of the evocative power is distinct from the ultimacy of characterlessness or “mujisho.” Further, this uniqueness of God is one based on the Experimentor’s humble experience leading paradoxically to the Call, with the consequence that it has nothing to do with the unreasonableness of a “God the King who delivers commandments from the throne” which Dr. Mesle questions in his autobiography (Chap. 20). The unique locus of God in the universe lies in the fact that it is precisely because of God’s humble loyalty to Creativity/Emptiness that God is paradoxically entitled to call forth loyalty in us creatures. This uniqueness of God is the very motive by which our trust in God is aroused in our hearts and minds.

III. The Third Ultimate, The World and Takizawa’s Theory of the Proto-factum: In Search of a Solution to “the Mystery of Creativity”

Let me then turn to the next theme, the third ultimate—the World. Crucial to the issue of the three ultimates involving the World is such an overview as John Cobb presents in the following passage:

Actually, Whitehead’s text supports our speaking of three ultimates, and there are types of spirituality oriented to the third one as well. This is the world. Whitehead writes that there is no creativity apart from God and the world. There is no God apart from creativity and the world. And there is no world apart from God and creativity. This passage makes clear that these three cannot be ranked in a hierarchical way. If there can be no creativity apart from God and the world, then creativity is not in some way superior to, or in my language, more ultimate than, God or the world. Equally this counts against the theistic tendency to rank God at the top and the world and creativity as subordinate.¹²

Here in relation to the issue of the three ultimates, I think I have learned a lot from my teacher Professor Katsumi Takizawa. According to his long-standing thesis of “the Proto-factum Immanuel,” there fundamentally is this Proto-factum on the ontological ground of the being of the World. Also, at

the bottom of each and every being-in-the-World there is hidden this Proto-factum.

Quite recently, I have read again Professor Takizawa's 1983 book *Where Are You? The Basis for the Actual Life and Religion* to find anew outstanding letters. In the following passage I find something like sacred sentences constituting a marvelous document. Let me quote:

When we strictly bear in mind this one point [i.e., the ground of the World] we will clearly find out on our own *one more element of "irreversibility"*¹³ *which has never entered into Mr. [Masao] Abe's mind's vision.* Namely, an event of enlightenment (a rightful self-awareness) occurring in one's life at some place and some time is enabled to arise primarily and unidirectionally by virtue of the working of that Proto-decision. Therefore, when we say that enlightenment is only that which arises because of the working of the absolute formless Self, we should not fail to see that this "working" of the absolute Nothingness-like Subject is a two-fold structure/dynamics; first, it means the "working" in the sense of the Proto-Occurring Itself of the Proto-Decision; and second, it means the "working" in the sense of the opus ad extra (i.e., toward what is within the World) of the Proto-Decision.¹⁴

While reading this passage I cannot but feel that Professor Takizawa hits the very mark of things. Let me explain. Recently, Seiichi Yagi who had a series of long-standing academic debates with Takizawa has come to acknowledge in his newly published volume *The Religion of Jesus* that Takizawa was the first person who made a distinction between the Proto-factum Immanuel and its realization in the person of Jesus. Yagi thinks that Takizawa goes far beyond the standard New Testament scholarship in which one usually makes a distinction between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith.¹⁵ In Yagi's most recent opinion as a New Testament scholar, Takizawa's philosophy has something really new in understanding Jesus.

Still, it appears to me that Takizawa grasps in the above-cited passage that which is basically antecedent to what lies at the base of the distinction Yagi thinks Takizawa makes, namely, the distinction between the Proto-factum Immanuel and its realization as they hold true in Jesus. Whether it is Jesus

or other beings, including his believers, we are all in the grip of the “working” of the Proto-decision *ad extra* (toward the World). Yagi thinks that he sees, with Takizawa, thus far. However, what Takizawa mentions in the above-cited passage is still antecedent to that, still deeper than that! What is, then, that which is still antecedent?

Takizawa calls it “the working in the sense of the Proto-Occurring Itself of the Proto-Decision.” What is that?

As those of you who have read the two additional chapters (Cobb’s essay in Chap. 19 and Mesle’s autobiography in Chap. 20) with enough carefulness might have acknowledged, when we regard the World as the third ultimate, what is unavoidably presupposed is the notion of the “Co-Eternity of God and the World.” Since Whitehead says that God is “not *before* all creation, but *with* all creation,”¹⁶ he is a proponent of this notion of Co-Eternity. My basic stance regarding Co-Eternity is, however, to say that in order that we may surpass the mere notion of Co-Eternity we must point out that it is an ultimate or eternal factum. We have then two questions to raise. First, is it then possible to point out that it is an ultimate or eternal factum? Second, if it is possible, what sort of consequence might we have philosophically?

- (1) Let me try to answer the first question. I can say in reply to the question that Takizawa’s above-cited passage, including especially his reference to the “working in the sense of the Proto-Occurring of the Proto-Decision,” is clarifying the “Co-Eternity” of God and the World. For Takizawa the Co-Eternity is not a mere concept. Rather, it is the most fundamental fact (the Proto-factum, the Proto-decision, or the Proto-occurrence) without which not only the World but also God cannot be. Accordingly, I think we should rather speak, from the perspective of Takizawa, of “the Point of Co-Eternity.”¹⁷
- (2) Let me now turn to the philosophical consequence of our argument in the above. To begin with, I have to say that what is important is that Takizawa in his life-long philosophical pursuit has come to identify this “Point of Co-Eternity” as the Logos appearing in the Prologue of the Gospel of John. For years I myself have been tending to be dubious about this identification of the Point of Co-Eternity as the Logos. For I have been sensing from a Cobbean—process theological perspective that the Logos is the religious ultimate, not the metaphysical ultimate like

“Creativity”¹⁸ which always accompanies the Whiteheadian argument for the Co-Eternity of God and the World, just like a shadow goes hand in hand with a thing or person. For instance, when it comes to speaking of God, the World, and Creativity Whitehead writes:

God and the World are the contrasted opposites in terms of which Creativity achieves its supreme task of transforming disjoined multiplicity, with its diversities in opposition, into concrescent unity, with its diversities in contrast.¹⁹

One more passage:

Neither God, nor the World reaches static completion. Both are in the grip of the ultimate metaphysical ground, the creative advance into novelty. Either of them, God and the World, is the instrument of novelty for the other.²⁰

What I can perceive in these two passages is a sort of hunch that the ultimate metaphysical ground in the grip of which are God and the World—while being at work as Creativity as the metaphysical principle, and as the creative advance in terms of actual process—might also be the ultimate factum in the universe. With this persistent hunch or expectation in mind for years I had been reading Whitehead. And recently (since probably last September until finally July of this year) I came to experience my hunch turning into a conviction while reading PR, 21:

‘Creativity’ is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact.

Something tremendous has happened here. Whitehead has been saying elsewhere (for instance, in PR, 31) that “creativity is without a character of its own,” but here he mentions that it characterizes Ultimate Matter of Fact despite the fact that it is characterless or *non-bhava* (Jpn., *mujisho* 無自性) What does it mean?

It almost sounds to me as if Creativity is loyal to Ultimate Matter of Fact.

How should we solve a riddle or mystery here—the mystery of creativity—which really is a “paradox” in the sense that that which is absolutely characterless characterizes ultimate matter of fact.²¹ By virtue of what capacity does it do this paradoxical service to Ultimate Matter of Fact?

I began thinking: what if I brought in here Takizawa’s above-mentioned two notions, the “working in the sense of the opus ad extra of the Proto-Decision” and the “working in the sense of the Proto-Occurring as such of the Proto-Decision”? They would really be fitting in here! Even perfectly! If so, I might be right to say that what I have referred to in the above as the “Point of Co-Eternity” corresponds to the latter “working” while Creativity corresponding to the former “working.”

IV. The Johannine Logos in Fourfold Perspective

I think this argument as a whole would be proving really fruitful when reflected upon from the ancient viewpoint of Logos Theology. The vision of the Logos as it is put forward in the Prologue of the Johannine Gospel is showing three stages of the Logos development.

- I. The Logos existed in the beginning.
- II. The Logos was with God.
- III. The Logos was divine.

In John 1: 2 stages I and II are combined to affirm that He was with God in the beginning. What is important is, rather, John 1: 3, where the fourth stage or proposition is presented:

- IV. Through him all existence came into being. No existence came into being apart from him.

With this four-stage vision of Logos Theology at the outset of the Gospel of John in mind, we might be able to say that Creativity corresponds to stage IV and the Point of Co-Eternity go hand in hand with stage I. I am convinced that the truthfulness of this grasp of the matter here is well evidenced in terms of New Testament scholarship by the fact that G. H. C. Macgregor speaks of “the creative activity of ‘the Word’ “ (which comprises in itself stage IV and stage I) in his famous commentary, *The Gospel of John*.²²

This fact makes me suspect that there might be in Whitehead’s metaphysics of creativity (or creative activity?) a mystery hidden in the Western history of ideas. Usually, it was a traditional academic custom within Whiteheadian

scholarship to think of “Creativity” as only a unique basic category in Whitehead’s philosophic scheme. However, it seems to me that there lies behind it a vast vein of ore in terms of Western history of ideas. The name of the vein of ore is the Logos doctrine, which is known in Western Christian theology as something like Logos Christology. But the truth of the matter might rather be the entire Logos scholarship, including its Greek background, its Johannine absorption, and the Hebrew wisdom tradition. Macgregor’s above reference to “the creative activity of ‘the Word’ “ in his famous commentary on the Gospel of John is suggestively expressive of what is at the core of the Logos scholarship at large. I suspect that Whitehead might have been rooted in the soil of this scholarship.

This state of affairs must be strictly interwoven with another riddle—one which I call “the Mystery of Creativity” in reference to the fact that creativity is said to be “characterizing ultimate matter of fact” (PR, 21) although it is “without a character of its own” (PR, 31). This “Mystery of Creativity,” however, is not known except by me in the current Whiteheadian scholarship, it seems to me. Even my mentor Professor Cobb wrote me, saying, “I had never thought about the fact that the characterless creativity characterizes [ultimate] matter of fact.”²³ Accordingly, it is tomorrow’s task for us all, I would say, to take up this issue and argue for it convincingly with the entire Whiteheadian scholarship energetically involved in it. In this respect, this essay of mine is a lone mountaineer in taking it up to consider philosophically on its own. Still, it is just a thinking experiment, needless to say. I am indebted to the late Professor Katsumi Takizawa in this regard, however.²⁴ For a funny thing has happened in that my rediscovery of the philosophical importance of his double notion of “the Proto-Occurring of the Proto-Decision” cum “the working toward the World, of the Proto-Decision” that had appeared in the final years of his career, gave me an impetus to consider “the Mystery of Creativity” in my own way.

Concluding Remarks

What has resulted from the above reflections philosophically is the fact that we can hardly regard the Logos as only what is usually called the religious ultimate (although the Logos contains this element within it, of course). The Logos has at least four strata in itself. Takizawa’s view of the Logos as the

Proto-factum (including in itself the Proto-Decision and the Proto-Occurring dimensions) still remains, obtaining its truthfulness by all means.²⁵ Given this understanding of Takizawa's philosophy anew, it turns out that its concomitant view of the Logos as the metaphysical ultimate seems to have a discrepancy with the traditional Western view of it. Also, Takizawa himself might object to this view of mine because of his Barthian—type hatred of metaphysics in general. How can we get rid of these entanglements, then?

One of the solutions might lie in the possibility of our becoming richer in the use of the terms “the metaphysical ultimate.” Otherwise, our use of the terms would be too fixed and lack elasticity in the sense of doing justice to what is really real here. I think we should refer to the Proto-factum as Ultimate Metaphysical Matter of Fact, given that the creative activity is regarded as the metaphysical ultimate.²⁶ If that is the case, what would be proper in our understanding of the relationship between the Logos's intra-Trinitarian inner core (which is stated in stage II of John 1: 1 to this effect, that “The Logos was with God,”) and the personal divine aspect of the Logos appearing in stage III: “The Logos was divine”?

I think we might have to call the inner core (Ad Intra) of the Logos the beyond-essence of the Deity, just like Etienne Gilson did.²⁷ For it is the intra-Trinitarian relationality (Gr., *perichoresis*) per se. It is not a fixed substance of whatever kind.

What would then become of the divine personality, which is designated: “The Logos was divine,” finally?

This aspect of the Logos should properly be called the religious ultimate, the entire God as concrete whom Whitehead designates “the consequent nature of God.” This aspect absorbs, remembers, and understands us all.

Compared with it, the inner core of the Logos (in which the Logos was with God) is so constituted that “the Father sees in secret within the Logos,”²⁸ according to my newest understanding of Takizawa Philosophy. The Father's vision (which in Whitehead's metaphysics takes the form of “envisagement”) is directed toward the inside of whatever is potentially there in the universe²⁹; and yet, it creatively transforms itself to see the actual processes in the World in such a way that it creatively advances toward the future—just like a beam. In this respect, what Whitehead writes in *Science and the Modern World* is brilliant:

...and lastly, the envisagement of the actual matter of fact which must enter into the total situation which is achievable by the addition of the future.³⁰

At this juncture, we are pushed forward from the Ad Intra envisagement of the Deity toward the Ad Extra—toward the World—by the divine envisagement in a manner of something “like a beam”³¹ in order that we might realize in the future the entire scope of the universe. We are all actively immersed in a cosmic stream, first getting in touch with the actual matter of fact, second by the addition of our future self-creative activities, and third arriving at the fulfilled entirety of the Universe at each and every moment. Whitehead calls what is enabling this active stream of the Universe to occur “an Adventure in the Universe as One.”³² Since the Deity who sees into the inner core (or the Ad Intra) creatively transforms Godself and reverses Godself toward the World (Ad Extra) launching out into realizing values through the processes in the World, I cannot but call this Deity an Adventurer-God-in-the-Universe.³³

One of the best passwords in this value-realizing, this entirety-accomplishing stream of the Universe/Deity as One is, I think, presented by the author of the present volume (i.e., the Japanese translation of the amplified version of *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction*), Bob Mesle. It runs, “Sarah matters!”³⁴ Each and every human person shines while creatively fulfilling her or his values in the Universe. To this end, the entire Universe—including God, the World, and Creativity mediating them—is focused. This focus-centeredness we finally call care, compassion, and love.

I admire Bob Mesle’s spirit for the sake of his cosmic family-affection. How it is inspiring to read his magical experience of Brahman, when his grandchild was born!³⁵ That is superbly comparable to the case in which John Cobb’s gigantic discovery of the Buddhist-Christian inter-truth has arisen when he has written, “Amida is Christ.”³⁶ He has passed over to the Buddhist realm while going beyond the walls of the Christian Churches and then has come back to his original domain while going “Beyond Dialogue” to find himself in a profound self-awareness—to utter these three words: Amida is Christ. Let me finish my response to the two prominent thinkers of Process Relational Theology rooted in its 21st century soil, dialogue, by saying, “Thank you so much!” (written on October 1, 2009; revised on October 8, 2009.)

* This is the English version of a Japanese paper I have delivered at the 31st Anniversary Conference of Japan Society for Process Studies at Chuo University, October 24-25, 2009.

Notes:

- 1 St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993,
- 2 D. T. Suzuki, *A Miscellany of the Shin Teaching of Buddhism* (Kyoto: Shinshu Otanaha Shumusho, 1949) p. 16; cited in Alfred Bloom, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace* (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), pp. 2-3.
- 3 See Tokiyuki Nobuhara, "Sunyata, Kenosis, and Jihi or Friendly Compassionate Love: Toward a Buddhist-Christian Theology of Loyalty," *Japanese Religions*, 15/4, July 1989, 50-66, esp. 61-63. See also my Japanese book *A Theology of Loyalty: Toward a Fusion of Civilizations, East and West* (Kyoto: Kohro Sha, 1997), pp. 24-26, 162; hereafter cited as TL..
- 4 TL, 20-27, 36.
- 5 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, pp. 200-201.
- 6 John B. Cobb, Jr., *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), pp. 110-115; hereafter cited as BD.
- 7 Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, Corrected Edition, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 344; hereafter cited as PR.
- 8 Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1914), p. 357.
- 9 Cf. "Creation achieves the reconciliation of permanence and flux when it has reached its final term which is everlastingness—the Apotheosis of the World" (PR, 348).
- 10 See John B. Cobb, Jr., *God and the World* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), Chap. 2. The One Who Calls, pp. 42-66.
- 11 PR, 31.
- 12 See John Cobb's email document for Bob Mesle of August 14, 2008 which I translated into Japanese to make Chapter 19 in the Japanese edition of Mesle's book *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction*.
- 13 "Irreversibility" is one of Takizawa's three categories of "inseparable, non-equatable, and irreversible" relationship between God and humanity. From the Buddhist point of view of Emptiness, Masao Abe challenged Takizawa's standpoint of "absolute irreversibility" by his opposite theory of "absolute reversibility." As to the overview of the so-called Takizawa-Abe Debate, see Masaaki Honda, *Choetsusha to jiko—Takizawa=Abe ronso ni yosete (The Transcendent and the Self: In Reference to the Takizawa-Abe Debate)* (Fukuoka: Sogensha, 1990). See also Seiichi Yagi, Masao Abe, Ryomin Akizuki, and Masaaki Honda, *Bukkyo to Kirisutokyo—Takizawa Katsumi tonon taiwa o motomete (Buddhism and Christianity: In Search of a Dialogue with Katsumi Takizawa)* (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobo, 1981). It was precisely in reply to the latter book and others written by Abe and other authors that Takizawa wrote the above-mentioned 1983 book, in which the most crucial point Takizawa raised and prized as to his theory of "irreversibility"

was the one contained in the passage I quoted in the text. See n. 13 below.

Since no thinkers, including Abe himself, paid a serious attention to this passage, it may safely be said that Takizawa's philosophy has never yet been rightly understood so far by many of Takizawa's readers, including his opponents and sympathizers. Incidentally, this passage is one of the focal points I have seriously considered and interpreted in my own uniquely Anselmian way in my recent Japanese volume *Anselmian Reflections on Takizawa Philosophy*.

- 14 Katsumi Takizawa, *Anata wa doko ni iruno ka—Jitsu jinsei no kiban to shukyo (Where Are You? The Basis for the Actual Life and Religion)* (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobo, 1983), p. 102.
- 15 Seiichi Yagi, *Iesu no Shukyo (The Religion of Jesus)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009), p. 30.
- 16 PR, 341.
- 17 Let me emphasize: it is only when we have come to think to “The Point of Co-Eternity” while surpassing the mere notion of “Co-Eternity” that we have come to perceive the metaphysical departure-point of what is usually called “Sustainability” which surpasses the mere language of sustainability.
- 18 Whitehead's notion of creativity might have come from the words “creative activity.” It is called “underlying creativity” in his *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 105; hereafter cited as SMW.
- 19 PR, 348.
- 20 PR, 348.
- 21 Roland Faber also speaks of a metaphysical paradox as inherent in Whitehead's metaphysics. Let me quote two passages from his paper “Organic or Orgiastic Metaphysics? Reflections on Whitehead's Reception in Contemporary Poststructuralism” (Japan Society for Process Studies, Chuo University, October 24, 2009, Tokyo): [A] “Corresponding with Deleuze's differentiation between the organic and the orgiastic, this metaphysical paradox can be formulated in this systematic manner: While in organic thinking any event is only an actual repetition of a generality inherent in every experience, that is, it merely reifies a general scheme, in orgiastic thinking every event is a singularity (or novel synthesis of becomings) for which these metaphysical rationalizations are always mere abstractions (PR 20, 230; SMW 30, 248)” (p. 19). [B] “In this sense, I think, we must read Whitehead's metaphysics as *this very metaphysical paradox*, that is, the paradox as *the very metaphysical situation* in which, and *only* in which, we *really* seek the transcendental conditions of an open chaosmos” (p. 20).
Obviously what he refers to as “a singularity” in orgiastic thinking in quotation [A] is reminiscent of my use of Whitehead's language of “characterless” while what he calls “the transcendental conditions of an open chaosmos” in quotation [B] might be corresponding to Whitehead's own language of “ultimate matter of fact.” At any rate, this metaphysical paradox—or what I call “the mystery of creativity”—would be one of the cases Kitaro Nishida attended to in his essay “Place” (1926) in which the crossing over of an event to its opposite can happen—“even beyond the boundary of genera”—within the place of emptiness. See Tokiyuki Nobuhara, “Portraying ‘Authentic Existence’ By the Method of Analogy: Toward Creative Uses of the Analogy of Attribution *duorum ad tertium* For Comparative Philosophy of Religion,” *Bulletin of Keiwa College*, No. 2, February 28, 1993, 49.

<http://ci.nii.ac.jp/search?author=Nobuhara+Tokiyuki>

(Click this address here or at Google and go to the essay No. 16.)

- 22 G. H. C. Macgregor, *The Gospel of John* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Lmt., 1928, 1959). Cf.: “In John’s conception of creative activity of ‘the Word’ we have an echo of the ‘Spermatikos’ or ‘generative’ Logos, and also of the formula of creation in Gen. 1 ‘and God said’” (p. 5).
- 23 Personal correspondence of Dr. John Cobb by email of May 4, 2009. He continues to disclose his opinion representing a standard Whiteheadian viewpoint of creativity: “I have understood that to be another way of saying is that every matter of fact, that is every actuality, embodies and instantiates creativity. Whereas in the passage in which he says that creativity has no character of its own, he is saying that in itself it is not characterized by any eternal object. Still I think that he would have done better not to use ‘characterize’ in both cases. However, since it inspired your thinking, perhaps it is a good thing after all. John.”
- 24 For years I have not been really persuaded by Takizawa’s reference to what he calls “the Ptofo-factum Immanuel” as the Logos although I was fully in accord with his identification of the Proto-factum Immanuel (the idea which he acquired at Bonn while studying with Karl Barth in 1934 through 1935) with his mentor Kitaro Nishida’s idea of “the Self-identity of the Absolute Contradictories” (which means the coming into existence of our human self in dependence upon the ultimate). This is because I sensed that the Logos was the pre-existent Christ who is “Personally Divine.” However, now it seems to me that the Logos is not exhausted only by being “Personally Divine” but is also what I would like to refer as the “the Point of Co-Eternity of God and the World.” In Takizawa’s case, the Proto-factum Immanuel was coterminous and interchangeable with what he designates “the Proto-relation of God and humanity.” In understanding the Ptofo-factum in this manner Takizawa was critical of Barth’s position which is to say that the Proto-factum Immanuel (God with us) has come into being only in and through the appearance of the Word of God in the person and history of Jesus of Nazareth. See, for instance, Katsumi Takizawa, *Jiyu no genten—Immanueru (The Origin of Freedom: Immanuel)* (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1969), p. 211. That is to say, Takizawa failed to say that the Logos is “the Proto-relation of God and *the World*.” The world at its bottom should be at one with the Deity, I might say. But somehow I did not hear Takizawa saying that his theory is the theory of Co-Eternity, like John Cobb does. Was his idea of “irreversibility” (of God over against the World) hindering this option in some way or another? I simply don’t know. At any rate, I just have come to say that Takizawa’s theory of the Proto-factum Immanuel should be the theory of “the Co-Eternity of God and the World.” By so saying I am in accord with Whitehead’s idea of “Ultimate Matter of Fact” while doing justice to Takizawa’s final attainment in his idea of “the Proto-Occurring of the Proto-Decision,” mentioned already in this essay.
- 25 As to its clarification in detail, see my recent volume, *Takizawa-tetsugaku no Anserumusuteki shosatsu (Anselmian Reflections on Takizawa Philosophy)* (written on July 23, 2009). The consequence of the reflections is my discovery of the core of Takizawa philosophy: namely, the idea that hidden in the Logos is the work of the Father who sees in secret. This I might call the Indwelling/Inworking of the Father in the Logos.

- 26 In the case of Buddhism, the state of affairs I call “Creativity plus the Proto-factum or the Point of Co-Eternity” might be considered in terms of “*Dharmata Dharmakaya*” (i.e., Dharma-nature Dharma-body). If we can envision the entirety of these as Dharma, it is in parallel with the Christian case of what Macgregor calls “creative activity of ‘the Word’.” If we took into consideration carefully the fact that the Logos in this sense (namely, stage IV plus stage I) is metaphysically antecedent to the “Logos who was divine” (i.e., stage III), I think Professor Yozo Hasegawa’s Buddhist theological claim in his book *Iesu wa Yudayakyo yori Bukkyo ni chikai (Jesus is Nearer to Buddhism Than to Judaism)* (Niigata: Kokodo, 2009) would be to the point and valid. Professor Hasegawa is of the opinion that Christianity might be re-grasped as the religion of “Logos-first-God-second.” It is acknowledged as precious in Buddhism that Dharma is inseparably accompanied by its spiritual qualification or personification in the form of “Maha Vairocana” (Jpn., *Dainichi Nyorai*). Thus, Buddhism is traditionally perceived by the Buddhists as the religion of “Dharma-first-Buddha-second.”
- 27 Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (Westport, CONN: Greenwood Press, 1978), pp. 133-134.
- 28 See n. 16.
- 29 Seeing into the inside of whatever is there potentially is what the primordial nature of God does, according to Whitehead. Cf.: “Viewed as primordial, he is the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality” (PR, 343).
- 30 Whitehead, SMW, 105.
- 31 I know that this expression “the divine envisagement—like a beam” is to take the form of “the Primordial Flaring Forth,” when it is actually realized. See Brian Swimme & Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era. A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992). See also Brian Swimme, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos: Humanity and the New Story* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996).
- 32 Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 295; hereafter cited as AI.
- 33 In this Adventurer-Deity we find the complement to Plato’s Receptacle. Whitehead’s following passage is a really overwhelming one: “This Adventure embraces all particular occasions but as actual fact stands beyond any one of them. It is, as it were, the complement to Plato’s Receptacle, its exact opposite, yet equally required for the unity of all things. In every way, it is contrary to the Receptacle. The Receptacle is bare of all forms: the Unity of Adventure includes the Eros which is the living urge towards all possibilities, claiming the goodness of their realization. The Platonic Receptacle is void, abstract from all individual occasions: The Unity of Adventure includes among its components all individual realities, each with the importance of the personal or social fact to which it belongs. In this Supreme Adventure, the Reality which Adventure transmutes into its Unity of Appearance, requires the real occasions of the advancing world each claiming its due share of attention. This Appearance, thus enjoyed, is the final Beauty with which the Universe achieves its justification” (AI, 295).
- 34 Cf.: “The greatest single changes in my spiritual life, however, came with the birth of my children and grandchild. When I first held my daughter, Sarah, the world universe

seemed to shift, snapping into place with Sarah at the exact center. ‘Sarah Matters!’ Sarah’s sacred value needed no theological or philosophical justification. Rather, from that time on, every conversation about the meaning of life or what really matters in life began and ended with the affirmation that ‘Sarah Matters!’ “ (Bob Mesle, “A Spiritual Autobiography, “ p. 4; hereafter cited as “SA.”).

- 35 Cf.: “Looking into that mist I had my own small vision of Brahman—not with billions of heads and arms [as written in *Bhagavad-Gita: The Song of God*], but with a few. Then, for just a moment, I saw a tiny new face pressed out of Brahman. Soon it withdrew into the cosmic whole—as we all eventually do. I stood with tears of joy pouring down my face. Later we learned that our new grandchild was a boy, Elliot. As with our own children, when I look into his eyes, what I see smiling back at me is not just Elliot, but Brahman” (Mesle, “SA,” p. 9).
- 36 Cobb, BD, 123-128.