

Chapter 3

God as Peace-Bestowing Buddha/Christ

An Amplification of Cobb's
Contribution to Dialogue between
Christianity and Shin Buddhism

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INTRODUCTION

This essay takes up the notion of transpersonal peace as a theme for East-West comparative philosophy and Buddhist-Christian interfaith dialogue in an age of religious pluralism. There is a special focus on the ideal of Peace in Jôdo Shinshû, or True Pure Land Buddhism, based on the teachings of Shinran Shonin (1173–1263), in relation to the organismic process theology and process cosmology of Alfred North Whitehead. The kind of pluralism involved here is a version of the *deep* religious pluralism articulated by process theologians John B. Cobb Jr. and David Ray Griffin, which is rooted in the pluralistic vision of Whitehead's naturalistic process theism, which recognizes at least two ultimates: Creativity and God. These two ultimates function to clarify two major kinds of religious experience—theistic and nontheistic, or devotion to a personal, form-giving God and realization of an impersonal formless reality. From the standpoint of Christian-Buddhist interfaith dialogue, the distinction between the two ultimates of Creativity and God in Whitehead's Christian process theology illuminates both the nontheistic religious experience of *satori* or sudden enlightenment in Zen Buddhism, as realization of formless emptiness, and the theistic religious

experience of salvation in Shin Buddhism, through *shinjin* or inward faith in the compassionate Other-power grace of Amida Buddha.

However, although the pluralistic hypothesis of two ultimates in Whiteheadian process theology explicates the formless ultimate of emptiness/nothingness in the nontheistic tradition of Zen Buddhism, it is closer to the theistic position of Shin Buddhism, which holds that the formless emptiness of Dharmakaya is always experienced in and through the divine form of Amida the Sambhogakaya Buddha, just as for Whitehead the formless ultimate of Creativity, which is said to be “without a character of its own,” is always experienced through its primordial characterization by God as the source of all forms. In Shin Buddhism, Amida Buddha (Sambhogakaya) is not subordinate to Formless Emptiness (Dharmakaya), just as for Whiteheadian naturalistic theism, God is not subordinate to the formless ultimate of Creativity. The two ultimates of God and Creativity in Whiteheadian process theology, and its correlates of Amida Buddha (Sambhogakaya) and Formless Emptiness (Dharmakaya) in Shin Buddhism, are equal and presuppose each other. The Whiteheadian ultimates of Creativity and God, wherein the formless process of Creativity is primordially characterized by God as the source of all ideal forms, therefore corresponds to the Shin Buddhist position that the Dharmakaya Buddha of Formless Emptiness is itself primordially characterized by the Primal Vow of Amida as the Sambhogakaya Buddha of infinite light and life or wisdom and compassion.

Unlike the nontheistic naturalistic traditions of Buddhism such as Zen/Chan, according to which the emptiness/suchness of events in Nature is all that is, the Shin Buddhist school holds that the dynamic process of evolutionary flux, whereby momentary events co-arise into actuality through harmonic interpenetration of many into one, is itself guided and saved by the operation of a personal deity: namely, Amida Buddha. That is to say, the Shin Buddhist tradition approximates Whitehead's naturalistic process theism whereby all momentary events in the dynamic web of felt value-relations in the aesthetic continuum of nature are influenced by the divine lure of a cosmic mind—Amida Buddha in Shin Buddhism and the dipolar God in Whitehead's process theology.

In this essay, I attempt to clarify that while Amida Buddha and the God of traditional Christian theology are very different, Amida and the God of Whitehead's process theology are strikingly similar. Like Amida Buddha in Shin Buddhism, the God of process theology is not an omnipotent creator of the universe. Like Amida Buddha, the God of Whitehead's process theology is to be envisioned through the image of “care,” so that for both traditions reality is compassionate or caring in nature. It is fundamental to Whitehead's process theology that God is “dipolar” and therefore has two natures: the Primordial Nature, which acts as a persuasive *lure* for all events to realize God's divine aims for them, and the Consequent Nature, a repository which acts as the divine memory that saves all events everlastingly in the kingdom of heaven. Whereas the Primordial Nature of God has been compared by John Cobb to the Primal Vow of Amida, the Consequent Nature has been compared by John Shunji Yokota to Dharmakara/Amida as a

personification of the “Storehouse Consciousness.” Cobb even identifies the Name of Amida Buddha with Christ as the divine Logos or Word, which is graciously incarnated into each occasion of experience.

After discussing this Buddhist-Christian interfaith dialogue between Shin Buddhism and process theology, I argue that transpersonal Peace is the ultimate spiritual value derived from God in process theology as well as Amida in Shin Buddhism. Peace in Whitehead's process theology is similar to Buddhist *nirvana*, insofar as it is not only a goal of civilization but also an expanded awareness transcending the ego-self whereby one achieves deliverance from the suffering and tragedy inherent in the perpetually perishing nature of impermanent events in the flux of interrelational existence. Finally, I show that for Whitehead's process theology, transpersonal Peace is not achieved through personal effort but comes only as a “gift” of divine grace through the divine immanence of a caring God, just as for the Shin Buddhist teachings of Shinran, rebirth into the Pure Land of Peace is not achieved by “self-power” (*jiriki*), but only through a “gift” (*ekô*) received from the transformative grace of Amida Buddha's compassionate “Other-power” (*tariki*).

I now develop these ideas as a way of amplifying the power of Whiteheadian thought, especially as developed by John Cobb, to promote a deep form of religious pluralism. Although one dimension of Cobb's contribution is the recognition that some religious traditions are radically different from others, I am here amplifying the other dimension—his discernment of deep similarities between Whiteheadian process theology, which originated in the Christian West, and Shin Buddhism, which reflects Indian, Chinese, and Japanese civilizations.

1. AMIDA IN SHIN BUDDHISM AND THE DIPOLAR GOD OF PROCESS THEOLOGY

Various scholars have noted that out of all Buddhist schools, it is Japanese Shin Buddhism that most nearly approximates Christian theism, just as Amida Buddha as the compassionate Savior of all sentient beings comes nearest to the Christian monotheistic idea of God. In response to the question “Is Amida Buddha a Buddhist ‘God?’” Kenneth Tanaka has given the following response:

You could say that Amida is “God,” but only if you define God as the dynamic activity of understanding (wisdom) and caring (compassion). But clearly, Amida is not a personal God who is 1) the creator of the universe, 2) a divine, transcendent being, 3) an omniscient (all knowing) being . . . or 4) a judge who decides my final destiny.¹

As indicated by Tanaka, Amida Buddha has none of these four attributes of “God” as conceived by traditional Christian theism. However, these attributes are also not applicable to Whitehead's revolutionary concept of God. Whitehead in fact said:

1. Tanaka, *Ocean: An Introduction to Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism in America*, 153.

"The notion of God as . . . transcendent creator, at whose fiat the world came into being, and whose imposed will it obeys, is the fallacy which has infused tragedy into the histories of Christianity and of Mahometanism" (PR 342).

To begin with, against the traditional Christian theological conceptions of God, Whitehead argues that "the nature of God is dipolar. He has a primordial nature and a consequent nature" (PR 345). While the Primordial Nature of God is absolute, transcendent, impassible (unfeeling), eternal, and unchanging, God is also relative, immanent, sympathetic, temporal, and changing, these features constituting God's Consequent Nature. The most radical aspect of Whitehead's process theology is that God is not to be understood as divine Creator of the world but as a caring deity that aims to save all occasions in world-process: "He does not create the world, he saves it" (PR 346). There is, to be sure, a sense in which God is the creator of our particular world ("cosmic epoch"), but Whitehead emphatically rejected the idea that the word "God" refers to an omnipotent being who created the universe out of nothing. For him, the ultimate metaphysical category is "creativity" (PR 21), according to which all events in nature are self-creative, in that they arise through a process of *creative synthesis*, a dynamic activity of unifying the dynamic web of interrelationships into a novel event or occasion with beauty and value.

For Whitehead, as well as for Charles Hartshorne, John Cobb, and other leading process theologians, insofar as all events arise through a process of creative synthesis, they are spontaneous, emergent, and unpredictable, so that God cannot be "omniscient" in the sense of an infinite, unqualified knowledge that sees the outcome of all decisions before they have been made.

Finally, Whitehead clearly rejects the image of God as a legalistic judge, law-giver, or "ruthless moralist" (PR 343). Instead, God is to be envisioned through the image of "care" (PR 346). Hence, while traditional notions of the Christian God might be very different from Amida Buddha, Whiteheadian process theology provides a description of God that resonates deeply with the Shin Buddhist vision of Amida as a peaceful, gentle, and caring deity that operates to forever lure all events toward realizing its divine aims toward value, beauty, goodness, truth, harmony, peace, and salvation. It might be said that the dipolar God of Whitehead's process theology functions like Amida as the Cosmic Buddha, defined as a dynamic activity of wisdom and compassion.

2. THE "PRIMORDIAL NATURE" OF GOD AND THE "PRIMAL VOW" OF AMIDA

The Buddhist-Christian interfaith dialogue between Shin Buddhism and Whitehead's process theology was initiated by John Cobb in his groundbreaking work *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism*. In this work, Cobb endeavors to show various parallels between the "Primal Vow"

as the working of the compassion of Amida Buddha's Other-power and the "Primordial Nature" of God in process theology:

Whitehead's account of the Primordial Nature of God addresses the same feature of reality as that spoken of by Shinran as the primal vow of Amida. Both of these are remarkably analogous to . . . accounts of the Word of God or Logos or Truth which is Christ.²

Cobb then goes on to make the bold declaration:

The conclusion from the above is that *Amida is Christ*. That is, the feature of the totality of reality to which Pure Land Buddhists refer when they speak of Amida is the same as that to which Christians refer when we speak of Christ.³

Here, it should be pointed out, Cobb is in agreement with the view of Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945), founder of the Kyoto school of modern Japanese philosophy, who likewise argued that the Name of Amida Buddha in the Shin Buddhist teachings of Shinran is to be identified with Christ as the divine Logos or Word of God in Christian theology.⁴ Cobb's profound insight is that Christ as the divine Logos or Word is itself the Primordial Nature of God, which *incarnates* itself into each and every occasion as the "initial aim" toward realizing maximum harmony and value, while moreover identifying the Logos or Primordial Nature with the Primal Vow of Amida. Whitehead describes the Primordial Nature of God as a "lure" to realize value (PR 344). For Cobb, the lure of God's Primordial Nature is a theological equivalent to the Primal Vow of Amida or, as it were, the "call of Amida."⁵ Elsewhere, Cobb refers to Whitehead's idea of the Primordial Nature of God or Logos, in its working as a divine lure prescribing initial aims, as "the call forward" and therefore describes God as "the One Who Calls."⁶ For Cobb, the lure from God's Primordial Nature as Logos or Word is therefore a Christian theological equivalent to the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha, or what he otherwise describes as the "call of Amida."⁷

Finally, Cobb argues for another similarity between Amida and the dipolar God, holding that the ultimate metaphysical category of creativity, as an indeterminate formless activity of creative synthesis, is itself conditioned by the determinate forms of harmony provided by the Primordial Nature of God, just as the formless emptiness of Dharmakaya Buddha is conditioned by the Primal Vows of Amida (the Sambhogakaya Buddha) in Shin Buddhism:

2. Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism*, 128.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Nishida, *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, 195.

5. Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue*, 136.

6. Cobb, *God and the World*, 43–66.

7. Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue*, 136.

It is the Primordial Nature which qualifies creativity in a way so strikingly similar to the qualification of the Dharmakaya by the primal vow. Just as the Primordial Nature of God is the primordial decision for the sake of all creatures, even more clearly the primal vow is made for the sake of all sentient beings.⁸

Hence, as developed by Cobb, and further crystallized by David Ray Griffin,⁹ Whiteheadian process theology establishes the basis for a genuine religious pluralism with its recognition of *two ultimates*, including both God and Creativity. For Whitehead, the two ultimates of God and Creativity are equally primordial and presuppose each other. These two ultimates function to explain two fundamental modes of religious experience: theistic, or the worship of a personal deity, and non-theistic, or realization of an impersonal formless reality. (For the sake of simplicity, I here leave aside the third ultimate discussed by Cobb and Griffin—the world of finite actual occasions—which provides the basis for a third kind of religious experience.) Furthermore, these two ultimates of Whiteheadian process theology correspond to the Shin Buddhist categories of the Dharmakaya Buddha as Formless Emptiness and the Sambhogakaya Buddha represented by Amida Buddha. According to the pluralistic hypothesis of Whiteheadian naturalistic theism based on the two ultimates of Creativity and God, then, the formless impersonal process of Creativity is primordially characterized by a personal savior God as the source of all ideal forms, just as for Shin Buddhism the Dharmakaya Buddha of Formless Emptiness is itself primordially characterized by the Primal Vow of Amida as the Sambhogakaya Buddha of infinite light and life or wisdom and compassion.

The profundity of Cobb's view of the divine lure of the Primordial Nature of God, or the divine Logos, as the One Who Calls, and its applicability to the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha as the "call of Amida," can at once be seen when considered in relation to the view of leading Shin Buddhist scholars, as well as the views of Shinran (1173–1263), founder of Shin (True Pure Land) Buddhism in Japan. Shinran sums up the Larger Pure Land Sutra by describing its essence as Amida's primal vow (*hongan*) and its embodiment as Amida's divine Name (*myōgō*), as well as the practice-faith of calling the Name of Amida Buddha through the *nembutsu* of NAMU-AMIDA-BUTSU. These two aspects, the primal vow and the *nembutsu*, were stressed to the exclusion of the other by the competing faith and practice factions of the Pure Land school. Shinran, in his interpretation of the teachings, considered the two aspects united in the Larger Pure Land Sutra, thereby avoiding the extremes of the factions.

In the second fascicle of this work, Shinran aims to clarify how *nembutsu* is the one true religious practice assuring birth in the Pure Land. *Namu* means "I take refuge in" (*kimyo*) and indicates the act of turning toward Buddha. Shinran, however, interpreted "taking refuge in" as "the beckoning command of the prin-

cipal vow" (*hongan shōkan no chokumei*).¹⁰ The active practice of reciting or calling the Name (*nembutsu*) does not occur by calculation (*bakarai*) of self-power (*ji-riki*), but through the lure, magnetism, or attraction of the primal vow of Amida's compassionate Other-power (*tariki*), here understood as the divine call to enlightenment. In Shinran's phrase "the beckoning command of the principal vow" (*hongan shōkan no chokumei*), the term *shōkan* means to beckon, invite, or call. Although through the practice of *nembutsu* we call out the Name of Amida Buddha in order to receive his gift of saving grace through the openness of *shinjin* or faith, it is Amida's call for us to realize perfection, because the *nembutsu* is not an act of self-power but the compassionate Other-power of Amida.

To sum up this point: Shinran's idea that the primal vow is to save all beings through the *nembutsu*, as "the beckoning command of the principal vow" of Amida, is what Cobb describes as the "call of Amida." The "beckoning command" is the imperative and urgent *call* of Amida implanted into each sentient being to achieve perfection, enlightenment, awakening, and Buddhahood. However, by identifying the Name of Amida Buddha with the Christ as the Logos or Word of God, and by further identifying both with the Primordial Nature of God as the divine magnetic "lure" or beckoning *call* to perfection, Cobb has made a breakthrough contribution to interfaith dialogue, showing how the notion of Amida Buddha in Shin Buddhism might be comprehended from the standpoint of Whiteheadian process theology and process metaphysics.

In his book published under the title *Naturalness: A Classic of Shin Buddhism*, Kanamatsu Kenryo describes the Other-power of Amida Buddha as follows:

This Unthinkable Power [= *tariki*, the Other-Power of Amida Buddha] stronger than ourselves, this persistent urge impelling the self to transcend itself, is a *call* to us of the All-feeling Compassionate Heart, the Eternal Spirit of Sympathy, who is in his essence the Light and Life of all, who is World-conscious. To feel all, to be conscious of everything, is the Spirit. . . . [T]his Light and Life, this All-feeling Being is in our hearts.¹¹

Kanamatsu's view—that the Other-power of Amida, as the urge of the self to transcend itself, "is a *call* to us of the All-feeling Compassionate Heart"—reinforces Cobb's view of the Primal Vow as the "call of Amida" and hence, by extension, its similarity to the Primordial Nature of God as the "One Who Calls." In his interpretation of Whitehead's process theology, Cobb emphasizes that the Primordial Nature of God as the One Who Calls is not a coercive but a persuasive agency, so that even though God inwardly *calls* the arising self-creative occasion to achieve perfection, the occasion is nonetheless free to accept or reject God's divine aims for it.

Likewise, Kanamatsu states that "shut up within the narrow walls of our limited self, we . . . turn a deaf ear to the *call* welling up from the inmost depths of

8. Ibid.

9. Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion*, 247–84.

10. Dobbins, *Jodo Shinshu: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan*, 34.

11. Kanamatsu, *Naturalness: A Classic of Shin Buddhism*, 3–4.

our heart."¹² Here, it should be further noted, Kanamatsu describes Amida Buddha as the "All-feeling Compassionate Heart" and the "All-feeling Being who is in our hearts." He adds that Amida Buddha is "that *basal, pure, universal feeling* that interpenetrates all objects" and that to achieve enlightenment, the self must "sink into this basal *pure feeling*."¹³ Thus, as will be discussed later in this section, Kanamatsu's writings suggest how the striking similarities between the notion of Amida Buddha in Shin Buddhism and the dipolar God of Whitehead's process theology are based on a concept of ultimate reality as *pure feeling*. Just as for Whitehead, all actualities are centers of feeling—and this includes God, as the supreme actual entity who feels all other actual entities everlastingly in their fullness—so in Kanamatsu's classic of Shin Buddhist theology, Amida Buddha is the "All-feeling Compassionate Heart." For both, enlightenment is achieved through perception in the mode of "pure feeling."

The depth of Cobb's penetrating interpretation of the Primal Vow in Shin Buddhism as the "call of Amida" can further be established by reference to the writings of Taitetsu Unno, a leading academic scholar and ordained minister of Shin Buddhism. In his introductory book about the Pure Land teachings of Shin Buddhism, Unno develops his understanding of the *nembutsu*, or vocal recitation of the Name of Amida Buddha, as the "Name-that-calls."¹⁴ The *nembutsu* is the Name that calls one to go beyond the ego-self and achieve one's full possibility for enlightenment as an awakened human being.¹⁵ Even though one calls to Amida through the *nembutsu*, the *nembutsu* is recited only through a gift of Amida's compassion, so the *nembutsu* is ultimately to be conceived as the Name-that-Calls. It is the beckoning *call* of Amida to transcend the ego-self through reliance on the compassionate Other-power grace of Amida Buddha. "If I were to translate *nembutsu* into English," says Unno, "it would be the 'name-that-calls,' for it calls us to awaken to our fullest potential to become true, real and sincere human beings," "to take leave of delusion and awaken to reality-as-it-is."¹⁶ Unno further explains that "the saying of *nembutsu* is experienced as a call from Amida, but simultaneously it is our response to that call."¹⁷ Since the *nembutsu* of NAMU-AMIDA-BUTSU is the Name-that-Calls, the central practice of Shin Buddhism is that of "deep hearing" (*monpô*), or "deep hearing of the call of Amida."¹⁸ Unno states:

Religiously speaking, deep hearing means that we have no choice but to hear and respond to the call of boundless compassion. It is through the Name-that-calls that Amida Buddha gives us the ultimate gift of true and real

12. *Ibid.*, 2.

13. *Ibid.*, 4.

14. Unno, *River of Fire/River of Water: An Introduction to the Pure Land Tradition of Shin Buddhism*, 26–35.

15. *Ibid.*, 31.

16. Unno, *Shin Buddhism*, 25, 257.

17. *Ibid.*, 5.

18. *Ibid.*, 19.

life. . . . Thus, the invocation of the Name, NAMU-AMIDA-BUTSU, is . . . a voicing of the call that comes from the bottomless source of life itself, the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life.¹⁹

From Unno's understanding of the *nembutsu* as the Name-that-calls, one can come to appreciate the profound significance of Cobb's discussion. For it is Cobb's landmark contribution to have reformulated Whitehead's notion of the initial aim, or lure toward perfection for self-actualizing occasions derived from the Primordial Nature of God, as "the call forward" from the power of deity as the "One Who Calls," while at the same time identifying this with the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha, understood as the "call of Amida."

From the standpoint of contemplative practice, the great strength of Shin Buddhism is its practice of *nembutsu*—natural, effortless, vocal recitation of the divine Name of Amida: "Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu." But I fully agree with the view, stated by the Shin Buddhist scholar Taitetsu Unno, that the closest parallel to this *nembutsu* practice is the Jesus Prayer as described in a book called *The Way of the Pilgrim*, which urges people to undertake the effortless practice of ceaseless prayer as a call upon the Name of God: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me."²⁰ Moreover, it must be pointed out that the divine form of the aesthetic image of Amida Buddha, as depicted in the Mandalas of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, has much in common with the archetypal image of the sacred artistic icons of Jesus Christ depicted in the Eastern Orthodox Church, so that one can easily visualize both Christ and Amida as imaginative variations of the Logos or divine creative Word of God. But it is the notion of the Primordial Nature of God in Whitehead's process theology that most clearly articulates the reality of the Logos, or divine creative Word, represented by Amida in Shin Buddhism and Christ in Christianity.

3. THE CONSEQUENT NATURE OF GOD AND AMIDA BUDDHA AS THE STOREHOUSE CONSCIOUSNESS

Although Cobb analyzes parallels between the Primordial Nature of God and the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha to save all sentient beings through the working of compassionate Other-power, he does not find any parallels between the Consequent Nature of God and Amida. Cobb argues that whereas the value-qualities realized by momentary events arising and perishing in the world of creative process function to influence and enrich the Consequent Nature of God, he sees no sense among Buddhists that dharmas contribute anything to Amida: "There is, in other words, nothing [in Shin Buddhism] comparable to what Whitehead calls the Consequent Nature of God."²¹

19. *Ibid.*, 52.

20. Unno, *River of Fire/River of Water*, 29.

21. Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue*, 131.

However, the very significant contribution of John Shunji Yokota, a scholar of both Shin Buddhism and process theology, is to have demonstrated the profound relation between the Consequent Nature of God and Amida Buddha. More specifically, Yokota argues for a parallel between the Consequent Nature of God, as the repository functioning to save all perishing events, and the nature of Dharmākara Bodhisattva/Amida Buddha, as the “Storehouse Consciousness.” Yokota rightly asserts: “The tradition [of process theology] is unanimous in its understanding of God as this final and unifying repository of all events. God is the keeper of the past.”²² In Whitehead’s process theology, when an event perishes it then becomes a cause influencing all future events, thereby acquiring what he terms an “objective immortality.” Yet with the passing of time, the causal influence of each passing event in its objective immortality would become dimmer and dimmer, gradually fading away into oblivion, if not for the functioning of the Consequent Nature of God. The values realized by all events do not fade away with the passage of time because they are retained, stored, and saved everlastingly in their full intensity and vividness as imperishable data in the Consequent Nature of God as the collective repository of the past.

Explicating the relevance of the Consequent Nature of God in process theology to Amida Buddha in Shin Buddhism, Yokota states:

As the [Buddhist] tradition develops, one encounters the notion of *alayavijñāna* or the storehouse consciousness that is comparable to the collective unconscious. It is the storehouse of all karma. . . . It is interesting to note that the Shin Buddhist scholar Soga Ryōjin equated Amida with this storehouse consciousness.²³

Yokota here makes reference to the insights of the Shin Buddhist scholar Soga Ryōjin (1875–1971), who endeavored to locate Pure Land Buddhism within the mainstream of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition by showing how Dharmākara Bodhisattva/Amida Buddha is the personification of the Storehouse Consciousness, the repository of all dharmas or karmic events.²⁴ Because of his compassionate Primal Vow, which aims to save all sentient beings, Dharmākara Bodhisattva was to become Amida Buddha presiding over the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss. In his analysis of the name Dharmākara, Soga clarifies how the meaning of the Sanskrit word *ākara* is “storage,” so that Dharmākara is the “Dharma storehouse.” According to Soga, therefore, “Dharmākara Bodhisattva of Pure Land doctrine is synonymous with the Storehouse Consciousness, the *ālayavijñāna* of traditional Mahāyāna Buddhism.”²⁵ Furthermore, Soga emphasizes not only that Dharmākara/Amida is the personification of the Storehouse Consciousness, but that the Storehouse Consciousness is itself the “Buddha Nature.”²⁶

22. Yokota, “Understanding Amida Buddha and the Pure Land: A Process Approach,” 91.

23. *Ibid.*, 95.

24. Soga Ryōjin, “Dharmakaya Bodhisattva,” 221–31.

25. *Ibid.*, 228, 223.

26. *Ibid.*, 224–25.

In my book about the microcosm-macrocosm conception of reality as a dynamic network of interrelatedness, interdependence, and interpenetration, formulated both in Whiteheadian process metaphysics and Hua-yen (Kegon) Buddhism, I myself have developed parallels between Whitehead’s Consequent Nature of God and both the Collective Unconscious of Jungian depth psychology and the Storehouse Consciousness of Buddhism.²⁷ However, Yokota specifically clarifies, from the perspective of Shin Buddhism, how the Consequent Nature of God in process theology relates to Dharmākara Bodhisattva and his fully realized state as Amida Buddha in his function as the Storehouse Consciousness. Yokota states:

As the discussion of objective immortality noted, it is in the incorporation into God of the entirety of an occasion in all its vividness and completeness that the evil of perpetual perishing is resolved. Amida too is seen as taking in the entire person in that the karma of that person is taken on by Amida in its entirety.²⁸

Yokota’s point is that just as for Whitehead’s process theology all events in their objective immortality functioning as causes that condition all future events would gradually fade away if not for being fully retained, stored, and saved in the Consequent Nature of God, the karmic influence of all dharmas on future events would also gradually fade away into insignificance if it were not for the working of Dharmākara Bodhisattva/Amida Buddha, who as the personification of the Storehouse Consciousness functions as the collective repository of the past, which saves all dharmas in their full vividness and intensity.

There is yet a further dimension to the parallel. In Shin Buddhism, persons are saved through the compassionate Other-power of Amida Buddha upon rebirth in the Pure Land. Likewise, in process theology all perishing events are “saved” as they enter into the everlasting divine life of the Consequent Nature of God, explicitly identified by Whitehead as the kingdom of heaven (PR 346). At the conclusion of his final chapter of *Process and Reality*, entitled “God and the World,” Whitehead propounds: “Thus the consequent nature of God is composed of a multiplicity of elements with individual self-realization. . . . This is God in his function of the *kingdom of heaven*” (PR 350; italics added). He continues:

The kingdom of heaven is with us today. The action of [this] phase is the love of God for the world. . . . What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. . . . [T]he love in the world passes into the love in heaven and floods back again into the world. (PR 351)

Here we find yet another convergence between Shin Buddhism and process theology: namely, the idea of salvation through rebirth in Amida’s heavenly paradise

27. Odin, *Process Metaphysics and Hua-Yen Buddhism*, 159–71.

28. Yokota, “Understanding Amida Buddha and the Pure Land: A Process Approach,” 95.

as the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss, and Whitehead's soteriological notion whereby events are saved by passing into the everlasting life of the Consequent Nature of God as the kingdom of heaven.

Although Taitetsu Unno does not discuss either Whitehead's process theology or the idea of Amida Buddha as the Storehouse Consciousness, he does clarify the deep spiritual meaning of this consequent function of the divine nature from the perspective of the Japanese Buddhist poetics of impermanence. Unno explains how the Buddhist teaching of "impermanence" was depicted through the image of fleeting dewdrops in Japanese poetry of the Heian Period (794–1185). This Heian poetics of impermanence came to be known as *mono no aware*, the "tragic beauty" of perishing events in the flux of becoming. Unno goes on to say: "In this early period the notion of impermanence had a negative tone, carrying a tone of sadness, regret, pathos. But with the passing of time it took on a more positive tone, an encouragement to discover an enduring, unchanging reality beyond the phenomenal world."²⁹ Unno then illustrates this with a poem by the priest-poet Ryokan (1756–1831), a Zen monk filled with the spirit of the Pure Land who wrote poems on Amida:

If not for Amida's inconceivable vow
What then would remain to me
As a keepsake of this world?³⁰

Ryokan encouraged people to follow the path of *nembutsu* to find salvation from the suffering of impermanence, where all transitory events disappear like falling dewdrops, by taking refuge in the everlasting Pure Land of Amida—the Buddha of infinite Light and Life:

Return to Amida
Return to Amida
So even dewdrops fall.

Unno goes on to interpret the above poems from the standpoint of Shin Buddhism as follows: "Everything in our evanescent world constantly reminds us not to rely on passing, unreliable things, but to entrust ourselves to that which is timeless—Immeasurable Light and Life that is Amida."³¹

The closest Western parallel to the Buddhist teaching of "impermanence" and the Japanese poetic ideal of *mono no aware*, or the tragic beauty of impermanence, is to be found in Whitehead's process theology. At the conclusion of his chapter in *Adventures of Ideas* entitled "Peace," Whitehead holds that due to the immanence of God, which provides divine aims to be actualized by events, each occasion realizes some degree of beauty, or aesthetic value-quality. Yet the beauty realized by events is always a "tragic Beauty" (AI 296), in that the aesthetic value-quality of each occasion perishes immediately upon becoming. For Whitehead,

the problem of tragic beauty, arising from the ultimate evil of the perpetual perishing of events in the ever-changing flux of becoming, is thus to be resolved through the concept of deity formulated in his process theism, according to which all perishing events are retained, stored, and saved everlastingly in all their vividness and intensity in the Consequent Nature of God. Likewise, the Japanese poetic ideal of the tragic beauty of transitory dharmas in the ceaseless impermanence of universal flux is overcome in the Shin Buddhist tradition through salvation by rebirth into the heavenly paradise of the Pure Land of Amida Buddha as the Storehouse Consciousness that saves all dharmas forevermore.

It is indeed remarkable that both Whitehead and Japanese Buddhism have converged upon an organismic process model of actuality as a temporal stream of arising and perishing events, upon a religio-aesthetic vision of Tragic Beauty, whereby suffering, pain, and tragedy are intrinsic to actuality due to the loss of beauty attaching to each arising and perishing aesthetic event in the ceaseless flux of impermanence, and upon a vision in which the evil of perpetual perishing is itself ultimately overcome by the grace of deity as the divine memory.

4. COMPASSION IN SHIN BUDDHISM AND CARE IN PROCESS THEOLOGY

One of the most significant points of contact between the frameworks of Whiteheadian process theology and Shin Buddhism is that both envision the divine nature of God/Amida as a caring or compassionate deity. For Shin Buddhism, the nature of Amida Buddha is that of unconditional "compassion" (*jihî*) working through the call of Amida's *tariki* or "Other-power" as expressed by the "Primal Vow," with its aim, or compassionate intent, to save all sentient beings. Describing the divine nature of Amida Buddha's salvific Other-power as boundless compassion, Taitetsu Unno asserts: "The working of the Primal Vow, the compassion of the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life, is called Other Power."³² Yokota explains both the compassionate nature of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow, to save all sentient beings through the grace of Other-power, as a call to compassion as well as the centrality of compassionate moral conduct based on a wisdom seeing the emptiness/openness of reality as interdependence:

The whole point of the Buddhist analysis of reality with its emphasis on impermanence, becoming, openness/emptiness, and dependent arising is that it tells us that reality is like this so that we can act accordingly. . . . [I]n short, we should act compassionately. We act compassionately because a world of openness and dependent arising is a compassionate world. . . . If compassion is the primordial character of existence, then a personal center to existence is undeniable. Compassionate intent (the primal vow) is present and undeniable as well.³³

29. Unno, *River of Fire/River of Water*, 164.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, 36.

33. Yokota, "A Call to Compassion" (2000), 211.

Like the Shin Buddhist tradition, Whitehead's organic process metaphysics articulates a doctrine of concern, care, or compassion based on a metaphysics of interconnected, dependently arisen events that emerge out of a relational web of causal interconnections in the dynamic, creative, undivided aesthetic continuum of nature. Although Whitehead does not use the language of *emptiness*, he does formulate the most comprehensive Western theory of interrelated events arising through *prehensions*, or sympathetic feelings of relations to all other events, which at once calls to mind the Buddhist doctrine of *pratitya-samutpāda*: dependent co-origination, interconnectedness, or relational existence. For Unno, this awareness of reality as a "vast network of interdependence" is itself the core of Shin Buddhism.³⁴ Emphasizing this point, Unno states: "Interdependence is an elemental truth. When one awakens to this fact, compassion that sustains us strikes us with full force, and we are made to respond to the world with the same compassion."³⁵

Whitehead's principle of "universal relativity" functions as a metaphysical category expressing the interrelatedness, interdependence, and interpenetration of all events. The principle of relativity states that "every item in the universe is involved in each concrescence," that "every item of the universe including all the other actual entities are constituents in the constitution of any one actual entity" (PR 22, 148). Indeed, Whitehead's principle of relativity is reminiscent of the Buddhist doctrine of *sūnyatā*, which is generally translated as "emptiness" but has been alternatively translated as "relativity" and "universal relativity" by the Soviet Buddhistologist Stcherbatsky.³⁶

In Whitehead's organismic process metaphysics, the Buddhist theme concerning the "indivisibility of emptiness and compassion" is articulated in terms of what Whitehead calls the "concern" structure of causal process and universal relativity, wherein each act of prehension, or "feeling of feeling," is itself understood as an act of sympathetic concernedness. In Whitehead's technical vocabulary, each dependently co-arising occasion or event is a unified *subject* arising through prehension, understood as concern for all multiple *objects* of the past: "The occasion as subject has a 'concern' for the object. And the 'concern' at once places the object as a component in the experience of the subject with an affective tone drawn from this object and directed towards it" (AI 176). Whitehead further states: "It must be directly understood that no prehension . . . can be divested of its affective tone, that is to say, of its character of a 'concern.' . . . Concernedness is of the essence of perception" (AI 180). This concern structure of causal process, whereby events arise through their concern for all prior events, is further clarified by his notion of "sympathy," or feeling of feeling, whereby each occasion arises through sympathetic feelings of its relationships to all prior events (PR 162). Hence, for Whitehead, "concern" is a functional equivalent to compassion (deriving from the Latin verbal root *compassio* meaning "to feel with"),

34. Unno, *River of Fire/River of Water*, 141.

35. *Ibid.*, 142.

36. B. Th. Stcherbatsky, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*, 42.

understood as sympathy or feeling of feeling. Like Buddhist compassion, Whitehead's concernedness involves sympathy with all phenomena arising out of the dynamic network of interrelationships.

It can now be further clarified how the dipolar God of Whitehead's process theology relates to the image of Amida Buddha. In Whitehead's process theology, God is not the omnipotent creator of the universe, just as in Shin Buddhism, Amida Buddha is not understood as a divine creator, since all dharma events naturally emerge from the dynamic web of interrelationships through the causal process of dependent co-arising. According to Whitehead's dipolar theism, God's Primordial Nature functions as a "lure for feeling" (PR 344). God is not an authoritarian deity, who rules by forceful coercion, but a caring deity, who lures events to achieve maximum depth of aesthetic value, beauty, harmony, and peace through gentle persuasion. Whitehead rejects the images of God as an unmoved mover, an imperial ruler, or a ruthless moralist, and instead envisions a patient, tender, and caring God who lures events to realize divine aims. He writes that in contrast to these other images, the origins of Christianity in Jesus suggest an image of deity that "dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love" (PR 343). Describing the divine primordial care operating in terms of the image of *tenderness*, he writes that God's "tenderness is directed towards each actual occasion, as it arises" (PR 105). Again, in his description of the Primordial Nature of God in its function as a lure toward value, Whitehead asserts that God is "the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness" (PR 346).

In its Consequent Nature, the dipolar God is a caring deity who saves all beauty achieved by creative events as everlasting value-qualities in the divine memory. Describing the cosmological function of God's Consequent Nature, Whitehead thus writes: "The image . . . under which this operative growth of God's nature is best conceived, is that of a *tender care* that nothing be lost" (PR 346; emphasis added).

The parallels with Shin Buddhism are striking. Just as the care of God's Primordial Nature lures all events to actualize the divine aims for them to realize harmony, beauty, and value, the Primal Vow of Amida's compassionate Other-power grace calls out to all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment, nirvana, and rebirth into the Pure Land. And the Consequent Nature of God as the kingdom of heaven is a caring deity who operates like the compassionate nature of Dharmākara/Amida as the Storehouse Consciousness, which functions to save all sentient beings through rebirth in his heavenly paradise as the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss. Hence, both Whiteheadian process theology and Shin Buddhism envision the divine nature of God/Amida through the image of *care* or *compassion*, just as they view the metaphysical character of ultimate reality itself as caring or compassionate, due to the *concern* structure of existence itself as composed of dependently co-arisen events or dharmas emerging from their sympathy for past events.

5. DIVINE 'SUFFERING' IN PROCESS THEOLOGY AND SHIN BUDDHISM

In the classical tradition of Christian theology, God is an unchanging absolute, characterized by attributes of transcendence, immutability, and impassibility, completely unaffected by events in process. By contrast, the Consequent Nature of God in Whitehead's process theology is a caring God who feels the feelings of all becoming and perishing events. God is thus forever evolving with the world-process as the creative advance into novelty. Above it was shown how Whitehead's dipolar God is to be conceived through the image of "care," just as the structure of ultimate reality itself is to be described as the "concern" structure of causal feelings. In opposition to the impassibility ascribed to deity by traditional Christian theology, Whitehead clarifies how the Consequent Nature of God is a caring deity who feels both the suffering and joy of all becoming and perishing events. Whitehead therefore asserts: "God is the great companion—the *fellow sufferer* who understands" (PR 351; emphasis added).

Thus far, the interfaith dialogue between Whiteheadian process theology and Shin Buddhism has not yet addressed the importance of this notion of "divine suffering" in both traditions. However, Professor Takeda Ryusei of Ryukoku University, an eminent Japanese scholar of both Jōdo Shinshū and Whiteheadian process theology, has clearly explained the Shin Buddhist notion of *duhka* (suffering) in an article entitled "Pure Land Buddhist View of Duhka" (1985). In this essay, Takeda explicates what he calls "the bodhisattva's compassionate practice of vicarious duhka" in Shin Buddhism.

This dynamism of the bodhisattva's ceaseless 'de-substantializing' [self-emptying] is embodied as the universal creativity of Dharmakara Bodhisattva's Primal Vow, whose fulfillment is Amida Buddha's untiring dynamism of saving all sentient beings. The uniqueness of Amida's compassion . . . is the ultimate form of bodhisattva's vicarious duhka.³⁷

Like Whitehead's God of care who acts as a "fellow sufferer" who understands, Dharmakara Bodhisattva/Amida Buddha is a compassionate deity who saves all sentient beings by feeling their suffering as its own through vicarious *duhka*. Although he does not explicitly refer to Whitehead in this essay, Takeda nevertheless shows the unmistakable influence of process theology by his use of Whitehead's distinctive technical term "ingression" when discussing the influx or incarnation of divine grace as a gift of faith from the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha's compassionate Other-power, thereby implying a parallel between the ingression, descent, or incarnation of grace from the divine immanence of the Primordial Nature of God. Takeda writes: "For Shinran, buddha-nature is faith.

37. Takeda, "Pure Land Buddhist View of Duhka," 15.

Faith is given by Amida to each being, and through this gift of faith the buddha-nature *ingresses* itself into each being."³⁸ Again, he states:

Apart from the bodhisattva's actualization as *ingressing* his will into the actual existence of each being, the 'de-substantializing' [self-emptying] reality turns out to be so abstract that any sort of reference to it falls into delusive attachment to that reality itself, which is none other than its dogmatic substantialization.³⁹

6. PEACE IN SHIN BUDDHISM AND PROCESS THEOLOGY

Imamura Yemyo (1867–1932), the Bishop of the first Buddhist temple in America (the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii) and one of the earliest missionaries to transmit Shin Buddhism to America, proclaimed a Gospel of Peace grounded in the Primal Vow of Amida to bestow the gifts of peace, happiness, and salvation to all beings. In his essay "Democracy According to the Buddhist Standpoint," he wrote:

"Peace! Peace!" is the universal cry; for this is the only condition in which we can realize our ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty. But we cannot have a permanent peace unless we have a thorough understanding as to the true signification of peace.⁴⁰

Imamura concludes: "We cannot stop short of propagating the *gospel of true peace* based upon the Will-to-Save [Primal Vow] of the Buddha."⁴¹

The process theology of Whitehead similarly holds to a vision of God as having a Primordial Nature that out of concern aims to lure all events toward realization of peace, happiness, and salvation. For Whitehead, Peace is the ultimate spiritual value which comes as a gift of God's divine grace. The God of process theology is a poet of the world, luring it toward a vision of beauty, goodness, and truth, along with their unity in the supreme Harmony of Peace. For Whitehead, as for Shin Buddhism, the realization of Peace as cosmic Harmony is an ultimate goal of civilization as well as an expanded transpersonal state of consciousness beyond the ego-self, analogous to resolution of suffering through overcoming attachment to an ego-self in the Peace of *nirvana*. Hence, in this final section, I will clarify how both Whiteheadian process theology and Shin Buddhism culminate in a Gospel of Peace, including both the social ideal of Peace as the

38. *Ibid.*, 21.

39. *Ibid.*, 15.

40. Tomoe, *Yemyo Imamura: Pioneer American Buddhist*, 87.

41. *Ibid.*, 108.

goal of civilization and the soteriological goal of an expanded consciousness transcending the ego-self in a cosmic Harmony of Harmonies.

The imaginative picture of Amida Buddha depicted in the three great mandala images representing the three Pure Land scriptures—as magnificently reproduced in *The Three Pure Land Sutras* by Inagaki Hisao—illustrate the serene countenance of Amida Buddha in his Pure Land of Peace and Bliss. This same tranquil and quiescent visage of Amida Buddha's sublimely calm expression is shown through such great religious art as the famous Daibutsu, or Great Buddha, located in Kamakura. Throughout the Pure Land scriptures, along with the writings of Hōnen, Shinran, and other Japanese masters of Shin Buddhism, it is constantly repeated that the Pure Land of Amida Buddha is the realm of Peace, as imparted by a variety of technical Japanese terms in the lexicon of Jōdo Shinshū, including *annyo* (Land of Peace), *annyo jodo* (Pure Land of Peace), *annyo josetsu* (Pure Land of Peace), *annyo kai* (Land of Peace), *anraku bukkoku* (Buddha Country of Peace and Bliss), *anraku butsudo* (Buddha Land of Peace and Bliss), *anraku jodo* (Pure Land of Peace and Bliss), *anraku koku* (Land of Peace and Bliss), *anraku kokudo* (Land of Peace and Bliss), and *anraku sekai* (World of Peace and Bliss)—to give just a few representative examples.⁴²

As James Frederiks has noted, for Shinran, Rennyo, and the whole Jōdo Shinshū tradition, “the true sign of saving faith came to be ‘peace of mind’ (*anjin*).”⁴³ Shinran’s notion of *anjin*, or “peace of mind,” is itself the criterion of true *shinjin* or faith—the state of openness and receptivity to the transformative grace of Amida Buddha’s compassionate Other-power. In the writings of Shinran, accordingly, the faith-consciousness of *shinjin* is called the “peace-bestowing pure mind.”⁴⁴

In *Kyōgyōshinshō* and other writings from his Collected Works, Shinran often quotes from the Pure Land scriptures about the Buddha’s teachings on Peace. In *The Sutra of the Tathagata of Immeasurable Life*, Amida Buddha declares: “I will benefit the world, bringing peace and happiness.” Again, “Such people as these, hearing the Buddha’s Name, will be full of peace and obtain the supreme benefit.”⁴⁵ For Shinran, these scriptural passages declare Amida Buddha’s Primal Vows to bestow infinite Peace on all who call out Buddha’s Name, while at the same time guaranteeing the effectiveness of reciting the Buddha’s Name through the *nembutsu* for rebirth into the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss. For Shinran, “practicing the saying of the Name alone” leads one to “birth in the Pure Land of peace.”⁴⁶ Moreover, Shinran underscores how rebirth into the “Pure Land of Peace” (*annyo jodo*) through recitation of *nembutsu* itself sponta-

42. Inagaki, *A Glossary of Shin Buddhist Terms*, 3.

43. Frederiks, “Jodo Shinshu’s Mission to History: A Christian Challenge to Shin Buddhist Social Ethics,” 56.

44. Shinran, *The Collected Works of Shinran*, Vol. 1: 171.

45. *Ibid.*, 15, 16.

46. *Ibid.*, 113.

neously, effortlessly, and naturally springs forth as the expression of *shinjin*, faith. It is therefore asserted, “Swift entrance into the city of tranquillity . . . is necessarily brought about by *shinjin*.” Shinran remarks: “We see, therefore, that the realization described above is all the great benefit we receive in the Pure Land of peace, the inconceivable, perfect virtue of the Buddha’s [Primal] Vow.”⁴⁷

The Primal Vow of Dharmākara Bodhisattva/Amida Buddha, which aims to bestow Peace on all who recite his Name, is cited by Shinran in such passages as follows: “When I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings throughout the countless, immeasurable, inconceivable, numberless worlds throughout the ten quarters who receive the Buddha’s majestic light and are touched and illuminated by it shall attain peace.”⁴⁸ For Shinran, the realization of the pure mind of “enlightenment” is characterized by the overcoming of “suffering” and the experience of divine Peace as the “gift” of the saving grace of Amida’s compassionate Other-power received in the openness and receptivity of *shinjin*, faith. Shinran cites *The Sutra of Immeasurable Life*: “The peace-bestowing pure mind (is so termed) because (the bodhisattvas) eliminate all sentient beings’ pain.” Again, “[T]hey follow the gate of compassion. They eliminate all sentient beings’ pain and become free of thoughts that do not bring peace.” Shinran remarks, “The undefiled pure mind is in accord with the gate to enlightenment. Also: “Enlightenment is the realm of purity that brings peace to all sentient beings.”⁴⁹ In his commentary on these scriptural passages, Shinran further emphasizes that Amida Buddha’s Primal Vows arise from the heart of “compassion” and promise to eliminate the problem of suffering due to impermanence by bestowing Peace on all who recite his Name in the state of faith: “[Concerning compassion (*jihad*): ‘To eliminate pain is termed *ji*; to give happiness is termed *hi*. Though *ji* one eliminates the pain of all sentient beings, through *hi* one becomes free of thoughts that do not bring them peace.” The Pure Land is continually referred to as “the land of peace.”⁵⁰ Shinran continues: “Thus we clearly know from the Tathagata’s true teaching and the commentaries of the masters that the Pure Land of peace is the true fulfilled land.”⁵¹

One of the most neglected categories in Whitehead’s thought is his notion of transpersonal Peace. Yet his idea of transpersonal Peace is not only the crown of his process cosmology and theology; it is also the nearest parallel to the ultimate Buddhist goal of *nirvana*, or Peace. The notion of Peace is therefore a central point of intersection between Whiteheadian process theology and the Shin Buddhist idea of rebirth in Amida’s Pure Land of Peace and Bliss, as well as its idea of the Peace of *nirvana* as a gift of the divine grace of Amida Buddha.

47. *Ibid.*, 73, 62.

48. *Ibid.*, 117.

49. *Ibid.*, 169, 168.

50. *Ibid.*, 169, 194.

51. *Ibid.*, 202.

It might be said that both Amida Buddha in Shin Buddhism and the dipolar God of Whitehead's process theology represent the Peace-bestowing Buddha/Christ whereby there comes to be the *ingression*, influx, or descent of transpersonal Peace, as the divine aim toward cosmic Harmony in each dharma event through the grace or persuasive agency of divine immanence as the Primordial Nature of God, the Primal Vow of Amida. For Whitehead, Christian theology explains Christ as a revelation of God's persuasive agency in the world as a lure toward the divine aims of peace, love, and sympathy: "The essence of Christianity is to appeal to the life of Christ as a revelation of the nature of God and the world" (AI 167). Whitehead then describes the revelation of the life, person, and teachings of Jesus as occurring through "his message of peace, love, and sympathy" (AI 167). In *Process Theology*, coauthors Cobb and Griffin write, "Christian Peace is an expansion of care for self to care for others."⁵² This statement underscores how in process theology there is a deep relation between God's function as bestowing Peace and the divine nature as care, concern, compassion, love, and sympathy.

Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas* concludes with a remarkable chapter entitled "Peace." According to Whitehead, transpersonal Peace is not only the ultimate aim of civilization; it is also an expanded state of consciousness wherein the self is transcended in a cosmic Harmony. Suffering, pain, and tragedy are intrinsic to the dynamic evolutionary temporal process of creative advance into novelty: "Decay, Transition, Loss, Displacement belong to the essence of Creative Advance" (AI 286). And just as for Buddhism, deliverance from the "suffering" of impermanence is realized only in the Peace of *nirvana*, so for Whitehead, salvation from the tragedy, pain, and suffering of existence, as the perpetual perishing of momentary events, comes only with the immediate experience of transpersonal Peace, the Harmony of Harmonies: "The Adventure of the Universe starts with the dream and reaps tragic Beauty. This is the secret of the union of Zest with Peace: That the suffering attains its end in a Harmony of Harmonies. The immediate experience of this Final Fact . . . is the sense of Peace" (AI 286).

Whitehead further describes his concept of Peace in a manner consonant with Buddhism when he writes: "The inner feeling belonging to this grasp of the service of tragedy is Peace—the purification of the emotions. . . . Peace is the understanding of tragedy" (AI 286). The salvific transpersonal dimension of Peace is then indicated in a manner reminiscent of Buddhist *anātman*, or no-self: "Peace is . . . the width where the 'self' has been lost, and interest has been transferred to coordinations wider than personality. . . . Peace carries with it a surpassing of personality" (AI 285). The parallel is further shown by Whitehead's assertion that Peace is "a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight" (AI 285). Whitehead even identifies the immediate experience of transpersonal Peace with the "attainment of truth" (AI 292) and with "extreme ecstasy" (AI 289).

52. Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition*, 140.

In Cobb and Griffin's *Process Theology*, it is written: "To whatever extent our lives become aligned to God's ever-changing aims for us, we can have 'that Peace, which is the harmony of the soul's activities with ideal aims that lie beyond any personal satisfaction.'"⁵³ Clarifying that "it is the immanence of deity as a whole, with its Primordial and Consequent Natures, its creative and responsive love, which is the source of Peace,"⁵⁴ they quote this remarkable passage from Whitehead:

It is the immanence of the Great Fact including this initial Eros and this final Beauty which constitutes the zest of self-forgetful transcendence belonging to Civilization at its height. . . . The immediate experience of this Final Fact is the sense of Peace. (AI 381)

Through the caring persuasive agency of God's Primordial Nature as the divine lure, there is implanted in each dependently co-arising event an initial aim toward realizing the harmonic value-qualities of beauty, art, adventure, and truth, as well as their unity in the supreme aim of Peace, the cosmic Harmony of Harmonies. Cobb and Griffin continue:

The presence of God in us is divine grace. . . . It gives rise to adventure, and to art. To it we owe the beauty we experience. . . . It works at all times in all people. The supreme gift is Peace, which is an alignment of ourselves with God's grace.⁵⁵

As again emphasized here, this aim toward Peace in each occasion derived from God's Primordial Nature as the divine lure is the functioning of grace, and the realization of Peace in each occasion as a result of this grace is itself the gift of God through Christ as the divine Logos, which incarnates into each occasion. Therefore, Cobb and Griffin conclude: "Peace is the gift of Christ."⁵⁶

Whitehead himself writes: "The experience of Peace is largely beyond the control of purpose. It comes as a *gift*" (AI 285; italics added). Again, "Peace carries with it a surpassing of personality. . . . It is primarily a *trust* in the efficacy of Beauty. . . . The trust in the self-justification of Beauty introduces *faith*, where reason fails to reveal the details" (AI 285; italics added). For Whitehead, transpersonal Peace comes as a gift of grace ingressing as the divine immanence of God received through entrustment, or faith in the divine efficacy of God's ideal aims for each occasion.

Thus, we arrive at a most remarkable convergence upon the idea of salvation from the suffering and tragic beauty of impermanent dharma events through a bestowal of transpersonal Peace by God/Amida in the framework of Whitehead's

53. *Ibid.*, 124.

54. *Ibid.*, 125.

55. *Ibid.*, 126.

56. *Ibid.*, 127.

process theology and that of Shin Buddhism. For just as in Whitehead's process theology the realization of Peace is not attained by self-effort, but is only received as a "gift" of divine grace through faith by means of the divine immanence of God, so in Shin Buddhism based on the teachings of Shinran Shonin, one attains salvation, enlightenment, *nirvana*, and rebirth in the heavenly paradise of the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss, not through the efforts of self-power" (*jiiriki*), but only as a gift (*ekô*) of the transformative grace of Amida Buddha's compassionate "Other-power" (*tariki*), realized in tranquil inwardness of *shinjin*, faith.

It is in such a manner, then, that we have arrived at this vision of Amida in Shin Buddhism, and the dipolar God in Whitehead's process theology, as the caring and compassionate Peace-bestowing Buddha/Christ that forever guides and saves all events co-arising from the dynamic network of interrelationships in the ceaseless flux of becoming.

Chapter 4

Where beyond Dialogue?

Reconsiderations of
a Buddhist Pluralist

John Shunji Yokota

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The context of the Buddhist-Christian dialogue is the foundation for a critical self-understanding of Buddhism's doctrines and its way of life. Moreover, to dialogue with other religious as well as nonreligious ways of knowing and thinking about our world is imperative for a fuller and truer vision of reality. Only in this context of dialogue with traditions of disparate views of our world can there be real understanding of this world we live in. Nevertheless, while the gains, personally, from such an opening up to these other traditions have been central to the growth in my thinking and appreciation of my Shin Buddhist tradition, an inertia has set in that has caused me to question whether I can go any further.

This personal journey to and through dialogue has fortunately taken me far from a formerly unrecognized, parochial, and absolutistic acceptance of my Shin Buddhist tradition. Admittedly, how far it has taken me is a question that needs to be constantly pondered. This transformation has come about less by design than by fortunate or malicious happenstance—I simply do not know which. This ambivalent feeling toward the turn of events that has determined my personal