

## 論文

Philosophy of Weakness:  
Whitehead's Existential Cosmology<sup>(1)</sup>

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A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and life is after all a chain.

(William James, "The Sick Soul" in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*)

O my soul, do not aspire to immortal life, but exhaust the limits of the possible.

(Pindar, *Pythian* iii)

## 1. The Age of Maturity and Weakness

March 11 is an unforgettable day for us, Japanese people. The Great East Japan Earthquake and the nuclear devastation it caused shocked our civilized society, which has been facing a natural decrease in population since the latter half of 2000s due to rapidly decreasing birthrate and aging population. Although the Japanese people and society have experienced an acute sense of powerlessness and responsibility for the succeeding generations through this tragedy, I embrace the hope that they will without doubt carve out a future for themselves. My hope does not arise from the unique strength that the Japanese culture possesses nor from the belief in its "power" to orient itself toward the external but rather from the confidence that the sensitivity to their weakness and fragility, a sensitivity that is inherent in Japanese culture, will undoubtedly give birth to a kind of patient intensity. In Japanese culture, there is a belief that "knowing oneself and knowing one's weakness increases human intensity". This belief provides the foundation of Japanese thought. Ours is an existence prone to weakness and fragility; that is imperfect, with a tendency to make mistakes easily. We are not the ones who dominate Nature. Rather, we are nothing more than a small part of Nature and there are times when we are overwhelmed by the threat of Nature. Around the same time as the experience of the great earthquake and the nuclear accident, Japanese society entered the era of rapid population aging and natural population decline because of which now nearly one in four Japanese is aged 65 or older.

This typically shows that apart from the option of aiming for the triumph of rationality based on scientific development and technological innovation, modern civilized society seeks to start afresh from the realizations that human beings are characterized by finitude and imperfection, that this civilized society can make mistakes, and that our social activities have unpredictable effects on nature and on ourselves. As Whitehead describes, we must start afresh with realizing “the limits of what we can do with the world” (AI.78). I suggest calling this mode of thought that constitutes this fresh starting point of realizing our finitude “the philosophy of weakness”.

It is difficult to define weakness. For the time being, I start from the understanding that weakness is a kind of powerlessness against reality. In this understanding, weakness refers to a passive involvement rather than an active participation in an event that has actually been realized in its particular way. With respect to the self, “weak” refers to the inability to exercise self-determination, self-management, self-survival, and self-development; simply put the inability to exist alone. Although Kierkegaard said that to exist is to become oneself with deciding for oneself alone, weakness, I argue here, refers to the hesitation to decide to become one’s own self. Weakness therefore means the ambiguity: to exist is to decide to become oneself and, at the same time, to be unable to predict the nature of the self that is to come. Therefore, the awareness of weakness refers to the knowledge that becoming oneself is a passive thing that is constrained by others and to the realization of powerlessness in that the self that is dependent on others cannot give to the others the benefits and contributions received from them. Further, it refers to the knowledge of the finitude within which we are incapable of ensuring the constant survival and endless development of the being of the actualized self in this passive situation.

Modern civilized society is in a transition period from the age of growth to the age of maturity. Now, we have come to realize that we are faced with the limits of growth. In the age of growth, the society made creative advances by proactively overcoming its structural problems and realizing better values. In the age of maturity, the society will come to be aware of its own limitations with searching for the way to realize its intrinsic values while understanding its weakness and fragility. In the age of growth

the society was led by intelligent aggressive initiatives and cooperation that changed an inefficient production system into a more productive one, changed a system which engendered oppression and exclusion of people to a more egalitarian system, and fundamentally improved the production-consumption relationship that inevitably led to the destruction of the natural environment. Contrarily, in the transition period to the mature society, people begin to have an ecological awareness of the natural environment and while they are aware of their finitude and the imperfections in things created by them, they make efforts to minimize the negative influences they exert on each other and on the surrounding world and try to achieve the realization of values within these constraints as far as possible. In the age of maturity, the keyword is “to live with one’s illness and with one’s old age”, and one needs to question anew how to realize all values in this kind of life and how to enjoy such a constrained life.

This self-understanding is based on the feeling of finitude in which we realize that we are mortal existents. Our life is finite. Pascal said:

We shall die alone.

We must act then as if we were alone. (*Pensées*, B.211, L.151)

Certainly, there is no one who can live our life except ourselves, but we cannot live life alone. By helping each other and by taking care of each other, we can enjoy our own lives. Moreover, irrespective of how enlightened civilization is, how advanced the medical technology and how hygienic the environment, we cannot escape disease and death in our lives. The weakness and fragility of human beings is not a defect that has to be negated, rather it is the central point for building the community through collaboration and mutual caring-for. A family creates an environment in which the skills and strengths of each and every member of the family can be exercised to the maximum and at the same time builds a relationship of caring with the weakest members as the central locus. In a similar way, we attempt to build society in such a way as to exhibit most efficiently its strengths and at the same time build the community with the most vulnerable aspects as the locus. A caring community

designed focusing on the people who are acutely aware of their weakness will become the nucleus of a mature society.

Our problem is whether, in the first place, the awareness of this weakness and fragility can be the fundamental mode of thought for realizing human values. Doesn't this imply defeatism seen from the perspective of the logic of "growth" and "development" ? Or is this not the idea of good-natured people with narrow perspectives who have given up on growth and on exploring possibilities and simply become complacent? In order to give an adequate answer to these questions, we should have to rediscover and construct a philosophy that starts from the insight of our weakness and finitude.

## 2. The History of the Philosophy of Weakness

The philosophical contemplation that starts from knowing one's weakness is not something characteristic to Japanese thought only. Even in Western philosophy which emphasizes the triumph of rational reason, the starting point of philosophical thought is not only a sense of wonder at the unpredictable world but also the awareness of human finitude and ignorance. The history of Western philosophy begins with Socrates' statement, "I know one thing that I know nothing". Both Plato and Aristotle also note that the beginning of philosophy is the feeling of wonder at the overwhelming world. The quest for wisdom began from the awareness of a fundamental powerlessness and ignorance, in other words, from the fact that while one wonders at the natural order of things one has to confess that one knows nothing. Christianity also owes its origin to the awareness of our own ignorance and powerlessness: St. Paul wrote to Corinthians, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (*II Corinthians* 12.10). Perhaps based on this weakness-oriented Western tradition, Pascal wrote, "What amazes me most is to see that everyone is not amazed at his own weakness" (*Pensées*, B.374, L.33). Pascal thoroughly thought about human weakness and the wonders of the universe that overwhelmed human beings. His insights are at first paradoxical but they demonstrate the central theme of this paper, that is to say, in the awareness of human

weakness lies human dignity and greatness. In particular, in the midst of disasters such as earthquakes and nuclear accidents that assail civilized society, we cannot give up nor escape but rather we must prepare for the worst by means of realizing our own finitude and weakness by questioning how we can live creatively and harmoniously.

“Human weakness is much more obvious in those who do not realize it than in those who do” (*Pensées*, B.376, L.34). These words of Pascal teach us about the importance of knowing our finitude and of becoming mature. What then does the intensity of the people who know human weakness refer to? With respect to his famous statement of the “thinking reed”, he says the following:

Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. ...Even if the universe were to crush him, man would still be nobler than his slayer, because he knows that he is dying and the advantage the universe has over him. The universe knows none of this. (*Pensées*, B.347, L.200)

For Pascal, the Universe, which is nothing but a mass of eternally silent infinite stretch of spaces, has given rise to human beings and swallows them into it just as a bubble or a trivial puff of existence (cf. *Pensées*, B.206, L.201). It is indeed strong and gigantic. However, the universe is ignorant of the fact that humans, who are so tiny as to be equal to nothing compared to the overwhelming giganticness of the universe, fear this gigantic universe and disturbed by their smallness but are, at the same time, thinking about what the universe is and how it exists even though they are aware that they are mortal existents. The universe is supremely dominant, ruthless and indifferent about the fact that human beings are a part of its existence. However, humans who are born, live, and die in this universe, know their own weakness. “He knows that he is dying and the advantage the universe has over him”. This is Pascal’s existential cosmological insight about human weakness.

I would like to add the following insight by William James to this insight by Pascal. According to James, certainly, the universe is full of order and is an overwhelming and wonderful cosmos in which humans are no doubt weak entities. However, it is precisely

in this weakness that gives birth to deep insights. James remarks:

...let us not simply cry out, in spite of all appearances, "Hurrah for the Universe !— God's in his Heaven, all's right with the world". Let us see rather whether pity, pain, and fear, and the sentiment of human helplessness may not open a profounder view and put into our hands a more complicated key to the meaning of the situation. (VRE.115-116)

According to James, it is through human perception that the universe knows all. The fact that humans are aware of the weakness and helplessness of their own existence in this universe implies that humans are the focal point for the universe to be aware of itself. While in their state of weakness, by thinking about their existence in this universe, human beings open their own existence as the locus for the cosmological awareness of that universe. This self-disclosure is the cosmological enlightenment of the universe knowing itself through the cosmological understanding of humans which has been generated by the universe itself. Humans know that they are finite, mortal existents. However, the awareness of this weakness orients human thought to the revelation of the mysteries of the infinite universe, to an exploration of the cosmological meaning of the existence of their self, and to the construction of a community with these weak small entities as the central loci. In this sense, in this weakness lies the strength of the thinking human.

What is required of this mature, humble intellect is such deep philosophical contemplation as thinking about realizing the value of our self in this world starting from the awareness of our finitude and weakness: a philosophy which questions what kind of value humans can realize on this earth through mutual consideration while at the same time being aware of their weakness and fragility. This is a cosmological contemplation based on an existential awareness and is a pragmatic philosophy based on the awareness of weakness.

In Heidegger's main work *Being and Time*, we can find the standpoint to discuss the philosophy of weakness as an existential cosmology. In this work he suggests

an existential human understanding of the being of Dasein as “being toward death”. In the existential analysis of Dasein as the existence of human beings, Heidegger differentiates between ontic understanding and ontological understanding. The ontic understanding of existence refers to the ordinariness of the Dasein living in vague anxiety while presupposing the existence of the self. In contrast to this, the ontological understanding of existence is something relevant to the genuine mode of being of Dasein in which there is a conscious questioning of the meaning of one’s own being as the “being-in-the-world”. In our context, the ontic understanding of the existence of the self is a vague feeling of its weakness and the ontological understanding of the existence is a deep disclosure of the world as a whole through the awareness of such weakness as a temporal limitation of being-in-the-world. We can say, therefore, that the philosophy based on the awareness of our own weakness is an existential cosmology that takes as its subject the mortality of the self in the world as a cosmos. Following the differentiation given by Heidegger, I would like to differentiate between the understanding of a cosmic existence and the understanding of a cosmological existence. “Cosmic” refers to the inconsiderateness of the universe that is indifferent to human existence. “Cosmological” means the insight into the vivid creativity and tolerance of the universe which gives birth to and is receptive to all entities including my being “here and now”. In other words, “cosmological” means to understand the universe as—quoting secondhand a passage by Whitehead who quotes Plato— “a natural matrix for all transition of life” (AI.187; see Plato, *Timaeus*, 50B-51B)<sup>(2)</sup> and to position our own birth, life, and death as a one among “all these transitions of life”.

### 3. Nature Alive

For the logic necessary to discuss the philosophy of weakness we refer to Whitehead’s philosophy. For the remaining time, based on Whitehead’s philosophy, I will discuss the problem of whether it is possible to realize a satisfactory value while minimizing any severe impact on the surrounding world and knowing our finitude through recognition of our weakness and fragility. My approach is mainly anthropocentric. I must say that Whitehead gives us wider point of view from which we can grasp a sufficient pragmatic

and cosmological scheme of the correlation between organism and environment. My human-centered approach may suggest an existential standpoint for the mature era to rediscover a cosmological eco-philosophy opened up by Whitehead's organic philosophy.

James' and Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism shows the plasticity of the personality changeable through the encounters with others, with environment: they evaluate the positive function of such weakness of human beings as to be changeable by the impact of those encounters. Their pragmatism was passed into Whitehead's philosophy through their academic interchange. He says, "It is a false dichotomy to think of Nature and Man" (AI.78), and continues to note the following: "Mankind is that factor in Nature which exhibits in its most intense form the plasticity of nature" (ibid.). Certainly, as is the case with Pascal, Whitehead, a cosmological metaphysician who started out as a mathematician and a scientist, emphasizes the cruelty of the physical universe and says the following : "The massive habits of physical nature, its iron heart, determine the scene for the sufferings of men" (AI.66).

However, unlike Pascal who wrote "[t]he eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread" (*Pensées*, B.206, L.201), while continuing to be aware of one's own finitude in this pitiless universe Whitehead remained calm, feeling at home, without any fear. Lucien Price describes the serenity and maturity of Whitehead's calm and gentle personality and remarks as following:

He had met and solved more problems than most of us are aware of as existing at all. One felt that here was a man who was not afraid—not afraid of those common enemies of mankind: illness, poverty, old age, misfortune, death; and then he was not afraid of the vast enigmas of human destiny or the immensities of the universe. In those awesome spaces he was at home and at his ease. (Price, Lucien, ed. *Dialogues of Whitehead*. 1954. New Hampshire: David R. Godine, 2001. p.17)

In the depths of the infinite silent space, Whitehead discovers the familiar universe which invokes every individual occasion of experience when it is willing to realize its own value and responds to it when it has realized its individual value. William James



argues that human recognition is a focal point for the universe to become aware of the universe itself. Whitehead gives to this idea the expression “Civilized Universe” (MT.105). While on the one hand he remarks on the merciless laws of nature and the ruthless destiny of humans in a dispassionate writing style (cf. SMW.10), on the other he is discussing the universe where everything creates its own novel value in harmony with each other, that is to say, the universe filled with tenderness and love (cf. AI.284-285). In the background of this understanding, there is “a deeper faith” (SMW.18), a typical example of which is illustrated in the belief in the order of nature based on which natural science has developed. This is the faith that the whole universe is required in order for there to be one existence, and each existence is connected with each other through this universe so as to create a whole system of harmony. The modern natural science has emphasized the harmony of the logical rationality in such systems, but Whitehead also seeks a harmony of aesthetic values in the universe. He notes the following:

To experience this [deeper] faith is …to know that, while the harmony of logic lies upon the universe as an iron necessity, the aesthetic harmony stands before it as a living ideal moulding the general flux in its broken progress towards finer, subtler issues. (SMW.18; [ ] are added by the author.)

Here, one can find another belief apart from the belief in the harmony of the world. That is to say, there is a belief in the flux and creative advance of the universe. The fundamental belief that runs through Whitehead’s philosophy is that even though the universe shows order and harmony, it does not finally settle in a crystalized, static harmony. Rather, it is the insight that the universe is full of “life and motion” (AI.275, 284, 285) constantly throbbing and giving birth to something novel. In short, it is the insight that the whole world is “Nature Alive” (MT.148).

The phrase “Nature Alive” is one of the many “metaphors mutely appealing for an imaginative leap” (PR.4). What it shows is the understanding that life is a process in which novel values are realized, and nature is an even greater process in which a novel

harmony is realized through the emergence of the individual value of every individual life. Whitehead says that, “an organism is the realization of a definite shape of value” and further continues saying, “but by reason of its very nature it also requires the whole universe in order to be itself” (SMW.194). This is precisely the insight that forms the core of Whitehead’s “philosophy of organism”. For the realization of the value of an individual, the whole is considered to be required. To put it briefly, two things are required in order for the individual elements found in the world to realize their inherent values. That is to say, “its individual self and its signification in the universe” (MT.111). The philosophy of organism aims to discover the correlation between the various values that emerge on the individual occasions of experience and the influence they exert on each other weaving the holistic value.

The focus at this point is the question, “What are those primary types of things in terms of which the process of the universe is to be understood?” (MT.144) The concept that forms the key to understanding the process of the universe as a process of self-realization of the living organism, is “life and motion” or the “organism”.

Whitehead presents the following metaphor.

Nature is full-blooded. Real facts are happening. (MT.144)

This actual world in which we live is a full-blooded process of life in which a variety of real facts occur, and novel values are realized while in motion and encounters. All things in the universe are individual events occurring by virtue of accepting the varieties of life blood filling “Nature Alive” and integrating these varieties into one. The life-blood also passes through me and is the blood that actualizes me. In other words, by accepting the multiplicity of actual entities in the actual world and by integrating them into its real internal components, a novel actual entity comes into becoming. This is the process of “appropriation” (PR.219) in which every individual event becomes itself.

Questioning the meaning of human existence is, at that time, united with questioning the meaning of the world as a whole. The idea of “signification of every individual self

in the universe” implies that the value of the universe is expressed in a particular way in the existence of every individual self. According to Whitehead, “What is wanted is an appreciation of the infinite variety of vivid values achieved by an organism in its proper environment” (SMW.199). The perspective of the philosophy of organism is to discover the relation between the various values that emerge in individual facts and the influence they exert on each other weaving a holistic value.

The metaphor of “Nature Alive” connotes that the universe is a huge organism that forms the order and harmony of the whole and creatively advances into novelty while giving rise to various complicated occasions. In other words, the universe is a creative process that produces the profound value of harmony as a whole while each of the various elements of its details realize their inherent values (cf. SMW.93-94). The essence of life is the realization and enjoyment of its inherent value (RM.88, MT.116, 135). However, the realization of value is not a matter of talking only about the individual elements of the universe. The particular internal harmony of each individual element illustrates the general harmony of the universe in which such individuals live. In other words, “[m]y importance is my emotional worth now, embodying in itself derivations from the whole, and from the other facts, and embodying in itself reference to future creativity” (MT.117). In this way, the whole is repeated in the individual (PR.215). Each individual self “requires a totality of ‘givenness’” (PR.83) at the time of realizing its inherent value. However, on reflection, when seen from the point of view of the world as a whole, through the realization of that individual value, “each totality of ‘givenness’ attains its measure of ‘order’” (ibid.); in this way the individual opens itself for a locus to embody the harmony of the whole. The whole is required for the realization of the individual value and, in contrast, the whole is expressed in a definite form only in the individual (cf. PR.83). For James, human awareness of the individual self is the focal point for the universe to know itself. For Whitehead, the realization of value of the individual self is the focal point for the universe to creatively advances into novel harmony.

#### 4. Dual Reference to the Whole and the Individual

The holistic value of the universe is not founded solely on the static harmony of a permanent order. The process of the universe in which it creatively advances into novelty while producing ongoing harmony is itself the spectacular process of value realization. The signification of the individual self in the universe can be understood through the “dual reference” (PR.289) to the whole and to the individual, to “publicity” and to “privacy”. Whitehead says the following:

The creative process is rhythmic: it swings from the publicity of many things to the individual privacy; and it swings back from the private individual to the publicity of the objectified individual. (PR.151)

Due to this rhythmic swinging, the general value of the whole is embodied in each individual in its particular way and in contrast the private value of the individual is placed within the order of evaluation of the whole. The individual embodies the whole and is accepted within the whole. For example, a wild flower embodies the beauty of the universe in a focused manner and at the same time completes its beauty by virtue of its acceptance in the midst of the universe. This is what Whitehead is portraying in his book as follows:

There is a unity in the universe, enjoying value and (by its immanence) sharing value. For example, take the subtle beauty of a flower in some isolated glade of a primeval forest. No animal has ever had the subtlety of experience to enjoy its full beauty. And yet this beauty is a grand fact in the universe. (MT.119-120)

The feeling that all that is derived from the universe is reflected in the value being realized by an individual can be called “our sense of the value of the details for the totality” (MT.120). In other words, from the perspective of the individual details, it can be called “the sense of being one actuality in a world of actualities” (ibid.). Even though the “being one actuality” is a sole trivial occasion in the details, it goes beyond its finite

immediacy and expresses its particular value through the relation to the whole (cf. MT.121). This relation is mutual and rhythmic. What Whitehead describes here is not only the idea that one individual actuality realizes its particular value as it prehends the whole, but also the insight that the individual actuality completes its process of the value-realization through the placing of its particular value within the harmony of the whole.

This means much more than the fact that every individual feels at home when it finds itself in the accepting and tolerating world. The point is that the whole world realizes a novel harmony along with one novel actuality which changes entirely the old settled harmonic order. Whitehead calls the activity to realize novel value “adventure” and justifiably says “without adventure civilization is in full decay” (AI.279). Three considerable problems arise here. The first one is the problem of discord. A radical unseasonable realization of novelty may disturb the harmony. In his argument about civilization Whitehead remarks, “given the vigour of adventure, sooner or later the leap of imagination reaches beyond the safe limits of the epoch” (ibid.). The second problem consists in the alienation. The words “being one actuality in a world of actualities” can connote that there is a possibility for one individual to find himself/herself in an exclusive world which treats him/her as a small and trivial one. I will discuss about both problems later; now I point out that there is one common problem behind both. That is, the problem of finitude or limitation of individual existence. We realize that our existence is neither eternal nor complete; we become ourselves and perish inevitably; our projects often fail to accomplish the purposes; we are actually limited, and yet we cannot escape from our own limited conditions. This realization brings us to the brink of an abyss which Whitehead calls “the awful ultimate fact, which is the human being, consciously alone with itself, for its own sake” (RM.16). What is emphasized here is the “solitariness” (ibid.) of “being one actuality in the world of actualities”. All actual entities realize their own individualities; and this means that they enjoy their particular sole existence, “and yet they suffer alone” (RM.88)<sup>(3)</sup>. However Whitehead shows that, in this lonely time when we stand alone, we are not standing out of the web of correlation of the world but rather facing the presenting world as a whole and appropriating it within us.

An interesting anecdote is told about him. One winter evening, Whitehead's house was a place for welcoming visitors and they made close conversations as usual. When the Bible became their topic, Whitehead said, "The Bible excels in its suggestion of infinitude". And then, as Price wrote, "Suddenly he stood and spoke with passionate intensity, *"Here we are with our finite beings and physical senses in the presence of a universe whose possibilities are infinite, and even though we may not apprehend them, those infinite possibilities are actualities."* He remained standing a moment, absorbed in his own thought then reseating himself continued, ..." ( "December 15, 1939", in L. Price, *op. cit.*, pp.130-131)

Whitehead remains standing alone in order to be willing to apprehend the universe along with its infinite possibilities with passionate intensity. I think this scene indicates the core of what he calls theory of prehension and concrescence. Every individual entity prehends the multiple elements of the universe so as to come to stand in itself alone in the universe. In short, we house in the world by housing the world in us.

The philosophy of organism describes this dynamic relation of the whole and the individual in terms of the alternating processes of concrescence and transition of the becoming of the actual entity while it prehends the various objects of the actual world. Each actual entity emerging each time is the activity of self-creation by prehending the data "provided by the antecedent functioning of the universe" (MT.151), and each of these is an occasion of experience with immediacy of the enjoyment of its own individuality. Furthermore, the actual entity that has completed its becoming loses its subjective immediacy and objectified itself as one datum among the multiple data for subsequent entities. In this way, the universe is full of the living occasions of experience in every detail and, in regard to such individual occasions, the universe is opened anew as a matrix-like place that generates and accepts them. The universe is such a productive and accepting matrix for every individual occasion. It is not a static, immovable place; it makes creative advance into novelty, and it requires a focal point for this creative advance. Its focal point is the very individual occasion it yields. The creative advance of the universe is enabled in the relation between the whole and the individuals. This relation is expressed in "the first Category of Explanation", which

asserts “[t]hat the actual world is a process, and that the process is the becoming of actual entities” (PR.22). What needs to be kept in mind is that the relation between the whole and the individual in the creative process is formed through both the “duration” in the process of concrescence from the whole to the individual and the “transition” in the process of the individual further adding to the whole. Whitehead says, “[t]here is no nature apart from transition, and there is no transition apart from temporal duration” (MT.152).

## 5. Rhythm of Becoming and Perishing

Therefore, the time theory of the philosophy of organism has two features. The first feature is temporal duration. It refers to an all-inclusive duration inherent in “a *here* and a *now*” (SMW.69) of the becoming of an actual entity in its subjective immediacy. Through the duration, “a *here* and a *now*” has “essential reference to other places and other times” (ibid.). That is to say, through the duration, all past events are objectified as multiple data and condensed into the unity of “a *here* and a *now*”. The achievement of individuality means self-transcendence and, in contrast here, all is inherent in the self in the process of achieving individuality. This integrated process is called “concrecence”. In this process of concrecence, the actual entity becomes itself. The actual entity is self-creative, and while being created through the “essential reference to other places and other times”, it creates itself through the active self-determination, through functioning “in respect to its own determination” (PR.25). My being “*here* and *now*” is created by the world and creates itself, and through this self-creation, it itself creates the world it lives in. In this active self-creativity, the intensity of experience of the self exists; there is an existential meaning of the self-realization that contributes to the creative advance of the world or, in other word, a cosmological significance of the realization of the individual value embodying the holistic value of the universe.

On the other hand, the second feature of Whitehead’s process philosophy is the insight obtained from Locke’s phraseology “perpetually perishing”. The moment of the ongoing value realization perishes perpetually when the realization is achieved<sup>(4)</sup>. Whitehead notes the following:

...actual entities ‘perpetually perish’ subjectively, but are immortal objectively. Actuality in perishing acquires objectivity, while it loses subjective immediacy. (PR.29)

This suggests a sort of weakness and fragility of self-realized actual entities in spite of the completion of their individualities in the end of the process of becoming. By losing its subjective immediacy and perishing perpetually, the actual entity loses creativity. At that time, the process of becoming ceases and the actual entity comes to be. Therefore, perishing means a transition from an unsettled, undetermined becoming to an unchanging, determined being, and it also means that an actual entity which is directed to become itself by the final cause turns into an efficient cause so as to give its particular character to the creativity which is urging other entities to become themselves. For objects there is no loss with the passage of time; they only go away from each “here and now” in which the creativity activates novel becoming (cf. PR.154, 347). However, the subjective immediacy of their experiences cannot be recovered. Here, lies the finitude of the existence of self.

What the two aspects of time theory—transition and concrescence—show is the fluency of the world in which novelty is constantly created and in which without staying within the created thing creativity transits towards the next moment of creation. This is the alternating, rhythmic relation between the process of concrescence and the process of transition. In the former process, based on the background of a grave mass of various given elements of the actual world, one actual entity appears in the foreground as a novel focal point into which those various elements are integrated. In the latter process of transition, the actual entity, which comes to embody in itself the general value in its particular fashion, comes to be accepted as a focal point within the whole harmony and then turns itself into an element of this holistic background for the purpose of new creation. The process of concrescence aims to achieve the internal harmony of the individual entity in which the various elements have become integrated into one. However, this realization of value does not accomplish an eternal harmony.



The duration for which the creativity works ceases in the final phase of satisfaction. In the process of transition, creativity transits from the “here and now” to events coming in the future. At that time, the immediacy of what is achieved “here and now” perpetually perishes, and then the actual entity functions as an immortal objects in the following moments of creation. Every time the achieved harmony vanishes. The sole particular value realized at that time and at that place resounds in the world like an echo and from this resonance emerges the becoming of novel actual entities.

In this way, the actual world, which echoes within itself the values realized by entities that have passed away, makes the novel emerging entities reside in it by opening itself as a matrix-like place for these to realize anew their proper values. One can say that Nature Alive is such a relativistic and dynamic world in which entities that have perpetually perished are present as echoes in every “here and now” so as to constitute the real internal components of an occasion of experience in each “here and now”. Through this process of what appears “here and now” from what have perpetually passed away, the blood filling Nature Alive flows from the past to the present and from present to the moments of the new becoming.

The specific feature of Whitehead’s metaphysical system is that becoming is paired with perishing. “...the actual entity ‘perishes’ in the passage of time” (PR.147). At this time, for the actual entity which has accomplished its becoming process, what has perished is its subjective immediacy of the experience in the “here and now”. “...[N]o subject experiences twice” (PR.29). Whitehead’s insight here is directed into the finitude of actual entities, that is to say, into the death of my being “here and now”. In other words, in every moment life is paired with death. My being “here and now” is constituted by my becoming in the duration of this moment, and, along with the completion of my subjective individuality, my being loses its subjective immediacy of experience perpetually and turns to be objectified. The essential pairing of becoming and perishing means the insight into the weakness of the actual entity: it is incomplete in its becoming process and that it dies away as a subject when it accomplishes its becoming process. The birth and death of the actual entity is an event occurring in the moment and the everyday experience of being myself is constructed through a series of

micro and rhythmic processes of becoming and perishing in the moment. Such series are called “nexûs” (*pl.*)(PR.20, 22, 24). The life and death of the actual entity in every moment is precisely the central theme of the philosophy of organism. In “Preface” of *Process and Reality*, Whitehead notes, “[t]he positive doctrine of these lectures is concerned with the becoming, the being, and the relatedness of ‘actual entities’” (PR. xiii), and continues that this theme is around life and death and around immortality. He says:

All relatedness has its foundation in the relatedness of actualities; and such relatedness is wholly concerned with the appropriation of the dead by the living subject the *s*, with ‘objective immortality,’ whereby what is divested of its own living immediacy becomes a real component in other living immediacies of becoming. This is the doctrine that the creative advance of the world is the becoming, the perishing, and the objective immortalities of those things which jointly constitute stubborn fact. (cf. PR.xiii-xiv)

The actuality of life which Whitehead investigates is a process, that is to say, the fact that the events of life and death are occurring in every moment. Through the basic point of view of *Nature Alive*, the philosophy of organism understands the world as the multiplicity of events constituted by the life and death of each sole individual in each moment. Understanding *Nature Alive* as a rhythmic process of becoming and perishing means that in the process of being myself in the “here and now” life and death form a pair and at this time death is not the end of the process of the actual world but rather the origin of the future process and further, the death of the various occasions of experience in the past provides a primitive activity that gives life to my being “here and now”. In that moment, the new ‘I’ emerges accepting the death of preceding entities.

The actual entity that has lost its subjective immediacy is given as one of the various objective conditions for the subject that is newly becoming. This is what Whitehead calls “objectification”. The actual entity that has been objectified no longer

realizes itself, and yet we must say that it no longer perishes. It attains its objective immortality. The actual entity that has realized its own being finishes its becoming process and functions continuously as one object that contributes to the process of becoming of other actual entities.

Nature Alive is a world interwoven with the events of life and death. It has in itself various centers activated by what are alive and various echoes and traces of what are dead. Here, creativity characterized concretely by the values realized by the past entities drives the process of becoming to myself in the “here and now”. Past events that have become objectively immortal turned into the blood of life filling up Nature Alive and flow into the present of the ‘I’ that is becoming in the “here and now”.

Whitehead understands the process of the universe as a flux of rhythmic becoming and perishing in which all the various events in the temporal world realize their inherent values in their becoming and fall into the universe in their perishing. Based on this understanding the cosmological insight of “the creative advance of the world into novelty” is systematized. What poses to be a problem here is the fact that the actual world is a world of flux in which there is passage of time, that is to say, the fact that the world is filled with the pathos of loss and separation caused by the prompt perishing of those which are loved and of those which are familiar.

## 6. Paradox of Permanence and Flux

Whitehead considers the flux of the temporal world to be “evil” (PR.340), because it never remains permanent but merely repeats becoming and perishing. The loss of the immediacy of irreplaceable values in every moment and their blurring into obscurity into the echoes of the past—in other words, the loss of values—is the “ultimate evil in the temporal world” (ibid.).

However, at another point, Whitehead says that the order that is permanently repeating itself as the same is contrary to the true nature of life. When the harmony that is realized at every moment is repeated in order to maintain itself, it loses its advancement and freshness, anaesthetizes the sense of value, and falls into decadence. Whitehead expresses this state of the stifling of the throbbing life through the

repetition of the same thing as “to be embalmed alive” (PR.339). Whitehead describes the repetition of the same harmonized order as following:

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order. Life refuses to be embalmed alive. The more prolonged the halt in some unrelieved system of order, the greater the crash of the dead society. (PR.339)

The speculation to construct an existential-cosmological system faces difficulties at this point. That is to say, although the world is a process of realization of values, it nevertheless seems to show that it consists of both the aspect of being in a constant flux without abiding and at the same time the aspect of being willing to lose nothing. Whitehead calls this difficulty a “paradox.”

The world is thus faced by the paradox that, at least in its higher actualities, it craves for novelty and yet is haunted by terror at the loss of the past, with its familiarities and its loved ones. It seeks escape from time in its character of ‘perpetually perishing.’ ... Yet conjointly with this terror, the present as mere unrelieved presentation of the past assumes the character of a horror of the past, rejection of it, revolt: (PR.340)

The “paradox,” which the world as Nature Alive is confronted with, appears as a conflict of two principles in the actuality of every organism. Whitehead notes the following.

There are two principles inherent in the very nature of things, recurring in some particular embodiments whatever field we explore—the spirit of change, and the spirit of conservation. There can be nothing real without both. (SMW.201)

The spirit of change and the spirit of conservation respond to the two aspects of the universe—the becoming-perishing the real nature of which exists in flux and the

harmonic order the real nature of which exists in permanence. The universe which reconciles these two opposing principles and embraces both is the important issue in the philosophy of organism.

In order to describe the universe as the process of value-realization, it is not enough to consider only one aspect of order or change. It has to be a description that includes the two species of fluency, namely concrescence and transition in equal measure. The process of the universe is not just an immutable order or an earnest changing but a rhythmic shift “to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order” (PR.339), that is to say, a rhythmic “order entering upon novelty” (ibid.). For the existential-cosmological description of the universe, it is important to examine the basic problem of why this process of the universe does not collapse as a whole. Why does the world not stop at being a crystalized, static order? Or why does the world not fall into a chaotic, continuous flux? This is a question about the essence of the universe and at the same time a question about the essence of life and a civilizing society. The basic question that constitutes the foundation of this query is, according to Whitehead, “the question whether the process of the temporal world passes into the formulation of other actualities, bound together in an order in which novelty does not mean loss” (PR.340).

Change is essential, and conservativeness is something extrinsic to the nature of the universe. Whitehead said, “Advance or Decadence are the only choices offered to mankind. The pure conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe.” (AI. 274). However, it also belongs to the depth of human spirit to call to the passing-away time in flux to stop and stay with me. Civilization has been built on human experience that feels the intense contrast between permanence and flux. Quoting the Hymn “Abide with Me,” Whitehead delves into the two kinds of mentalities, namely, the prayer for permanence and the actual experience of flux (PR.209, 338)<sup>(5)</sup>.

Abide with me;

Fast falls the eventide.

In contrast to the aspiration for permanence in the first line, the second line expresses

the actual experience of the passage of time. In this verse, the spirit of conservation that hopes for the eternity of the moment of harmony which is present in the background of the evening scene, and the spirit of change that senses the unavoidable, continual change in the looming twilight, both enhance and set off each other without separating from each other, and infinitely heighten intensity of the value-experience in the “here and now”. Here, two types of senses of wonder—wondering at the harmony of all things and wondering at the flux of all things—co-exist along with the feeling of awe that fills everything from the foundation of the existence of the individual self to the whole world. The attachment to the harmony accomplished at every moment and the aspiration for permanence is the origin of the value-realization of the organism that tries in vain to carve the passage of time with timeless order.

On the other hand, all sentient beings have the spirit of exploration, of trying, and of adventure. From a conservative point of view, the adventure of going beyond the established order maybe viewed as evil. However, Whitehead emphasizes that the present real condition is the creative process of Nature Alive. He remarks as follows:

A static value, however serious and important, becomes unendurable by its appalling monotony of endurance. The soul cries aloud for release into change. It suffers the agonies of claustrophobia. The transitions of humour, wit, irreverence, play, sleep, and—above all—of art are necessary for it. (SMW.202)

In spite of the aspiration for permanence, the preservation of the permanent order is contrary to the essence of life. Amidst the unavoidable flux, the aspiration for permanence reveals the “individual self and its signification in the universe”; in contrast, amidst the peremptory preservation of the static order the aspiration for novelty reveals the “signification of every individual self in the universe”.

What animates the rhythm of Nature Alive in the universe is the contrast between the spirit of conservation that aspires for the permanent preservation of the moment of harmony in the midst of the all-inclusive flux of the changing universe and the spirit of change that fervently aspires for novelty in the midst of the dominant order of the

universe. Maturity means a reconciling mentality of the two aspirations, the dearest call for permanence and the fervent aspiration for novelty. However, how do these two reconcile in our daily experience, in the civilized societies in a coherent and logical existential-cosmological scheme?

## 7. Contrast between Order and Novelty

The philosophy of organism suggests the idea of the “contrast” of the opposites between incompatibles. Seen from the perspective of the spirit of conservation that defends the old and conventional order, realization of novelty may be considered destructive, but from the point of view of the spirit of change that aspires for new creation it can be seen as an active effort that realizes novelty in the world. Between the spirit of conservation and the spirit of change, good and evil are relative. The conflict between these two spirits, through which one may destroy and exhaust the other, leads to occurrence of stagnation due to the repetition of the same or of the sudden destruction of the settled order with rapid change in the process of the universe. In the contrast, both realize values and set off each other enhancing the intensity of the mutual experience of value and through this the harmony and the creativity of the universe is realized. What is required of the civilizing world is “a real contrast between what has been and what may be” (AI.279); that is to say, for the creative advance of the world, it is necessary that the world as a whole shows both its acceptance to embrace the novel elements born in the conventional harmony without any exclusion and at the same time its plasticity to change softly without complete collapse and ruin of harmony caused by the unseasonable emergence of novelty.

Whitehead discovers a kind of acceptance and flexibility in the universe that realizes harmony in every moment while advancing creatively. The tolerance by the settled order, which is required to be generous with respect to the tendency of novelty that goes beyond the order itself, constitutes the “goodness of the world”. Whitehead remarks:

But the two elements [i.e., novelty and order] must not really be disjoined. It

belongs to the goodness of the world that its settled order should deal tenderly with the faint discordant light of the dawn of another age. (PR.339; [ ] are added by the author.)

It is, however, a goodness that is accompanied by tragedy. Although the “good” world is filled with the fervent aspiration for novelty, it is, at the same time, haunted by fear of losing the familiar and loved world (cf. PR.340). Tragedy refers to the fact that remorseless fate swallows what life is attached to and clings to, in other words, the value that is realized and enjoyed. According to Whitehead, “the essence of dramatic tragedy is not unhappiness. It resides in the solemnity of the remorseless working of things.” (SMW.10). With respect to the aspiration for everlasting harmony, the tragic world is indifferent and intolerant. In spite of the aspiration for permanence seen in the prayer of “Abide with me”, each moment of value-realization passes away and “fate, remorseless and indifferent”, urges “a tragic incident to its inevitable issue” (ibid.). When trying to understand that the world is tragic, life or the civilized society is torn between the aspiration for permanence and the “fate, remorseless and indifferent” of the world in flux.

This paradox cannot be compromised through the conflict between the spirit of change and the spirit of conservation by emphasizing each respective strength but barely reconciled through the spirit of “weakness”, in which both the spirits become aware that one of these conflicting spirits is so incomplete that it solely cannot realize any individual value as a focal point of realizing the holistic value of the universe. It belongs to the goodness of the creatively advancing world, to be tolerant for the novelty emerging from the realized order, and to open up to the future so as to realize novel values while accepting the past. It also belongs to the plasticity of the individual organism as a focal point of the value-realization. This is the intensity within the weakness. The spirit of “weakness” embraces the paradox between the aspiration for permanence and the craving for novelty, between the terror of loss of the beloved familiar world and the horror of “mere unrelieved preservation of the past” (PR340). Instead of the struggle between two conflicting strong spirits, the spirit of weakness



rather suggests that their finitude and incompleteness need their mutual complements and backing to each other so as to give rise to a fresh harmony between the old settled order and the creatively realized novelty. The tolerant spirit knowing its own weakness can realize profounder values than either one spirit clinging to the strength of its desire can do. In other word, truly creative intense values are not realized through striving of one strongest agent but rather through interaction of two weaker agents. The creation of these values means the change of conflicts between opposite things to their contrast, and this change activates the sense to enjoy such contrasted opposites. With the sense of enjoyment, we can accept every difference and enjoy ourselves in diversity. Whitehead's terminology "enjoyment" implies such flexible sense to enjoy diversity. We can say that the awareness of weakness, in this sense, nurtures the spirit of tolerance that becomes the focal point of the individual realization of the holistic value in the modern pragmatic world in which good and evil is relative.

## 8. Conclusion

This study shows that by bringing conflict in contrast, giving meaning to the individual within the whole, and renewing the whole within the individual lies the dynamism of the creative activities of the world that continue to realize harmony and the focal point of this is not the strong spirit of intensifying the conflict but the spirit of tolerance that recognizes weakness. The process of the realization of individual value is an adventure in each moment, and it introduces novelty to the inherited old order: the old order accepts this adventure without eliminating it and tries to advance towards novelty by making each adventurous individual as a focal point for its advance. Through these acceptance and advance, we can say that the age of maturity, civilized society opens up.

Now, we return to the beginning of this paper. At March 11, 2011, we were not only suffered by the terrible earthquake and tsunami but also allowed for the severe accident of the nuclear power plant to happen, which caused the suffering of people and living things for several generations in the future long after we perished away perpetually. The severe impacts and influences caused by the nuclear devastation

will remain for a long time in the future. We must continue making effort to make those destroying influences minimal, and at the same time, we must include in those negative inheritances to our descendants our dearest aspiration for them to live at home in the peaceful creative world. We must realize our weakness and tendency to make mistakes; and what is required here is a philosophy—a philosophy based on the awareness of our own weakness and finitude; a deep philosophy accompanied with the dearest aspiration for the new creation in the harmonious world.

To conclude this presentation, I would like to cite from Whitehead. “Philosophy is an attempt to express the infinity of the universe in terms of the limitations of language” (ESP.14).

## Notes

- (1) This is a paper for a short lecture at the Department of Philosophy, the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, in March 11, 2016. I express my sincere gratitude to the chair Prof. Ronald Bontekoe and Prof. Steve Odin for the opportunity to present this paper.
- (2) Whitehead referred to A. E. Taylor's translation (Plato: *Timaeus and Critias*, 1929, translation and introduction by A. E. Taylor, Routledge, 2013). He quoted from this translation with free changes. The following sentences appear in p.49 of this translation: “For it is always receiving all things and has never anywhere a shape in any way like any of the things that enter it. For it is there as a natural matrix for all things, moved and variously figured by the things that enter it, but through their agency takes on divers appearances at divers times”.
- (3) Whitehead remarks: “The actual world, the world of experiencing, and of thinking, and of physical activity, is a community of many diverse entities; and these entities contribute to, or derogate from, the common value of the total community. At the same time, these actual entities are, for themselves, their own value, individual and separable. They add to the common stock and yet they suffer alone. The world is a scene of solitariness in community.” (RM.88)
- (4) See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 2: Chapter 14: 1.

- (5) Whitehead quotes here a popular hymn “Abide with Me, Fast Falls the Eventide”, written by Henry Francis Lyte, 1847 (?) and composed by William Henry Monk, 1861.

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## 「弱さ」の哲学 —ホワイトヘッドの実存論的宇宙論—

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現代の日本社会は急激な少子高齢化による人口減少の中で、震災や台風、豪雨などの自然災害に対する脆弱さを露呈している。本論文は、現代の日本社会がこうした弱さを見せながらも、その弱さや壊れやすさと向きあうことのうちに日本文化に固有の強さがある、ということを示す試みである。日本文化の中には、おのれを知り、おのれの弱さを知ることが、人間の内的強度を高めるという考え方があって、これが日本思想の土台になっている。現代の文明社会は、科学の発展と技術革新による理性の勝利を目指すという選択肢とは別の、人間の有限性と不完全性の自覚と、この文明社会は過ちを犯しうること、私たちの社会的活動が自然に対しても自分たち自身に対しても予測できない影響を与えることの自覚から再出発することを求められている。本論文では、「私たちが世界とともに何ができるのか、という限界」(AI78)の決定から再出発するべきだというホワイトヘッドの言葉にしたがって、この再出発のための原点となる考え方を、「弱さの哲学」として提示することを試みる。

現代社会にとって必要なのは、自然を改変したり人々の対立を激化させるような「強い」精神ではなく、人間としての「弱さ」を自覚して、自然の営みに調和した生活を追究し、他者に対して寛容な受容的態度で臨み、多様性の中に自己自身を位置づけ、他者との違いや世界の多様性を楽しむような享受と寛容の精神である。「享受 (enjoyment:楽しむということ)」を強調するホワイトヘッドの形而上学において、そのような精神が示されている。

キーワード：ホワイトヘッド, 弱さ, 寛容, 東日本大震災

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