Tattva
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Editorial

Tattva, Journal of Philosophy, is a 'new-year' gift of Christ University to the lovers of wisdom (*sophia*): students and researchers, learners and scholars, social scientists and policy makers, and men and women who are committed to preserve an imaginative bonding between 'knowledge' and 'zest' of life in all its manifestations. The splendour of the gift amply bears testimony to the rich milestones in the annals of Christ College, such as the conferring of the status of 'deemed-to-be-university,' the launching of M.Phil and Ph.D programmes by the Centre for Research, and the organization of the 7th International Whitehead Conference (7th IWC 2009).

Christ College was founded in 1969 with a view of creating a new epoch in the field of higher education. Within four decades of its existence, Christ College has become the most preferred educational institution in the city, with a rare distinction of being the first institution in Karnataka to be accredited with A+ by NAAC for quality education, and in July 2008 it was conferred the status of 'deemed-to-be university' by the University Grants Commission. The establishment of the university readily paved the way for the institution of a Research Centre, and the launching of the research progarmmes, M.Phil and Ph.D. These research programmes provide, in the words of the Vice Chancellor, "an opportunity to engage in research constructively, to cultivate an aptitude to explore creatively, and to apply critically our learning for the emergence of a new consciousness and 'constant unveiling of reality'." The organization of the 7th International Whitehead Conference, which aims at bringing together scholars from all over the world to exchange their views and reviews, and to share their expertise and experiences, inspired by the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, mathematician, philosopher of science, and metaphysician, adds yet another feather in the university's cap.

It is in the context of Christ College becoming Christ University with its new research programmes and the organization of the 7th International Whitehead Conference 2009 that the PG Department of Philosophy, Christ University, conceived the launching of *Tattva*, Journal of Philosophy. Indeed *Tattva* is envisaged to facilitate a meaningful transaction of the findings of the researchers and scholars, to establish a legacy of research literature and to create an academic environment for multi-disciplinary discourses in the field of social sciences. The first volume of *Tattva* is dedicated to the general theme of the 7th IWC 2009: "Process, Religion and Society".

Part II

"Process" is a term that has been used in various contexts with different meanings and nuances. In the common parlance, process means 'a method of doing or making something'. In this wider sense, I view "process thought" as 'a method of inquiry into a background frame of understanding,' and process thus has become 'a way of doing philosophy and theology'.

"Process" may also be used to mean, 'a series of actions - conscious or unconscious - performed in order to make or achieve something'. Such a meaning of process can help us read into the basic concepts of process thought. These basic concepts are that the whole of everything is not made up of things, but of 'events', and that all events, however small they are, affect other events. In Whiteheadean language, the composite world of rocks, trees and humans are made up of the 'actual entities' through their essential interconnectedness. Whitehead thus describes the universe as "a solidarity of many actual entities,"[1] and process has come to mean 'a dynamic network of connections and interconnections leading to a creative synthesis'.

In philosophical circles, "process" refers to a comparatively new system, evolved through the works of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, which in its scope and depth rivals the so-called *philosophia perennis*. Indeed, one of the intellectual achievements of the twentieth century has been the emergence of a 'process alternative' to the metaphysics and philosophical theology of our classical tradition. Process, conceived as a network of relationships that are interdependent and mutually enriching, provides us with an adequate conceptuality - a metaphysical framework - for a profound understanding and meaningful interpretation of reality.

Although it has readily been labeled 'process' philosophy', Whitehead chose to name his philosophic scheme the "Philosophy of Organism".[2] The very phrase, "Philosophy of Organism," used by Whitehead to capture the tenor of his approach, reminds us of the significance of interconnectedness and interdependence which is to be found in any organic whole. The term 'process' has, however, been retained to identify this philosophical movement simply because it highlights the chief feature of this movement, namely, the primacy of change combined with the ultimacy of relationship.

Like Whitehead, Hartshorne has also identified his philosophy with other terms. He has spoken of his system as "societal realism" to stress that there is a plurality of

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1. A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, New York: Free Press, 1979, 40.

2. A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, xi.

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real entities intimately related. While describing his position on God, Hartshorne called himself a "panentheist"[3] to indicate his vision of the relation of God and the world. Accordingly, God is conceived both as affecting/enriching all other beings and as being affected or/and enriched by the world.

The biblical statement, *Deus est caritas* (I Jn 4:8), captures this fundamental relatedness of God with the world. If God is love, who could be the eternal 'thou' of that love?, asks Walter Kasper.[4] Hence, God would no longer be thought of without human beings or without the world. That is why the God of love "pitched his tent amidst us" and became "Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us'." The mystery of incarnation is the process of God becoming man and heaven coming down to the earth. By reason of this reciprocal relation, as Whitehead observes, "the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world."[5] If God is viewed in 'process-relational' terms, the cross of Christ can be interpreted as proof of God's love for the world: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Whitehead's vision of God as "great companion - the fellow sufferer who understands"[6] resonates this biblical reality.

An important implication of God's relatedness to the world is that the world has the opportunity to "contribute to the colour and richness" of divine life. The idea of God's on-going enrichment is not merely a logical deduction, but it matches with the religious idea as well. This religious idea finds expression in such phrases as "serving God," and "to the glory of God." For instance, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches explicitly that wo/man "was created to serve and love God" (§ 358). In an important passage, Hartshorne states that "to 'serve' is to confer a benefit, in precisely the sense that the served will to some extent depend upon the server for that benefit."[7] The testimonies of holy women and men and the witness of the Scriptures attest to the intrinsic value of our human undertakings. Indeed, it's a consoling thought that the whole of creation, and we the humans in particular, can contribute to the ever-growing divine treasury of values in a special way. Yes, our final and inclusive end is to contribute to the divine life.

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3. Charles Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process: Studies in Metaphysics and Religion*, Glencoe: The Free Press, 1953, 25.

4. Walter Kasper, Theology *and Church*, London: SCM Press, 1989, 30.

5. A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

6. A.N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

7. Charles Hartshorne, "The Dipolar Conception of Deity," *Review of Metaphysics* 21/2 (1967), 274.

Part III

In tune with the Whiteheadian understanding of 'process', the contributors to this volume of *Tattva*, Journal of Philosophy, have addressed various issues of life with scholarship and imagination, and have come up with profound implications and applications of process thought.

The paper on "Process, Religion and Society" by John Cobb Jr. dwells on the very theme of the 7th International Whitehead Conference, jointly organized by Christ University and Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, India. In his view, the process philosophy, with its emphasis on the 'primacy of relationships', analyzing unit events, or 'actual occasions' into their prehensions, which are the relations that constitute them, renews the effort of traditional philosophies to understand the world comprehensively. This alternative understanding of reality has significant implications for religious thought, enabling us to return to the biblical emphasis on love, recognizing that love makes even God 'vulnerable'. This emphasis on love (or relationship) affects our thinking about society, awakening in us awareness that increasing the well-being of the community is the best way of helping the persons, rather than aiming at simply increasing the quantity of goods.

The Indian answers, as proposed by Ramanuja, a philosopher-sage, to the question: "What is the relationship between God and world?" form the main body of the paper, "God-world Polarity: A Paradigm for Reconciliation," by the Vedantin, Augustine Thottakara. He is of the conviction that the greatest contribution of Ramanuja to Indian thought is his specific conception of world as 'God's attributive body', which is not static, but dynamic and in constant heterogeneous and homogeneous movements. This 'body-soul relationship (*sarira-sariri bhava*), as Thottakara conceives, has various philosophical and spiritual implications: (i) The human being is not a 'supernatural' being incarnated to conquer, dominate and exploit this earth, but is an integral part of this planet, intimately related to all the beings in an inseparable existential bond as part of God's body. (ii) The awareness of humans that they form part of the divine body engenders in them loving devotion (*bhakti*) to God, which in turn enables the seekers to shake off the bondage and enter into the state of liberation.

"God beyond Orthodoxy," by Philip Clayton, provides us with a relatively brief introduction to process thought, along with various affirmations and involvements the process philosophy would imply for our theory, practice and experience of the world. This process of reflection, practice and activism, for Clayton, is open-minded, enabling us to conceive of a distinct kind of community, a distinct way of relating to other persons and living things, and a distinct understanding of one's self and

one's own beliefs. The paper ends with an optimistic note that the process philosophy, in due course of time, would pave the way for a process economics, a process environmentalism, a process understanding of religious communities, a process psychology and a process political theory.

Herman Greene, in his article "Whitehead, Cosmology and Civilization," offers a reflection on Whitehead's proposition that "in each age of the world distinguished by high activity there will be found at its culmination and among the agencies leading to that culmination, some profound cosmological outlook, implicitly accepted, impressing its own type upon the current springs of action." The thesis of the paper is that Whitehead's cosmology and the values derived from his cosmology, in particular, of truth, beauty, adventure and peace, have an important role to play in bringing into being a constructively postmodern society. According to him the primary challenge facing contemporary civilization is that of moving into an ecological phase, and he concludes his paper with a discussion on the role of Whitehead's cosmology in enabling and supporting this ecological phase of civilization.

Zhihe Wang, in his article, "The Second Handshake: Constructive Postmodernism in China Today," traces the history of the new movement called "constructive postmodern movement," which engages in the study of Whitehead with a re-claiming of Chinese classical traditions, and a renewed focus on the practical problems of China today. As Wang acknowledges, the translation of *Reenchantment of Science* (edited by David Griffin) made people realize an alternative kind of 'postmodernism', which opened the way for the translation and publication of various process writings. Moreover, the 4th International Whitehead Conference, held in Beijing in 2002, aroused the interest of the people in constructive postmodernism. With a sense of pride, Wang narrates some of the achievements and impacts of constructive postmodernism on the contemporary Chinese academia and on the vision and mission of the people of China. However, the author admits that, despite its many advantages, the constructive postmodernism has not become the mainstream of Chinese thought.

In his paper, "Whitehead and Higher Education," Thomas Chathamparampil explores the implications and applications of process thought to education in general, and to the three key dimensions that propel higher education system in particular: university leadership, university governance and university academic strategy. Dwelling upon the insights of Whitehead on education, Chathamparampil explains how the universities, as centres of learning and research, should preserve the connection between knowledge and the zest of life, by uniting the young and the old, the students and teachers, in the imaginative consideration of learning.

Jason W. Brown, in his article "Subjectivity and Truth," probes the meaning of Whitehead's saying, "The task of philosophy is to recover the *totality* obscured by the selection," through an interpretation of mental content, drawing a contrast between philosophy and process thought, particularly microgenesis, where the theory of the mental state is fundamental. In microgenesis, the direction of development and iteration of the mental state is from the core self to conscious mental content and external objects. For Brown, major differences between process thought and substance theory stem from such foundational issues as: (i) how objects, as segments of events, precipitate in the mind (ideas) and in the world (objects), (ii) why we perceive objects, not the change that lays them down, including the transition from the self to its objects, and (iii) how, in substance theory, change occurs across the sharp edges of object demarcations. His contention is that a theory of becoming, not substantialism, is the key to unification of internal and external perspectives.

May *Tattva*, Journal of Philosophy, be an epitome of Christ University's passionate search for knowledge and wisdom, as a premier educational institution of India! May *Tattva*, Journal of Philosophy, be a 'published form', for the faculty of universities, as schools of education and research, of its contributions of thought, to be estimated not in number of words, but in 'weight of thought' (Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*)! May *Tattva*, Journal of Philosophy, provide the students — lovers of wisdom — with materials to elevate and ennoble, through reading and reflection, their thoughts, words and deeds, and thus enable them to construct an 'intellectual vision' of a new world, and to preserve the 'zest' of life!

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