Synthetic organic chemistry is closely related to chemistry, engineering, pharmaceutical and agricultural sciences. To advance this field further, in addition to improvements in the system, I believe that the activities of leading chemists, i.e., giants, are very important. This conclusion is drawn from my experiences as described below during my 40 years in pursuit of organic synthesis.

In the early 1980s, when I was then in my early 30s, Prof. Herbert C. Brown (Purdue) sent me an official letter politely requesting that I send him a set of our papers on the chemoselective reduction of esters with NaBH₄ in t-BuOH(THF) MeOH. Postcards containing reprint requests were common then, and I was very surprised and delighted that I received this exceptional letter from a giant in my field.

In 1986, during the development of chiral catalysts, when we published the diastereoselective synthesis of monophenylprolinol, Prof. E. J. Corey (Harvard) sent me an official letter politely asking for the detailed procedure. We sent him the manuscript of the full paper together with a proof of the catalytic enantioselective addition of dialkylzincs to aldehydes using the above and diphenylprolinol derivatives. In their later paper on the enantioselective alkylation of aldehydes, the schemes of our catalysts were cited.

These two scientific responses from two giants gave me self-confidence and significantly encouraged this then young chemist.

Since 1990, we have dealt with asymmetric autocatalysis and the origin of homochirality. On December 31st, 1999, I received a handwritten congratulatory fax from Prof. Albert Eschenmoser (Zurich, Scripps) about our just published paper on asymmetric autocatalysis triggered by chiral quartz. He described how he had seen our results and exploded with enthusiasm. He also said that the paper will be remembered for over 100 years.

During the study on spontaneous absolute asymmetric synthesis by using asymmetric autocatalysis, in 2002, I received an e-mail from Prof. Kurt Mislow (Princeton) that he was going to write a commentary on absolute asymmetric synthesis and asking me to send him our papers. We sent him all of our papers on asymmetric autocatalysis and absolute asymmetric synthesis, including the Japanese patent on the subject. When his paper was published, I was very surprised, excited and pleased. All of our papers had been cited in complimentary contexts with his keen insights. Moreover, the reaction was named the Soai reaction.

Profs Teruaki Mukaiyama (Tokyo) and Ernest L. Eliel (North Carolina) were my mentors at the graduate and postdoc levels, respectively. Both mentors gave me significant stimuli. I have also been stimulated by my excellent collaborators.

Although the above are my limited personal experiences, the scientific responses and stimuli from giants are very encouraging, activating and attract others; therefore, their activities accelerate the society. One of the responsibilities of giants is, in addition to their own research, to motivate others based on their scientific activities. Society expects that more and more giants will appear.