Dōgen and Nishida on Self: An Introduction to Analytic Asian Philosophy

Dōgen (1200-1253) and Kitarō Nishida (1870-1945) are among the most prominent Japanese philosophers, one of whose central questions is: what is self? They tried to answer this question from perspectives of East Asian Buddhistic tradition, especially those of Zen or Chan. Unlike some Buddhists, they don't deny existence of self. Rather they seek to articulate an idea of self, or true self as they put it, that is free from self-centeredness and any form of attachment to itself and anything else. For them, self is also essentially embodied in the sense that self is nothing but a physical body, and only through its somatic practice, it can emancipate itself from its self-centeredness. In their philosophical endeavor, both Dōgen and Nishida dare to violate some of the basic Western logical principles such as the law of non-contradiction: for them, reality including self is contradictory. Based on this diagnosis, Nishida tried to establish an alternative logic to the Western standard one, that can incorporate true contradictions. This talk will explore their philosophies of true self, reality and logic, by reconstructing them in terms of contemporary tools of analytic philosophy and non-classical logic.

This talk provides an example of Analytic Asian Philosophy, an emerging field in contemporary philosophy, which aims to reinterpret Asian philosophy, traditional or modern, in the light of contemporary analytic philosophy and logic, and to revive them as viable philosophical options for today's discussions.

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