Nishida's Logic of Creation

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Abstract

Inspired by Daoist theories of cosmogenesis, particularly by that of Wang Bi, logic is an expression of reality for Nishida Kitaro, a leading figure in the Kyoto School. Unlike Western philosophy, which understands Being as the beginning of all things, cosmogenesis for Nishida originates from Absolute Nothingness, or Basho. In this essay, I will first articulate the logic of Basho through predicate logic and through Hegel's Concrete Universal, an important influence for Nishida. Secondly, I will describe the influence of Wang-Bi on Nishida's formulation of the Basho. Criticizing the Daoists' emphasis on passivity as a way to maintain reality, Nishida advocates the active creation of reality through visual perception and art-making.

I will first explain the metaphysics of Basho through an explanation of its predicate logic. For Matsumaru, the logic of Basho is predicated upon the transcendentalization of the subject and predicate, which leads to their negation in the space of Basho and their mutual identification. I will also explain D.T. Suzuki's identification of Basho with the Buddhist logic of *Soku-hi*.

Nishida's idea of Absolute Nothingness is theorized in reference to Hegel. For Hegel, the concrete universal, or the absolute idea is "the last predicate, the most subsumptive predicate which encompasses everything" (Masao) and yet, Hegel's the absoluter Geist, still an object of judgement, cannot defy all predication and conceptualization and become a predicate. Unlike Hegel's concrete universal, Nishida's absolute nothingness is absolutely indeterminable. It is the final predicate or the place for all things.

Being the place for all things, absolute nothingness for Nishida is thus a generative force that is the source of being and non-being. Unlike Daoism's passive theory of creation, creativity for Nishida is the generation of reality, which is the creation of forms through "logization of reality." Through the body as a tool, Nishida prioritizes the "poiesis" of reality through visual perception (Sugimara).

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Biography

Joy Zhu is a PhD student in UCLA Architecture and Urban Design. Her research is focused on the philosophy of geology and its intersections with architecture. She is also interested in East Asian philosophy.