

What if Wittgenstein could speak Japanese or even read Nishida?

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This talk is intended to offer a tentative comparative study between Wittgenstein, the most studied 20th century analytical philosopher, and Nishida, the leading philosopher of "Kyoto School", i.e., a group of Kyoto-centered Japanese philosophers who "are themselves inherently dialogical, commuting between Eastern and Western philosophical and religious traditions" (Davis& Schroeder & Wirth eds. 2011, p.2), although there is no historical evidence to show that they had any philosophical communication between each other during their lifetime. The feasibility of this comparison study lies in the fact that Wittgenstein shares the same philosophical target with Nishida: the uncritical employment of the subject-predicate format in the philosophical studies. More precisely, from the perspective of both early and later Wittgenstein, the existence of the signs of the 's-p' form in the western language does not guarantee that this form should hold as a metaphysical fact, hence, any seriously conducted philosophical inquiry should be immune to the seduction of the 's-p' form imbedded in the Indo-European language. Hence, Wittgenstein takes pain to seek for *a logically fine-grained language* which is not of the 's-p' form in his *Tractatus*, and when the possibility of finding such a language was revealed as delusion in his philosophical transition, he turns to seek for *a natural language* which is already without the trouble-making 's-p' form. If, as I will further argue, Wittgenstein could have a chance to study Japanese, he would know that Japanese is exactly such a language which can be employed a perfect linguistic tool for his philosophical purpose in his later philosophy. This observation is motivated by Katehiro Kanaya's cognitive-linguistic insight that Japanese is a language formulated "from the bug's perspective", i.e., a language which is born to bear many salient features identified in Nishida's philosophy, such as the "fusion both of the subjectivity and objectivity". In this sense, if properly reconstructed in the light of contemporary cognitive linguistics, Nishida's Logic of Basho can be consequently viewed as the Japanese counterpart of Wittgenstein's philosophy. Such reconstruction, as I expect, will also bring the study of Nishida's philosophy into a broader picture of analytical philosophy.

