

“PROBLEM-SOLVING, IS IT ENOUGH TO BE A PHILOSOPHY?” POPPER’S CONCEPT OF PHILOSOPHY

Yim Taesoon

Graduate Student, Assumption University, Thailand

What is the meaning of philosophy? According to Encyclopedia Britannica, ‘philosophy’ (from Greek, by way of Latin, philosophia, "love of wisdom") means ‘the critical examination of the grounds for fundamental beliefs and an analysis of the basic concepts employed in the expression of such beliefs’. Philosophical inquiry is a central element in the intellectual history of many historical civilizations. But since the beginning of the 20th century many of the leading philosophers have claimed that “philosophy is dead”, for the questions raised in philosophical discussions will never be answered.

In the 20th century, western philosophy divided into two deeply opposed camps, the English-speaking "analytic" philosophers and the European or "continental" philosophers. It doesn't matter much here how they differ, and how recent bridge-building initiatives have fared. One reason why philosophy seems to have died is that major figures from both camps, who agree on little else, seem to agree that it has died.¹

According to philosophers who analyze human knowledge through language, figuring out the truth by the analysis of language is impossible, for language analysis does not assure any certainty in searching the reality. On the opposite side, philosophers who claim the historicity of human knowledge say that philosophy has reached its end. In other words, all human knowledge are under the distortion of historical relativism, under the “legitimate prejudices”.

Even though Karl Popper disagrees with this opinion (he believes philosophy is still one of the essential human disciplines in explaining the truth appropriately), he also mentions the problem of academic philosophy which focuses only on building its intellectual system.

In my own view, professional philosophy has not done too well. It is in urgent need of an apoloia pro vita sua, of a defense of its existence. I even feel that the fact that I am a professional philosopher myself establishes a serious case against me: I feel it as an accusation. I must plead guilty, and offer, like Socrates, my apology.²

Does philosophy still have meaning in human intellectual world? If it does, what is the reason? Even though we cannot escape from the philosophical questions like ‘what is the nature of human existence?’ ‘is our perception of the world correct?’ ‘how can we prove it?’ and so on, so many people doubt whether philosophy is still helpful in answering these questions. Why? According to Popper, our traditional philosophical activities have become too academic to answer the questions which human being is facing. So Popper insists that the *raison d’être* of being philosophy is not in the academic activity itself, but an ability to solve problems. For him the most important and essential thing in doing philosophy is the problem solving. The function of a philosopher is to solve the philosophical problems.

In this paper we will discuss the meaning of philosophy in Karl Popper’s thought critically. Popper was one of the leading philosophers of the 20th century, especially in English speaking world. So reviewing his view on the meaning of philosophy can help us understand the discussions on this topic. My position basically is critical in approaching Popper’s view on the concept of philosophy. Even though his thought includes many good aspects in understanding philosophy it still has some limitations in explaining the meaning of philosophy as a whole.

1. Popper's View on Philosophy

a) What Philosophy Should Be

Actually Popper denies that philosophy has certain essence or distinct character. Philosophy has to be defined with the problems with which it struggles. So he suggests that, in dealing with the issue of the meaning of philosophy, we need to ask, "what is the character of philosophical problem?" rather than "what is philosophy?"

I wished to hint at one of the reasons for the futility of the current controversy concerning the nature of philosophy: the naïve belief that there is an entire such as 'philosophy', or perhaps 'philosophical activity', and that it has a certain character or essence or 'nature'. ... But all this classification and distinction is a comparatively unimportant and superficial affair. We are not students of subject matter but students of problems. And problems may cut right across the borders of any subject matter or discipline.³

Popper's view sounds like a kind of pragmatism. So he defines philosophy as the process of problem solving. How does philosophy solve problems? He thinks if we follow the rationality which functions with formal logic and experience, it will guarantee the problem solving. He says rationality is the only tool to reach the objective and acceptable knowledge on reality. What is the foundation of rationality? Popper trusts rationality, for it is the only way to get closer knowledge on reality. His view on philosophy is founded on the confidence of existence of reality. He does not just believe the existence of reality, but believe that it can be the foundation of philosophical activity, even though we cannot figure it out clearly. He says the aim of philosophy is to get the approximation to the truth of reality.

b) Philosophy as Problem Solving

i) Popper delivered one of his last lectures with the title, "All life is problem solving."⁴ In this lecture he said civilizations are the products of this problem solving process and it is the essential character of all kinds of life, including animals. And this is the nature of philosophical activity. Every human being who faces problems tries to find proper ways to solve this problem, and philosophy began in that procedure. In this sense he says all men are philosophers. Popper thinks problem solving is the key aspect of philosophy. So the meaning of philosophy should be directed towards philosophical problems.

ii) Are there philosophical problems? According to Wittgenstein there is no genuine philosophical problem but the pseudo-problems which are alleged with pseudo propositions or pseudo-theories. For him philosophical theory is only the meaningless combination of words. So Wittgenstein argues that the task of all genuine philosophy is to unmask philosophical nonsense, and to teach people to talk sense. Popper agrees with Wittgenstein that the philosophical problems cannot be found in philosophy. There is no 'pure' philosophical problem. But Popper still believes the possibility of philosophical problems, not inside of philosophy, but outside of philosophy. His view on the relation between philosophical problem and the philosophy is obvious. In his article titled, "How I see Philosophy" Popper clearly states his view: "if I had no serious philosophical problems and no hope of solving them, I should have no excuse for being a philosopher: to my mind, there would be no apology for philosophy."⁵

iii) What are philosophical problems? He believes philosophical problems and scientific problems are not much different. So he rejects language analysis as philosophical activity. It is good to unmask somebody's nonsense and meaningless pseudo-proposition, but it cannot be the nature of philosophy. Philosophical problems should include the issues that lead us to more understanding of reality. Those are the problems of mathematical logic and problems that make us speculate critically about the universe and about our place in it, including our powers of knowing and our powers of good and evil.⁶

iv) But the problem of reality itself is not included in philosophical problems. Popper insists that it is impossible to describe reality so the theory on reality itself is meaningless. The aim of philosophy, according to Popper, is problem solving with the 'satisfactory explanations'. Here "satisfactory explanation" does not mean the perfect solution that includes no error. It may still include some mistakes, but generally acceptable through the testability. "Satisfactory" also means the solution should be applicable in any situations until it is found wrong. Popper basically accepts the scientific method as the philosophical method. But the 'satisfactory explanation' is not the same with the 'ultimate explanation' which explains the essence of reality. Popper says that the satisfactory explanation means it has explaining power about reality, not perfectly but partly. Our explanation essentially has limitations, for it includes some errors. And we have to humbly agree by allowing the possibility of refutation. But the satisfactory explanation is meaningful, for it leads us to more understanding of the reality.

Although I do not think that we can ever describe, by our universal laws, an ultimate essence of the world, I do not doubt that we may seek to probe deeper and deeper into the structure of our world or, as we might say, into properties of the world that are more and more essential, or of greater and greater depth.⁷

Therefore Popper believes that piecemeal or gradual evolution of knowledge has more power to explain about reality and solve more problems. The concept of "corroboration" is used to explain this. Popper insists the development of knowledge come from 'conjectures and refutations' procedure instead of the confirmation of the suggested theory. If the suggested theory passes the strict tests or fails to disprove, it means this theory may have more possibility to be a true theory. And this corroborated theory is the stronger theory that may tell us more about how the world actually is.⁸

c) Rationality as the Tool of Problem Solving

i) Rationalism is the philosophical view that regards reason as the chief source of knowledge. Holding that reality itself has an inherently logical structure, the Rationalists assert that a class of truths exists that the intellect can grasp directly. There are, according to the Rationalists, certain rational principles--especially in logic and mathematics, and even in ethics and metaphysics--that are so fundamental that to deny them is to fall into contradiction.

ii) Popper's view on philosophy is based on rationalism. But he says his rationalism is critical rationalism. He divides rationalism into critical rationalism and uncritical or comprehensive rationalism. For Popper, uncritical rationalism means an attitude toward refusal of any assumption that cannot be supported either by argument or by experience like the Positivists. But actually such an attitude is impossible, since all arguments must proceed from assumptions resulting from human mind's activity. Popper's critical rationalism accepts the necessity of assumption. He understands the knowledge as the product of human mind and imagination. So in doing philosophical argumentation some assumption is inescapable. The more important attitude is to be self-critical and open to refutation by critical evaluation. In other words, we need to agree that our knowledge has some mistakes, and make sure our theory or propositions are testable. Falsifiability is an essential aspect of critical rationalism.⁹

iii) So Popper agrees to the necessity of assumption and prejudice which forms the subjective aspects of human knowledge. But every assumption and prejudice should be open to refutation for it essentially includes some mistakes. Every theory must have the testability through the mathematical logic and empirical test. Philosophy should not stop at the inevitability of mistakes, rather, it should continue to remove the errors through "conjectures and refutations" procedure. So Popper rejects the attitude which accepts prejudice as essential part of human knowledge. He disagrees with philosophers who agree that a man's opinions are always determined by his self-interest. Popper rejects such an attitude as philosophy, for it prevents us from approaching other's theories critically and it makes rational discussion impossible.¹⁰

iv) How is the critical rationalism applied in doing philosophy? Popper's method of philosophy can be summarized as "trials and errors". When man faces problems, he immediately forms a hypothesis with the expectation of solving it. But the hypothesis should be falsifiable through argument and empirical tests. Popper makes a three-stage model :¹¹

- a. the problem;
- b. the attempted solutions;
- c. the elimination.

In this model we can find several main factors of rationality in Popper's philosophy. First, rationality begins from the natural response of the problem. Second, rationality does not reject the assumption and imagination as the activity of mind. Third, attempted solution should be refutable through argument and experience.

v) Rationality that is represented with the concept of falsifiability, is another character of the concept of philosophy. In this sense, even though he opposes the group of Logical Positivists, he and the Logical Positivists accept the correctness of the deductive-nomological model of explanation.¹²

d) Drawing Closer Picture of Reality and Problem Solving

i) What is truth in Popper's thought? He said truth is "the statement which corresponds to reality". He follows Kant's view that truth is "the correspondence of knowledge with its object". Popper's comment on the truth sounds similar to Kant: "a theory or a statement is true, if what it says corresponds to reality".¹³

For him the idea of truth is the foundation of critical discussion. Popper understands that problem solving is possible through "trials and errors" method. The procedure of elimination of mistakes cannot happen if there is no reality as the criterion of critical discussion. So, in Popper's thought, the concept of truth that presupposes the existence of reality, is a kind of regulative principle.¹⁴

ii) Popper criticizes the subjectivist or idealist, for they refuse reality as the source of cognitive perception. Subjectivists reject the possibility that all statements can be reducible into the cognitive, univocal language, so they disagree to the concept of truth as correspondence to the reality. Popper thinks that idealism or subjectivism says like this: "the world is just my dream or the product of our belief". Popper explains the subjectivist attitude as this;

*If we start from our subjective experience of believing, and thus look upon knowledge as a special kind of belief, then we may indeed have to look upon truth - that is, true knowledge - as some even more special kind of belief ... all subjective theories of truth aim at such a criterion : they try to define truth in terms of the sources or origins of our beliefs, or in terms of our operation of verification, or of some set of rules of acceptance, or simply in terms of the quality of our subjective conviction.*¹⁵

He says he can not accept this attitude, for there is no possibility of falsifying, it is not testable. It has no refutability.

*Much of my work in recent years has been in defense of objectivity, attacking or counterattacking subjectivist position. ... I don't deny the existence of subjective experiences, of mental states, of intelligence, and of minds; I even believe these to be of the utmost experiences, or about these minds, should be as objective as other theories. And by an objective theory I means a theory which is arguable, which can be exposed to rational criticism...*¹⁶

iii) Popper believes there is the reality that makes our cognition possible. Then what is the "reality" for him? He says realism is essential to common sense. If we don't accept that there is reality, our common sense cannot be workable. Usually people distinguish between appearance and reality. But actually appearance is experienced as a sort of reality. Therefore, there are two kinds of reality: one can be a surface reality - that is an appearance - and a depth reality. Realism that is related to the

depth reality, Popper said, "is neither demonstrable nor refutable. Realism like anything else outside logic and finite arithmetic is not demonstrable..." But he suggested several reasons that we need to accept realism for our philosophical foundation;

- (1) Realism is part of common sense.
- (2) What we attempt in science is to describe and explain reality.
- (3) Human language is essentially descriptive and argumentative. Rationality, language, description, argument are all about some reality, and they presupposes realism.
- (4) Idealism appears absurd, for it also implies something like this: "that it is my mind that creates this beautiful world". But we actually are not its creators.
- (5) If there is no reality, only dreams or illusions, the whole question of the truth and falsity of our opinions and theories clearly becomes pointless.¹⁷

To sum up, Popper proposes to accept realism as the only sensible alternative that has ever been offered.

iv) Popper explained his realism as "scientific realism" which can be the basis of the refutation or falsification. *"What we attempt in science is to describe and (so far as possible) explain reality."* If we refuse the existence of the reality, we have no more foundation for science, according to Popper's concept, no more falsification. Popper's view on reality is not confined to the physical world. He said there are three different worlds that represent the reality. First, "world 1" is the world of physical things which all kinds of objects of human cognition including movements, forces and fields of force. Second, "world 2" is the world of our experience including our unconscious experience. And lastly, "world 3" is the world of all planned or deliberate products of man's mental activities, i.e., arts, music, dramas, songs, etc. For him, reality consists of these three worlds. Therefore, the truth is a statement, which corresponds to these three worlds.

v) Even though Popper rejects perfect knowledge of reality, he still believes the possibility of reaching the closer knowledge to the truth. And he says there can be degrees of closeness, too. He thought the closer knowledge to the truth can explain the reality more and it will give us more power of problem solving. So Popper's view on the evolution of knowledge and the degree of closeness to the truth is important in understanding his view on the meaning of philosophy. How can we know a theory t_2 corresponds better to the facts than t_1 ? Popper suggests six criteria to check the degree of closeness of the truth ;

- (1) t_2 makes more precise assertions than t_1 , and these more precise assertions stand up to more precise tests.
- (2) t_2 takes account of, and explains, more facts than t_1 .
- (3) t_2 describes, or explains, the facts in more detail than t_1 .
- (4) t_2 has passed tests which t_1 has failed to pass
- (5) t_2 has suggested new experimental tests, not considered before t_2 was designed
- (6) t_2 has unified or connected various hitherto unrelated problems¹⁸

If one theory is fit to the six conditions we can say the empirical content of theory 2 (t_2) exceeds that of theory 1 (t_1). "This suggests that we combine here the ideas of truth and of content into one - idea of a degree of better (or worse) correspondence to truth or of greater (or less) likeness or similarity to truth; or to use a term already mentioned above (in contradiction to probability) the "*idea of (degree of) verisimilitude*".¹⁹ What Popper calls the concept of verisimilitude we also can call "truth-likeness" or "approximation to truth". Popper believes that there is no perfect precision in getting truth, so we need not consider whether a statement is true or false, but to focus on the degree of verisimilitude of the statement. What is more important in searching the truth, is that there may be more truth or less truth, in what it says.

Ultimately, the idea of verisimilitude is most important in cases where we know that we have to work with theories of which we actually know that we have to work with theories which are at best approximations - that is to say, theories of which we actually know that they cannot be true. In these cases we can still speak of better or worse approximations to the truth.²⁰

2. Problem Solving Is Not Enough to Be Philosophy

a) In his article titled "All Life is Problem Solving," Popper says modern civilization is the outcome of problem solving philosophy (& science). He seems to believe that the problem-solving attitude in doing philosophy is the only way to be philosophy. And rationality is the tool to secure the power of problem-solving. To him philosophy is activity of figuring out the reality, and it can be accomplished through (scientific) rationality. And Popper believes that if we can figure out the reality it will increase the power of problem-solving. Does the scientific knowledge always help human society in solving the problems? Sometimes it does, but not always. So Popper's view is challenged by several criticism.

i) Max Weber is the one who is critical of the role of rationality in solving the problems. In a sense rationality was problematic in the process of forming modern world. The problem of rationality in forming modern society is hierarchy and dehumanization. Max Weber explains the development of modern society as a process of rationalization. But in this process, the function of rationality was understood as instrument to dominate and control over nature.²¹ But this view on scientific rationality, as rationalization, was later expanded into the rationalization of bureaucratic and economic system and then into human thought at last. The result was a radicalization and generalization of instrumental rationality, that is reification. The capitalistic rationality with emphasis on purposive rationality causes the alienation of morality and humanity in modern society.²² Weber explains the characteristic of rationalization of modern society as differentiation of subsystem of society. And it results in the compartmentalization of society and the solidarity of society becomes weakened. It means, in the

process of forming modern world the (scientific) rationality is an instrument of progress in solving problems, but at the same time it entail many new problems.

ii) Habermas is another philosopher who doubts the role of scientific rationality as a way of problem solving. According to Habermas the ills of present-day society are not due to the resignation of reason but to the encroachment of the imperatives of bureaucratic and economic system on the life-world, that is, the result of use of rationality one-sidedly as instrumental rationality. Habermas differentiates three primary generic cognitive areas in which human interest generates knowledge. These areas determine categories relevant to what we interpret as knowledge.²³ The first one is the work knowledge (instrumental reason) that is identical with the rationality that Popper uses in defining philosophy. Rationality here refers to the way one controls and manipulates one's environment. This knowledge is based upon empirical investigation and governed by technical rules. The empirical-analytic sciences using hypothetical-deductive theories characterize this domain. But this rationality can not solve all kinds of human problems. So Habermas suggests two other kinds of rationality which are applied to different areas of life. Second one is practical reason. The practical domain identifies human social interaction or 'communicative action'. Social knowledge is governed by binding consensual norms, which define reciprocal expectations about behaviour between individuals. Social norms can be related to empirical or analytical propositions, but their validity is grounded 'only in the intersubjectivity of the mutual understanding of intentions'. Third one is emancipatory knowledge. The Emancipatory domain identifies 'self-knowledge' or self-reflection. This involves interest in the way one's history and biography has expressed itself in the way one sees oneself, one's roles and social expectations. Insights gained through critical self-awareness are emancipatory in the sense that at least one can recognize the correct reasons for his or her problems.

b) Popper introduces his approach to reality as "critical rationalism". It has several aspects: self-critical attitude, objectivity through the possibility of refutation, and evolution of

knowledge. He believes if we can continue the “critical rationalistic” attitude it will lead us to more knowledge of reality. And there can be evolution of (objective) knowledge. Can we achieve the approximation to reality through rationality? Can critical rationalism ensure the evolution of knowledge? But many other philosophers critically challenge his conviction on these aspects:

i) First, this is Hanson’s Theory-Ladenness. When Hanson argues that we directly perceive such object, he rejects the claim that we are seeing a neutrally characterizable object and then making an inference about what the object is. With some experiments Hanson proves that our theoretical framework influences our observation. So observation does not offer a neutral basis for evaluating the theory. The claim that every perception is theory-laden undercuts the objectivity of scientific activities and renders science totally subjective. Popper says it cannot be problematic, for the theory-laden observation can be eliminated through the unending refutation. It may not be eliminated totally, but reduced. But theory-laden observation is always there in human perception, even in the process of refutation. It is doubtful that the self-critical aspect of critical rationalism can reduce the subjective aspect of our knowledge. If all the three stages of “conjectures, refutations, and elimination” are influenced by the theory that observer has in his mind, the three-stage model can not be regarded as the process of removing subjectivity.²⁴

ii) There is another challenge to Popper’s view on critical rationalism. Thomas Kuhn proves that the primary factors governing scientists’ decisions is not neutral observation or mathematical logic, but the historical agreements among scientists. Kuhn’s work effected three major transformations in the study of scientific rationality. Firstly, and most importantly, it brought history to the fore. The implicit (if not explicit) message of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is that a respectable theory of rational scientific procedure must conform to the greater part of actual scientific procedure. Second, instead of focussing on the theory as the unit of rational exchange, scientific activity is based on the structure as a unit that could persist through minor

theoretical changes. He distinguishes between revisions and wholesale rejection. Kuhn called this unit as "paradigm", "the research programme", "the research tradition", "the global theoretical unit", and so on. Third, Kuhn's work highlighted the real problems that rationality has a face reflecting the historicity: there may be no trans-historical rule for rational scientific procedure.²⁵

Popper's "critical rationalism" still can not be independent from the historicity. Contrary to a popular picture of science, Kuhn insists that "normal science does not aim at novelties of fact or theory and, when successful, finds none."²⁶ This striking view challenges Popper's critical rationalism, which sees the heart of scientific rationality in the constant critical scrutiny of accepted scientific belief. Kuhn insists the normal science does not aim at novelty, so most of the scientific activities are done under the prevailing paradigm. Kuhn argues that the scientific discoveries in the past do not show that normal science aim at novelty, but only that novelty signals the end of normal science.

c) According to Popper, to philosophize means to figure out closer picture of reality. So "approximate truth" or "truthlike knowledge" is an important aspect of philosophy. And he believes that this "truthlike" knowledge gives more problem-solving power. Is there an obvious relationship between truthlikeness and problem-solving power? Some philosophers reject the relationship. And truthlikeness is impossible for there is no "pure reality" which is independent from human preconception. This view can be another criticism on Popper's concept of philosophy which is problem solving oriented.

i) Laudan disagrees that increasing the power of problem solving can be identified with more truthlikeness or the evolution of knowledge. We can say a theory is better than the others, if it has more power of problem solving, but it does not mean the theory can be identified with the closer picture of reality. Laudan believes that some better theories increase the power of problem solving, but it can not be identified with the approximate truth.

(1) theory transitions are generally non-cumulative, i.e. neither the logical nor empirical contents (nor even the 'confirmed consequences') of earlier theories is wholly preserved when those theories are supplanted by newer ones. ... (7) given the notorious difficulties with notions of 'approximate truth' – at both the semantic and epistemic levels - it is implausible that characterizations of scientific progress which view evolution towards greater truthlikeness as the central aim of science will allow one to represent science as a rational activity.²⁷

Laudan says that the progress of the theory is not cumulative. And the degree of the problem-solving power cannot be assessed by some neutral criteria. A theory may have more effectiveness in problem solving, but it does not always mean it is the better theory. To assess the progress of theory we need to consider the three aspects of it at the same time: Does it include the more number of the important empirical problems? Does it have the less number of significant anomalies? And does it raise the less number of conceptual problems?²⁸ But the three aspects are not always consistent. And there is no objective criterion to evaluate degree of progress of numbers of these three aspects.

ii) Some philosophers insist that it is not possible that there is the objective reality independent from our subjectivity, or subjective conception. Reality is not the pure existence out there. Whenever we talk about the “reality” there is always some cultural and historical conventions behind it. James Conant, Thomas Kuhn’s teacher, rejects realism and says that objectivity and concept of reality are always constituted by the historicity of the structure.²⁹ He uses the phrase “conceptual scheme” to explain that reality is embedded in frameworks which can be viewed as historical traditions rather than logical structure.

Such a view makes us suspicious about the concept of experience. Experience can not be the direct cognition of reality, for the understanding of reality is already mixed with some subjective frameworks. Therefore, W.V.O. Quine says ‘empirical claims’ are partly conventional and somewhat autonomous from experience. He calls it a “dogma of empiricism”. He argues that

empirical statements do not directly confront the world, nor are they dictated by experience alone.³⁰

*the distinction throughout this passage is between the fact (Tatsache) and the categorical scheme (die sämtlichen vorgefundenen Kategorien). Facts are inseparable from categorical schemes. A theoretical revolution always concerns the whole conceptual scheme and not some discrete statement of fact. ... the existing facts only emerge because the categorical scheme accommodates them. Experiment is only crucial when already embedded in a scheme.*³¹

iii) Hermeneutical understanding of reality is another criticism of Popper's view on philosophy. Heidegger focuses on the process of understanding. He explains about the reflexive awareness of one's own finite standpoint and interest. There is no more universal fixed reality, the mode of our being is related with our understanding the world. Understanding is more basic to our humanness than our use of tools. Indeed, understanding makes it possible to use tools and go beyond our social life and its cultural expressions. There is no more objective and universal foundation in understanding the reality and true meaning except open dialogue with the agreement that everyone in the world has prejudice. This requires us the reflexive activity with openness to other and openness to the self. And such openness helps us to reach self-understanding, and then to broaden our horizons.

iv) Popper's failure in understanding social reality is another criticism. He is criticized for his understanding of social problems as being too normative. It has limitation in understanding the real problems that we are facing in daily life. His understanding of society seems more normative rather than real situation of social world. His basic presupposition in understanding reality is normative, rather than descriptive.

Epilogue

Popper says that philosophy has to follow the path of science as a discipline of problem-solving. And, if philosophy moves from speculation to science, it will help philosophy to overcome the crisis in the meaning of philosophy. Popper believes that philosophy should struggle with problems that can be evaluated through logical and empirical evidences. So for him falsifiability through scientific rationality is essential for philosophical activities to be philosophy. Popper believes that all theories including philosophical theories should have the possibility of falsification. He looks down on the kinds of person who is interested in the history of philosophy rather than in solving philosophical problems.

Are there particular problems of philosophy? Can problem solving be the nature of philosophy? Did Popper achieve the goal through his new definition of philosophy? As we discussed above it is not sure whether his view on the concept of philosophy can show the new path for human thought. There is still disagreement on what are the philosophical problems, and on which of these problems are to be solved and which unsolved. Popper believes that scientific problems can give the clues for philosophical problems. But it is not possible that all philosophical problems can be classified as scientific problems.

Popper is too optimistic that human ability is free from historical and cultural bondage. His understanding of rationality and reality is too normative until he believes they can lead our philosophical discussions drawing closer picture of the world as the progress of philosophical knowledge. For the understanding on reality is under historicity of human thought, the account of progress of philosophical knowledge is impossible to be probed. If there is no objective picture of reality as the criterion of progress, it is difficult to accept the concept of philosophy as "problem solving". So many philosophers criticize Popper's for his optimism.

Whether there is, or even could be, progress in philosophy is problematic. There is progress in intellectual history, for it is evident enough that human

*conceptual resources have expanded and developed in the course of history and it is evident as well that these conceptual resources have become material forces in the lives of human beings. However, these things do not entail, or indeed in any way establish, that philosophy has progressed.*³²

Popper's concept of philosophy is too narrow in applying it to the real situation. Because of the normative aspect of rationality, especially scientific rationality, it is not effective in solving problems originated from cultural and social contexts. He thinks we can overcome the problem of subjectivity if we can continue the process of "conjectures and refutations" under (scientific) rationality. But he overlooks the historicity that is embedded in our interpretation of reality. Problem solving founded on scientific rationality, therefore, can not be identified with the definition of philosophy. To have the right concept of philosophy we have to be open towards the non-scientific problems.

*Rather, we should relax and say, with our colleagues in history and literature, that we in the humanities differ from natural scientists precisely in not knowing in advance what our problems are, and in not needing to provide criteria of identity which will tell us whether our problems are the same as those of our predecessors. To adopt this relax attitude is to let the institutional tail wag the pseudo-scientific dog. It is to admit that our geniuses invent problems and programs de novo, rather than being presented with them by the subject-matter itself, or by the "current state of research." ... This Gadamerian point can be put in Kuhnian terms by saying that the essential thing is not to be "scientific," but to have a disciplinary matrix for ongoing work which maintains a reasonable balance between "standards" and openness, or in Habermasian terms by saying that what matters is that conversation be continuous and undistorted.*³³

These days even the word “scientific” has different meaning. Popper says “scientific” means a kind of revolutionary attitude that rejects everything which cannot sustain under mathematical logic and empirical evidences. But Thomas Kuhn disagrees with him. “Scientific”, under the “normal science,” means some activities which are practices under the agreement among scientists. So there is confusion over the meaning of the word “scientific”. For those who follow Kuhn’s view the word “scientific” does not mean “to reach the objective knowledge by purely neutral logic and experience”, but “to search the theory under some historical influence”. “Scientific” does not mean the “knowledge founded on pure objective observation and mathematical logic” any more. It seems more “argumentative.”

Scientific’ now means something like “argumentative”. The contrast between the old and the new is no longer a contrast between an immature prescientific and a mature scientific stage of discussion of a common set of problems, but a contrast between styles – the “scientific” style and the “literary” style. The former style asks that premises be explicitly spelled out rather than by allusion. The latter style may involve argumentation, but that is not essential; what is essential is telling a new story, suggesting a new language-game, in the hope of a new form of intellectual life.³⁴

Historically, there is split between the “analytic” style and “continental” style. Both have their own understandings of the meaning of philosophy. The ‘analytic’ style understands philosophy as activities solving problems treated under “scientific” rationality. But the ‘continental’ style sees philosophy as dialogue among different understanding of reality through the fusion of horizons. Popper’s view on philosophy belongs to “analytic” style for he identifies philosophy with scientific activities. But recent discussions inside the “analytic” bloc show that it is almost impossible to identify philosophy with science any more. They gradually accept the historicity, which is imbedded in our procedure searching for the truth. It seems the distance of the split is getting closer. The analytical view that Popper belongs to is

forced to move from scientific attitude toward more speculative. Both blocs do not need to be unified as one view on philosophy, rather they exist separately and help each other in forming the meaning of philosophy. I think Rorty's view on the meaning of philosophy can be a good answer to the problematic Popper's view.

If we put aside wistful talk of bridge-building and joining forces, we can see the analytic-continental split as both permanent and harmless. We should not see it as tearing philosophy apart. There is no single entity called "philosophy" which once was whole and now is sundered. "Philosophy" is not the name of a natural kind, but just the name of one of the pigeonholes into which humanistic culture is divided for administrative and bibliographical purposes. A Reichenbachian account of what counts as "scientific philosophy," like a Heideggerian account of what counts as being "ontological" rather than merely "ontic," is merely a device for directing attention to the range of topics one wants to discuss.³⁵

Endnotes

- ¹ Peter Suber, "Is Philosophy Dead?" in *The Earlhamite*, vol. 112, no. 2 (Winter 1993) p. 12.
- ² Karl R. Popper, *In Search of A Better World: Lectures and Essays from Thirty Years* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.174.
- ³ Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: the Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 66-67.
- ⁴ This lecture was given in Bad Homburg in 1991. Cf. Karl R. Popper, *All Life is Problem Solving* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 99-104.
- ⁵ Karl R. Popper, *In Search of A Better World: Lectures and Essays from Thirty Years* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 177.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-86.
- ⁷ David Miller (ed.), *Popper Selections* (Hillsdale: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 167.
- ⁸ William Bechtel, *Philosophy of Science: An Overview for Cognitive Science* (Princeton: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988), pp. 33-34.
- ⁹ David Miller (ed.), *Popper Selections*, p. 34.
- ¹⁰ Karl R. Popper, *In Search of A Better World*, p. 181.
- ¹¹ Karl R. Popper, *All Life is Problem Solving*, pp. 4-6.
- ¹² William Bechtel, *Philosophy of Science*, p. 38.
- ¹³ Karl R. Popper, *In Search of A Better World*, pp. 4-5.
- ¹⁴ Popper mentions the importance of *regulative ideas* in critical discussion. He says there are three ideas which have great significance: first, the idea of *truth*; second, the idea of the logical and empirical content of a theory; and third, the idea of a theory's *truth content* and of its *approximation to the truth*. Karl R. Popper, *All Life is Problem Solving*, p. 19.

¹⁵ David Miller (ed.), *Popper Selections*, p. 184

¹⁶ Karl R. Popper, *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 138.

¹⁷ David Miller (ed.), *Popper Selections*, pp. 221-23.

¹⁸ David Miller (ed.), *Popper Selections*, p. 193.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 194.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 197.

²¹ Popper agrees M. Weber's view. He believes that human mind searches the way to control the world and (scientific) rationality is the best method to achieve that goal. In the process of the "conjectures and refutation" rationality takes the main role, and through this we can figure out the reality. It can improve the power of problem solving. cf. Karl R. Popper, *In Search of A Better World*, pp. 26-29.

²² Raymond A. Morrow, *Critical theory and Methodology* (Thousand Oaks : SAGE Publications, 1994), p. 109.

²³ David E. Klemm, *Hermeneutical Inquiry, Volume II : The Interpretation of Existence* (Atlanta : Scholars Press, 1986), pp. 204-205

²⁴ William Bechtel, *Philosophy of Science*, pp. 44-48.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 51.

²⁶ Thomas Kuhn, 1970, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 52.

²⁷ Ian Hacking (ed.) *Scientific Revolution: Oxford Readings in Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 144-45.

²⁸ Ian Hacking, (ed.) *Scientific Revolution*: p. 149.

²⁹ Robert D'Amico, *Historicism and Knowledge* (Routledge: Chapman & Hall, Inc. 1989), p. 33.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 37.

³¹ Ibid., p. 51.

³² Kai Nielsen, *After the Demise of the Tradition: Rorty, Critical Theory, and the Fate of Philosophy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 125.

³³ Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980* (Minnesota: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 218.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 220.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 226.

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