
Prologue

“How Do You Know It’s True?” On the Role of Humanities in Modern Crisis

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In the final year of our IAS project, a great earthquake hit Japan followed by massive waves, which as everyone will remember, swallowed the north-eastern coast of Japan and wiped out many beautiful fishing villages and towns. The loss of lives was as terrible as it was instantaneous. In its aftermath, people were forced everyday to see awful scenes of the endless piles of wreckage. Still, the Japanese people continue struggling to survive even with the further disaster at the nuclear electric power stations in Fukushima.

As the project leader, I cannot help but mention the terrible events of 3.11, because they set the context for a discussion of the shortcomings of modernity, sciences and technologies, which in a way is a focus for our project entitled *Modernity and Interpretations of Ancient Texts: the Collapse and Remaking of Traditions*. Indeed, this project began three years ago in order to reconsider the scientific grounds of the humanities as exemplified by the classical studies of the Bible and Homer *par excellence*. In this hour of crisis for all of Japan, I believe the ramifications of our project must be more than a mere affirmation of the advancement of human civilization made possible by natural sciences and technologies. We hope to suggest also a new understanding of the relationship of humanities to natural sciences, as complementary to each other, as if they were the two sides of the human brain in which we perceive our reality in crisis.

Of course, we are not the first to think about this topic — people have been concerned about the harmony of sciences and humanities since the very beginning of modernity. One such instance was an essay by Sir Isaiah Berlin, entitled as “The Divorce Between the Sciences and the Humanities”, in which he broached the question of how humanities and sciences should interrelate; and he was ultimately quite critical of the optimism of the scientific mind which believes “it is possible to make steady progress in the entire sphere of human knowledge; that methods and goals are, or should be, ultimately identical throughout this sphere; that the path to progress has been, as often as not — or perhaps a good deal more often — blocked by ignorance, fantasy, prejudice, superstition and other forms of unreason; that we have in our day reached a stage when the achievements of the natural sciences are such that it is possible to drive their structure from a single integrated

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set of clear principles or rules which, if correctly applied, make possible indefinite further progress in the unraveling of the mysteries of nature".¹

With recent disasters in my mind, I share with Berlin his warning that our society will lose its balance if it favors natural sciences and technologies due to their satisfying our desire to control our world through the discoveries of rules and principles while neglecting the wisdom of humanities as the lessons from the past and the traditions of human heart. In this criticism of sciences, however, Berlin also clarifies why sciences have so little regard for humanities as the studies of the past: the issue is not just one of values but of methodology; scientists are skeptical of the methods which humanities use in order to ascertain the past as reality — the ways by which their conclusions are not based on scientific methods such as experiments, measurements, observations, etc.

The philosophers of the seventeenth century, in this sense, are regarded by Berlin as most responsible for creating the trend to view the scientific mind of mathematics and natural sciences as superior to the critical spirit of theology and humanities; in particular, Spinoza and Descartes played a central role in setting the standard of today's positivistic approaches which is to demand most the credibility of the research method as the ground for acquiring the truth. Furthermore, Berlin regards Voltaire as one who exacerbated the ideal of humanities in a way to subjugate the mind of humanities to the judgment of natural sciences. Berlin thus quotes Voltaire as saying, "Anything not in keeping with natural science, with reason, with the nature of the human heart is false".² By that, Voltaire stated that man's ability to judge the true or the false regarding the knowledge of the past through *le bon sens*, i.e., the common sense of natural science which is for Voltaire the solid ground like mathematics to distinguish the truth from the false in calculation.

But, Isaiah Berlin believes in the unique role of humanities for compensating the shortcomings of natural sciences; thus rejecting such a view as described by Voltaire, he insists that humanities and natural sciences should be the two distinct types of critical thinking. This argument of Berlin is, in my view, profoundly philosophical since it raises an absolute question of methodology, i.e., whether the knowledge of the past should be subject to the laws of natural sciences or not; the question is not as simple as it seems, when one realizes our knowledge of humanities and natural sciences is ultimately both artificial, as relying on human inventions of the letters and the numbers without which no academic subjects such as mathematics, physics, or laws, etc could be discussed as knowledge of truth; so that sciences and humanities can only indirectly touch on *the absolute reality* before which we stand and aspire to know, regardless of whether that truth of reality is expressed as some general regularity in the universe or as a narrative of some specific event that happened in the past.

Berlin's view of the relationship between natural sciences and humanities may be one-sided and may invite criticism from the experts of history of natural science in each aspect of his argument, while in Japan after 3.11, I believe, there are many sincere natural

scientists who would lend their ears to Berlin's criticism in order to understand what went wrong in some of decisions, judgments, predictions, estimations, and forecasts, as they conscientiously feel responsibilities for the systems or action plans as prepared by themselves for disasters at the request of government. For those who are willing to rethink the responsibilities of natural sciences and technologies for society in general, now is the time to reflect on themselves as fragile vessels rather than cold-iron tools, when facing the issues of life and death in which scientific knowledge is obviously not enough for such an un-precedent situation as we now face.

One symbolic event which can illustrate a dramatic change of the atmosphere of Japanese society is a scene from a live TV coverage in which the journalists were not only asking the nuclear scientists about *the data which they knew*, but also ask them "How did you know they are true?" This was undoubtedly a question with which the journalists showed their distrust to those particular scientists; but also, to me, it was a moment in which the scientists must have realized their shaky grounds in terms of methodologies and assumptions when people desperately demanded to know *the absolute* meaning of the numerical data for human security in crisis.

Since scientists no longer command unquestioned respect, they (and we) must meet the responsibilities of public relationship not only for communicating their knowledge, but also for defending the methods and the assumptions which lead them to a certain knowledge or judgment, in terms of the free society which believes in the equality for all in "scientific" logical thinking. Within this awareness of the limits of "science" as being questioned in crisis, one must acknowledge the fact that natural sciences, much as they can grasp the world and powerful as its inventions and cures are, cannot answer the issues that humanities are designed to address, i.e., the basic questions of the values of life and death, of why things are as they are.

The crisis demands from scientists and humanists together to rethink of the meaning of being "scientific" or "critical", i.e., the limits and possibilities of positivistic approaches as they face the splits of values in people's perceptions of the nature of human being and its environments. Perhaps, to ask again the question among the scholars of humanities and natural sciences — "How do you know it's true?" to each other — more than ever — may be a key to the renewal of positive thinking in which scientists and humanists can think of their subjects, more solidly and more freely and more truthfully, free from any preoccupations and scholarly habits.

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But at the same time, we must also acknowledge the legitimacy of the claim that humanities need natural sciences. Why so? Spinoza would answer the question by pointing out the problem that people in power claimed things which were not written in the Bible as if they were said in the Bible. He believed that biblical interpretation should be based on

evidence, the evidence of the text, not on the fancies of the interpreters. His model for this kind of interpretation was natural sciences or as he put it, "I hold that the method of interpreting Scripture is no different from the method of interpreting the (sic) Nature, and is in fact in complete accord with it".³

Berlin did not agree, and his criticism can be put in the following way: the nature and the scripture cannot be interpreted by the same method because of the essential differences of humanities and natural sciences. In other words, Berlin cannot think of the "divorce" of humanities from natural sciences in such a way as the distinction of *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft*; he sees the very problem in the concept of *Wissenschaft* (science) as shared by the two. As it is well known, the concepts of *Wissenschaft* and *Encyklopädie* have both been central to the German style of scholarship of humanities since the time of Christian Wolff (1679-1754); Wolff defined *Wissenschaft* as the ability or "habit" not only to demonstrate the facts or reality on principles but also to understand the connection of one truth with another, i.e., to have one holistic view of truth, in which all the subjects of the universe are principally chained one to another like an encyclopedia.⁴ Yet, Berlin is firmly opposed to such a view of the totality of "one science" as something which does not know essential differences between the natures of humanities and natural sciences in light of Vico's criticism of New Science.

According to Berlin, Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), who is an Italian humanist of Wolff's time, also considers the method of humanities to be fundamentally different from that of natural sciences. As its reason, he considers the essential difference of mathematics and human history. That is to say, the mathematics is the subject of human invention *par excellence* since its demonstration of truth depends on our choosing definitions and axioms for a logical construction which is after all at our will, whereas human history is the subject of everything involved in human experiences as a composite of motives, purposes, hopes, fears, loves, hatred, jealousies, ambitions, outlooks, visions of reality etc.; to do history, in other words, one has to ask about his or her inner world of motives and feelings in a way that a natural scientist cannot do for the objects of his or her scientific inquiry. Berlin puts it as "we could not ask this about natural objects; it was idle to ask what cows or trees or stones or molecules or cells were at".⁵

The two different views on the relationship of humanities with natural sciences — which Berlin illustrates by contrasting the thought of Vico with the philosophy of Descartes — unmistakably exhibit the serious tensions by which I define the necessity of our project as to raise the question of "How do we know it's true?" on the scholarships of Homer and the Bible as a case for studying. Indeed, it is the fact that our present knowledge about Homer and the Bible as "history" or "fact" such as read in various encyclopedias is not possible without the accumulation of *wissenschaftlich* efforts as done by the scholars of the last two hundred years, who followed the vision of encyclopedic knowledge as laid out in the time of enlightenment.

During the nineteenth century, however, the simplistic notion of *Wissenschaft* as one total thinking was also gradually eroding after Immanuel Kant's intellectual revolution, and the concept was undergoing a transformation in various directions in German-spoken Europe; therefore the argument by Berlin for humanities needs to be put in a historical perspective. In our current context, a focus of discussion is to understand how "humanities" can be different from natural science; yet we inevitably anticipate another critical voice which asks thus: "Is there a way to be scientific or critical while refusing to be dependent on the assumptions of natural sciences?" Those theoretical questions were addressed in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, and were mainly answered in favor of the answer "No", but they need to be raised again in our own day as we face the limits of sciences in crisis.

An instance of new development which seems to be particularly relevant to Berlin's argument is the establishment of *Der Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* by the Jewish students of the University of Berlin in 1818, which was historically a response to the riots against the Jews after the Napoleonic war. The members of *Verein* were then serious like Spinoza in search of the true past of the Jews by *Wissenschaft*, i.e., to understand the history of their religion and culture, anew, from a critical and scientific point of view. It is because they thought of clarifying the historical truth as a powerful means to rectify the misunderstandings and prejudices about Judaism and the Jews as held by the Christian society in general; so that for them, the concept of *Wissenschaft* became a symbol for the spirit of emancipation which anticipates the values of fairness, justice, liberation from prejudices; making new discoveries as much as natural sciences do was not merely an academic concern but a matter of social justice as well.

Indeed, one of the founding members of *Verein* was L. Zunz, who said in a document for inaugurating the society, "The complex problem of the fate of the Jews may derive a solution, if only in part, *from this science*". He believed in "this science" because it should "distinguish between the old and useful, the obsolete and harmful, and the new and desirable".⁶ A fair measurement, by which Zunz thinks does not discriminate everything old as obsolete, should come from the advancement of "this science" in which "the old and useful" should be taught for common good while "the obsolete and harmful" should be criticized for common justice.

However, another important member of *Verein* and a prominent student of Hegel, namely, Ed. Gans was different from Zunz in this regard; for Gans, *Die Wissenschaft des Judentums* was more like a tool for his vision of social reform according to which he values the knowledge of the past as a criticism to the present situation and perhaps as a calling for a change for new European society of future; yet facing the reality of his time in which his academic appointment was not endorsed by the government because of his Jewish origin, Gans eventually gave up on *Verein* out of disappointment and stopped seeking to live as a Jew in order to advance his carrier in the university of Berlin. Thus

Gans replaced the truth of the past with the common sense of the majority of his time, whereas Zunz continued to adhere to the original goal for “the old and useful” even after Gans and other members had left *Verein* for the pursuit of “the new and desirable”. So, the question is what kind of “science” did Zunz have in mind if it isn’t focused only on the new but also involves the old. My answer is the science of philology as taught in the University of Berlin.

Zunz and Gans were in different disciplines or academic majors in the University of Berlin; Gans was a student of law who was taught by Hegel and Savigny, while Zunz was a student of philology and theology who was trained by Wolf and Boeckh and also by de Wette. They seem to have fostered different perspectives to the knowledge of the past, according to their differences of academic disciplines in which they were differently appreciating the state of their time; in fact, the famous faculty of humanities in the University of Berlin, led by Wilhelm von Humboldt, was politically divided between those who felt responsibilities for national unity such as J. G. Fichte, G. W. F. Hegel, F. K. Savigny, B. G. Niebuhr, L. Ranke, and those who valued individual freedom such as F. Schleiermacher, F. A. Wolf, A. Boeckh, W. M. L. de Wette, F. Bopp; therefore, I speculate that the split of Zunz and Gans may also be seen as a reflection of the state of the faculty which was also divided by their academic approaches to the past, not only by politics.⁷

At least, Zunz openly admits the uniqueness of *Die Wissenschaft des Judentums* in contrast to other *Wissenschaften* by calling *Verein*’s one as “this science” or “our science” often in his writing.⁸ Zunz’s personalized “science” seems to signify his distance from the mainstream of *Wissenschaften* such as Hegel’s philosophy or Savigny’s history of jurisprudence or Friedrich Rühls’s history of civilizations. Rather, Zunz felt affinity with the less known current of philologists or theologians, particularly, with the philology of A. Wolf and also A. Boeckh; indeed, Zunz favored those two scholars, and closely studied the Greek and the Latin classics with them as he reported in his diary. In short, for Zunz, “science” was the science of philology which he met in the class.⁹

It is not appropriate to make a call on this complicated issue of the discordance in the university faculty of humanities by one paragraph explanation, so I shall leave the issue without going into detailed analysis except for one brief digression on Boeckh’s conception of philology; I think it is the key which has inspired Zunz on the term of *Wissenschaft* and also brings our discussion closer to the ideal of Isaiah Berlin for humanities as separated from natural sciences. Indeed, Boeckh’s idea seems to be nearer to Vico’s position than to Descartes’s, because he clearly placed philology and philosophy on a par in terms of importance, not regarding philology as a tool of or assistant to philosophy; that is to say that philology and philosophy are equally the very roots for all sciences, regardless of natural or human, as I quote from his *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften* (1886) as follows:¹⁰

In der Philosophie und Philologie wurzeln alle übrigen Wissenschaften; denn diese

können einerseits nur betrachtet werden als besondere Anwendung der Philosophie zu einzelnen Zwecken, oder insofern sie rein theoretisch sind, nur als Abzweigungen der Philosophie; andererseits aber haben sie ihr Object in ihrer eigenen Geschichte. Jede Geschichte der Medicin, jede historische Betrachtung der Jurisprudenz, ohne welche eine gründliche Mittheilung jener Wissenschaften unmöglich ist, ein grosser Theil der Theologie ist philologischer Natur. Allerdings ist noch ein Unterschied zwischen der Erkenntniss des Erkannten in der Philologie selbst und derjenigen, welche ausser ihr in jeder besondern Wissenschaft stattfindet, zwar nicht in der Thätigkeit, aber wohl im Zweck. Der Zweck der Philologie ist rein historisch; sie stellt die Erkenntniss des Erkannten objectiv für sich hin. In jenen einzelnen Wissenschaften dagegen und in der Philosophie selbst erkennt man auch das Erkannte, aber um darauf weiter zu bauen, wie wenn der Naturforscher die Forschungen anderer benutzt um neue Resultate zu erhalten, welche er darauf gründet.

Again, I make my claim that Boeckh’s argument should be taken as a precursor of Berlin’s criticism which demands the separation of humanities from natural science as the two kinds of critical thinking, since Boeckh clearly sees philosophy of his time as premised upon the essence of natural sciences in which “new” must replace “old” for the sake of truth. In other words, the philosophers of those days regarded their discipline as an empirical one, like medicine or physics, in which they believed their language to be capable of speaking of any subjects in terms of the relationship of the cause and effect as in perfect accord with phenomena they perceive. Thus, philosophers can aim at a breakthrough of new knowledge which should accrue from a thorough criticism of the past as imperfect. In this sense, today’s social sciences can be regarded as the successor of the trends of those philosophers as far as they were always interested in concrete solutions to human problems.

On the contrary, the essence of Boeckh’s philology is laid out in his famous cliché “*Die Erkenntniss des Erkannten*”, which means that the philology is intended for the recognition of the recognized things by the people of the past. This stands for everything of the distinction of philology from philosophy. By *Erkannten*, I think, Boeckh meant someone else’s recognition of something as given through the expression of the letters of the documents; and by *Erkenntniss*, he referred to our efforts to understand someone else’s recognition as “past things”; that is to say, the task of philology is nothing but to restore the recognized things as they were in their original text.

The goal of philology demands us thus to be involved in *two* dimensions: the first is restoring meanings of words, sentences, and texts as historical as possible in terms of the language of their time, and the second is reconstructing knowledge, thoughts, and emotions of ancient people which lie beyond the expressions of language. That is to say, with these two, the philologists are reviving “the recognized things” as they were experienced by the people in their time. For that reason, the necessities of statistics and geography and other knowledge of natural sciences for interpreting the ancient texts are self-evident in the *Wissenschaft* of Zunz as well as Boeckh and Wolf.¹¹

Since the philology of Boeckh dedicates all energy to understand someone's recognitions as they were, and to reach the full reconstruction of thoughts and knowledge implanted in words as well as between the lines, the philologists do not principally anticipate something new like the breakthrough or the innovations of ideas such as the philosophers always do in their efforts. On the contrary, the works of philologists aim at the recognition of the past without taking from it or adding to it anything at all. But it does not mean the intellectual power of empathy to the words of the past was the only requirement for the pursuit of philology. The philologists also need the acute sense of logic by which they can assemble the fragments of someone's recognition into a coherent world of ideas and thoughts, and they also need the encyclopedic knowledge of human activities as well as the universe with which one may be able to interpret the enigmatic passages in ancient texts. Only then, according to Boeckh, philology can accomplish "*Die Erkenntniss des Erkannten*" in its full sense.

In this spirit of *Wissenschaft* which focuses on particular texts or sentences or words as the things recognized by particular writers or readers in the past, Boeckh differentiated the merit of philology from that of history; while historians devote themselves to understanding of actual events and happenings which should be done in terms of cause and effect in nature, the interests of philology include the traditions of faith, reason, illusions, superstitions, etc; they are not only bound to the human events in the sphere of natural phenomena but to every one of human words and feelings in past in principle. In this sense, Boeckh's spirit of philology is also different from the spirit of criticism which is preoccupied to know the particular things only as parts of a big picture, saying, "*die Kritik...welche das Kleine, das Scharfbegrenzte, das Einzelne übersehen und nur die grösseren allgemeinen Ideen erfassen will, während doch erst die Einheit des Allgemeinen und Besonderen eine richtige Erkenntniss gewährt*".¹²

Seemingly, Boeckh felt the needs for philology to deter the presumptions of the philosophers of his time in which they permitted themselves to claim the big picture of humanities and nature without firmly grasping the details and the real life of individuals in the past as well as in the present. The monolithic generalization of world and mankind which permeates the natural philosophy of his time needs to be amended by the spirit of particularization of philology which can be another critical point of view, particularly when philologists also try to achieve neutrality by avoiding the influences of particular religions in its pursuit for the recognition of the recognized things.

As a whole, we should not misunderstand Boeckh's true intention in his critical tone on philosophy. He was rather in favour of the corroboration of philosophy and philology. Namely, Boeckh does not envision the unilateral way in which philosophy governs philology but the bilateral way; that is, philosophers need the results of philology to understand truly the past of philosophy while philologists cannot recognize the recognized things without solid concepts of analysis which philosophers teach. He says, "*Umgekehrt*

aber bedarf auch die Philologie der Philosophie. Sie konstruiert historisch, nicht aus dem Begriffe; aber ihr letztes Endziel ist doch, dass der Begriff im Geschichtlichen erscheine; sie kann die Gesamtheit der Erkenntnisse eines Volkes nicht reproduciren ohne philosophische Thätigkeit in der Construction".¹³ Philosophy in monologue is like a dictatorship over *Wissenschaften*, but philology and philosophy in dialogue will turn the act of science to a kind of due process of ascertaining the world, in which the philologists meet the philosophers like the past meets the present to discuss the question of the truth as a whole. The ideal of humanities as *Wissenschaft* as seen in the eyes of A. Boeckh, as well as in those of Isaiah Berlin and L. Zunz, the founder of Jewish Studies, is complementary one in relation of humanities to natural sciences.

III

The year of 2018 will be the 200th anniversary of the birth of *Der Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* in 1818, to which we know young Jewish talents such as Heinrich Heine, Isaak Jost, dedicated themselves to looking for the ideal modernity for the Jews by the power of science. The impact of their spirit of passion for truth is now reaching the other end of the world like Japan, so that our project of IAS dares to pose the questions of "How do you know it's true?" to the western authorities of scholarships of the Bible and Homer, as taking a cue from Umberto Cassuto, the first chair holder of the biblical studies in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who challenged the dominating theory of Wellhausen of his time and criticized the very foundations of the theory concerning the origin and the process of formation of the Pentateuch.

In his lectures, thus, Cassuto testified to the mood of the scientific studies of the Bible in 1924 by quoting the words of a German scholar of the Old Testament, H. Gressmann, as follows: "We must stress, with the utmost emphasis, that there is no school of Biblical scholarship today that is not founded on the critical analysis of the sources in the Hexateuch (that is, the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua), ... and anyone who does not accept the division of the text according to the sources and the results flowing therefrom, has to discharge the onus, if he wishes to be considered a collaborator in our scientific work, of proving that all the research work done till now was futile".¹⁴

Such an oppressive statement as made by a Bible scholar of the early 20th century is no more heard in our time. In the recent *Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies* (2006), a writer openly admits the limits which the Bible scholars face regarding historical reconstruction of the Hebrew Bible, as saying "The increase in the number of volumes devoted to the history of Israel, particularly in the 1980s, did not signal a growing confidence in the genre, but reflected a crisis of confidence in the historian's ability to reconstruct Israelite history. This is not a self-confident genre but one beset by self-doubts".¹⁵ This is a well said report of the present state of the biblical scholarship.

Then, I must ask what happened to *die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, if not to all the

humanities. In my understanding, the collapse of *die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* regarding the documentary hypothesis and its efforts for historical reconstruction of the past is something that was determined by the internal workings of western thought, since the collapse of the 21st century is the same in cause as that of the traditions of humanities in the 17th century: the failure to recognize the fundamental uniqueness of the letters of humanities in contrast to the numbers of natural sciences.

Before taking for granted *Wissenschaft* as one system, the following questions must be answered: is the thinking by numbers essentially identical with that by letters so that only one method of reasoning is enough for all of humanities and natural sciences? How can one be so sure that the numbers and the letters are not two different languages of logic but two mere variations of one unified reason? I observe in humanities as well as natural sciences a presumption that the question has been answered and there is no strong need to confront the impossibility of bridging the two kinds of criticism or logic.

According to Elliot Sober, who is a modern philosopher of evolution theory, "reconstructing the past" is a different kind of science because there is the distinction between pattern and process in scientific significance. Science may be able to perceive the patterns from natural phenomena, whereas it is something else to reconstruct the past, namely, proving the process of event for a particular thing on the basis of a pattern; the pattern is not exactly synonymous to the process in terms of critical thinking.¹⁶

The fundamental crevasse in principles between the "sciences" of reconstructing the past as in philology and those of understanding phenomena as in physics is obvious, since any of the scientific criteria which make physics possible cannot be applied to reconstructing the past as the process of event; for instance, 1) the past event cannot be observed directly, 2) the experiments are not possible in order to verify a given explanation of the past, 3) the past event cannot be repeated by any means in human initiative, 4) the alternative prediction cannot be made for the past event, 5) therefore, the generalization is logically impossible for the past event since any of scientific criteria as mentioned above cannot be applied to it.¹⁷

In this awareness of the logical tensions between natural sciences of physics and evolution theory as a science of reconstructing the past, Sober or Minaka speaks of a concept of *abduction* which means the intellectual effort to select out the best one among several theoretical options that seems the most reasonable. To put no more obligations on "historians" to prove the factuality on the same level as physics does, is a clever solution to the chaos of skepticism in reconstructing the past. Perhaps, the scientists of the Old Testament should think seriously of the concept of *abduction* as a basis of their studies if they wish the significance of "fact" in their studies in the same degree as in natural sciences. Many of the futile claims of the "fact" as for the Bible and its formation including Wellhausen's theory will be put properly in context, as one considers historical criticism as an *abduction* in which the pursuit of the past is no longer an act to prove the

historical truth but a game to choose the best explanation of the past out of many.

The concept of abduction may function as a *liaison* to the tensions in critical thinking between natural sciences and humanities as a science of history, but it does not cover all the concerns of "humanities" as including poetic, mystic, and esthetic aspects of human thoughts in letters. According to Boeckh, the uniqueness in the pursuit of the past in philology is "*Die Erkenntniss des Erkannten*" which I believe cannot be ultimately reduced to the debate on logic in the way the scholars of natural sciences do.

As the distinction of philosophy and philology, Boeckh claimed that philology does not seek the privilege to proclaim the new truth of the universe as philosophy or natural sciences do in the dialectical sequence of arguments and counter arguments, in which their knowledge seems to progress from the past toward the future; but the concept of the progress is not exactly suited for philology, i.e., the efforts to recognize the things which have already been recognized. Philology is more like the act of rediscovering the things forgotten by the people of today; so ultimately, it should be said that the recognition of the things by philology seeks no more and no less than the "conviction" which resides in the heart of the reader who holds the text.

This distinction of philology is fundamentally due to the unique quality of human experience through language, in which expression must come either in the first person, in the second person, or in the third person; the system of the three persons such as "I/We", "You", and "It/He/She/They" in English. This system is a universal one which conceptually exists in all human languages. On the contrary, the differentiation of three persons is not required for the critical thinking by numbers which always functions impersonally. In my view, this difference should be taken more seriously into consideration regarding the relationship of natural sciences with humanities. The awareness of the personhood in language should put humanities in difficulties as to separate the subject and the object of scholarship, particularly, when they deal with understanding of texts in the depth of the ineffable meanings of the words spoken to particular audiences through the metaphor or the symbolism; in this regard, I see, F. W. Nietzsche or L. J. J. Wittgenstein or A. J. Heschel showed their sensitivities to the issues in each way in their interpretations of the ancient texts.

Indeed, if philology is the science of "the recognition of the recognized things", the differences of the first person, the second person, and the third person should be the fundamental dilemma in its pursuit for the knowledge of the past. Whereas philology as a discipline of science aspires to, like mathematics, establish an absolute recognition regarding a recognized thing, I am not so sure of our ability to close the gaps of meaning in the various voices of language.¹⁸ Can we fully translate what we grasp from the text written in the language of the first person or the second person, again, into the paper form of recognition by the language of the third person without changing any of its original nuances?

Or maybe, something as said in the first and second person cannot be, in principle, replaced by the language of the third person. At least, the Japanese people are now sensitive to the issue that the numerical data of nuclear radiation cannot signify one thing but many things for human safety at the civilian level. Even though a clear axiom or function in mathematics can give only one value in the numbers, the significance of the numerical data for human life is not so clear-cut due to the characteristic of human language in three person system, which inevitably involves a diversity of interpretation in order to reach such a consensus as unanimously-agreed for safety and convenience.

Anyway, the philology as the critical thinking of letters seems to reject in principle the monotonous solution in interpreting a word or a sentence or a text, since the speakers or the writers are not only those who have right to presume *a priori* the degree of intimacy in relationship to their own words by persons; but the interpreters are also able to choose in which person they should express their understandings. Choosing among three voices is paradoxically a precondition in philology as a science for the recognition of the recognized things, which by itself tries to grasp the words as they were spoken by speakers to audiences or meant by writers to readers.

In contrast, the thinking by numbers involves no complication of intimacy in expression, since the formal expression of numbers cannot have options in voices except for the third person. As imitating the exactitude of natural sciences, the German tradition of *Wissenschaft* recommends more the style of argument and exposition by writing only in the third person in order to avoid ambiguities in meaning and express one single value like in the numbers of natural sciences. Yet I am not sure that the confinement of the language to the third person does justice to the goal of humanities, to the insight of the letters, since I do not know how vital is the language of the first person and the second person for the recognition of the recognized things in the science of philology which intends to interpret the meaning of a word or a sentence or a text as it meant. In this, we should remember that Nietzsche's argument of Greek tragedy was criticized for too much of his "first" person ("megalomania") by Ritschel, while A. J. Heschel's reading of the Bible was questioned for too much of his "second" person (God's perspective) by his contemporaries.¹⁹

The language of humanities always exists as if in the tensions between the recognition of heaven (i.e., nature) and that of the earth (i.e., we humans), so that for philologists the pressures are not only the objective to understand as the people felt in the past, but also to realize in themselves in their agonies of scientific indeterminacy; upon being asked the question of "how do *you* know it's true?", the philologists are surely sensitive to the fundamental dilemma in human recognition as caused by the choice of I, You, or It.

In conclusion, how can humanities be complementary to natural sciences in the time of crisis? The role of humanities may be limited in terms of knowledge, but I dare to answer the question by a metaphor of the creation of man and woman; man was alone until woman was created as עֹזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ ('ezer kēnegdō), which can be taken as "a help by

countering him". So, at least, I believe humanities have an important role to play in times of crisis, as long as they keep in mind the paradoxes and the gaps of the three separate voices in human language. That is to say, the duty is not only to scrutinize the knowledge and claims of natural sciences in terms of the voices of individuals damaged in natural disasters, asking "How do *you* know it's true?", but it is also the responsibility of humanities, as reminding themselves of the existence of the first and second person in human language, to be the "better half" by taking on the burden of future with natural sciences by asking "How do *we* know it's safe?"²⁰

Notes

- ¹ Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current* (Princeton, 1979), 80.
- ² Berlin, *Against the Current*, 91.
- ³ Michael L. Morgan (ed.), *Spinoza Complete Works* (Indianapolis, 2002), 457.
- ⁴ M. Hettche, "Christian Wolff", in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2006. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/wolff-christian/>
- ⁵ Berlin, *Against the Current*, 96.
- ⁶ Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (ed.), *The Jews in the Modern World* (New York, 1980), 197.
- ⁷ Max Hoffmann, *August Böckh* (Leipzig, 1901), 76. Michael H. Hoffheimer, *Eduard Gans and the Hegelian Philosophy of Law* (Dordrecht, 1995), 3–5. Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: the Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, (Hanover, 1994), 183, 258–259.
- ⁸ David N. Myers, "The ideology of Wissenschaft des Judentums", in Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman, *History of Jewish Philosophy* (London, 1997), 706–720.
- ⁹ Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 222–224.
- ¹⁰ August Boeckh, *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der Philologischen Wissenschaften* (Leipzig, 1886), 18.
- ¹¹ Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 224.
- ¹² Boeckh, *Encyklopädie*, 27.
- ¹³ Boeckh, *Encyklopädie*, 17.
- ¹⁴ Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem, 1961), 7. About Cassuto, see Robert Bonfil (ed.), *Umberto (Moshe David) Cassuto* (Jerusalem, 2007).
- ¹⁵ Keith W. Whitlam, "Introduction: General Problems of Studying the Text of the Bible in Order to Reconstruct History and Social Background", in J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu, *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies* (Oxford, 2006), 256.
- ¹⁶ Elliott Sober, *Reconstructing the Past: Parsimony, Evolution, and Inference* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 3–13.
- ¹⁷ Nobuhiro Minaka, *Keitoujyu-Shiko-Nosekai* [Japanese] (Tokyo, 2006), 35–65. Also, E. Sober, *Core Questions in Philosophy* (New Jersey, 2009), 19–35.
- ¹⁸ The question of our ability of recognition is posed by A. Heschel for prayers, that is, "I have been wrestling with the problems all my life as to whether I really mean God when I pray to Him, whether I have been succeeding in knowing what I am talking about and whom I am talking to..." See E. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America* (New Haven, 2007), 150.
- ¹⁹ Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 121–125. Also, see Carl Pletsch, *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius* (New York, 1991), 143ff
- ²⁰ I thank my old friend Steve Weitzman (Stanford University) for commenting on the ending as

follows: "The only issue is that it can be perceived as a little stereotyped from a gender perspective, comparing the humanities to a woman and the sciences to a man. Also, maybe there is a stronger question to end with than 'How do we know it's safe'. Maybe 'How do we know it's right?'" Indeed, he is my good "help" as a counter who shows me the alternative ending which also suits the idea of the essay on the role of humanities as critical thinking. The communication illustrates the unique nature of thinking by letters in which I can support the two different endings of the essay since they should be united by a creative mind.

N.B. The original English title of the project was "Modernity and the Studies of Ancient Texts: the Collapse of Traditions and their Remaking". The title has been modified for publication according to the suggestion by a native speaker.

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