

【논문】

Philosophy in its Place and Time:

A Trans-Pacific Perspective

Lee, Sukjae

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【Abstract】 This paper, on the basis of personal experience, examines the challenges that philosophy and the liberal arts in general face, and argues that, while the decline of philosophy and the liberal arts might be common to both Korea and the United States, the reasons behind such decline are distinct. Based on this diagnosis, the paper goes on to suggest how we might begin to address this decline by identifying the proper role of philosophy in relation to the social, historical, and cultural setting in which philosophy has its natural place.

In October of 2012, a conference was held in Beijing to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Philosophy Department at Peking University. The speakers, representing the various philosophical communities around world, were asked to present a paper on the general topic of “Philosophy Education and Contemporary Society.” More specifically, the conference organizers suggested that the participants might address one of the following four issues: (1) the challenge to philosophical education and our reaction; (2) philosophical research from a trans-disciplinary perspective; (3) philosophical exchange in the era of globalization, (4) Chinese philosophy

in philosophical education. This essay is a descendent of the presentation I gave in Beijing, in which I hoped to address the first issue of the challenges to philosophical education.

What challenges might we face as we do philosophy and engage in its education? Are there particular challenges we face now, in contrast to, say, a hundred years ago? And might there be challenges that differ due to different cultural, social, and historical backgrounds? These are some of the questions that first came to my mind, when I began to consider this complex cluster of issues that most philosophical communities around the world, I take it, would agree they commonly face.

Perhaps we might begin with what appears to be somewhat of a common phenomenon.¹⁾ While the tradition of studying philosophy and, more broadly, the liberal arts remains strong in pockets of higher education across the globe, it also seems hard to deny that there is, on a broad scale, more pressure to justify, in some sense, the worth and value of philosophy and its education. If the members of society were previously comfortable with a special place reserved for what might be called “pure theory”, intellectual endeavors that were thought to be valuable in themselves regardless of its practical implications and applications, it seems hard to deny that this oasis of pure, non-practical knowledge is being encroached upon. That is, the worth and value of philosophy and its education, along with that of the liberal arts in general, seem to require an on-going justification in this age where all academic activity appears to be thought of as fundamentally preparatory and instrumental in character, destined for real life application, practical

1) The conference at Peking University mentioned at the outset actually provided a nice opportunity to verify, albeit anecdotally, that the phenomenon I will go on to describe is present in at least four nations, namely, Korea, Australia, China, and the United States. It might be more widespread, of course, but I did not have the opportunity to discuss such issues with philosophers representing other nations.

advantage, and profit. To be fair, the institutions of higher education that many philosophers call their home do not operate in a social vacuum, and indeed are supported and maintained by the public and members of society. Hence, the request to present our best case for why philosophy and its education have a rightful place does not seem completely out of place. Even if its worth might not be that of bringing about increased national wealth, upon request, philosophers should be able to present a case for why philosophy is valuable and why we should teach it in this age.

In addressing this issue of the challenges facing the pursuit of philosophy and its education, I limit the scope of the discussion to my own individual experience as a philosopher and teacher. A broader scope with further reaching implications would require a comprehensive gathering of relevant data, something that cannot be undertaken here. I hope, however, that the somewhat uncommon trajectory my life has taken up to this point will perhaps be helpful in providing some perspective in thinking about the challenges we face together, and what challenges might be more unique to each of us.

Though born in Seoul and initially raised in Korea, I went abroad to the United States early, following my parents. After a ping-pong existence going back and forth, I finally returned to Seoul in 2010. The last stay in the US had been for sixteen years, and on the flight back to Incheon, I realized that time-wise I had equally divided my life between Korea and the US. This background is what I think might provide a different perspective on the issues that concern us in this paper.

While the political, social, and historical contexts of Korea and the US are undoubtedly different, as noted earlier, the two societies seem to share the fate of the general decline of the liberal arts, and, with it, a decline in the perceived value of an education in philosophy. While one

needs to approach such surveys with caution, there was one recent report in the media on the “Ten Worst College Majors for Your Career” for US college graduates, and three of the ten were from the humanities, with philosophy and religious studies ranked as the fourth worst.²⁾ In Korea, I think it is also safe to say that the overall trend is not encouraging, and interest in majoring in the humanities and philosophy has not been robust and has been in steady decline. My own anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the smaller, private institutions in Korea are planning to reduce the liberal arts faculty significantly in the near future, while others are even contemplating the closing of core departments.³⁾

The reasons for such a decline are undoubtedly complex and difficult to diagnose. To get to the full set of reasons, we most likely require the aid of comprehensive and detailed empirical research, something that cannot be done here. But based on our own experience in the field, along with the reflective, critical attitude distinctive of philosophers, we can with some accuracy, in my view, detect at least some of the reasons behind this decline. What comes to mind first and foremost for me is that there appears to be a worrying assumption on the part of many that the central questions that philosophy, and, more broadly, the humanities raise have somehow been answered. So what questions do I have in

2) Dewey, Caitlin. “Worst College Majors for Your Career,” *Kiplinger*. August 2012. Web. 16 June, 2013. <<http://www.kiplinger.com/slideshow/college/T012-S001-worst-college-majors-for-your-career/index.html>>

3) As one referee of the journal asked, is this a decline in philosophy itself or is it rather a decline in education of philosophy? I suspect it is a mixture of both, though the combination will differ depending on the situation. In Korea, for instance, while there seems to be a serious decline in philosophy majors, and many universities appear to be closing their philosophy departments, there also appears to be somewhat of a demand for philosophy from the general public, as I will discuss later. In the US, in contrast, while the general public seems less interested in philosophy per se, its education seems to be more secure across the institutions of higher education, especially if we focus on the more elite institutions.

mind, and in what sense are they thought to be answered?

The questions I have in mind, as Anthony Kronman has aptly put it, are those that concern the “meaning of life.”⁴) Most of us hopefully are fortunate enough not to be faced with these arduous questions on a daily basis. But most of us also will have had, at least once in our lives, the experience of asking, is what I am currently doing worth its while? Is this all there is to life, or is there something more, something more fulfilling and meaningful? We also have met many a student seeking our advice in making key decisions, in which case we often ask back, what do you really value, and what true abilities do you think you have? These questions force us to consider the core values and beliefs that structure us as persons, and to seek out what values and facts we take to be at the core to our lives. At any critical juncture in our lives, it is these questions that emerge to identify and test our basic commitments and beliefs, to tell us and reaffirm who we really are.

But why do we ask such questions, and why is that these questions are so important to us? Most noticeable, perhaps, in these considerations is the fact that there is a point to *each of us* asking these questions. That is, the answers seem to depend on who each of us are, and this diversity and individuality of the answers stand in stark contrast to other human intellectual activities we are familiar with and value as well. Compare the situation to the questions asked in the natural sciences, say, chemistry or mathematics. In these fields, there are standard textbooks to which we turn when we need answers, and they contain universally veridical answers that apply to all of us. Is there a point of *each of us* asking whether the Fermat’s Last Theorem is the case, wondering whether the fact that *I* am asking the question will yield an answer different from

4) Kronman, Anthony. *Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

your asking? In contrast, it seems obvious that the goals in life we each pursue depend on what we each decide, what we each want, and who we are as individuals. Would it not seem absurd to require that my neighbour become a philosopher because I am to be one?⁵⁾ Thus, these questions are important to us, because each of us are the only ones that can answer these questions, and how we answer these questions has deep and significant implications for how we live and what we pursue in our lives.

There might be a number of different ways people might react to this line of reasoning. One prominent form of objection would be that there seems to be an overemphasis on the differences among individuals in what I am saying. For one might think that there are certain basic desires and needs all of us pursue and want, and, while there might be some divergence in terms of minor preferences, say, one's favorite flavor of ice cream, it is not the case that the basic, fundamental "meaning of life" questions are left open-ended. From such a perspective, one might go on to argue that, in some sense, the "meaning of life" questions have already been basically answered in that we live to maintain our biological survival, enjoy the various material goods that are both required for survival and often pleasurable in abundance, and endeavor to pass down our genes to the next generation.

Given our physical existence, it seems difficult to deny that the vast majority of us do need to meet basic biological and economical needs to engage in asking these questions about the meaning of life. And when such needs are not being met, and our lives are mostly devoted to fulfilling such needs, it can indeed be the case that striving to satisfy these basic needs is what life is about. But, as we can anticipate, the issue

5) Kronman makes this point well in the first chapter "What Is Living For?" of his *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp.9-36.

of what counts as enough can emerge quickly enough, and at what point other interests and goals ought to be taken as equally important, if not more, turns out to be a question that depends on who asks. Once again, the values, goals, and beliefs that are at the core of who each of us are tell us whether such striving is all there is, or whether goals other than that of biological or economic success are equally important as well.

It also seems possible that in the earnestness and frenzy that accompanies the pursuit of the economic wealth, a nation or society as a whole can at times induce its members to lose sight of these questions about how much is enough, and what else might really matter as well. I think the recent remarkable history that has unfolded in the southern half of the Korean peninsula might perhaps be thought to fit both of these descriptions. As an aftermath of the brutal Japanese colonization in the earlier half of the 20th century and the devastating Korean War from 1950-53, Korea's GDP per capita in the 1960's was comparable with levels in the poorer countries of Africa and Asia.⁶⁾ I remember when I first returned to Seoul in the late 1970's, classmates would leave the classroom at lunch time because they could not afford to bring their lunches and the schools were unable to provide lunch. And on my way to school, my shoes would often get muddy because of the rice paddies I had to traversed, but now affluent apartment residences take their place. Korea now is among the world's 20 largest economies, with a true, thriving democracy, and, according to one US media account, "the most

6) This fact in itself gives rise to the following question: given such difficult economic circumstances, was it possible for philosophy and other humanities to ever have a foothold in post-war Korea? Paradoxically enough, I think it was in some ways in better shape than it is now. How so? In my view, the strong Confucian tradition in Korea of valuing scholars as well as the literati, which dates back at least to beginnings of the Chosun dynasty (1392-1910), held sway well into the late 1980's in ways it does not currently, though remnants of this valuing still undoubtedly remain, as I shall argue below.

wired place on Earth”, enjoying the newest technology spawn from wealth backed by a high-powered export driven economy.⁷⁾

But, as the report itself suggests, “being wired” has multiple connotations, and some can be rather deeply troubling. Korea now also suffers from highest suicide rate among the thirty four OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) member countries, with forty three people committing suicide a day, a rate when compared to 1991 has risen four-fold over the last twenty years. This rate is roughly 2.4 times higher than the average of the OECD member nations. Regardless of the various ways in which this troubling data can be interpreted, it is undeniable that there are deep, fundamental issues and the society as a whole is suffering. Diverse reasons have been offered for this troubling phenomena, including the increasing and alarming level of economic disparity among the populace, and not a day passes without attempts of national soul searching. And accordingly diverse ways of “healing” are mentioned daily in the main stream media. But there also seems to be some consensus that the pressure cooker social competition ubiquitous in Korean society, where everyone is uniformly assumed to strive for and hence pegged into the same goal of “good school, good occupation, high income, and high social status”, is deeply problematic. Koreans seem to have collectively held their breath too long to reach the goal of escaping dire poverty, only to find that many could and should have let their breath out a long time ago. That is, we seem to be only now slowly realizing that there are so many other meaningful goals other than that of “cookie cutter” success focused on wealth and social status, especially if such success requires sacrifices not worth

7) Dretzin, Rachel (producer/director). “South Korea: The Most Wired Place on Earth”, *Frontline*. 14 April, 2009. Web. 16 May, 2013. <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/south_korea802/>

making. But this realization does not imply that we are in fact moving away from this straightjacket framework, since the vast majority of the populace still seems to be committed to the goals and lifestyle dictated by such a framework. Hence, the suffering continues, and it is in this sense that the assumption that the “meaning of life” questions have been answered is not only false but may turn out to be rather oppressive, with dire consequences.

But there seems to be another sense in which the “meaning of life” questions seem to be left unanswered for Koreans. Though it might be somewhat difficult to believe, given Korea’s current population of about 48 million, Michael Sandal’s *Justice: What Is the Right Thing To Do?*⁸⁾ sold over 1.3 million copies, since its Korean translation was published in 2010.⁹⁾ This suggests, among other things, that even among those who accept as primary the type of economic success and material affluence mentioned above, there are deep questions and concerns about how the newly accruing wealth is to be distributed in a fair and equitable manner, not to mention how the various social, economic, educational, and other institutional resources are to be allotted. This concern mirrors the fact that Korea does not, once again, compare favorably in terms of income disparity among the OECD nations, but it also reveals that considerations of fairness and equality play a critical role in how many Koreans now regard their lives as going, even if they agree upon the main goal as that of material affluence. That is, justice and fairness are critical elements in the makeup of an ideal society, and how to think of

8) Sandal, Michael. *Justice: What Is the Right Thing To Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009)

9) This phenomenon appears to support my earlier suggestion that there is in Korea a certain type of public demand for philosophy from the general populace. As additional evidence, we might note that a series of lectures sponsored by the Platon Academy this Spring at Seoul National University, which introduces certain key Western classics to the general public, is typically drawing over 1,500 people.

these elements are once again standard questions that philosophers raise, the answers to which over 1.3 million Koreans were eagerly seeking.

Lastly, the change for Korea has not been merely physical. The idyllic hilltop overlooking the Han river on the eastern side of Seoul retains its notorious name of the “Mountain of Beheading (絶頭山)”, where early Christian followers were executed *en masse* in the late 1800’s. But many visitors to Seoul now are surprised to see the skyline dotted with the abundant neon crosses at night, with the 2008 census stating that 28% of the population regard themselves as Christian. In turn, the current elderly who have long toiled to uphold the Confucian virtue of filial piety even under economic duress now find their affluent offspring rejecting Confucian values as antiquated and oppressive. While those of my parents’ generation worked hard to support their parents, they are finding that many of their children do not feel the same type of moral and cultural obligation towards them, leading to a deep sense of loss and injustice. It is hard to think of another nation that has been subject to such a whirlwind of East meets West on such a scale in the last century.

This volatile mix of compressed economic growth backed by severe competition and straightjacket expectations and a new bewildering array of new ideas, values, and religious attitudes is the crucible that is now Korea. And this is why asking the “meaning of life” questions is precisely what Koreans appear to need most at this time. In fact, has there been a time when philosophy had been needed more? We need to take stock, look back, and reassess our priorities and values. We need to think hard about economic equality and justice. We need to sort through the various philosophical, religious, and secular traditions, and see where each of us stand, and how we can reach common ground. Each and every one of us needs to find each of us again, and this life of examination is not possible without engaging in philosophy.

If this is the situation of Korea, what of the US? Let me now turn my attention to the other side of the Pacific, where that situation seems rather different. While it certainly seems to be the case that some find the study of philosophy and the liberal arts problematically impractical,¹⁰⁾ this negative attitude seems to be tempered by a view that takes philosophy and liberal arts to hold a central place in the proper forms of higher education in the US.¹¹⁾ Though my evidence again is merely anecdotal, the undergraduate courses at Yale in which I had worked as a teaching assistant were mostly overflowing with bright, enthusiastic undergraduates. And, in my nine years of teaching at the Ohio State University, there were no imminent worries about the reduced enrollments in philosophy classes, and the undergraduate philosophy major and minor programs seemed mostly steady both in terms of number and quality of students.

But is then this perception of decline a mistake and thus unfounded? Most likely not, and I do think there is something to this perception of decline, though the decline in the US seems to be of a rather different nature. In the US, the decline to me seems more like a change in attitude toward the discipline of philosophy and the liberal arts in general. More

10) For instance, there have been numerous media reports about the proposal in Florida that students majoring in the humanities will be required to pay higher tuition: “the governor’s task force on higher education suggested recently that university tuition rates be frozen for three years for majors in “strategic areas,” which would vary depending on supply and demand. An undergraduate student would pay less for a degree in engineering or biotechnology-whose classes are among the most expensive for universities-than for a degree in history or psychology.” Alvarez, Lizette. “Florida May Reduce Tuition for Select Majors.” *The New York Times*. 2012, December 9. Web. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>

11) For interesting and enlightening account of the history of the liberal arts education in the US, see Kronman, chapter two of his *Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

specifically, the decline appears to be a kind of a doubtfulness as to whether philosophy can rise to fulfill its traditional role. Fueling this skepticism, I believe, is the seeming willingness of philosophers to distance themselves and, in some sense, give up their authority on the questions concerning the meaning of life.

In navigating two cultures, I have found that one gains a new perspective when, instead of being a student oneself, one gets involved as a parent. You are still part of the system, but you are one-step removed: you are not the direct recipient of the educational efforts, and, hence, you get to see things you had not noticed before. One eye-opening experience was that of visiting the classroom of my son early in elementary school. What struck me was how early and constantly the identification and affirmation of one's desires or thoughts was going on. I think the visit was in kindergarten, and the teacher would routinely ask the students what they wanted and what they thought. The mantra in Korea, in contrast, had been more along the lines of "this is what you *should* think, and this is what you *should* want."

Episodes such as these reveal what many a visitor to the US has remarked upon: the culture in the US is such that asking the basic questions about what one values and believes seems to come rather naturally, or at least is inculcated in a way that it becomes natural for the general populace. That is, the raising of the basic "meaning of life" questions come much more easily for those with a cultural background in the US than, say, in Korea. Indeed, this type of self-determining individualism about basic values and preferences seems very much like what might be called the "American Way."

But along with this ease comes a different kind of ease, where the *answers* also appear to come much more easier as well. For the operative assumption appears to be that it is the individual that has the final say in

deciding these issues such that that it would seem odd to consult the philosopher or scholar as an “expert” on how to live well. Philosophers, it seems, are not thought of on the model of sages or gurus who possess *phronesis*, but more on the model of a physicist or mathematician. While one might ask the physicist about the rate at which the universe is expanding, one would not typically ask her how one should live their lives in light of this information. Similarly, while we might ask the ethicist what possible rules of ethical conduct are out there for the picking, we do not take the ethicist to give us the final word on what normative guidelines we actually should adopt, or so the thinking might go. That the ethicist knows more about what reasons people have for their views and what advantages and disadvantages a given position entails, might make him more knowledgeable about the field of ethical inquiry, but this does not mean he is better at living an ethical life. That is, in the intellectual climate of the US people do not look up to the philosopher as someone is better at living life well, or so it seems.¹²⁾

Might this be too cynical or sarcastic a rendition of how philosophy and philosophers are regarded in the US? Perhaps. And I want to be careful to note that there is something very valuable about this lack of authority mentioned here. I myself have suffered from instances where the “expert” professor shuts down a line of critical questioning simply on the basis of his authority, and such authoritarian suppression not only has individually negative consequences but also can be the cause of much social ill with disastrous results. So it is a fine line that I am trying to toe: the absence of authority seems much preferable to groundless, oppressive

12) If so, how are we to explain the aforementioned steadiness in the teaching of philosophy in the universities across the US? One relevant factor might be that there seems to be broad consensus in the US that the learning of philosophy nurtures the practical skill or ability to argue for one’s position effectively, and hence is at the least instrumentally valuable.

authority, but well-founded, properly justified authority also seems better on occasion. Perhaps one might wonder whether such benign, well-grounded intellectual authority is possible at all. But if we extend our memories back, to, say, Socrates, would we not think of him as something closer to a sage, a genuinely good person, someone to look up to and admire, and would he not hold sway over us with a respect that was due *because* he was such a good philosopher?

That we need to go back to Socrates to find this type of ideal sage/philosopher might seem to suggest that the situation is pretty dire. It seems to suggest that Western philosophy has been downhill since the 6th century B.C.E. But I suspect that even within the intellectual history of the US we need not go that far back to find people who might emerge as candidates of this sort of sage/philosopher – perhaps Thoreau or Rawls might fit this mold. Even if we disagree with the actual views being professed, we agree that these individuals were attempting to present the total package, as it were, where not only does one excel in terms of intellectual and philosophical ability, but this ability is also manifests itself as being capable of providing convincing examples as to how the good life ought to be led. And I myself can easily think of a couple of philosophers I look up to as people I respect, someone I wish to emulate in certain ways, where the central reason is that their living well is a result of their being good philosophers. Though I have never actually posed this question to my colleagues when I was in the US, I wonder what the reaction would have been, had I presented this model of the philosopher, as one who is comparatively better at living a meaningful, fulfilling life? Would it be surprising if such an ideal were met with surprise and even perhaps some ridicule?

I wonder whether this environment has not led ourselves to accept, deep down, that we as philosophers are really in no better position than

any other individual to live a meaningful, fulfilling life. Thus, in contrast to the image of philosopher as the sage or secular guru, we ourselves accept that we are technicians of a sort or referees, making sure the rules of the debate over the “meaning of life” are being observed. At times, we become so good at this debate that we show off our skill over the game, showing how we are capable of arguing any position. And it is at times like this that I have felt that we verge on getting too comfortable with disagreement, taking for granted that genuine resolution is unattainable. Philosophy then becomes more of a skill or technique to effectively present oneself with a veneer of plausibility, and is not much more than score-keeping, winning one little skirmish once and again but never the battle.

One of the surprising changes in returning to Korea is that on occasion I am asked to give public lectures to audiences that have had no formal training in philosophy. This had never happened in the US, and given that my area of specialization is 17th and 18th century Western Philosophy, I was somewhat hesitant at first. But the organizers were fairly persistent, but, more importantly, they were happy to have my public lectures focus on introducing the views of philosophers such as Descartes or Leibniz, or on providing a general overview of philosophy, so I acquiesced. On one such occasion, not yet six months after my return to Korea, I gave an one and a half hour presentation on “What is Philosophy” at a major hospital in Seoul for its medical staff. The last section of the presentation focused on ethics and value theory, about various conceptions of the good, and whether value itself is subjective or objective in nature. At the end, one member of the audience raised his hand and asked the following question: given that you are a philosopher, an expert at this type of thing, what kind of practical advice do you have for us to live a meaningful, fulfilling life? I was stunned. Completely

unprepared for this request for practical wisdom, I remember stumbling about for an answer, trying to gather my thoughts. The mere fact that I was a philosopher carried a full expectation that I would be able to provide some sound and genuine wisdom about how to live.

Now might this type of demand and expectation be special to Korea and not the case in the US? A recent “US religious landscape survey” from the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life states that 84% of the participants affiliate themselves with some religion.¹³⁾ While there are undoubtedly many reasons why one affiliates oneself to a particular religion, it seems difficult to deny that a central reason is that people feel they find answers in religion to the deep, fundamental questions about the meaning of life. If so, then despite the aforementioned self-determining individualism that exemplifies the “American spirit”, the general populace appears to be open to accepting such authority if it is in the form of religious guidance. Thus, the demand for guidance seems to be there even in the US. But it does not seem to be the case that the general populace regards philosophers as sages who might guide them to, say, secular salvation. And it has been my cautious suggestion that the reluctance of philosophers to take on this role is part of the reason.

So where do these observations leave us? I would like to end this essay by saying a bit more about the actual answer I gave to that member of the audience at that hospital last year. My practical advice in attaining a good life was basically that of suggesting that we all begin the quest for seeking out what we really value and believe in earnest. In the

13) <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-key-findings.pdf>. In contrast, a recent census report from Korea (2005) states that 46% replied as having “no religion” (<http://kostat.go.kr>). Might there some type of correlation here? Is the lack of religious affiliation be somehow conducive to seeking out advice for secular salvation?

background was the thought that Koreans at this point would do better to remove themselves from the spell of authority, be it government, general societal pressure, or intellectual authority. I also added that a central role of philosophy is to aid those who wish to critically examine the various claims presented as truths, in debunking them and showing how shaky they are in terms of their foundation. Thus, in effect, I gave the time-tested Socratic answer of valuing the examined life.¹⁴⁾ But I also felt at that time that it would be very nice, some years down the road, to present an answer that was fuller, one that would include an intrinsic goal or good that does not consist in searching for such a good, one that would provide some type of bedrock meaning to our lives. Frankly, I do not yet feel ready to give such an answer at this point, but also undeniable is that I feel rather uneasy about the fact that I am not ready. As noted, I am firmly committed to Socrates' dictum that an unexamined life is not worth living. But would not an examined life that has the answers as to what gives real meaning to life be all the more worthy?¹⁵⁾

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이석재
 서울대학교 철학과

14) Cf. *Apology* 38a.

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철학의 자리와 시기

—한국과 미국의 철학과 철학교육 비교—

이 석 재

저자는 개인적 경험을 바탕으로 이 글에서 철학과 순수학문 교육의 쇠락이라는 현상을 한국과 미국을 비교하며 조망한다. 쇠락의 측면에서 양국이 비슷한 운명을 겪고 있지만 저자는 그 쇠락의 형태나 원인은 상이하다고 분석한다. 이러한 상이성에 근거하여 저자는 각각의 역사적, 문화적, 사회적 배경에 근거하여 철학과 철학 교육의 역할 역시 규명, 추구되어야 한다는 주장을 제시한다.

주제어: 철학교육, 쇠퇴, 인생의 의미, 가치, 전문가