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Pak Sedang 朴世堂 (1629-1703)

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In the 17th century, Korean orthodox of Zhu Xi's school, which was confined to overly theoretical or metaphysical thoughts and debates, began to disclose its limitations and some scholars found a way to base their thinking on reality and to make their thought carry in it practicality. Their thought paved the way for further development in the 18th century. Pak Sedang was part of this new current. In his commentaries to the Classics, he looked for understanding and interpretation true to the original texts but at the same time he was independent and open-minded vis-à-vis the orthodox. In the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, during the rage of faction between *namin* 南人 and *sŏin* 西人, split and conflict even inside the latter between *noron* 老論 and *soron* 少論 were intense around the issue of the relation with Qing China. Pak Sedang was indifferent to the ritual debates between *namin* and *sŏin* and, on the diplomatic issues he pursued practical interest over rationale. On the ritual debates, in particular, he pointed out that the rite justified by a principle doesn't affect the fact of transmission of the throne and therefore he didn't fully acknowledge the worth of the ritual debates. In other words, he didn't intend to implement the ritual ideas from Zhu Xi's school in a doctrinaire way. He laid stress on the fact that Confucianism is a system of thought that essentially values the practicality. The scholarly effort he made to renovate Confucianism of his time inside Confucian tradition crystallized into his work *Sabyŏnnok* 思辨錄 (or *T'ongsŏl* 通說) that interprets Six Classics, and his search for this renovation outside the tradition, into his commentaries to the *Laozi* 老子 and the *Zhuangzi* 莊子.

1.

As to the studies on Confucian Classics, Pak Sedang, being unsatisfied with Zhu Xi's commentaries which were recognized as authentic, pursued faithful interpretation in his own way, tried to recover original meanings in ruminating on the sense of letters and contexts and giving detailed analyses. In this reason, he sometimes did neither accept Zhu Xi's commentaries nor hesitate to indicate doubtful or unclear points in his eyes. In this sense, he was free from Zhu Xi's authority.

This attitude of Pak Sedang reveals itself in his commentary to the *Great Learning* (*Taehak* 大學) in particular. He underlined that most of the text of the work contain contents that even the beginners can easily understand and put into action. According to him, however, Zhu Xi commits, in his commentary to the opening chapter of the *Great Learning*, a contradiction in describing the highest stage of the attainment of self-perfection while saying that the work is for the first learner the door to enter to the learning. Pak Sedang glosses the *kyōk* 格 in *kyōngmul* (格物) as “rule” or “correct” and understands *kyōngmul ch'iji* (格物致知) as setting right the object of practice by acquiring the appropriate reference of action in practicing. In other works, these phrases indicate, not any profound theory by which one's knowledge attains the fullest realization of the world of things as Zhu Xi's teaching, but the practical awareness of the correct thing to do. His argument is based on the position that regards as important practice and experience advancing stage by stage, from close proximity to distant place, from lower to higher. Pak Sedang underlines the fact that this is the original spirit of the Classics and therefore he criticizes Zhu Xi's teaching for failing their real meaning. Thus his thought differs in orientation from Zhu Xi's school and takes another turn.

His *Chungyong Sabyōnnok* 中庸思辨錄 or the *Critical thinking on the Chungyong*, starts with a study on the definition of *chungyong*. Unlike Zhu Xi's commentary reading *yong* in an ordinary sense, he interprets *chungyong* as getting the middle way and keeping it permanently. His understanding of the term doesn't restrict it to the awareness of the usual nature of the middle way but puts the emphasis on continual and steady practice. On the grounds that the work is written to teach about human being and not about things, he rejects Zhu Xi's theory that doesn't make a great discrimination between human being and no human being in their original nature.

2.

In criticizing the speculative nature of Neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi's school, he repudiates its principal concepts and theses. In the development of Neo-Confucianism, the rise of philosophical tendency to understand all formations and changes through principles and the thinking that considers the 'li' 理 (principle) as a reality in the meaning of *so yi yǒn* 所以然 (the reason why it is so) and *so tang yǒn* 所當然 (the reason why it must be so), these two factors had worked to come up with the idea of "the *ch'ǒn* 天 (heaven) is 'li'". Hereby, the idea of 'Lord on High' (*sangje* 上帝) as a supreme being was eclipsed and the 'li' as principle replaced 'Lord on High'. The Heaven being reduced to 'li' was understood as *sǒng* 性 (nature) inherent in human being. The *li*, as Supreme Ultimate regarded as the first cause of reality, is one as a whole; at the same time it is omnipresent. As to this thesis, Pak Sedang considered the 'heaven' as 'Lord on High' irreducible to the *li*. His understanding about the concept of *sǒng* (nature) was also different from that of Zhu Xi. The *sǒng* was for him the perspicacity endowed from Lord on High, corresponding to one's reason capable to distinguish between right and wrong and use perception ability. According to him the *sǒng* is no other than 'talent' (*chae* 才) which contains it to shape in accordance with the form of each one after the latter is endowed his form to exist. For this reason he considered also *sǒng* as having a form ('below form', *hyǒng i ha* 形而下). He had interest in heterogeneity of the *sǒng* endowed to each individual more than its essential homogeneity with *li* which establishes the thesis "nature is principle" (*sǒng chūk li* 性則理).

Thus, more than to the general principle the 'original human nature' has, Pak Sedang paid attention to its significance of self-conscious subject having in one's mind innate insight. And the fulfillment of the latter depends on ordinary practice such as putting filial piety into action. For him, the *li* (principle) provides the reference in order that good sense or moral judgment is possible and, being endowed this *li* as criteria that is *sǒng* combined with the *ki* 氣 (vital force), human being merely does his best in relation with things and society. Pak Sedang tried to emphasize the necessity of practice in reality and the acquisition of the moral virtue through endeavor in the course of life more than the metaphysical understanding or

belief about moral original nature or innate integrity. This thought appears later in Chǒng Yagyong 丁若鏞.

3.

In addition to the Cheng and Zhu's Neo-Confucian school, philosophical thought was relatively varied in Pak Sedang's time. This landscape was shaped by the diversity of Chosŏn scholars' attitudes toward indictments of contradictions and limits of Zhu Xi's school's ruling principle that disclosed themselves during wars and invasions. Pak Sedang's open-minded way of thinking and study can be seen in his attitudes towards Yangming's school, Lao-Zhuang thoughts and Buddhism. In the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* not only he points out extensively those which correspond to self-perfection and state administration, fundamentals of Confucianism, but also he explains through his Neo-Confucian eye such concepts as 'way' (*to* 道), 'virtue' (*tök* 德), 'having name' (*yumyǒng* 有名), 'not having name' (*mumyǒng* 無名) or 'putting things in order' (*chemul* 齊物). This can be regarded at the same time as a 'Confucianization of the Lao-Zhuang's thoughts' and a renovation of Confucianism.

One of the points that are worthy of notice in his commentaries to the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* is that he has fundamentally Confucian worldview and value system, that he centers his thinking upon human conditions and actions. He turns the Lao-Zhuang's thoughts on the being transcending human conditions into all interest in human dimension. He affirms man's ethical judgment and attaches importance to the contribution to society through traditionalism, that is, by transmission of values of the past, while being critical against Lao-Zhuang's skeptical attitude toward moral value and their thought pleading for cultural relativity and individual enlightenment. And he pursues applicability in reality of problem solving.

Meanwhile, toward Lao-Zhuang's thought and Buddhism, he shows inclusive attitude, that is, rational and selective adoption of other traditions with the idea that "truth also can partially be found in other traditions". In his search for Confucian truth in Buddhist or Lao-Zhuang's texts, he reads therein the Confucian ideology such as 'self-perfection and social administration' or 'inner sage, outer king'. In particular, he seeks therein an alternative thought to remedy *noron*'s rigid dogmatism of his time.

This inclusive attitude also can be seen in his acknowledgement of ideal being and society thinkable beyond every tradition. For example, toward those who reach an ideal state or a high level of moral attainment, even though they belong to Daoist or Buddhist tradition,

he shows them respect by using such appellation as *talja* 達者, *t'ongin* 通人, *sangin* 上人.

According to his thought, there can be no distinction between inside and outside of a tradition at the highest level of the teaching; Dao is in the center that all things and disputes surround and there are lots of ways to approach the center. Hence, no matter how innumerable are disputes, grasping this center one can have plenty of ways to respond to them. He rejects self-righteousness too. He argues that the ways to pursue the common good can be different from one to another, and that other's searching for good helps my seeking virtue and in this case it is necessary to tolerate and encourage other's pursuit of good. Thereby he regards as model of government the being lenient and fond of doing good in the 'Great Centre' (*hwanggŭk* 皇極) and 'Perfect Equilibrium' (*chungjŏng* 中正).

Sources

“六經之書，皆記堯舜以來群聖之言，其理精而其義備，其意深而其旨遠，蓋論其精也，毫忽之不可亂，語其備也，纖微之無或闕，欲測其深，莫得其所底，欲窮其遠，不見其所極，固非世之曲士拘儒淺量陋識所可明也，(…)

傳，曰行遠必自邇，此何謂也，非所以提誨昏蔽使其能自省悟乎，誠使世之學者，有得乎此，向所謂遠者，即可知自邇而達之，(…)

今之所求於六經，率皆躡其淺邇而深遠是馳，忽其粗略而精備是規，無怪乎其眩早迷亂沈溺顛躓而莫之有得，彼非但不得乎其深遠精備而已，併與其淺邇粗略而盡失之矣，噫嘻悲夫，其亦惑之甚乎，夫邇者易及淺者易測略者易得粗者易識，因其所及而稍遠之，遠之又遠，可以極其遠矣，因其所測而稍深之，深之又深，可以極其深矣，因其所得而漸加備，因其所識而漸加精，使精者益精備者益備，可以極其備極其精矣，又何有眩早迷亂沈溺顛躓之患哉，夫聾則不聞乎雷霆之聲，瞽則不覩乎日月之光，彼

聾瞽者病耳，雷霆日月，固自若也，行乎天地而震烈，耀乎古今而晃朗，未嘗爲聾與瞽而聲光之或虧，故及宋之時，程朱兩夫子興，乃磨日月之鏡，掉雷霆之鼓，聲之所及者遠，光之所被者普，六經之旨於是而爛然復明於世，囊之迂僻者既無足以膠人慮而滯人意，其近似者又不能以假之名而借之號，邪遁之煽誘遂絕，坦夷之準的有在，究其所以至此者，亦莫非操末探本沿流沂源以得之，則是於子思所言之指，真有深合而妙契者乎，然經之所言，其統雖一，而其緒千萬，是所謂一致而百慮，同歸而殊塗，故雖絕知獨識，淵覽玄造，猶有未能盡極其趣而無失細微，必待乎博集衆長，不廢小善，然後粗略無所遺，淺邇無所漏，深遠精備之體乃得以全，是以輒忘僭，汰槩述其蠡測管窺之所得，裒以成編，名曰思辨錄，倘於先儒牖世相民之意，不無有塵露之助，故非出於喜爲異同，立此一說，若其狂率謬妄不揆疏短之罪，有不得以辭爾，後之觀者，或以其意之無他而特垂恕焉，則斯亦幸矣。”(思辨錄, 序)

“余嘗讀大學章句，多所未解，竊不能無疑，伏而細繹，似有一二可議者，輒不揆僭越，以意易置如此，或冀文從其類，語不失次，無難曉不通之患，然唯以識疑，兼自便誦習，不敢煩諸他人，以取狂妄悖謬之罪，然究其大本，終不失朱子之旨云。”

(思辨錄, 大學章句識疑)

“天命之謂性，率性之謂道，脩道之謂教。

命者，授與之之謂也，性者，心明所受之天理與生俱者也，天有顯理，物宜之而爲則，以此理則，授與於人，爲其心之明，人既受天理，明於其心，是可以考察事物之當否矣，苟處事應物，能必循乎此，無或違焉，則其行於事物也，有通達而無阻滯，譬若衢路然，故謂之道也，然，日事日物，既有大小輕重親疎尊卑之不等，人之稟氣，又不免有愚智賢不肖之異，則間多不能循乎是而行乎是者，故聖人爲此本乎己之所自

循，權乎人之所當行，脩而明之，品節其緩急次第，以立天下之大法，以覺其不能循者，即父子君臣三綱五常之教是也，人皆知天下之有大法而獨不知聖人權乎人之所當行而設也，則是其蔽也，若反之其心而察之，以理之顯，思所以行乎此者，當如何而可，則斯無難於得矣，既得乎此，其於設教之意，審其若準的之在前，可以不迷乎其所嚮，即此書之所爲作而子思於此，原本而言之，欲人之易知也。○註，謂命爲令，今謂爲授與，何也，令之義，不明故也，如授之爵，亦謂命之爵也。註，謂性爲理，今不同，何也，理明于心爲性，在天曰理，在人曰性，名不可亂故也，曰理曰性曰道曰教，論其致究其歸，卒未嘗不同，但不可亂其名，名亂則或失所在本末之次第，無以明所言之義也。註，言性兼人物，今去物而獨言人，何也，雖物亦有性，但其爲性也，與人不類，無以稱乎五常之德，兼言物，非中庸之指故也。註，言人物各循其性之自然爲道，今亦但言人者，何也，中庸言人而不言物，夫中庸之爲書也，以教人而非以教乎物，人可教也，物不可教，人能知道，物不能知道也。註，言性道雖同氣稟或異，今但言稟氣之異，不言性道之同，何也，只言稟氣之異則性之同也不言而自明，且道是率夫性而得，非有生之初，與生俱者也，若曰性道同而氣稟異，則是道也又將與氣稟對立，疑乎受之於天，然則性與道之辨，亂矣，其所云不能無過不受之差者，亦無以識其何謂也。註，言人知事之有道而不知其由於性，知聖人之有教而不知其因吾所固有者裁之也，今亦不同，何也，事非有道，人之行乎事者有道，教非因吾所固有者裁之，乃裁吾所當行也，謂事之有道則疑於道在事而不由乎性，謂教之裁吾所有，則疑於脩性而非脩道也。”(中庸思辨錄, 第一章)

“朱子謂性，形而上者也，氣，形而下者也，竊以爲有不然也，夫易所言形而上者謂之道，形而下者謂之氣者，豈非以未賦形之前，其賦形之理，已具於冥冥之上，故曰

形而上者，謂之道，既賦形而在下則又各隨其形而含其理以爲之才，故曰形而下者，謂之哭乎，今人物之性則乃哭之含其理以各爲之才者，故曰天命之謂性，又曰心之官則思，此天之所與我者，又曰惻隱羞惡恭敬是非之心，我固有之，仁義禮智，非由外鑠我也，皆有是形而含此理之謂，恐不可曰形而上者也。”(孟子思辨錄, 告子上).

“大舜，有大焉，善與人同，舍己從人，樂取於人，以爲善。

天下之善，己不獨有，必與人而共之，所謂公而不私者是也，己未善則無所係吝而舍以從人，人有善則不待勉強而取之於己者，其爲說也美矣，猶未足以盡乎舍己從人樂取人爲善之義，若向所言者，乃喜聞過拜昌言者所能，非盛德之至而爲舜之所以大也，蓋天下事，一致同歸，殊道百慮，其事一也，同也，有如是亦善，有如彼亦善，如是者，我之所慮也，如彼者，人之所慮也，舜乃於此，未嘗不舍其所慮，唯人之所慮是從，夫然者，不自有其善而所樂者在乎取人而已，其爲善也唯取於是樂而已，則天下之人將無不各自以其善而來爭進之於我助我爲善，夫合天下之美，孜孜焉不知其己也，舜之爲善也不亦廣乎，其有大於前所稱者，以此也。

自耕稼陶漁，以至爲帝，無非取於人者。

以舜之聖，其平日慮事，豈盡不如人，乃無不於人而取之，卒未有一善之出於己者，則其忘己好賢之誠，有足以來天下之善，如此。

取諸人以爲善，是與人爲善者也，故君子，莫大乎與人爲善。

與，獎與之也，夫舍己善而取人善，在己則以人之善而爲吾之善，在人則以我之與其善而益勸於爲善，君子之德，豈有大於使人人而勸於爲善者乎，自善與人同至此，皆一義，而反覆之如是者，欲學者深察而得其意也，非獨以著舜之聖也。○竊謂人莫難於舍己從人，故善之大者亦無過於是，今有與人共事者，人爲之畫其事，卽曰子之言果善矣，然吾所慮者亦無不可，盍姑從吾意乎，唯恐善之不出於己，如是者三則人遂

吞其舌而不敢再有所言，聞者亦搖首而去之，此常衆人之失而天下之善所以伏也，夫一人之智不如聚天下之智，一人之善不如合天下之善，彼徒恐善之不出於己不知舉天下之善畢歸於己之爲美，此惑之大也，而罕能改之，其或距人之甚者，雖有絕人之智，尚足以亡國敗家，況於下者乎。”(孟子思辨錄, 公孫丑 上)

“言凡人之有猷有爲有守者人君當念之而無遺忘雖其未盡合乎中正之則若不至罹于愆咎則君當受而用之此所謂與人不求備者也其或不及于此而有善其顏色自言好德者則君亦錫之以福開其向善之路此又與人爲善之一事如此則是人者斯莫不一惟皇之極蓋王者寬廣樂善納人於中正之則者如此使民日遷善而不自知者此之謂也。○朱子謂有謀者有才者有德者人君固當念之而不忘其或未能盡合而未底于大戾者亦當受之而不拒也人之有能革面從君而以好德自名者則雖未必出於中心之實亦當因其自名而與之以善則是人者亦得以君爲極而勉其實也蔡傳因朱子之說而云念之受之隨其才而輕重此猶未大害至曰見於外而有安和之色發於中而有好德之言則又倍師說而大舛於理矣朱子以錫之福爲與之以善者於義未愜而傳又謂福者爵祿之謂二說皆偏福既不可名爲善又不可名爲祿獎與寵進之意皆存乎其中不宜執一說也。○陳雅言謂時人即指上三等之人言廣收樂育使皆知所以自勉則人莫不觀感興起因其所已能而益勉進其未至皆歸於皇之極也愚謂朱蔡皆以時人爲專指康色之人殊失經文之本意陳氏此說爲得之但其所謂三等者亦未悟前說之非若分未協于極爲次一等則其所謂有猷爲守者皆爲能協于極矣若以康色好德爲好善之誠見於色辭所謂德之符者則是又不止爲有猷有守而已其能協于極有不待言而可見者矣如是則向所謂時人斯其惟皇之極者未見其有着落而爲無所指明之語矣故此章所言當爲二等之人皆待王者寬容獎與以成就之納之於中正之則也皇之建極者如此云爾。”(尚書思辨錄, 洪範 11 章).

“老子當衰周之時 老於守藏 不用於世 至其將 隱 猶著書以明其所守之道用 見其志 其道雖不合聖人之法 其意亦欲修身治人 蓋其言約 其旨深 自漢以前 尊用其術 上而為君 能行恭默之化 下而為臣 能為 清靜之治 及晉之世 士之狂誕者 託為玄虛無實之談 渺茫不可涯之說 以飾其偽 以欺一世 天下翕然同趣 而風俗大亂 晉室遂傾 老子之道 夫豈然哉 其遺風餘 烈 歷世猶存 是以後之說老子者 多宗晉人 以為微言妙義 訛而又訛 益可悲也”(新註道德經, 序)

“夫禮者忠信之薄而亂之首, 前識者道之華而愚之始”

(朴世堂 註) “文勝質衰而刑辟多. ... 多識前古以為禮, 而不知非道之實, 既以自愚, 又愚後人, 故曰愚之始.” (新註道德經, 38 章註)

(原文) “故有儒墨之是非 以是其所非而非其所是 欲是其所非而非其所 是 則莫若以明”

(朴世堂 註) “儒之所非 墨以為是 墨之所是 儒以為非 皆由乎大全破於小成 實理蔽於榮華 而各自為是非 若真欲是人之所非 非人之 所是 而不失是非之正 則莫若照之以天理之明” (南華經註解刪補, 齊物論)

“道之樞要在乎是矣. 樞者, 環中之物. 得道之樞以環中而應是非之無窮, 則是非誰無窮而其所以應之者沛乎, 其有餘矣.” (南華經註解刪補, 齊物論)

“按言 魚各造乎水而已, 無問流之大小; 人各造乎道而已, 無問方之內外. ... 遊道術者, 忘彼此.” (南華經註解刪補, 大宗師)

“天下之善己不獨有, 必與人而共之, 所謂公而不私者是也.

蓋天下事一致同歸而殊道百慮. ... 天下之人將無不各自以其善而來爭進之於我, 助我為善.” (孟子思辨錄, 公孫季(上)).

“聖人待人之厚, 而與人為善之意, 本自如此, 何嘗如今人迫隘偏狹, 視若怨敵之為也” (西溪集, 書, 答申監司翼相書)

“... 而有善其顏色, 自言好德者, 則君亦錫之以福, 開其向善之路, 此又與人爲善之一事, 如此則是人者 ... 盖王者寬廣樂善, 納人於中正之則者如此, 使民日遷善而不自知者, 此之謂也。”(尚書思辨錄, 洪範).