Reconstruction of Korean-Christian Experience in Post-Colonial Era: Understanding Edward Said's Orientalism and Lee Jung Young's Theory of Marginality

Introduction

Theological research has a tendency focus on western Christianity in attempting to understand Korean Christians.   Because this traditional method has concentrated on abstract 'Christianity,' Korean particularity becomes the secondary element given the postulation of western theological implications. This presupposes a monolithic interpretation of Christianity and alienates Koreanness from Christianity. In this thesis, I would argue that "Orientalism" is the basis of the distortion, and illustrate the method to get away from it.   I will discuss on Edward Said's Orientalism and the problem of understanding Korean-Christian 'self.'

   In the second part of this thesis, I will introduce Lee Jung Young's theological methodology of 'marginality.'   Lee earned the fame for his bold interpretation of Christian theology through I Ching or the Book of Change.   Constructing his theology, he uses the idea of 'change' in I Ching, and suggests Asian way of doing theology from "creative core," the place of in-between and in-both.   I will Illustrate this idea as a possible way of overcoming Orientalism.

Main Subject

1. The Discourse of Orientalism and Problem of Understanding Self

   Edward Said, a leading figure in the discourse of post-colonialism, defines Orientalism as follows: " . . .European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."[1] Externally, westerners have also created an "other" against which to perceive themselves.   In other words, the West's technique of gaining identity is through a projection of their 'surrogate' and 'underground' self onto Orientals, and their setting themselves off from the Orient. In other words, Said argued that the Europeans used their geographical imagination to achieve objectification of their subject.   This is his critical reconstruction of Foucault's major interest of "achieving normality through objectifying abnormality." To analyze the technique more closely, Said draws on Foucault's definition of discourse as follows:

> Without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.[2]

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[1] Said, Edward, <u>Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient</u>, 4th ed., (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 3
[2] Ibid. 3

As he confesses, Said gets vast influence from Foucault: "Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted."[3] Then, I need to discuss Foucault's idea of discourse first:

> …all manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said', an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the hollow of its own mark. . . The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said.[4]

Discourse is something, which makes 'said' possible.   Nobody talks about the discourse, but everybody knows how to say through it.   To meet this argument, Foucault defines discourse as historical *a priori* "that is not a condition of validity for judgements, but a condition of reality for statements."[5] These statements are called archives as he describes them as follows:

> Instead of seeing, on the great mystical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use).   They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call *archive*.[6]

In Foucault's idea, therefore, the "shown or said" of archives always depends on the "not-shown or unsaid."   Archives conditioned by discourse develop into knowledge, and his archeological analysis is to find permeated discourse from statements to knowledge.

"Orientalism" is not a statement, but 'discourses.'   In other words, western statements such as novels, poems, philosophy and theology about the east have always hid the discourse of Orientalism, and he proves it through his books of *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*.   Said argues that the core of the discourse of Orientalism is the Europeans' positional superiority: "In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on the flexible *positional* superiority, which put the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."[7] This positional superiority productively reformulates or 'distributes' Orientalism into diverse academic disciplines:

> Therefore, Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive some nefarious "Western" imperialist plot to hold down the "Oriental" world.   It is rather a *distribution* of

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[3]   Ibid. 23
[4]   Foucault, Michel, <u>The Archeology of Knowledge</u>, trans. Sheridan A.M. Smith, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 25
[5]   Ibid. 127
[6]   Ibid. 128
[7]   Ibid. 7

geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interest" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains.[8]

In the final analysis, Said's argument is that Europeans' use of their positional superiority to distribute their objectified identity into the diverse field of knowledge, and the discourse of Orientalism is elaborated by diverse academic disciplines. In this process, quite separate from the reality of Orientals, "Orientalism not only creates but also maintains." Paradoxically, East Asians have imported those disciplines to understand themselves.

U Sirha, a lecturer in sociology at Yonsei University, clearly shows the domination of colonial ideology today: "During the first class of each semester, I often asked students to draw a picture of the East and the West."[9] The gathered sheets showed the result of the students' ordinary understanding of the images as follows[10]

	West	East
Positive Image	Rational, Reasonable, Scientific, Progressive, Logical Active	Spiritual (?), Contemplative (?)
Negative Image	Material, Imperial	Irrational, Unreasonable, Unscientific, Non-Progressive, Mystical, Superstitious, Quiet (?), Contemplative (?)

For the students, the image of the East is "almost made by putting a negative prefix to that of the West. Already, the students put a superior value on the image of the West, and then they produced the opposite value of the East. In addition, the images of the East were mostly negative. The positive images of the East, "spiritual and contemplative," are also the opposite of the negative western images, "material and imperial." The result of Wu's work cannot always be the same as that of other departments of the university. But, Wu's intention is to illustrate the fact that colonial ideology still dominates the Koreans.

In Korean seminaries, there is a course entitled "Church History." Actually, the title, "Church History" means "Western Church History." When the schools offer a course in Korean Church History, the title is "Korean Church History." Western Church History is generally taught in sophomore year, and Korean Church History is taught in the senior year. In other words, the schools universalize western church history as "Church History," and marginalize Korean Church History through adding the prefix, 'Korean.' The problem is the tip of an iceberg. Almost all of the theological disciplines, such as Systematic Theology, Biblical Study, Christian Ethics, Practical Theology, are taught in Korea omitting

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[8] Said. *op.cit.* 12
[9] U, Sirha, <u>Deconstruction of Orientalism and Reading Our Culture Properly [오리엔탈리즘의 해체와 우리문화 바로읽기]</u>, (Seoul: Sonamu Press, 1997), 42-43

the prefix 'Western.' Without the course on "Korean Church History," the student would not even learn any 'Korean' or 'Asian' prefix-added course in theology.

Then, is there any way to get away from the discourse of Orientalism, and produce our own theology? Does Said suggest anything to exodus from the discourse produced by Europeans for hundreds of years? Said criticized dominated Orientalist discipline in current academic discipline, but he himself suffers the effect of Orientalism. Although it is true, he shows how to get free from orientalist discipline. Said shares this insight with the readers:

> For objective reasons that I had no control over, I grew up as an Arab with a Western education. Ever since I can remember, I have felt that I belonged to both worlds, without being completely *of* either one or the other. During my lifetime, however, the parts of the Arab world that I was most attached to either have been changed utterly by civil upheavals and war, or have simply ceased to exist. And for long periods of time I have been an outsider in the United States, particularly when it went to war against, and was deeply opposed to, the (far from perfect) cultures and societies of the Arab world. Yet when I say 'exile' I do not mean something sad or deprived. On the contrary belonging, as it were, to both sides of the imperial divide enables you to understand them more easily.[11]

According to Abdul JanMohamed's description, Said's experience of 'exile' has the character of: "worldliness-without-world, homelessness-as-home."[12] This situation of exile pushes Said to constitute his own place, which is neither Palestine nor the U.S. JanMohamad comments on Said's overlapped self-identity for creativity, and he categorizes this into the paradigm of 'border':

> In theory, and effectively in practice, borders are neither inside nor outside the territory they define but simply designate the difference between the two. They are not really spaces at all; as the sites of differences between interiority and exteriority, they are points of infinite regression. Thus, intellectuals located on this site are not, so to speak, "sitting" on the border; rather, they are forced *to constitute themselves as the border*, to coalesce around it as a point of infinite regression.[13]

Border is the place of continuous re-construction, and to promote this creativity, Said's writings suggest alternative 'contiguity' rather than 'hierarchy' of Orientalism:

> Said's world-view does not "authorize" either the logic of identity and contradiction (the logic of the syllogism) or the principle of analogy as methods of representation. This means that he does honor, as noted above, the notions of adjacency, complementarity, discontinuity – in other words, *contiguity*, which serves as both an ontological principle and

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[10] Ibid. 43
[11] Said, Edward, Culture and Imperialism, (London: Vintage, 1994), xxx.
[12] JanMohamed, Abdul R., "Worldliness-Without-World, Homelessness-As-Home: Toward a Definition of the Specular Border Intellectual," in Sprinker, Michael, Edward Said: A Critical Reader, (Oxford U.K & Cambridge U.S.A: Blackwell, 1992), 96
[13] Ibid. 103

a method of exposition.   In Said's world-view, things exist side-by-side with one another, not in hierarchies of relative reality or ordered series of dynastically related groups.[14]

Said's presupposition of contiguity is permeated in his writing, but he never analyze a detailed strategy to get beyond Orientalism.   If I connect this idea of contiguity with Korean theological discipline, western theological ideas becomes close to Korean religious traditions as well as cultures, and create diverse metaphysical ideas.   Although he struggled hard, it is not so clear to adapt his theory to theological methodology.   This idea of 'contiguity,' however, was elaborately analyzed by Lee Jung Young, the late Korean-American professor of theology at the Drew University in the U.S.   Different from Said, Lee developed a careful method to exit from dominating culture of western imperialism. Lee names the 'border' as marginality, and analyzes 'contiguity' into 'in-between,' 'in-both' and 'in-beyond.' In the next section, I will discuss Lee's idea of "margin of marginality."

2. Margin of Marginality: Lee Jung Young's Idea of Post-Colonialism

According to Richard King, a professor of religious studies in the University of Stirling, Scotland, there is no such thing as 'pure' religion or spirituality:

> The a priori (and largely uncontested) status of the category 'religion' is reflected in the
> fact that in the West it is thought to be *simply common sense* that all cultures have religions
> and that those religions have been important constitutive factors in the development of
> those cultures.   Debates about the precise denotation of the term 'religion,' whether there
> is an 'essence' to religion or whether it is a polytheistic concept, do not question the
> fundamental assumption that there are things called 'religions' that are easily identifiable
> and classified in terms of specific names such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism,
> Buddhism, Janism, Taoism, etc.[15]

In King's view, religion must be hyphenated with culture.   Like his insight, theology in Korea has the significance of Orientalist culture of narrating the Korean's Christian experience with the western theological discipline.   Then we need to approach more closely to Korean-Christianity, not Christianity in general.   Lee Jung Young invested almost all of his life of theology in clarifying East-Asian-Christianity.

To follow his thought, I will describe Lee's theology first, and then illustrate his strategy of rebuilding self in the place of border.   Lee regards Orientalist worldview as that of the centralist,[16] and he criticizes western "either/or" thinking:

> First of all, the either/or way of theological thinking in the West not only promoted but
> shaped the absolute dogma of God.   The God of dogma is not God at all.   The God who

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[14] White, Heyden, "Criticism as Cultural Politics," in Diacritics, Vol 4, Part 3, 1976.
[15] King, Richard, Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India, and the Mystic East, (London: Routledge, 2000), 41
[16] The term, centrality is equivalent to hierarchy, and this word will be discussed in the next section.

is absolutized by human words is less than the God of Christianity… Secondly, the either/or way of theological thinking is responsible for the predicament of Christianity in the world of today… Christianity has no choice but **either** to accept **or** reject them totally… Thirdly the either/or way of thinking has made scientific technology possible. Thus Christianity is allied with technology to reject the non-rational aspects of human life…Her rejection of them is based on the absolute style of either/or thinking, which allows no room for mysticism. Finally, the either/or style of theological thought has contributed toward the pollution of our environment… Man [sic] must **either** conquer nature **or** nature will conquer him [sic].   **Either** the spirit overcomes the body **or** the body will overcome the spirit.[17]

His criticism on "either/or" way of thinking is that it makes humans fragmented and alienated from themselves. They are alienated or fragmented from God, Christianity from world religions, human experience from mysticism as well as emotion and humans themselves from nature.   Against the framework, Lee is suggesting "both/and" way of thinking.   In the matter of "both/and" thinking, Lee suggests:

The goal of every religion is the transformation of an "either/or" way of thinking to a "both/and" way of thinking, that is, the transition from a reasoning process to a faith-filled process.   In this transition, man [sic] experiences transcendence.   This is a salvation experience, the experience, the experience of totality from that of fragmentation.   This experience transcends the partiality and discrimination of the world.   It is the experience of wholeness and unity, the experience of realizing the Change in himself.[18]

"Both/and" thinking goes together with negation of self-fragmentation caused by separation from totality. To achieve the state, Lee suggests solidarity with Jesus in self-negation or in "margin of marginality":

The greatness of Jesus-Christ lay in his renunciation of his rights and privileges by emptying his glory and power, becoming a lowly and helpless person, the slave of humanity, and belonging to the company of the marginalized on earth.   By becoming a marginal person, he was in touch with two different worlds; the world of Heaven and the world of Earth, the world of the Father and the world of the Mother (Spirit).   As a marginal person, he was placed "in-between" conflicting worlds.   He was neither in this nor in that world.   Yet, at the same time, he belonged to both worlds and transcended them. He was in the world but not of the world.   He was both detached and attached…[19]

Although Jesus was marginalized by the divine world and by the human world, he could take both worlds, and even transcend (resurrect) both of them.   Therefore, "both/and" way of thinking presupposes

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[17] Lee Jung Young, "Yin-Yang Way of Thinking," in Elwood Douglas J. ed., <u>What Asian Christians Are Thinking,</u> (New Day Publishers, 1976), 60 – 61
[18] Lee Jung Young, <u>Cosmic Religion</u>, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1973), 37
[19] Ibid. 76

"nether/nor": Jesus was contained neither in the human life, nor was in the divine life. Because of the reason, Jesus embraces the two conflicting worlds into one.   This paradox embraces the negative and positive entities.   Lee depicts this as a diagram.[20]
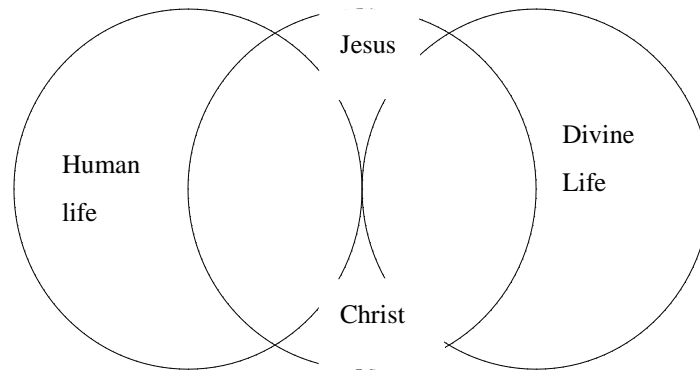
Being a connecting principle, Jesus makes this world sacred, because he is both the Divine Being 'in' human life 'and' he is human being 'in' Divine life. Lee applies this through the paradox of "neither/nor" and "both/and" with crucifixion and resurrection:

> Crucifixion means the negation of life, while resurrection means the reaffirmation of life. Man [sic] does not have one without the other, for reaffirmation presupposes negation. Resurrection is inseparable from crucifixion.   In crucifixion life was negated, but it was also the way of reaffirming life.   Without negation there is no affirmation.   If resurrection is impossible without crucifixion, crucifixion is necessary for resurrection.[21]

Through Jesus, divine world cannot exist without human world and vice versa.   This dual aspects depend on one another illustrates that salvation is not the traditional concept of deliverance to exit from this world but the 'connection' of the Divine and the human worlds.   Compromising deliverance with connection, Lee suggests inclusive Korean language:

> …Jesus Christ as the people of God is acceptable from the Asian perspective.   In East Asia, "I" is interchangeable with "we."   Especially in Korea, my book is "our book," my house, "our house," my friend, "our friend," or my children, "our children." "I" and "we" are interchangeable, for they are inclusive… Because of this inclusive thinking, the concept of the Son is interchangeable with that of "children" from an Asian perspective.   This new interpretation from an Asian way of thinking may provide a new understanding of divine plurality, without denying the singularity of the historical Jesus.[22]

When I introduce my wife to friends in Korea, I say, "She is our wife."   There is no "my" family, "my" house, "my" father, or "my" mother etc. but "our" family, "our" house, "our" father, and "our" mother.

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[20] Lee Jung Young, Trinity in Asian Perspective, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 77
[21] Lee, "Cosmic Religion," 51
[22] Ibid. 64 – 65

Lee accepts East-Asian trinitarian thinking of concreating unity of Heaven, Earth, and Human through adopting the inclusive Korean word, *oori* 우리. The ground of Jesus and us are merged into the Korean inclusive word, *oori*.   God's Child, Jesus, according to Korean's inclusive communal idea, can imply God's children.   This idea is not a unique Korean word, because the Lord's prayer starts from "our" father, which can be interpreted to Jesus' proclamation of sharing his ground with us.

In this idea, the more Asians have solidarity with Jesus, the more do they have a harmonious perception of God and the world. In the final analysis, Jesus becomes the creative core to make people in the margin of marginality to be children of God.   In this theological framework, Lee identifies the place of Asian-American with Jesus' margin of marginality.   Using the diagram above, he recreates another as follows[23]:
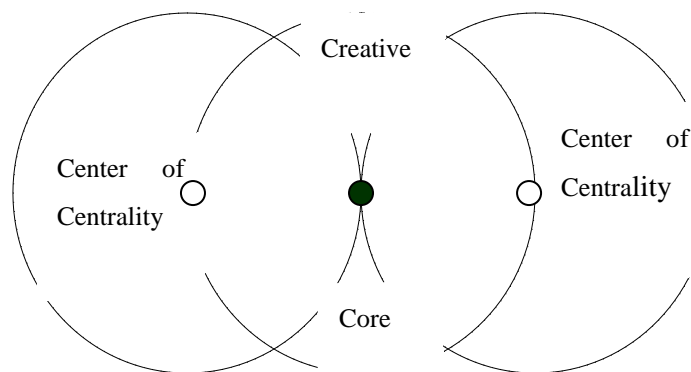
The intention of this diagram is to embrace Asian-American Self-Identity.   Because Asian-Americans are neither Asian nor American, they become marginalized by both cultures or two centers of centrality, as the two white dots show (in-between).   But, as the black dot in the middle implies, this marginality has the possibility of embracing both the cultures (in-both) and transcending both of them as a continuous creativity for the formation of a new culture (in-beyond).   Explaining the diagram, Lee maintains the following:

> …the creative core or the new center marginalizes the center of centrality and brings the
> marginal toward the creative core.   Previous centers become margins, and margins cores
> (the new centers).   The new, transforming core will never replace the center of centrality,
> for it is also the margin of marginality.   It is a dynamic, creative, transforming core,
> because it does not dominate but harmonizes margins with coexistence.   In this dynamic
> process everyone moves toward the margin of marginality, the real center where
> marginality is overcome by marginality.   When the former marginality is overcome by the
> new marginality, a creative core is formed again.[24]

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[23] Lee, Jung Young, <u>Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology</u>, (Minneapolis: The Fortress Press, 1995), 98
[24] Ibid.

Lee sees this margin of marginality positively, because it is the place of a creative core for a new paradigm of social formation. Lee does not imply any 'essentialist' theory to perceive Asian-American's diverse social formation uncritically. Negative experience on in-between can be transformed into all embracing inclusivism. Lee's idea of "in-between" and "in-both" does not come from the western theory of cultural theory, but from his consistent recapitulation of the yin-yang theory.

To begin with, Lee introduces the symbol of the Great Ultimate, 太極, the beginning of yin (quescence) and yang (movement) as the origin of the cosmos:
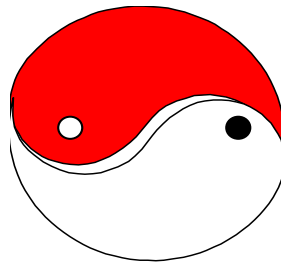
One of the significant description of the yin-yang symbol is written in Chou Tun-i's "the Diagram of the Great Ultimate":

> The Infinite! Also the Supreme Ultimate! The Supreme Ultimate [Great Ultimate] through creative Movement manifests its Yang Aspect. This Movement, having reached its limit, is followed by Quiescence, and, by this Quiescence, it manifests its Yin Aspect. Thus, Movement and Quiescence, in alternation, become each the root of the other. The distinction between Yin and Yang is determined and the Two Modes (i.e., Yin and Yang) are established. By the transformation of Yang and the union therewith of Yin, the Five Elements of Water, Fire, Wood, Metal and Earth are produced. These five ethereal forces (ch'i) are diffused in harmonious order, and the four seasons proceed in their course.[25]

Chou describes that the dispersion is not an artificial procedure of leading into illusion, but the cosmological events to create time and space. Using the diagram, Lee focuses on the 'change,' and it is possible through black and white dots in the yin-yang symbol above. The dots are the yin element in the place of yang and the yang element in the place of yin. Because of them, the Great Ultimate can be changed. In other words, Lee separates the Great Ultimate, and highlights 'inness' for the "creative core." He restructured this yin-yang symbol for the diagram of Asian-American experience. They are Asians in the place of America and they are Americans in the place of Asia, but because of them, the two cultures can compromise with each other.

In the context of Orientalist theological discipline, it is hard to define Korean-Christians' spiritual formation in the overlapping cultural system. They are neither traditional Koreans, nor western

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[25] Wei, Tat, <u>An Exposition of the I Ching</u>, (Hong Kong: Dai Nippon Printing Co., 1977), 71. 無極而太極！太極動而生陽, 動極而靜, 靜而生陰, 靜極復動, 一動一靜, 互爲其根. 分陰分陽, 兩儀入焉. 陽變陰合而生水火木金

Christians.   According to Lee Jung Young's way, this "double marginality" gives them the possibility to embrace the two different entities and to create their own place.   Then, Koreans' multi-religious setting of Buddhist, Confucianist, Shamanist, Taoist and their western theological learning become the sources of recreating theological creativity.   The black and white dots are Koreans in the place of Christianity, and Christians in the place of Koreans, but because of them, the two cultures can compromise with each other. Edward Said's experience of exile of contiguity can be interpreted as the combination of "in-between" and "in-both." Then, theology should interpret the formation of spirituality influenced by Christianity and other religions.   In other words, we have to overcome monolithic western 'theological' interpretation of Christianity, and theology should adopt diverse methodology of religious and cultural studies.   From this particular experience of Korean-Christians, we can creatively construct 'Christianity' including and transcending the East and the West.

Conclusion

> Not so very long ago, the earth numbered two thousand million inhabitants: five hundred
> million men, and one thousand five hundred natives.   The former had the Word; the others
> had the use of it. (Jean-Paul Sartre)[26]

Sartre's writing above is in the preface of the Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth.*   He was an Algerian and took part in the struggle for the liberation of his country, but his point of need was to find the identity of himself and his people.   It was pictured, divided as well as subdivided, and structured by French intellectuals.   Colonial intellectual's dilemma of finding themselves behind the ideological fiction of Orientalism is described as follows:

> But at the moment when the nationalist parties are mobilizing the people in the name of
> national independence, the native intellectual sometimes spurns these acquisitions which he
> suddenly feels make him a stranger in his own land.   It is always easier to proclaim rejection
> than actually to reject.   The intellectual who through the medium of culture has filtered into
> Western civilization, who has managed to become part of the body of European culture.[27]

Although he decided to mobilize people into the national independence, he was another westerner establishing another western civilization.   He disappointedly confesses: "He wishes to attach himself to the people; but instead he only catches hold of their outer garments."[28] As Sartre says thousands of natives only use of the Word.

   Colonial intellectuals just like Fanon are placed 'in-between.'   However, Lee's idea illustrates that they have to 'make' their identity through "catching hold of the natives' outer garments."   They are not intellectuals of a colonial power, nor natives of colony.   But they have a role of connecting these two

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土, 五氣順布, 四時行焉.
[26] Fanon, Frantz, <u>The Wretched of the Earth</u>, Philcox, Richard trans., (New York: Grove Press, 2004), xliii.
[27] Ibid. 176
[28] Ibid. 180

opposite sides. The 'connection' implies dialectic creativity, and it is the creative core of self-identity. Then, theology in Korea is the process of creating Korean-Christian self identity through recapturing the ideas of East and West, and produces its own specific theological works. Identity is not something which is given, but we create it in the place of margin of marginality.

Abstract

This thesis is a critique of Korean-Christian experiences in post-colonial era, and it suggests the method of getting over the ideology of Orientalism. Illustrating Orientalism as 'discourse,' this thesis criticizes the West's "positional strength" over the East. In addition, almost all of imported knowledge from the West hides the discourse of Orientalism, and Koreans understand themselves through the eyes of the West. In the second part of this thesis, it introduces Lee Jung Young's theological methodology. Chasing after his theology influenced by I-Ching, this writing argues that Korean-Christian experience of "in-between" can be transformed into that of "in-both," and it is a possible way of overcoming Orientalism.

Key Words: Post-Colonialism, Cultural Studies, Theology, Religious Studies

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