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Symposium "TRANSITION: Changing Society and Art"

■ Colloquium I *Memories and Visions: From Tradition to a New Identity*

Session 2: *The Asian Perspective*

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Toward Oblivion of Identity, Disassembly of "Subject" in the 20th Century and Representation

This section is subtitled "From tradition to Identity". However, tradition is embodiment of identity and thus from the very start this concept encloses within itself a contradiction that some opposite structures, no matter what position they stand on, which decided (or, industrialized) the 20th century have always appeared in the shape of identity, the fundamentalistic politics.

For one example, words of Edward W. Said in his speech at DocumentaX obsessively emphasizes effectiveness of "the great story" even after the world structure holding the cold war as its axis collapsed. If you do not read his "Orientalism" once again, you see it clearly that his view is based on the continuous tension between Palestine and Israel, and straightly opposes the West-oriented Hegelian principle.

I admit that Said's model of the world where identities coexist had effects on the late "São Paulo Biennale" and "Kwangju Biennale," as well as Theodor W. Adorno's idea "Discrimination without Domination" did. These concepts have been widely accepted by non-American and non-European countries including Asian countries as powerful text to encourage them to be conscious of their identities.

On the other hand, "magiciens de la terre" and "Documenta IX," also suggest introspection of the West-oriented principle, although they were criticized for boldly exposing the image of Europe which included non-American and non-European countries, and showing no coexistence. In the trend of identity we can see the fact identity is becoming the axis around which art all over the world revolves.

The issue overlooked in the circumstances is the interrelationship, like crime committed with confidence, the could be found in either Said's position and the strong West-oriented principle which emerges unintentionally. In the odd relationship, the "subject" of the 20th century style has been built up through restoring human existence to such extremely restricted political definitions as nation and race, or history and culture, with a shield named identity held high as if it was the terminal indulgence. And, the greatest contradiction in the 20th century that we must point out, commonly heard in low voices of Said and the West-oriented principle, is this logic of the powers: "Human existence cannot be assured unless identity is justified."

Will human being (representation) be unable to be established when identity is got rid of? In my presentation, I dare to try to give a little development to a consideration on the possibility of representation which is marching in the direction of "Oblivion of identity." Following the march arrives another "subject" of new representation that will never reveal its name nor belong to any category, and whose existence will never secure itself. In my attempt, I refer to Tadashi Kawamata's "Working Progress-Boat Travelling" at Münster and Tatsuo Miyajima's "Fortress of Right" at Genève. These works disassemble the "subject" of the 20th century imposed by the powers, in the middle of the world art current about which is still spoken in the context of the "great story" dialogue of the powers.