CURRERE, PSYCHIC SPEECH, AND TEACHER EDUCATION

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The task of teachers, according to Doll (2017), is to teach how to read psychic speech. Expressed symbolically, psychic speech can be illuminated through myth, literary text, and dreams pointing to psychic reality. Psychic speech is, thus, recurring patterns of symbols and themes that help us make sense of our teaching, articulated through myth, literary text, dream, and one's daily experience, hidden in the unconscious (Doll, 2017; Semetsky & Delpech-Ramey,2013). Informed by the work of Doll (2017) and the ideas of Jungian psychologists, using the method of *currere* and co-mingling my past experiences and current thought, I illustrate how I endeavor to read "psychic speech," of my students and myself, which makes possible a fresh, startling, poetic, reframed vision and understanding of teaching and opens up teaching practice for renewal.

MY "ARCHETYPAL" STORY

It was the first year I had worked as a university instructor. The university I worked for was a national key university in Beijing, China, with more than 12000 undergraduates and 4000 graduate students. I taught two courses—Civic Education and Fundamental Knowledge of Chinese Law—that were required of first- and second-year undergraduates throughout the country.

As a young instructor, I was conducting an educational innovation—teaching the course on Chinese Law in English—in response to the call of both the university and the Ministry of Education in China. At the time, the Ministry of Education in China (as cited in Wang, 2013) had launched educational innovations at the university level, aiming to "cultivate talents" with "competitive capacities" that can "meet the demand of social construction" (p. 4) and calling for teachers' participation by various means—bilingual teaching being one of them. I responded to the call as a university instructor. However, it was obviously a challenge both for me and my students.

For this innovative course, besides legal knowledge, an immense knowledge of English was demanded. To address the language gap, I prepared a list of new words that would appear in each teaching session with an aim to assist students' leaning. Generally, for each weekly teaching session (two hours), around 50 new words were needed. However, this language requirement appeared to be a big burden for my students. The workload caused by this course, for them, seemed too heavy. Moreover, law itself was hard to understand; I had made it even more complex by teaching it in English. For me, it was also challenging. I spent a lot of time preparing for the course (making PowerPoints with Chinese and English explanations; searching American case law to illustrate some key points with a comparative perspective; screening content knowledge because bilingual teaching would not allow the same amount of content to be delivered as in other classes taught only in Chinese). It was too much work. I felt exhausted. Did I do it for the good of students, to expand their understanding of law and improve their English for the future global challenge? I believed so.

However, some students came to me saying that they could not follow very well if they had not prepared as advised—memorizing the words I provided before each class—though some students were so excited with my new way of teaching. Wasn't this course supposed to be a course of "joy" or "relaxation" without heavy homework? How could it require extra workload before and after class? Public required courses in Chinese universities have long been deemed as "necessary" to graduate with a certificate but not

"useful" after graduation. Students were not supposed to spend much time on them. My innovative attempt was, apparently, contradictory with what had been prevalent. Some students were, then, resisting this bilingual teaching. They complained to me: there is too much workload for the course! I have no time to prepare! Students' complaints made me nervous, and I even worked harder.

The course entailed teaching a weekly two-hour session to two separate groups—with approximately 150 students in each group—using the same content. One student, Xiao Jin, came to my attention when he showed up regularly in both groups. He was the only one who attended twice per week and came up to me after my first teaching session ended. "Professor Wang, your teaching is great! I can learn law and English at the same time!" He said he was amazed by my teaching. From then on, he attended my class twice each week, even though the content was the same. He was a second-year undergraduate in the department of Chemical Engineering. It was rare that students attended the same class twice taught by the same teacher, and I knew that he was burdened with various assignments of different subjects, especially for student in the department of Chemical Engineering. His continuous attendance made me feel confident in the significance of my new way of teaching and the efficacy of my teaching. Was it because his positive, supportive response reassured me as to my sense of efficacy and sense of worth as a teacher? How could a student spend so much time attending a course if this course was not well-taught? The sense I made of his behavior heightened my sense of worth as a good teacher. Meanwhile, his presence seemed to affect other students positively, which could be observed from their attitudes about his showing up again and again in my teaching sessions. I carried on with my teaching—the only one who taught bilingually among teachers who taught public required courses in the university.

Xiao Jin was composed but was always highly attentive in my teaching sessions. Later on, I got to know that he was from a small village, located in Hebei province in North China. He shared with me:

> There was no school in my village, and I had to walk two hours to the center school every day and of course two hours back. In winter the hilly road was dangerous and bumpy, or it was not a road, just a winding path through a mountain. Once I accidentally fell into a hole and fainted. I lay there for hours till I woke up. I crawled out of the hole.

I might have read or heard similar stories from novels, or a friend's friend. However, it was special when I heard it from one of my students. With what I heard, I was completely shocked and moved. The brutal reality, the hardship. I looked into his eyes and saw a shining spot. He failed in the first year for college entrance examination but succeeded the second year and entered the university where I worked. He was happy with the result.

The university had two campuses—one in the center of the city and the other in a district 20 miles away from the city (mainly for the first- and second-year undergraduates). The university provided a shuttle bus every day for professors and staff. But occasionally, I drove by myself. It was not very convenient for students to go to the city center because they had to take a bus by themselves. As we got more familiar, I once drove Xiao Jin to the city center after he missed the shuttle.

On the journey, I asked him what he wanted to do after graduation. He replied that initially it was his wish to do a master's degree. But now he would find a job making money after graduation. He told me that he was the only boy in the family and that his parents relied on him. I continued the conversation by asking why he had chosen to

go to university. He answered quite assertively that it was to find a good job and have a better life. I asked whether there was anything else and enquired about his dreams. He informed me that he and his family could not afford to dream and that he should be practical. Then he added that what every student wanted in this era was to find a good job. But he did feel that he had learned much from attending my class: English and law. It was reasonable, not different from what I expected to hear. He was gladly looking out of the car window while talking with me. I glimpsed at him, praising him for his performance in the course.

I continued by asking him if he was interested in law and told him that some law scholars were making new attempts using classical Chinese poems to illustrate the concept of property ownership in law. I also encouraged him to express himself no matter how strange or naïve he might feel his opinion. He listened to me attentively.

Each time Xiao Jin spoke during my teaching sessions, I smiled at him. Once, I divided students into groups to conduct a moot court activity, and each group could choose any case they wanted to try. Students were assigned as judge, lawyer, journalist, and so on. I still remember that his group was the third group to present at the moot court. When he expressed his opinion as a "lawyer," he cited the story of *Wusong* beating the tiger. *Wusong* was a figure during the *Song* Dynasty famous for beating to death a tiger that had attacked him while he was walking through a forest. He is a well-known, national hero in Chinese history, a Chinese Superman. Xiao Jin commented that *Wusong*'s behavior was a violation of Environmental Protection Law, since the tiger is a national protected animal today in China according to Chinese Law. What a paradoxical image—that a highly respected national hero committed a crime! What a subtle mixture of the past and present's perspective! When other students in the class heard this comment, they all laughed loudly and applauded excitedly. The burst of laughter continued for minutes.

I further invited students to discuss Xiao Jin's perspective, which triggered a hot debate in the class thereafter: Can we kill a tiger when we are being attacked by a tiger in a forest? Under what condition could it happen without committing a crime? What is the difference between encountering a tiger in the wild and in the zoo? Who defines crime? What is the nature of a crime? How do different periods or eras give meaning to legal regulations? This discussion became more and more deep, intensive, and prolonged than expected. What a teachable moment! What a moment of encounter! Everyone was engaged and immersed entirely in this "complicated conversation," discussing and questioning, including myself. I forgot that I was a teacher, and evidently, my student forgot I was teacher too. In the wrap-up, I thought highly of his speech: Xiao Jin has a great potential to be a lawyer.

It has been many years since then, but the scene still remains vivid in my mind. This experience made me realize the importance of engaging students in class discussion through creating "pedagogical unfolding" or allowing "pedagogical unfolding" to occur and flow in accordance with emerging teaching situations, which gave me a fresh, renewed perspective on teaching. However, this teaching was totally out of expectation, never planned in advance. It was not outcome based. For those students who deemed the course "not useful," this experience, as I had observed, rendered them an "unimagined possibility" contradictory to the prescribed, practical, utilitarian goal.

I call this story "archetypal," which, among so many teaching stories of mine, remains typical and special. Being typical means that it coincides with what has threaded through my teaching experience: teacher/student relationship and their mutual understanding. Being specials represents that it emphasizes how I first reacted to students' psychic speech: unspoken words from their hearts. In this paper students' psychic speech

is, thus, equal to what archetypal images convey. Psychic speech is interchangeable with "archetypal image or theme." In the following, informed by the work of Doll (2017) and the ideas of Jungian psychologists, using the method of *currere* and co-mingling my past experiences and current thought, I illustrate how I endeavor to read the "psychic speech" of my students and myself.

PSYCHIC SPEECH AND THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS

Doll (2017) associates psychic speech with the unconscious. Carl Jung (1959/2014) distinguishes between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The personal unconsciousness refers to lost memories, painful ideas that are repressed or denied, and subliminal perceptions that are not strong enough to reach consciousness; whereas the collective unconscious refers to a collection of experience accessible to all humans through history, which underlies the personal unconscious—the psychological outline and process of archetype (Stein, 2006). Archetypes are, for Jung, typical modes of expression arising from this collective layer, and they are fundamental psychic patterns common to all humans into which personal experiences are structured, the inherited part of the human psyche. Jung observes that certain symbols have appeared again and again throughout history in mythology, religion, fairy tales, alchemical texts, and so on. For Jung, the unconscious exists not as a thing but as "a living foreign entity within us which can respond to the figures familiar in folk tales and wisdom writings" (Doll, 2017, p. 34). Then one question arises: how can one access one's unconsciousness?

The archetypal images, which exist in myth, folk tales, and literature as discussed previously, act as symbolic transformers capable of making themselves (the unconscious content) manifest at the level of conscious awareness (Semetsky & Delpech-Ramey, 2013). In her journey of *currere*, Doll (2017) describes how myth and literature can allow her to see "this archetypal pattern," affirming their educational significance. Doll (2017) argues that literature and myth help find in images and metaphors "the basic givens of psychic life" (p. xvi). Hence, "feelings thought to be central get routed," "peripheral imaginings begin to take root," and "one learns about living, about mistakes, and about being coerced by cultural demands" (p. 48). The feeling, imagination, and knowledge point us to "the reality that lies underneath words" (p. 139), a psychic reality. Thus, for Doll, one is able through literature "to grasp more coherently the world" (p. 48) in which feeling, thinking, and imagining; rational and non-rational; systematic and non-systematic; multiple modes of thought and feeling are co-mingling. To understand this psychic reality is to approach interiority, "which is within all things" (Doll, 2017). Approaching this interiority and "tapping" the coursing within animate our inner world and render our grasp of the unfolding selfhood. To make it explicit, "The work of the curriculum theorist," Doll (2017) posits, is to "tap this intense current within, that which courses through the inner person, that which electrifies or gives life to a person's energy source" (p. 49). This is to approach the core of oneself, the innermost part of a person. It is to see archetypally.

For Doll (2017), literature, fiction, and myth are archetypal and help find the thread of life in the inner side of things—the thread "made available to consciousness through dreams, associations, and imaginative thought" (Casemore, 2019, p. 1); seeing archetypally is, thus, educationally significant. Teachers are to read "psychic speech" rooted in "archetypes," uncovering the unconscious at the personal and collective level. However, archetypal patterns may also exist in one's daily embodied experience, as argued by Semetsky and Delpech-Ramey (2013). When triggered or inspired by our experience, we begin to learn from our experience, realizing "the embeddedness" in our particular experience—the archetypal nature.

Both Doll and Jung seem to contend that it is through the integration of the unconscious that we might be able to make sense of our experience of archetypal nature, orienting us to the primitive, most inner self. As argued by Semetsky and Delpech-Ramey (2012), the better our understanding of the reality of the archetypes, the more we can "participate in this reality progressively realizing the archetypes' eternity and timelessness" (p. 70). I argue that the method of *currere* offers such "an archetypal story," revealing the unconscious dimension of experience, the primitive self. In the following, using my *currere* guided story either as "literary text" or "archetypal experience," I will further espouse my teaching story to illustrate how I integrate my conscious and unconscious, bringing what is latent to the surface.

Reading Psychic Speech and *Currere*

The method of *currere* (Pinar, 2004) affords me access my past teaching experience, my experience with my students. In this recalling and retelling, I re-encountered my students. In order to get to the heart of an idea, theory, model, or experience, it is necessary to penetrate its archetypal infrastructure, to look into its formative process in the workings, although this core can never be fully perceived or comprehended (Brooke, 2015). *Currere* offers to grasp the core of an experience, as Wang (2020) argues, through potentially meaningful "contingencies," more readily for openness and reflection. This heart or core is the psychic speech delivered. Therefore, what "psychic speech," will I read from my story?

First, Xiao Jin, for me, seems to correspond to the hero archetype in Jungian psychology. To be noted, there might exist multiple archetypes in one person, and Xiao Jin might also possess the characteristics of other archetypes, such as caregiver or helper. The hero archetype represents the process of overcoming obstacles to achieve specific goals. In myths, the hero's objective is often to find a treasure, to save a princess, or to return with the elixir of life. At the beginning of the journey, the hero crosses a threshold into a dangerous forest, desert, or jungle. This symbolizes the hero's acceptance of the challenge to leave childish things behind and to overcome those difficulties, during which both personal and transpersonal growth are achieved (Campbell, 1949).

As a student from a rural area in China, Xiao Jin bore a strong sense of duty to his family, associating his future with his family, conceiving taking care of his family as his life goal, a destined task. His effort became crystalized as he attended every class very carefully and participated in class discussion actively. The unflinching determination and the strong will he possessed to improve his family's situation and the immense efforts he had invested in hard conditions makes him an archetypal hero. Now when I look back, I begin to see and understand the hidden intention as mentioned above (associating his family with his future) that he was not conscious of at that time. He constantly overcame extraordinary obstacles in his ordinary life, and even his presence in the course I taught again gives me confidence. As a teacher, I participated in, or bore witness to, this educational process.

Second, the teacher/student relationship between me and Xiao Jin may be archetypal too. Mayes (2005) argues that educational processes are themselves archetypal. He posits that "the teacher" and "the student" are archetypal figures. For him, the teacher/student relationship is "an archetypal event— just as bride, groom, and marriage are an archetypal situation or just as doctor, patient, and healing or parent, child, and family (p. 34). The interaction between teacher and student is entwined deeply into "the fabric of what it means to be a human being" (p. 34). The teacher who understands the teacher-student archetype, who is most "in touch with the archetypal nature of his or her very

psyche" (p. 34), and who is able to read their own or their student's psychic speech, is a teacher who is able to influence students (Mayes, 2005).

The archetypes of the Wise Old Man and the Wise Old Woman, which are at the very top of Jung's list of the most historically prominent archetypes, seem to be educationally significant (Mayes, 2005). The Wise Old Man and Woman appear in many myths, religions, and dreams and are always related to a young hero or heroine who is engaged in a dangerous journey in order to accomplish a great but difficult task (Mayes, 2005). These Wise Ones who offer guidance and directions are teachers, as pointed out by Mayes (2005). My effort to understand and guide Xiao Jin and the ride I provided for him may symbolize that, as a teacher, I was able to direct the seeker and anticipated that he might one day overcome obstacles and transcend what was given to him. The Wise Old Man or Woman often speak in riddles to inspire their young students to intellectual and moral growth (Mayes, 2005). Xiao Jin, for me, represents a variation of archetypal hero, giving form to an archetypal hero. "Within each archetypal theme there are variations," as argued by Brooke (2015); "there are no fixed boundaries between themes" (p. 142). Thus, the archetypes, for Jung, may be defined as the sources of those typical patterns of action, reaction, and experience that portray and differentiate human beings.

Third, from this story, we might be able to perceive the collective shadow burdening me and my students—an archetype that reflects the negative side of collective culture. Recalling my first innovative attempt, it seemed that I was not very well prepared, practically and theoretically. I purchased different textbooks and wrote very detailed teaching plans. I carefully went through each step of the imagined teaching before I actually taught. I believed that I had done what I could for this new attempt. However, I was not conscious of, or sensitive enough to, the various possible obstacles I would encounter while teaching the course. For example, was it enough that I prepared a list of new English words for students before each teaching session? How was I supposed to view and make sense of this innovation attempt—besides understanding it as new knowledge to be delivered to students? Confronted with difficulties, how could I identify a "negotiated space" where students and teacher could dwell together? How might the teachers' view of curriculum have impact on the way they engage students in learning? I was eager to achieve the "pronounced" or "practical result" of my innovative pedagogy, driven by a force—a hidden, continuous one—to achieve an outcome, a fixed, prescribed, utilitarian one. Other meaningful values seemed to be hidden from me. In this sense, I was similar to my students who regarded public required courses as something "not useful." Also, Xiao Jin had "traveled a long way" in order to find a good job upon graduation. There is nothing wrong in finding a good job. However, is there something more to life than finding a good job? What can a university provide for students? Is the mission of a university to prepare students for all of life, beyond the immediate application of learning, to provide an enduring foundation of basic general knowledge on which they can build? (Hirsch, 1988, cited in Wang, 2013).

Following Jung, Hillman (1975) explained his method of psychologizing as a method of "seeing" or "seeing through," which can teach us how to look at "the frames of our consciousness, the cages in which we sit and the iron bars that form the grids and defenses of our perception" (p. 127). Seeing through emphasizes the need for examining our ideas themselves in terms of archetypes and noticing the psyche "speaking imaginably" (p. 127). This new self-awareness, Burnett (2014) argues, can grant us the freedom and courage to see the traces of our hidden fears, failures, and longings. For the method of psychologizing, Hillman (1975) states,

It suspects an interior, not evident intention; it searches for a hidden clockwork, a ghost in the machine, an etymological root, something more than meets the eye; or it sees with another eye. It goes on whenever we move to a deeper level. (p. 135)

With this method, I, then, begin to recognize the collective shadow burdening me, and my students. I discern the Other within and among us, a culture's collective shadow—the flip-side of its conscious values (Odajnyk, 1976). Jung (1953) writes,

If people can be educated to see the shadow side of their nature clearly, it may be hoped that they will also learn to understand and love their fellow men better. A little less hypocrisy and a little more self-knowledge can only have good results in respect for our neighbor; for we are all too prone to transfer to our fellows the injustices and violence we inflict upon our own natures. (p. 26)

As argued by Mayes (2005), nations, families, communities, political parties, and ethnic groups have "collective shadows that are the underside of their conscious, normative values" (p. 39). Left unexamined and unintegrated, these shadows function negatively. As discussed above, the collective shadow—the utilitarianism—seemed to exist among myself and my students though it had different manifestations in different people. It was embedded in collective unconsciousness, articulated though their effects in the conscious—the pursuit for a visible result only, for the practical. As Cheng (2013) posits, utilitarianism prevails in Chinese higher education, where professors and students consider visible, measurable results only. It can be argued that this utilitarianism may be related to the tradition of Confucianism, which has exerted a much stronger impact than the other religious or philosophical systems of East Asia. It is a pragmatic and present-oriented philosophy. As Max Weber (as cited in Nakamura, 1964) argues,

Confucianism is extremely rationalistic since it is bereft of any form of metaphysics and in the sense that it lacks traces of nearly any religious basis … . At the same time, it is more realistic than any other system in the sense that it lacks and excludes all measures which are not utilitarian. (p. 16)

This philosophy seems to be more useful in helping people solve current problems, but it may not be appropriate to conclude that Confucianism is utilitarian. It may contain such an element though other aspects, such as humanism, need to be attended to too (Wang, 2013). It is only after one comes to realize this impact of utilitarianism, and begins to reconsider it, that one may engage in a subjective reconstruction.

I engage myself in "teacher reflectivity" (Bullough, 1991). In this process, the teacher reflects and evaluates himself/herself and his/her practice. Do I have "unresolved issues or prejudices that are standing in the way" (Mayes, 2005) during my teaching? Was I sensitive enough to my students' reactions and responses regarding my teaching although I did achieve my goal to teach bilingually and engage students with new perspectives? Did I attend to the outcome only without paying sufficient attention to students' responses and comments, especially some negative ones? The teacher should be concerned about his/her own psychic condition, so that he/she can discern the reason that has caused the trouble in his/her teaching (Jung, 1954). What was the driving force that made me pursue this "ambitious" goal? Was I supposed to slow down, to reflect on and engage in inner dialogue with my "shadow"? Without knowing my psychic condition, I might not be able to understand the paradoxical situation where myself and

my students dwelt. The teacher who is able to read their own and their students' psychic speech is more able to be an influential teacher (Mayes, 2005).

Through recalling and retelling my experience with my students, I seem to achieve "the psyche of wholeness and balance" through its own movement—allowing my unconscious at the personal and collective level to surface and manifest, by contrast with the only focus on conscious thought. Reading the psychic speech of myself and my students seems to manifest the unconsciousness and make the unconscious conscious, achieving integration eventually. The method of *currere* allows me to see and understand myself and my students more deeply, maybe the most inner part of myself. *Currere* offers, as posited by Doll (2017), to recover interiority, to tap the coursing within, and to help us find the thread of life inside ourselves (p. 96). Through seeing Xiao Jin and other students, I see myself, more of Xiao Jin, and the world. I am reading psychic speech of my student and myself.

There is a classical Chinese poem from the *Wei and Jin* Dynasty, "Green grasses standing by the riverside, they are, continuously and heartfully, missing the way stretching out to the far." They can never meet regardless of how the riverside green grass may miss the way ahead. There might be somewhere in our heart that we can never arrive. Can I understand myself and my student, eventually?

SUMMARY

Informed by Doll (2017)'s work and the ideas of Jungian psychologists, using the method of *currere*, and co-mingling my past experiences and current thought, I elucidate my exploration of reading psychic speech, including my students and myself. The method of *currere* allows me to retell my teaching story, my teaching experience with my students, manifesting the previously unnoticed, the invisible aspect of my teaching experience, something unconscious at both the personal and collective level, during which I have come to understand the psychic reality of my students, the archetypal nature of the teacher/student relationship, and the collective shadow burdening me and my students—the psychic speech of myself and my student—thereby, engaging in self reconstruction and transformation in recurring cycles as a teacher. Psychic reality is textured with psychic speech arising from archetype and one's archetypal experience. Its consistency lies in its unconscious coming to conscious, enacted through the method of *currere*. Reading psychic speech makes possible a fresh, startling, poetic, reframed vision and understanding of teaching and opens up teaching practice for renewal.

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