# A Zen journey in the living map of curriculum

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> The prestructured curriculum resembles such a map: the learner, the stranger just arrived in town. For the cartographer, the town is an 'object of his science,' a science which has developed standards of operation and rules for the correct drawing of maps. In the case of the curriculum maker, the public tradition or the natural order of things is 'the object' of his design activities (Maxine Greene, 1975).

My father likes travel very much and his biggest dream in life is to have his footprint on each province throughout China. When I was a little girl, one of my favorite things was to listen attentively to his exciting travel stories: as his fingers moved on different local maps of those places of interest he had visited, he often circled out new points that originally weren't marked on the maps in order to show off his own discoveries to me. Now all of these maps have become among my father's most valuable and unique collections. This is one of the major reasons why Maxine Greene's metaphor of curriculum as map strikes me. My father has always divided maps into two kinds, dead and living: if one follows every marker on the map, this is a dead map for the traveler; if one can find exciting unmarked and empty places besides those marked ones on the map, that is living map. Of course my father always boasts that he only uses living maps. I wonder, are there also dead and living maps in the area of curriculum?

Compared with the notion of curriculum as a static running track, William Pinar understands curriculum in its Latin root of '*currere*'[1] – 'the infinitive, verb, active form of curriculum' (Doll, 2005). In Madeline Grumet's words, *currere* 'seeks to know the experience of the running of one particular runner, on one particular track, on one particular day, in one particular wind' (quoted in Doll, 2005, p. 67). This shift from the curriculum's fixed *what* to its flowing dynamics in its different or unique *ways to be* leads me to ponder upon a Zen journey as one of the possible paths on the living map of curriculum. The history of Zen can be tracked from the first centuries A.D. when Indian Buddhism was transferred to China – the fusion of Indian Buddhism and Chinese Taoism led to the product of Chinese Zen which then spread to Japan and some other Asian countries (Dumoulin, 1979; Durckheim, 1987; Watts, 1957). The journey of Zen on the living map of curriculum is a journey of enlightenment without any preset aim or end. The story of Siddhartha told by Hermann Hesse (1951) is such an awakening journey. As Siddhartha says 'I am not going anywhere. I am only on the way.' (p. 93), he is not aware of what may happen in his future life while calmly

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[1] At the end of his presentation paper in the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, William Pinar (1975) states that the method of *currere* in education lets us try to 'generalize on the basis of the stories we tell and the ones we hear others tell, taking them as evidence of a sort, and attempt to formulate in general terms the broad outlines of past, present and future, the nature of our experience, and specially our educational experience, that is the way we can understand our present in the way that allows us to move on, more learned, more evolved than before.'

welcoming and experiencing the following unknown journey – he is always on the way. Siddhartha has no slightest idea of the so-called end or objective of his journey because he knows 'When someone is seeking, it happens quite easily that he only sees the thing that he is seeking; that he is unable to find anything, unable to absorb anything, because he has a goal, because he is obsessed with his goal. Seeking means: to have a goal; but finding means: to be free, to be receptive, to have no goal' (p, 140). What will we lose when we are too occupied with the predetermined goals from the very beginning of our journey? Is our curriculum a fixed secure running track on which everything during the process is merely an obstacle for us to pass through as quickly as possible for the final end, or rather a dynamic *currere* in which we can take our time to enjoy the beauty of scenery alongside our way? What do we want to have in our today's education, an efficient seeker in a constantly accelerating automobile on the highway, or a free finder by foot in the journey for awakening? Can the seeker really learn? I ask Siddhartha this question, but he smiles and turns back to me and then goes on his journey. I close my eyes and listen attentively to the silence: 'No one can be spared of one's own journey. You too. Take your journey and then you would know.' Thanks for his prayer and bliss, and now I am on my way. In my wandering and sometimes even dangerous journey, the first stranger I encounter is the haunting ghost in the dead map of curriculum.

## The haunting ghost of control in the dead map of curriculum

For my father as explorer not cartographer, if each step of the traveler is entirely dependant on the prescribed map, this is a dead map. For me, a graduate student in education, if the map of curriculum becomes the only tool for both teachers and student for directions, then this belongs to dead map. With its exclusive emphases on preset educational aims and objectives as markers, a dead map of curriculum is compelled by a strong need for closure and certainty in the institutionalized schooling. In the very dead map, the predetermined objective is not only the starting line but the finish line of the prepackaged race track of curriculum: while both teachers and students are motivated by the set objective at the beginning, the ultimate aim is to produce uniform-qualified-students-as-products to reach this same line in the end. In the whole process, all elements irrelevant to the marked items in the map are disregarded as disrupting 'noises'. In the linear order of Tyler's Rationale, predetermined objective is the ultimate end for curriculum and instruction to achieve – people concern much more of the result or evaluation if the preset aim is achieved than critical reflections upon the aim itself. According to Fleener (2002), in such a closed system, we only 'operate from the givens, follow acceptable procedures, and derive objective and certain truths that are already stated within the conditions of inquiry' (p. 191).

Then this question emerges: where do those preset objectives come from? I remember my father often complains that one of the worst things of touring groups is that the guide only uses dead maps. Although the guide usually explains since the map is scientifically designed it is best to just follow the marked routes, my father wonders the real reason in most cases is that the guide and the travel agency can get money from the well-designed business itinerary on the dead map. Sometimes he even doubts that most cartographers make those dead touring maps for the sake of making profit rather than pure scientific aims. Then, how about the dead

map of preplanned curriculum? Is it politically neutral? As a leading figure in the cliché of the reproduction theory of education, Michael W. Apple (2004) points out that the mask of 'science' covers the inherent political nature of prestructured curriculum to serve the interests of particular social groups. He claims that the neutrality of curriculum in schooling is only a myth for curriculum that can never be completely interest-free. Let us go back to that dead map of curriculum and a number of questions emerge: who designs this map? Is there a particular individual or group behind the cartographer, or who hires the cartographer? What places of interest are excluded from this map and why? What particular places of interest are marked on the map and others not, and why? What will travelers thus miss or lose in this dead map? …… Actually in the clear-cut dead map of curriculum, the learner as stranger only needs to follow the pre-marked directions on the map without 'the leap of faith, an aesthetic sensitivity, a personal commitment, and of great importance, an ability to accept ambiguity and uncertainty' (Apple, p. 103). Thus, the machine aesthetics of modernism (Jencks, 1996) dominates – a typical thinking mode of computers, of machines, in which there is no middle space between one and zero, and thus no magic, no myths in a disenchanted machinery world.

When Apple tries to denaturalize this seemingly natural dead map, what he finds in this 'black box' of the dead map of curriculum also includes the selective tradition of education, the tacit teaching and learning under institutionalized schooling, the hidden curriculum…… All of these shocking findings can subvert our impression of the cloaked 'neutrality' of education and thus direct us to the deep embedded control in schools – a haunting ghost has hovered over curriculum from the past. William E. Doll (2002) has demonstrated this 'ghostly perspective of curriculum' in *Ghosts and the Curriculum*,

> Ghosts have an ethereal presence; they can be seen, often felt, but have no material substance. They exist on the fringes of our consciousness, neither physically real nor psychically unreal. They appear and disappear. They may be the appropriate metaphor to use when talking of curriculum visions. A ghost incarnated loses not only its ghostliness but also its suggestive power–of what was, is, might be (p. 24).

For Doll, the invisible ghosts have been persistently flying over the field of curriculum since its birth. We can't see them but we can feel their existence everywhere. Doll (2002) tracks the ghost of control from Frederick Taylor's 'scientific' management theories adopted by curriculists to Ralph Tyler's rationale. Not coincidentally, both Noel Gough and Doll (2002) choose the metaphor of clock to represent this external control embedded in curriculum for 'control is not only the mechanical ghost in the curriculum clock – to use a modern, mechanistic metaphor – but is also the force which actually runs the clock as its pendulum swings from one ideology or fad to another' (p. 34). This huge mechanical clock over our heads on the dead map of curriculum reminds me of my own experience in teaching practice: 'What does curriculum mean for you?' 'Timetable.' This is one conversation that happened between my mentor teacher and me during my intern teaching in a middle school in Shanghai which is famous for its extremely high percentage of graduates into universities. She showed me this timetable of her 8th grade class of that semester in this boarding school:

|  | Teacher | Students |
|---|---|---|
| 7:35~7:55 | Dictation | Dictation |
| 8:00~8:40 | Grade the dictation | First Class |
| 8:50~9:30 | Teach a Class | Second Class |
| 9:30~10:00 | Physical Exercises | Physical Exercises |
| 10:00~10:40 | Grade the exercises of the second class | Third Class |
| 10:50~11:30 | Grade students' compositions | Fourth Class |
| 11:40~12:00 | Lunch | Lunch |
| 12:00~13:00 | Examine students' recitations | Grade students' Morning dictation |
| 13:00~13:40 | Teach a class | Fifth Class |
| 13:50~14:30 | Teach a class | Sixth Class |
| 14:30~14:50 | Snacks | Snacks |
| 14:50~15:30 | Prepare next class and write s teaching plan | Seventh Class |
| 15:40~16:20 | Read official curriculum syllabus | Play |
| 17:00~17:30 | Supper | Supper |
| 17:30~18:00 | Supervise student on homework | Homework |
| 18:00~19:20 | Help student review the first 7 classes | Eighth Class (for tutorial) |
| 19:20~19:30 | Snacks | Dessert |
| 19:30~20:30 | Help student review the first 7 classes | Ninth Class (for tutorial) |
| 20:30~20:50 | Send students to the dorm | Go to dorm |

At that time I was completely shocked by this tight timetable and the teacher finally concluded our conversation with the description of her and her students' lives in school as 'breathing under deep ice,' a heavy sense of suffocation and control. When I read Doll's argument of 'the authoritarian, unilateral control which has permeated the concept of curriculum' (Doll & Gough, 2002, p. 53) and Gough's remark that 'I saw the best minds of *my* generation preset and programmed by bells and buzzers and buzzwords…' (p. 3, original emphasis) that teacher's timetable and her phrase of 'breathing under deep ice' immediately stuck into my mind. This dead map of curriculum design and implementation is so 'successful' that both teachers and students are deeply immersed in that technological clock with little or even no space left for those insiders to consider the deep complex assumptions under the heavy pressure of control. For Michel Foucault (1975), dividing time into 'series of series' of planned tasks and final examinations in schools can best serve 'the sake of efficiency and effective control' (p. 157). Time is only the technology of control, to help the ghost implement its power in daily classroom. Then the question of *why* emerges: why is the ghost of control summoned in curriculum? In explaining the term *discipline*, Foucault finds Napoleon had great interest in making his whole nation a big machine, for he desired to

'embrace the whole of this vast machine without the slightest detail escaping his attention' (p. 141). So many critics complain the producer-consumer mode in the dead map of education between curriculum developers and teachers in curriculum planning, between teachers and students in daily teaching practice. However, the whole education itself has been also deeply stuck in the instrumental mode of means-ends. No matter how reluctant we are to admit, it is a matter of fact that institutionalized education is viewed and operated as a rigid machine to maintain or reproduce the existing order of our society, an instrumental means to achieve the final end of control. As Foucault observes, from the 18th century, 'the organization of a serial space' became one characteristic of educational administration, and furthermore by assigning different ranks to teachers and students according to their performances in school, it 'made the educational space function like a learning machine, but also as a machine for supervising, hierarchizing, rewarding' (pp. 146-147). This is echoed by Apple (2004) when he tracks the first curriculists such as Bobbitt and Charters who had begun to bring 'social control into the very heart of the field whose task it was to develop criteria for selecting those meanings with which students would come into contact in our schools' so it is not surprising that the whole field of curriculum 'has its roots in the soil of social control' for ideological aims (pp. 44-45). Actually it is the very focal eye in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) that hides itself behind those so-called scientifically cartographers of dead maps of curriculum,

> The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned (p. 173).

This focal manipulative eye resides in the center of social structure to guarantee dominant interests and status of particular groups and the institution of schooling is only one of its subsystems around itself. It is the site of the very central eye where the real decision-makers hide behind those *scientific* curriculum designers and experts of final prepackaged curriculum. As Foucault writes, the main function of this central eye/I is to illuminate all its constituting parts so as to penetrate its power of control into each component, or in Apple's words, to implement the reproduction of existing social structure and orders. In this sense, the dead map of curriculum is only a mirror image of the dead map of larger social systems. The focal eye, its cold gaze from the center, the mirror of existing social order – all of these intertwine in my mind and drive me to write the following lines:

I am

i is

I am

An eye

Perfect and invisible

In an empty mirror

i is

> Gazed by I/eye
>
> No flesh, no blood, no body
>
> Before an empty mirror
>
> I am
>
> i is

This is a nightmare about a mirror, an empty mirror in which an invisible I/eye dominates. This is a nightmare for i, which has the same shape of I but is only the objectification of I on the dead map of curriculum. For Paulo Freire (2005), this is the very dehumanization process of I, the oppressor, imposed on i, the oppressed: after i completes the internalization of I and then is reduced to 'a thing' instead of a 'subject,' i indeed becomes a lifeless replica of I. Therefore, the banking mode of education, which, for Freire, takes teaching as the mechanical transfer of knowledge as deposit from teacher to student, appears in the dead map of curriculum.

## A journey of Zen in the living map of curriculum

As the ghost of control lingers in the dead map of curriculum without the least inclination to go, we have to search for alternatives to it and a living map of curriculum appears. In the dead map of curriculum around the centers of teacher or textbooks, the objective is to transfer the 'neutral' content knowledge from teachers to students to have uniformed 'educated people' as the ultimate product of education. The exclusive emphasis on the final product as the result of purely technical transfer tends to shift people's attention from the aesthetic, ethical and political dimensions of this problematic process: who chooses the knowledge that students are to learn? Whose point of view does that knowledge represent? Whose knowledge is intentionally or unintentionally neglected in this process? Why should students need to acquire that knowledge? What is the moral and political result of this acquisition? Who will benefit from this result? Who will suffer? Are there any other choices that we can make beside the current one? Where is the possibility of deconstructing and reconstructing present education situations? …… If we bypass these important questions in curriculum, we are blind to critical problems which are important for human beings and thus ignoring the possibility of making significant turnings on the never ended race track of education in the sense of *currere*. On the contrary, the living map of curriculum tolerates and even encourages any traveler's runaway from the makers on the map for new meanings. Therefore, the focus of curriculum is moved from the final product to the ongoing process, the preset race track to *my* running in *my* day on *my* track. When Ted Aoki (Pinar & Irwin, 2005) probes the question of 'What is it?' he shifts our attention from the 'whatness' of curriculum to the 'isness' of *currere*. This takes us from the pure concern of achievement of predetermined aim, the understanding of curriculum as a given noun of markers on the dead map, to that of the lively world of becoming, of process, the understanding of curriculum as a changing verb of journey on the living map.

In the unfolding of this living map of curriculum, why not take a journey of Zen?

Although the Zen tradition originated from China, it is here a very broad notion which is not only merely Chinese Zen, but incorporates into it the Japanese Zen. And the famous contemporary Japanese Zen master, Shunryu Suzuki, is one of the major players I rely on in this paper.

*Meditation and imagination in Zen*
Then, what is the main practice and spirit of Zen? No matter which book of Zen you open, these two key words always appear: meditation and enlightenment – to meditate for enlightenment is one major practice of Zen.

Shunryu Suzuki established a Zen center in San Francisco after World War II and wrote quite a few books of Zen in which he gives much good advice on how to meditate. He suggests that our meditation focus on our own daily lives: 'Zen is not some kind of excitement, but concentration on our usual everyday routine' (1970, p. 57). In this meditation, he advises us to 'walk slowly, like a cow or an elephant' instead of 'galloping around' in order to get enlightenment from our most common daily lives. Therefore, meditation is not an escape from the society, but to prepare to reenter it – 'This is not a retreat, it is treat' (Hanh, 1987/2005, p. 15). This is echoed by Maxine Greene's (2001) idea of imagination, which involves 'a capacity to see new possibilities in things, to perceive alternative realities, to open windows in the actual and discover what might be' (p. 30). Greene calls us to uncouple from the ordinary life – to break with the taken-for-granted to see what might be, what is not yet. She also points out this is not to be alien from one's life background, but instead only when 'speaking with their own voices, perceiving from their locations, people can release their imaginative thought freely for 'a range of meanings' (p. 184). For both Suzuki and Greene, enlightenment or new meaning does not come from nothing but from refreshed sharp eyes on the daily routines. This is also where creativity and significant changes come from. By this uncoupling, one can defamiliarize the familiar to see things otherwise as if it is first time one sees them. The new vision into alternatives and possibilities from the usual itself may not be sufficient to lead to transformations, but it is a good and necessary beginning to trigger the possible awakened consciousness and praxis.

In the daily classroom of schools, Greene (1995) advises that teachers should know the multiple power of imagination and concludes that 'imagining things being otherwise may be a first step toward acting on the belief that they can be changed' (p. 22). Then, why not imagine possible new marker and try different routes on the map in the journey of curriculum? In this constantly restructured living map of curriculum, both teachers and students do not haste to reach the predetermined destination along the marked path on the dead map but take their time walking 'like an elephant' to enjoy the scenery on the journey with their whole bodies, especially in non-marked strange places of interest.

In this journey, each discovery of new places that can't be found on the dead map is not merely runaway from the originally designed course, but a good possibility to find cracks for alternatives. As Trinh Minh-ha (1989) describes, these 'cracks and interstices are like gaps of fresh air that keep on being suppressed because they tend to render more visible the failures operating in every system' (p. 41). In the beginning, the cracks or fissures may be only the slightest flapping of butterfly's wings, but after we insert patient praxis into them, they can trigger the most significant changes on the whole map. For Greene (1975), as the learner is

required to apply 'his own subjectivity and break with the common sense world s/he normally takes for granted' (p. 302) by uncoupling from daily routines,

> [S/he] will moved to pore over maps, to disclose or generate structures of knowledge which may provide him [her] unifying perspectives and thus enable him [her] to restore order once again. His [Her] learning, I am saying, is a mode of orientation – or reorientation – in a place suddenly become unfamiliar. … [curriculum] requires a subject if it is to be disclosed; it can only be disclosed if the learner, himself [herself] engaged in generating the structures, lends the curriculum his [her] life (pp. 307-308).

Thus, curriculum is no longer only a dead prescribed map with fixed chartings of locations, a final product, but a process of incessant creations and recreations into what is not yet. In this sense, curriculum has actually turned into a living map full of possibilities of not yet as the learner's subject plays a quite active role in it. Indeed, not only the field of curriculum and education, but our whole lives are themselves continuing processes of tapping into various possibilities of what might be. Here I cannot help thinking of Jacques Derrida's (1982) conceptualization of 'différance'[2] – an open ended play not only *within* the structure but *with* the fixed or internal structure itself – as meaning plays you, you have to cut the chain of the signifier to play with what plays you. In this play, one has to undo all those social constructs in critically analyzing how meanings or themes are construed and beliefs or faiths are projected as facts rather than in a natural order. This is also a dangerous play/journey for one has to give up the desire of mastery or control to become homeless on the bottomless chessboard of play. In some sense, such play is always an ongoing process of (re)opening new possibilities in certain systems and at the same time meanings become unstable in the system – a real and unpredictable adventure on the living map of curriculum.

*Detachment in the empty world of Zen*
As a mixture originated from Indian Buddhism and Chinese Taoism, it is not difficult to find the strong flavor of Taoism in Chinese Zen, including in its practice of meditation. Karlfried Dumoulin (1979) has quoted a story from Chuang-tzu, a Taoist master, to describe the essence of meditation in Zen as 'sitting down and forgetting everything' – discard intelligence, 'detach from both body and mind, and become one with Great Universal [Tao]' (Chuang-tzu, quoted by Dumoulin, p. 32). By 'forgetting [attachment to] everything' in the meditation of Zen, people want to achieve a state of 'emptiness' which is emphasized by both Buddhism and Taoism so that they are not cling to any ephemeral external objects, fixed rules or ambitious desires any longer. When Suzuki (2002) talks about 'emptiness' in Zen, he writes:

> All descriptions of reality are limited expressions of the world of emptiness.
> Yet we attach to the descriptions and think they are reality. This is a mistake

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[2]  In his 'Margins of Philosophy,' Jacques Derrida (1982) intentionally misspells or deconstructs the word 'difference' to 'différance' because the word difference cannot refer 'either to *différer* as temporization or to *différends* as *polemos*' as différance can refer to both simultaneously (p. 8). In other words, Derrida argues differences are 'produced' and deferred by différance. He says the a of différance cannot be heard or comprehended because it is what différance is not makes possible the presentation of the being-present. In other words, différance can never be presented as such – it does not have any existence or essence. This is why Derrida thinks différance is 'neither a word nor a concept' (p. 7). For more understanding of Derrida's conceptualizations of difference, différance, trace and language, see Nicholas Ng-A-Fook in this volume.

> because what is described is not the actual reality, when you think it is reality,
> your own idea is involved (p. 36).

Suzuki (2002) argues that people often add different scales to 'analyze one reality into entities' (pp. 36-37) and thus put the world into dead conceptualized boxes. This echoes Alan Watts'[3] statement of Zen (1960/1935), 'Zen is to move with life without trying to arrest and interrupt its flow; it is an immediate awareness of things as they live and move, as distinct from the mere grasp of ideas and feelings *about* things which are the dead symbols of a living reality' (p. 52, original italics, quoted in Wang, in this volume). So, to become empty in Zen does not mean to rely on any external concept or the thinking mind to add something to spoil the world but 'just receive the letter from the world of emptiness' to 'see the thing itself as it is with a wider mind' (Suzuki, 2002, pp. 37-38). This 'letter' is the call that the world of beings, which are not just scientific objectives standing against to us, sends to us. Nor is it a purely product of human beings. We receive this letter only insofar as we listen carefully and patiently to the calling of the world – only when we are addressed by and thus opened to this claim can we hear and get the letter to let beings be themselves. Therefore, this listening requires a detachment from persisting on our *own* opinions as we have to let things go in the empty world of Zen while what we have always taken for granted falls apart. What if you feel groundless in the detachment to the firm ground of local system you previously reside in? The voice of Pema Chodron (1997) is so soft:

> When things fall apart and we're on the verge of we know not what, the test of each of us
> is to stay on that brink and not concretize. The spiritual journey is not about heaven and
> finally getting to a place that's really swell (p. 7).

In this detachment, one has to take off one's armor in this vulnerable place, because this is not only a testing, but a healing – 'Only to the extent that we expose ourselves over and over to annihilation can that which is indestructible be found in us' (Chodron, p. 9). We can see unavoidable dangers and hurts outside our small but secure nut, but, as suggested by Chodron, that is part of our journey: 'to be continually thrown out of the nest,' 'to be always in no-man's-land,' 'to experience each moment as completely new and fresh,' and 'to be willing to die over and over again' (pp. 88-89). In order to kiss the Other in my journey, I am vulnerable without any shield. My responsibility is to respond to every calling from the Other, and never stop to try to occupy his land as mine although sometimes we have difficult struggles. But even in our struggle, we converse, listen, and negotiate – we just let things go in their own ways. Is this letting go a cold rational detachment? Chodron would say No, for 'this nonattachment has more kindness and more intimacy' than this (p. 62). Each time after I kiss the Other I can feel that some part of the Other becomes mine as part of mine flows into the Other's blood and bone. If I cannot let things go but stick to *my* own right opinions, I have to attack the Other to make me win in the war. Here the warning of Chodron sounds: 'When we hold on to our opinions with aggression, no matter how valid our cause, we are simply adding more aggression to the planet and violence and pain increases. Cultivating

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[3] Alan Watts was an influential teacher of Zen spirituality in America of the 1960's. Hongyu Wang has a deep exploration of Watts' life history, especially his struggling with both Eastern and Western cultures, in this volume.

nonaggression is cultivating peace' (p. 133).

Go back to our current world, can we pause for a while in the inaction rather than aggressively act under the great flag of peace or justice? Compared with the ambitious claim of 'if I changed the world, it would be better for other people,' can we not 'set out to save the world' but 'set out to wonder how other people are doing and to reflect on how our actions affect other people's hearts' (Chodron, pp. 122-123). Chodron thinks we have to learn that 'what truly heals is gratitude and tenderness' (p. 122). This is also the secret of inteaching[4] in our classroom. Instead of concerning what we can teach to our students, we have to reflect on how our teaching affects our students in their learning. Can we as teachers pause a while in our teaching to listen to our students for their 'joy and sorrow,' 'laughing and crying' 'hoping and fearing' (Chodron, p. 122). Could we use inteaching to simply undo what is brutally hurt or damaged in aggressive teaching as a healing? Actually it is always wondering between 'go[ing] with the movements' in the strange place and 'getting a grip' on the dead map of curriculum (Suzuki, 2002, p. xi). Do not let all marked items on that dead map actually become obstacles on our way of new discoveries under the umbrella of so-called security as indeed there is no such a thing called guarantee. Suzuki (2002) tells us that 'This is secret of teaching. It may be so, but it is not always so' (p. 93). Since 'it is not always so' as the dead map of curriculum shows, why not try the living map of curriculum in our own exploration of mistakes, perturbations and disruption on the journey?

### 'Playing the stringless lute' in Zen

Suzuki (2002) maintains that in order to get the intuitive feeling and understanding of the world of emptiness, we have to remain silent and remember 'Not to talk does not mean to be deaf and dumb, but to listen to intuition' (p. 69). As a special way of achieving emptiness through meditation, this unique silence of talking intuitively by not talking verbally can also be found in Chinese traditional art. Watts (1957) mentions that Ma-yuan (1190-1279), one outstanding Zen painter in Song dynasty, was famous for 'filling in just one corner' to make the whole picture alive. He remarks that,

> [This technique] amounts almost to 'painting by not painting,' or what Zen sometimes calls 'playing the stringless lute.' The secret lies in knowing how to balance form with emptiness and, above all, in knowing when one has 'said' enough. For Zen spoils neither the aesthetic shock nor the satiric shock by filling in, by explanation, second thoughts, and intellectual commentary. Furthermore, the figure so integrally related to its empty space gives the feeling of the 'marvelous Void' from which the event suddenly appears. (p. 179)

*Plum tree, Rock, Stream and Mallard* by Ma-yuan[5]

As one of the four most famous painters of his dynasty, Ma-yuan gets his nickname of 'Margin Ma' because his Zenist drawing usually only occupies a corner of the whole picture to leave enough space both on the paper and in people's mind. It is interesting that it is this 'marvelous Void' space in his pictures catches people's eyes and attention and thus triggers their creative and imaginative intuition toward that blank space. In this sense, Ma-yuan can never be the only painter of his drawings: after he finishes his magic corner, the rest of the work of art is left for viewers or readers to accomplish by their personal spiritual commitment and exploration into their own various aesthetic worlds of emptiness from that corner for a-new meanings. It is from the empty space on the map that extreme possibilities emerge in the process of becoming and happening. This is also the myth of the margin in Ma-yuan's drawings – the margin and the rest blank space do not 'mean but evokes' (Pinar, 2002, p. 467).

Then, can we play that stringless lute on the living map of curriculum? Can we play curriculum 'in a new key'[6]? While the dead map of curriculum only concerns measuring every inch of routes and filling the map with numerous markers for travelers to follow step by step, the living map of curriculum leaves enough space for self-created markers by travelers themselves and encourages them to take explorations and risks on those large unmarked areas on the map. This is also the genuine relationship between teaching and learning suggested by Martin Heidegger – teaching should let learning happen. Heidegger (1978) argues that the reason teaching is more difficult than learning is 'not because the teacher must have a larger store of information, and have it always ready,' but because 'what teaching calls for is this: to

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[5]  This drawing (梅石溪凫图) is downloaded from http://www.shw.cn/97ldmt/ldhh/004.htm.
[6]  This is a phrase Ted Aoki (2005) uses in his book title, 'Curriculum in A New Key.'

let learn' and 'there is never a place in it [the relation between the teacher and the learner] for the authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official' (pp. 379-380). In other words, teaching is not the determination of learning but let learning be itself – teacher is not the dictator but helper or facilitator. In our living map of curriculum, the teacher cannot guide students everywhere while their journey is not predetermined but a happening, a becoming.

This reminds me of another story of maps, which is told by Gregory Bateson on his personal website[7]. There ran a pretty girl who likes to sleep on disused railroad tracks and a brutal surveyor who runs the trains up and down the tracks in a country. The surveyor was so interested in exploring each branch of the railroad system in order that he could mark them on maps that the girl was often disturbed in her sleep and compelled to retreat hastily while a powerful and smelly engine dashed over the very place she had been happily resting. He asserted that it was his right – and even duty – to map the railroad system and that the whole system was entirely his, even including the unexplored parts of it. He argued the system was a single, entirely logical-causal network of tracks. She averred the tracks were designed for the rest and peace of the human soul and she cared nothing for his dreams of causality and logic. When he mapped every detail of the tracks along which he ran his engines, she continually found other parts of the system not yet mapped.

From this story, I am afraid that while there are more and more people who are entirely dependant on the dead map of curriculum like that rude surveyor, will there be any empty place left for the girl's sweet sleep? If one day the girl can find nowhere to escape from the logical-causal network of the surveyor, that is the tragedy for all people, not only for that guy or the girl. Let us not talk verbally by talking spiritually, not mark on the dead map of curriculum aggressively but unmark the blank space on the living map of curriculum silently, not teach and learn always so but open ourselves and find when 'it is not always so' in classroom! Then, it might be possible for us to play the stringless lute in the living map of curriculum to get a new key beyond. This is also the travel of the troubadour of knowledge in Michel Serres (1997):

> [T]he philosopher who seeks does not employ method, the exodus without a path remains his only sojourn and his blank book. He does not plod along or travel by following a map that would retrace an already explored space; he has chosen to wander. Wandering includes the risks of error and distraction. Where are you going? I don't know. Where are you coming from? I try not to remember. Through where do you pass? Everywhere and through as many places as possible, encyclopedically, but I try to forget (p. 98).

Without following any predetermined route or path, the troubadour travels everywhere without any dead map. He has not any reference point where he should come or go, but tries to visit any place of interest. If he is lost in the wild forest or desert, he would not care; on the contrary, this could only inspire him to begin his new adventures. As he enjoys the luxury of wandering from any preplanned itinerary, the traveler takes his time in his lone but happy journey. In this sense, the troubadour is a master Zenist in his awakening journey for

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[7] Bateson says this story is quoted from Stewart Brand on the *CoEvolution Quarterly*, Spring 1978, pp. 44-46, http://www.oikos.org/batallegory.htm.

enlightenment.

## Challenges of the living map of curriculum in a postmodern age

Although Linda Hutcheon (1989) remarks that 'Few words are more used and abused in discussions of contemporary culture than the word 'postmodernism' (p. 1), we are definitely living or/and facing the challenges of a postmodern age. And Jean Baudrillard (1998) directly expresses his concern of the 'ecstasy of communication' – 'all secrets, spaces and scenes abolished in a single dimension of information' (p. 151) in a postmodern age. He describes this terror as,

> too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore (p. 153).

Then, the object is no longer the 'mirror' of the subject and there is no 'scene' of interiority; instead, the subject now becomes 'only a pure screen, a switching center for all the networks of influence' (p. 153). In other words, the information from the Other (other travelers and changing local situations) is so countless for any traveler in the tour. Is that still possible for us to bow to each call from the Other on the journey? How can we develop a critical consciousness to discriminate among different directions in specific situations without drifting in free flows in the living map of curriculum where there are no preset 'safe routes' for us to follow? However, as grown up and thus framed in particular systems of culture, history and language, each person has her/his own contextual bias which can become a big blind spot in this critical consciousness and thus confine the furthest area we could reach. How can one find his/her own blind spot and then not only see from his/her local places but deconstruct and see through this local myth to reach beyond for new routes and experience in this living map? This is a difficult challenge for all of us. Even after we know where our blind spots are (if we could know) that obstruct our vision to find new ways into new places and are clear of the need to go beyond them, we still can't travel freely in the living map of curriculum as we wish – we are always seeing and enjoying landscapes through particular lens as observers. As we have such a deep inclination of making coherent patterns from 'incoherent fragments' (Greene, 2001, p. 13) and are constantly producing, updating and depending dead maps with more and more markers on them, we are still immersed deeply in the wholeness of modernism, lacking a new appreciation of holes in postmodernism. While we are too concerned with transforming holes into the whole, we are, at the same time, struck into a crazy desire of overcoming the hole of emptiness rather than closely examine and look into it for a-new visions.

Shoshana Felman (1992) has presented the testimony of Fyodor Dostoevsky, in which this famous Russian novelist confesses his illness but refuses healing and does not seek cure because he wants to 'let it hurt even more' (quoted in Felman, p. 10). This strange enjoyment of the hurt of illness, the hatred of cure and healing, in some sense, is a desperate gesture of resistance against the preset and predicted order/wholeness in modernism. Can we just run away from the marked paths on the dead map of curriculum and stray around in the living one? Can we become nomads in the flows? Do we still need clear directions for guidance? What if

we turn to be homeless in the continuing pursuit of looking for homes? Can we tolerate and enjoy this discomfort of displacement on the journey? Or is this journey one that necessarily involves 'enjoyment'? In the living map of curriculum, when confronted with so much information as a receiving screen, faced with so many choices that have to be made for directions, we are challenged by different ways of understanding in the journey of curriculum where the ground is so 'narrow and slippery' that 'none of us can pride ourselves on being sure-footed there' (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 28).

## Not a conclusion

As the ghost of control hovers over the dead map of curriculum, particularly in the area of formal schooling, predetermined objectives, teaching and learning task on time, standardized tests, scientific systems management, and etc. trivialize education and reduce real educational problems into pure technological ones. Behind those professional curriculum theorists and designers in this so-called scientific and neutral dead map of curriculum, there stand particular groups of people in the shadow whose interests this dead map mainly serves. It is the black box of this dead map that Michael Apple tries to open and thus take off its cover of neutrality. Then, why don't we try to experience a journey of Zen in the living map of curriculum. As the practice of Zen meditation focuses on the reflection of daily routines to see alternatives and possibilities, it echoes Greene's view of imagination by uncoupling from the ordinary: a power element in provoking the not yet openings in the living map of curriculum. Besides, the spiritual power of Zen calls us to play the stringless lute of curriculum to get a new key beyond in the living map of curriculum. Then, the challenge or danger of this living map under the 'ecstasy of communication' in a postmodern era emerges: how can we discriminate among different directions in specific situations without drifting through free flows of information and choices in the living map of curriculum as nomads? How can we develop a different understanding, a new appreciation between holes and wholes, noises and orders, fragments and patterns, displacement and homes on this map? Do we just 'let it hurt even more' or seek for cures to heal this hurt in postmodernism? …… So, I'd like to end this paper with a number of question marks so as to explore more alternatives and commas to tap into various possibilities of what might be, what is not yet on the living map of curriculum, instead of a definitive stop with a conclusion here.

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