

**Self-authorship through *Currere*: Autobiography in Christian Religious Education
: Empowering Self through Curriculum as Autobiography**

Introduction

Telling stories is a distinctive human ability rooted in experience. This paper addresses the potential of story as an alternative way to reconceptualize curriculum. It employs Pinar's and Grumet's concept of *currere* as an appropriate theoretical and pedagogical curricular practice for empowering Korean women's sense of self. The following questions are raised. What is the nature of curriculum? How does narrative construct and legitimize self and worlds? What is Pinar's and Grumet's understanding of *currere* as a curriculum theory? How is this understanding useful in Christian education? How does narrative, especially autobiography, work in empowering women's sense of self through autobiography? This paper will propose autobiography--self-authorship of one's own story--as a new spiritual dimension of Christian education.

Curriculum as Story

A key concept in the reconceptualization of curriculum studies or theories understands curriculum as story. According to Grumet, "Curriculum is the collective story we tell our children about our past, our present and our future, curriculum enquiry requires acts of interpretation as well as observation."¹ This means curriculum as story is located on the temporal axis from the past to the future and concerns experience, description, and critical evaluation. This collective story is close to "good literature" that allows "us to have it both ways, that a profoundly literary experience can engage and even astonish us with its formal achievements and still be provocative in its demands for a critical reevaluation of the way we live outside of the textual engagement."² Individually seen, curriculum is based on one's narrative that is rooted in one's experience. It can be said, "I am experience . . . I am running a course. *Currere* is to run."³

Currere refers to one's "existential experience,"⁴ especially one's educational experience. Grumet writes, "*Currere* is the root of curriculum."⁵ It is "the race not only in terms of the course, the readiness of the runner, but seeks to know the experience of the running of one particular runner, on one particular track, on one particular day, and in one particular wind."⁶ This useful concept in curriculum studies methodologically intends to disclose one's experience for deepened understanding of the running.⁷ Narrative on educational experiences, that is, autobiography can be used as one way to disclose one's curriculum.

¹ Madeleine R. Grumet, "Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience: An Autobiographical Method for Curriculum Theory," in *Rethinking Curriculum Studies: A Radical Approach*, eds. M. Lawn & L. Barton (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 115.

² Thomas E. Barone, "Acquiring a Public Voice: Curriculum Specialists, Critical Storytelling, and Education Reform," *An Interdisciplinary Journal of Curriculum Studies* 10, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 147.

³ William F. Pinar and Madeleine R. Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1976), vii.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 36.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

The theoretical basis of this approach is found in the ontological shift from objectivity to subjectivity⁸ begun by Husserl and Heidegger. They highlighted the significance of subjectivity with different methodologies, but with the same motif. After all, the self is closely connected to ‘Dasein’ as ‘being-in-the-world.’⁹ Pinar’s and Grumet’s theories depend on phenomenology, existentialism, and psychoanalysis. The word ‘reconceptualization’ is understood with this background. Curriculum is not understood as “materials, intended learning outcomes, and experiences, . . . from the point of view of the other, whether this other be curriculum developer, designer or teacher.”¹⁰ Curriculum is rather understood as “lived experience” and “curriculum reconceptualized is *currere*; it is not the course to be run, or the artifacts employed in the running of the course; it is the running of the course.”¹¹

Additionally, *currere* assumes a self that keeps moving or running. Graham writes, “with its focus on the learner . . . it acknowledges the student’s search for meaning as an interactive and reflective process undertaken in a social milieu.”¹² This is similar to the horizon that keeps evolving through the fusion of horizons.¹³ The definition of education comes from this understanding. Pinar and Grumet write, “Because our lives tend to be progressive, we say that we evolve. This evolution is education.”¹⁴

Loss of Self in Curriculum

The above understanding of self and story as curriculum is crucial for this paper. Traditionally, Korean women’s sense of self has been lost in their ‘communal self’ legitimized and sustained by their societal and cultural stories.¹⁵ Pinar and Grumet explains this situation quoting Emerson “A [hu]man is the façade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide.”¹⁶ Miller also writes,

“Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed. The assumption that subjectivity is constructed implies that it is not innate, not genetically determined, but socially produced. Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices – economic, social, and politic – the meaning of which are a constant site of struggle over power.”¹⁷

⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1962), 79-80.

¹⁰ Pinar and Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, 18.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Robert J. Graham, “*Currere* and Reconceptualism: The Progress of the Pilgrimage 1975-1990,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 24, no. 1 (1992): 27. 27-42

¹³ “Understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2d rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1994), 306.

¹⁴ Pinar and Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, 18.

¹⁵ This context brings an educator for Korean women or a Korean woman educator, as Martusewicz puts it, “a tension between a critical theoretical space and an affirmative political space.” Rebecca A. Martusewicz, “Mapping the Terrain of the Post-Modern Subject: Poststructuralism and the Educated Woman,” in *Understanding Curriculum as Phenomenological and Deconstructed Text*, eds., William F. Pinar and William M. Reynolds (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), 155.

¹⁶ Pinar and Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, 7.

¹⁷ Janet I. Miller, “Biography, Education, and Questions of the Private Voice,” in *Writing Educational Biography: Explorations in Qualitative Research*, ed. C. Kridel (New York: Garland, 1998), 21; quoted in Janet I. Miller, *Sounds of Silence Breaking: Women, Autobiography, Curriculum*, A Book Series of

In education, therefore, “What is missing is the study of the students’ points of view from the students’ point of view. What is missing is the portrayal of the self from the point of view of the self.”¹⁸ This can be called the estrangement of self, the alienation of self, or the loss of self.¹⁹ This situation keeps the potential of the self from being fully actualized.

In order to understand the loss of the Korean women’s self, one can look to some stories that have functioned as their curriculum. Grumet writes about the indispensable relationship between curriculum and the culture of a society by saying, “curriculum is the child of culture . . . Curriculum transmits culture, as it is formed by it.”²⁰ Stories as the basis of curriculum transmit culture, modify it, and vice versa. Indeed, we live stories before we describe them. We are immersed in them, influencing and being influenced. Therefore, curriculum as a collective story of a society can be a meta-narrative that constructs and legitimizes one’s sense of self and one’s world. The following stories exemplify this process.

Story 1 (Personal Story)

I (Song) was the third daughter in my family. I had two older sisters and two younger brothers. My grandmother, who lived with us, hated my mother and two of my older sisters.²¹ However, after my younger brother was born, I was treated just like my brothers. My grandmother believed that the third daughter (me) caused the younger brothers to be born. She treated me very differently and I was even able to get more education than my older sisters. With my education, I was able to be an active woman in such a traditional society and ran my own business when I was twenty-two years old.

Story 2 (Folktale)

Shimchung was a young girl whose father was blind. She had been very faithful to her father since her mother died. One day her father fell off a bridge and a monk saved him. The monk said, “If you donate one hundred bags of rice to Buddha, your eyes will be open.” Shimchung’s father told his daughter what he heard from the monk. They were so poor that they could not afford to do it. However, Shimchung decided to sacrifice herself on the condition of receiving one hundred bags of rice. Shimchung was sold by fishermen and was drowned in the sea as the offering to please the god of the sea.

Story 3 (Religious Story)

Yeon was raised in a rich family with education by her Confucian scholar father. Getting married, she was frequently abused by her mother-in-law. She became an extremely reserved person. It was her faith in Jesus that totally changed her life. The faith gave her the hope of a new life in heaven. Her regular attendance in worship services and early morning prayer services that were mostly led by men made her an active church member. However, to be an active member of the church meant that her activities were limited to preparing meals for the

Curriculum Studies, ed. William F. Pinar (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 49-50.

¹⁸ Pinar and Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁰ Madeleine R. Grumet, “Autobiography and Reconceptualization,” in *Contemporary Curriculum: Twenty Years of JCT*, ed. William F. Pinar (New York: Peter Lang, 1999/1980), 24.

²¹ One of the Confucian ethics, *Chil-Geo-Ji-Ak*, lays out seven grounds for divorce, which are called the seven devils: disobedience to her parents-in-law, inability to have children, adultery, jealousy, hereditary disease, verboseness, and stealing. However, a woman cannot ask for a divorce under any circumstances.

congregation every Sunday morning. She was taught by the church that she needed to be submissive to her husband in order that he might be led to the church after feeling God's love through her.

It is true to say that above stories can be read as gender texts that reflect and impose various female images on Korean women. The first story talks about the Confucian ideology of *Nam-Jon-Yeo-Bi* (honored men and abased women) which has been at the heart of women's sense of self. Song's informal education in family and her formal education in public were related to the relationship with men, explicitly and implicitly. Her educational experience was under the invisible power of a predominant meta-narrative in which women did not have much power to control what happened to them. The second story, which is a favorite Korean folktale for children, implicitly teaches a woman's roles as faithful and sacrificial server or assistant as a daughter. It is easy to find that women in Korean folktales appear in roles defined by men as daughters, wives, or mothers. This carries the ideology of *Sam-Jong-Ji-Bu* (woman's submissive role to her father, husband, and son). The third story shows Christianity's double-bind messages for women: individual salvation story from a tragedy into a comedy²² with a new sense of self through being loved by God, but still within the bigger meta-narrative of the traditional society.²³ The double bind-messages, in which cultural stories and Christian stories create and sustain Korean women, trap them within their familial and social roles. They deny women's experiences and force them to conform to the society and the systems to which they belong.

Throughout the analysis of the stories, I identify Korean women's sense of self as a communal self, a false self, which has to be differentiated from an authentic sense of self. In other words, their true self is lost in the communal self, with the collective stories that the society tells as curriculum. These collective stories are "distorted by power and ideology in its uncritical acceptance of the prevailing assumptions . . . # These texts tend to be conservative and to reinforce the *status quo*."²⁴ In addition, this loss of self to the social, cultural and religious norms means the loss of self to others because "the loss of self leads us to a broken and distorted existence."²⁵ According to Pinar, the loss of self is a central effect of traditional schooling.²⁶ With various kinds of stories of or about

²² According to Frye, the essence of comedy is happy ending moving from problems to solution, but tragedy moves from solution to problems. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 158-239.

²³ The church instructs Korean women as follows. You are valuable as a woman because of your nurturing and relational capacities. God loves you as you are and accepts you as you are. Do not try to change or God might not love you any more. You are created in the image and likeness of God. God is male. Male is superior to female. You have to respect your father and your husband. Only males can be the head of a family, of a church and of a social system. You are small, weak, dependent, and in need of male protection. But you can be so dangerous that you can destroy men with your sexuality. You represent moral and spiritual purity in your endurance, steadfastness, and lack of self-seeking in your roles as a woman and mother, yet you are historically and theologically responsible for all sin (original sin) in the world. You need to be submissive, patient, and accepting in your family role. . . . You are a welcomed, valuable, and full member of the church. Your vocation is to support the church, but from kitchen not from the pulpit. The church says it supports justice, but the church requires women to be silent about their domestic abuse because it is shameful for your family. I adopt Neuger's analysis and add some for Korean women. See *Christie Cozad Neuger, Counseling Women: A Narrative Pastoral Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 45.

²⁴ Barone, "Acquiring a Public Voice," 142-143.

²⁵ Rosemary Ruether, "Feminist Theology and Spirituality," in *Christian Feminism*, ed. Judith Weidman (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), 14#.[extra space]

²⁶ William F. Pinar, William M. Reynolds, Patrick Slattery, and Peter M. Taubman, *Understanding*

Korean women, we also can notice the loss of self, the internalization of the externalized self, the loss of self-love, the internalization of the oppressor, and development of a false self-system.

Loss of Voice and Space in Curriculum

It is clear that lived experiences shape women's stories and the stories shape their lived experience. The stories and their lived experience as curriculum are interrelated to each other. We need to ask the following questions. How can a story challenge or shape one's lived-experience? How can the lived experience challenge the story that is formed by society and culture? Can the change of an ideological or an educational system be a solution for bringing a new lived-experience to women? An analysis of films of 'Chunhyang' leads us to a very interesting conclusion.

Story 4 (Films Based on a Folktale)

Chunhyang is a daughter of a Kisaeng, the lowest of the low in Confucian society. She falls in love with Mongyong, the son of the mayor. Despite their difference in social status, they get married secretly. Mongyong must leave for Seoul. He promised to take her as a legal wife when he passes a state exam to become a court official. The next mayor, Byon, comes to the town. This evil official finds Chunhyang and orders her to become his courtesan. She refuses saying that "A servant cannot serve two masters; a wife cannot serve two husbands." Enraged, Byon orders the guards to beat and imprison her. Meanwhile, Mongyong passes the exam with the highest accolades. . . . # Byon, the new mayor, holds a great birthday feast for himself. Chunhyang is again asked if she will become his concubine and is sentenced to death. Just before she is executed, Mongyong suddenly appears as a secret royal inspector, saves her and punishes Byon.

This story is very popular in South Korea as well as in North Korea. Nine different films have been made using the same story. An analysis of five films about Chunhyang,²⁷ of which three films are from South Korea²⁸ and two from North Korea,²⁹ gives a unique chance to compare them in terms of knowing how stories serve as political and gender texts in different societal systems, how the different societies retell the same story, and how the different retellings can affect women's identity. The three films from South Korea are basically about love between a woman and a man. As gender text, they convey the same message to women: marriage is the only means through which women can secure their privacy and dignity. However, the two films from North Korea identify Chunhyang's problem as an issue of class between the exploiting and the exploited³⁰ rather than as an issue of gender. In particular, the image of Chunhyang in North Korean films is of a self-confident working woman who knows how to control her sexual desires and her own destiny. Being unlike the character in South Korea's films, passivity and obedience are not fostered as female virtues in the narratives of North Korea.

Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 518.

²⁷ Hangjin Lee, *Contemporary Korean Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 67-101.

²⁸ Three films in the South are Shin Sangok's *Sung Chunhyang* (1961), Pak Taewon's *The Tale of Sung Chunhyang* (1976), and Han Sanghun's *Sung Chunhyang* (1987).

²⁹ Two films in the North are Yu Wonjun and Yun Ryonggyu's *The Tale of Chunhyang* (1980) and Shin Sangok's *Love, Love, My Love* (1985).

³⁰ Lee, *Contemporary Korean Cinema*, 93-95.

According to Lee, North and South Korean films positively depict traditional womanhood epitomized by Chunhyang, selectively recycling patriarchal values that are sustained by the patriarchal communist society. The positive description of fatherhood in the North Korean films is a good example.³¹ In other words, while rejecting the traditional patriarchal class structure, the North Korean films create a visionary paternal figure by emphasizing traditional family value system. The female virtues are defined in terms of the old Confucian gender hierarchy that is interpreted from a communist perspectives. Chunhyang in North Korean films is, therefore, “a figure of the dual nature of a respectable wife and a representative worker.”³² The storytellers combine traditional womanhood as wife and contemporary womanhood as worker as expected in a communist society in the figure of Chunhyang.

This analysis shows us how a different social system can employ the same rhetoric in different ways in order to sustain their systems. The films as societal curriculum have neither women’s voice, nor space for women’s own voice. In this way, the films show that different social systems produce different collective stories or curricula that construct individual stories. Different stories can evolve in different social systems, but they are only culturally or politically saturated curricula that the societies continue to create.³³ A woman’s sense of self remains under the control of another societal and collective story.

We can now conclude that a true transformation of a woman’s selfhood does not depend on a change in the cultural story as curriculum. Changing a social system or creating another socially constructed curriculum cannot be a true solution for changing one’s self image, because a dysfunctional social system itself is equally defective and “the self and its dynamics relations to other selves do not stand out as reality apart from social structure.”³⁴ Therefore, when we tell, listen to, or retell a story as lived experience, we must ask these questions: Whose stories are they?; Who constructed the stories?; Who legitimize the stories?; Who is the teller?; and Whose ‘lived-experience’ is described in the stories?

True transformation of one’s subjectivity occurs from the inside to the outside, not from the outside to the inside. On this point, *currere* as curriculum has great potential in Christian education. We must engage in a critical reflection on our stories that permits us to reclaim our lived-experiences and to go beyond them through acts of remembrance and interpretation, being conscious of the collective stories as curriculum that we tell our children about our past, our present, and our future.

Reclaiming Self through *Currere*

Currere is an important alternative means of education. Grumet argues that we are the curriculum, and this calls for the restitution and reconstruction of our educational experience.³⁵ This is similar to John Dewey’s idea of curriculum as experience.³⁶ An autobiographical account of educational experience is used for this purpose. It serves to

³¹ Ibid., 94.

³² Ibid., 99.

³³ Douvan’s article is helpful for understanding the resistant character of male dominated society in the area of sex and gender roles. Elizabeth Douvan, “Sex and Gender in Social Psychology,” in *A New Outline of Social Psychology*, ed., Martin Gold with Elizabeth Douvan (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1997), 221-233.

³⁴ Archie Smith, Jr., *The Relational Self: Ethics and Therapy from a Black Church Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 50.

³⁵ She explains, “It is a method of curriculum research that employs autobiography to restore the visions that have been muted by years of schooling. The vision is rarely revealed in the text but hovers in and around it.” Grumet, “Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience,” 122.

³⁶ Graham, “*Currere* and Reconceptualism,” 27.

“mark the site for excavation.”³⁷ It helps penetrating “our public masks, the masks which keep us dissociated from our experience.”³⁸ It calls for a (?) “critical version of participant language.”³⁹ It helps us “overturn the ideology of environment,”⁴⁰ “so that we may see more of it and see more clearly.”⁴¹ The result of such reflection or seeing through an autobiographical account is “deepened understanding of the running, and with this, can come deepened agency.”⁴² Barone emphasizes this idea with the concept of ‘strong reader’ equivalent to ‘writer.’⁴³ Autobiographical reflection is opposed to ‘weak reading’ in which only the expert is qualified fully to discern the subtleties of textual meaning.⁴⁴ *Currere* affirms that one can reclaim one’s own experience, one’s own story, and one’s own self through autobiography.

Currere can be a very inclusive and broad concept. The primary method of revealing our educational experience is to lay it bare in a phenomenological way through autobiography. It is a reflexive analysis. “It is the relation of the knower to the known (and to the unknown).”⁴⁵ There are at least four distinctive steps: the regressive and the progressive based on temporal ambiguity, and the analytical and the synthetical based on dialectical understanding.⁴⁶ One can say that there are three stages: seeing, interpretation, and integration.⁴⁷ On one occasion Grumet simplified this process to two stages-- evocative and analytic.⁴⁸ This approach “challenges the student to attain maximum experiential clarity in discovering and living out his unique commitments as validly as possible.”⁴⁹ The student becomes “the active interpreter of his (her) past, as well as to heighten his (her) heighten his (her) capacity to be the active agent of his (her) own interests . . .”⁵⁰ In fact, “it is more than a method . . . at least in the ordinary sense that ‘method’ is used. It is a coherent, comprehensive educational point of view . . .”⁵¹

Grumet introduces Ricoeur’s concept of the interaction of appropriation and distanciation as the dialectic of written communication.⁵² She acknowledges that she and Pinar worked with autobiographical accounts of educational experience as a mode of curriculum enquiry and found the rhythm of appropriation and distanciation.⁵³ Distanciation is seen when the reader treats the text not as his or hers. For example, the reader interprets the text through its language, culture, and history. The reader distanciates himself or herself from the text so that interests, biases, and themes are revealed. In contrast, appropriation is found when the reader regards the text as his or hers from the beginning. For example, a Korean reader understands the Bible written a

³⁷ Grumet, “Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience,” 122.

³⁸ Pinar and Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, vii.

³⁹ Barone, “Acquiring a Public Voice,” 143.

⁴⁰ Pinar and Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, viii.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Barone, “Acquiring a Public Voice,” 139.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴⁵ Grumet, “Autobiography and Reconceptualization,” 27.

⁴⁶ Pinar and Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, ix.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁸ Grumet, “Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience,” 116.

⁴⁹ Clifford Mayes, *Seven Curricula: An Approach to the Holistic Curriculum* (Dallas: University Press of America, 2003), 173.

⁵⁰ Grumet, “Autobiography and Reconceptualization,” 28.

⁵¹ Pinar and Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, 15.

⁵² Grumet, “Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience,” 123.

⁵³ Despite the method’s similarity with psychoanalytic and phenomenological methods, they are less demanding of the knower than psychoanalysis, and less emphasizing the ground of certain knowledge than in Husserlian phenomenology. *Ibid.*, 123-124.

long time ago in his or her own Korean context. Grumet calls the latter an act of *mimesis* and writes that, “Ricoeur argues, the text projects the possibility of new words by offering sense that, transcends actual contexts, and leaving the reader with the possibility and option of finding within himself (herself) and his (her) community the capacity to realize the world the text signifies.”⁵⁴ Ricoeur seems to highlight the text’s initiative in the process of interpretation. The result of this dialectic process is that “the original author, the original audience and the contemporary reader are one and the same person” around the autobiographical work.⁵⁵ It is certain that this dialectic process is a hermeneutical interpretation.

Meanwhile, Grumet points to the rift between experience and expression that is acknowledged by Ricoeur, with an emphasis on the capacity of language to make private experience public.⁵⁶ She writes, “It can be argued that as experience is drained into written discourse it leaves its life behind and is channeled into forms that impose alien and public meanings upon its unique, but silent truth.” She also writes, “Curriculum as lived and curriculum as described amble along, their paths sometimes parallel, often not, occasionally in moments of insight intersecting. So it is possible that experience and description diverge now and then . . .”⁵⁷ In other words, experience never can exactly coincide with its description. Additionally, there is no story that is not influenced by the writer’s prejudices.⁵⁸ Thus, “the abstractions of primary experience presented in these autobiographical reflections are vulnerable to critical scrutiny.”⁵⁹ In consequence, she identifies the self that one discovers when one reflects on one’s experience as a construct, an interpretation, and concludes that the self and its definition are “still the intentional objects of consciousness.”⁶⁰ The writer can turn back upon his or her texts and see there his or her own processes and biases of selection at work.⁶¹ This is the place where curriculum starts to be revealed.

This understanding calls for the dialectic process of appropriation and distanciation for understanding one’s own curriculum. Grumet writes, “So the first phase of this so called appropriation, this narrative of educational experience, this rendering of private experience, produces a text, an object that is the precipitate of the author’s intentional activity.” Once this object is produced, one can distanciate himself or herself from it. “The next phase subjects the text to various forms of analysis.”⁶² A number of questions can be raised about the text, especially around the gaps in the story. The answers pull “the past into the present, drawing it together to confirm what I anticipate will be my next move.”⁶³ This process of interpretation shows that the text points to “the future as it reveals what the text has concealed, or forgotten and begins to bring these submerged intimations to expression.”⁶⁴ Of course, autobiography discloses the masks of the self influenced by various things such as society, culture, history, and ideology. This is certainly a painstaking process that cannot be finalized. Grumet writes, “It is as if the student has gathered all her courage to come forward and to dramatically rip off her mask, only to find underneath it another, and to feel its taut rubber surface when she had expected to feel the familiar texture of her own skin. It is because the text never

⁵⁴ Ibid., 123.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 124.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 125.

⁵⁷ Grumet, “Autobiography and Reconceptualization,” 24.

⁵⁸ See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 277-285.

⁵⁹ Grumet, “Autobiography and Reconceptualization,” 25.

⁶⁰ Grumet, “Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience,” 126.

⁶¹ Grumet, “Autobiography and Reconceptualization,” 25.

⁶² Grumet, “Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience,” 126.

⁶³ Grumet, “Autobiography and Reconceptualization,” 26.

⁶⁴ Grumet, “Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience,” 127.

completely coincides with the experience it signifies that interpretation is a revelatory enterprise.”⁶⁵ However, this is the moment when the self is reclaimed from the past and presented to the future. This requires the continual process of appropriation and distanciation for further understanding of the self. This leads Grumet to conclude that “the fundamental structure of curriculum inquiry is complicity, and only the rigorous dialectic of distanciation and appropriation can inform our project of restitution and reconstruction.”⁶⁶

Finding Voice and Space: *Currere* in Christian Religious Education for Korean Women

Currere's educational significance for Korean women is found, as mentioned earlier, in the concept of the evolving self. *Currere* can be the impetus or the occasion for the self to evolve. This evolvment starts from seeing problems in the *status quo*. Grumet uses autobiography for teachers so that they will become “conscious of their fictions so that they will not be ruled by their myths,”⁶⁷ and that they will make students conscious of their constitutive metaphors. Likewise, *currere* can be used as an important theoretical and pedagogical curriculum theory for Korean women, and it can encourage them to be conscious of their lived stories and not to be ruled by their social myths. In other words, *currere* as curriculum can give women a perspective through which they can name the hidden meta-narratives in their own stories. By remembering, seeing, and interpreting one's own story through the dialectical process of appropriation and distanciation, women can realize the danger of the taken-for-granted in the stories that they have lived. This awareness of their communal self can empower them to challenge the collective stories told by the society against their true selves.

Grumet explains three different voices in *currere*.⁶⁸ They are very useful for Christian educators in planning to empower Korean women's self. The first voice speaks from free associative response in the language of the personal and transpersonal unconsciousness. This voice can be the descriptions of the taken-for-granted in Korean women's lives, which the society and the church have told and taught them. The second voice is an active voice that comes from their subjectivity. It provides a critical interpretation and questions the problems of the status quo. This voice may reflect the new emergence of their authentic self. It enables them to challenge the taken-for-granted and to seek their own identity as a “fully human” in God. Then, the third voice can speak the curriculum language of society and faith community. Through this process, *currere* is a way for giving voice to private and public selves and realms.

One of the ways of fostering self-reflexive storytelling, which Grumet used for teacher education,⁶⁹ can be useful for educating Korean women. Writing multiple accounts of one's same experience may show the experience from different angles, and also show some recurring themes influenced by social meta-narratives. In other words, *currere* through autobiography can disclose Korean women's lived experience and offer the opportunity to study both the individual's lived experience and the impact of the social milieu upon that experience. Despite its tremendous potential, *currere* has its own drawbacks. Autobiography can be written only in a safe space. Indeed, autobiographical storytelling is a “risk business”⁷⁰ because it can entail some unpredicted disclosure of personal experiences to others. Grumet explains, therefore, “We need to re-create safe places, even in schools, where teachers can concentrate, can attend to their experience of

⁶⁵ Ibid., 128.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 129.

⁶⁷ Pinar and Grumet, *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, 74.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 138.

⁶⁹ Grumet, “Autobiography and Reconceptualization,” 26.

⁷⁰ Pinar and Others, *Understanding Curriculum*, 548.

children and of the world, and we need to create community space where forms that express that experience are shared. The process of creating those spaces will be as important as the spaces themselves.”⁷¹

Conclusion

The reclaiming of voice of Korean women’s selves through *currere* can provide them with a chance to challenge their old stories and to create their new ones in which women and men can dwell and dream an eschatological future. This is the future-directedness of *currere* firmly rooted in the past and present. The future-directedness of the self is close to what Heidegger calls “the potentiality-for-being.”⁷² The new experience through the process of *currere* continually creates a new situation in tension between the past/present and the future. Therefore, Christian education for Korean women can be called “middle passage or way,”⁷³ or “in-between pedagogy” in which there is always a movement from the alienated to the authentic, from familiar to the unfamiliar, from the past to the future, and from the *status quo* to the transformation of the self and community.

Furthermore, the recognition of one’s subjectivity and one’s lived experience in *currere* opens us to a new possibility of dealing with Christian spirituality in Christian education. *Currere* redirects us to our educational experiences. If we say the experience of God is at the heart of Christian existence, Christian spirituality can be dealt in *currere* as a particular area in which the experience of God is connected to one’s educational experience. As an academic topic or an educational motif, the significance of women’s experience of God can be recognized. At this point, autobiography –self-authorship of one’s own story--emerges as a new spiritual dimension of Christian education.

However, we need to clear that *currere* is one way of understanding curriculum. It is better not to exclude other curriculum theories by insisting that *currere* is the only valid approach to education. Otherwise, this would be yet another example of method controlling content. Rather, *currere* can be the spine of curricular theory that is inclusive of other curricular approaches to deal with every dimension of human experiences with God in Christian education. Mayes writes, “Each curricular landscape must be honored in order to nurture the student in all of his physical, psychological, cultural, cognitive, existential, and spiritual complexity and capacity. Without this expansive view of the curriculum, both the theorist and teacher are all too liable to ignore vital components of the student’s total being.”⁷⁴

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⁷¹ Madeleine R. Grumet, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 90; quoted in Pinar and Others, *Understanding Curriculum*, 548.

⁷² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 183-184.

⁷³ Pinar and Others, *Understanding Curriculum*, 549. Grumet argues that not only school but also home can be a mediating place or process. See Madeleine R. Grumet, “Curriculum and the Art of Daily Life,” in *Reflections from the Heart of Educational Inquiry: Understanding Curriculum and Teaching through the Arts*, eds. George Willis and William H. Schubert (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 74-89.

⁷⁴ Mayes, *Seven Curricular Landscapes*, 176.

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