Graceful listening and educational rhetoric

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Introduction

Gerald Grace is probably the person who has most mapped out and influenced the development of Catholic education as a serious field of academic study in the UK. He is someone whose work stands between the living tradition of Catholic faith and contemporary educational policy developments in order to interpret one to the other and to build bridges between them. He displays an intelligent and critical fidelity engaged in a sophisticated and nuanced way with secular and secularist trends in education. He offers realism in service of fidelity, resourced by tradition but not restricted by it. His writing fearlessly exposes the unwelcome implications of the managerialist language that has swamped the reading of school leaders. He combines a stout defence of Catholic education with a ready acknowledgement of its shortcomings. He demonstrates that faith can be expressed credibly in an academic register. He has provided a level of analysis and the development of vocabulary which assists school leaders in negotiating the dilemmas they face and as they address increasing state intervention on behalf of market approaches to education.¹

The three main fields in which Grace has established his reputation are first, sociology of education, where he has waged a war on the distortions and omissions brought about by an excessive secularisation of consciousness; second, school leadership and management, which has been colonised by the malign forces of marketisation; and third, the theory and practice of Catholic education, which has long lacked both empirical research and philosophical muscle.² He has exercised a major role in developing Catholic education as a serious field of academic study, energetically fostering research, as well as conducting it, editing an influential journal, *International Studies in Catholic Education* (ISCE) from 2009, and co-editing the impressive two-volume *International Handbook of Catholic Education* (2007), producing a constant stream of articles, chapters and books and, not least, communicating his ideas about the strengths and needs of Catholic education all over the world, as he is frequently invited to serve as keynote speaker at academic and professional conferences.

For the purposes of this chapter, I pick out two themes that are pervasive in his work. First, he exposes the gap between the *visionary rhetoric* about Catholic education and the more mundane reality that pertains in its practice, pressing the questions about the ideals espoused: is this truly reflected ‘on the ground’, can we back this up in practice, and what is the evidence? Second, he places great emphasis on inclusivity³ as a necessary feature of Catholic education, focusing often on the Church’s aspiration to express a *preferential option for the poor*, not omitting from the various categories of the poor those who are ‘far from the faith’. As a partial response to these two themes, in the first part of the chapter, I will develop rhetoric in a different direction from Grace’s use, which adopts the common interpretation of rhetoric as unreliable, untrustworthy ‘spin’. Instead, I will focus on an earlier understanding of rhetoric as the art of moral persuasion, with its (Aristotelian) constitutive elements of logos, ethos and pathos. I will suggest that rhetoric understood in this sense continues to play a vital and positive role in Catholic education, as it does in any type of education. Then, in part two, I will develop a dimension of rhetoric that has been neglected, even by scholars of rhetoric; that is, listening. I will show how listening contributes to Grace’s theme of inclusivity, arguing that educational inclusivity must include (!) listening by teachers, teachers who hear their pupils into speech.

Rhetoric retrieved

Rhetoric was central to education for 1500 years. To practice rhetoric is to bring together in an act of communication three elements: first, a message, which has to be clear, thought-through and make sense; second, a messenger (in speech or in writing) who has to be trustworthy, credible and come across as well-disposed towards those he or she seeks to reach; third, the target group, taking into account the perspectives, felt needs and concerns of the people we hope to persuade (Aristotle, 1991). These three elements, which are described by Aristotle as logos, or reason, ethos, or character, and pathos, or emotion, have been labelled ‘the three musketeers of rhetoric’ (Leith, 2011, p. 47). Rhetoric seeks to connect and relate truth to particular times, places, personalities and problems. It may lead to a range of different effects, which may be ethical, practical, emotional and intellectual. Therefore, it is at the heart of serious communication (as in teaching or preaching). It is a practical art aimed at moving souls in some direction, with a view to make life better in some respect (For an analysis of the relevance of Aristotle’s theory of rhetoric for school leadership, see Sullivan, 2003).

While logos or reason seems well enough understood, the other two constitutive components of rhetoric, ethos and pathos, do not always receive the attention they deserve in literature about teaching. If the teacher wishes to influence their audience, to render them ‘benevolent, attentive, and docile’, then he or she must establish his or her ‘honesty, credibility, and amicability before the real issue is

addressed' (Gross, 2020, p. 68). This is a matter of ethos. As Sam Leith points out, 'Your audience needs to know ... that you are trustworthy, that you have a locus standi to talk on the subject and that you speak in good faith. ... you will be seeking to persuade your audience that you are one of them: that your interests and their interests are identical in this case' (Leith, 2011, p. 48). This means that a teacher should ask herself: why should students trust or believe me or follow my instructions? How do they see me: as their helper, or enemy, as a mentor who exemplifies what they teach, or as someone who seems disconnected from their own message? And pathos relates to the state of the audience one hopes to reach out to: their feelings, hopes, fears, expectations and values. For a teacher to consider the pathos of a class is to question herself about how willing and ready her students are to be moved in some way: what is their potential for learning, action and change? 'The skill is to find' the lines of approach and of argument that will 'hold most sway with your intended audience' (Leith, 2011, p. 45). But, according to the Roman exponent of rhetoric, Quintilian, 'essential for moving the emotions of others is first to move oneself' (quoted by Gross, 2020, p. 70). And thus, there is a close link between the ethos of the teacher, as picked up by students, and their own pathos.

Traditionally rhetoric has been divided into three main types. First, it can be deliberative, seeking decisions on what should be done about a situation. This is future-oriented and applies, for example, in politics, in businesses, and in schools that are developing policies to address some issues; or, indeed within any community coming to a view on how they should respond to what their members are facing. Second, it can be forensic: deciding and making a judgement about what has happened (e.g. in a court of law); this kind of rhetoric is oriented to the past. Third, it can be epideictic. This kind of rhetoric is concerned with allocating praise or blame; it occurs, for example, in speeches at weddings, at funerals, or in obituaries; it is oriented to the present. The opening paragraph of this chapter is a blend of description and epideictic rhetoric. Three purposes have frequently been taken to be the aims of rhetoric: to teach, to delight and to move. Perhaps the most effective rhetoric succeeds in combining all three.

In the education and training of would-be rhetors, and following Quintilian, rhetoric has been divided up into five parts: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. These have been crisply and vividly summarised recently in the form of: 'You think up what there is to say; you devise an order in which to say it; you light on the way in which you want to say it; you get all the aforementioned into your head; and then you get on hind legs and let rip' (Leith, 2011, p. 43).

Rhetoric applies when matters are uncertain; it relates to specific contexts and cases, even if it appeals to what are held to be universal truths and values. It is concerned with practice, not with theory. It aims to bring about change in attitude or behaviour, not merely to impart knowledge. St Augustine, who earned his living as a teacher of rhetoric before he became a Christian, and then

applied his rhetorical skills in service of communicating the Gospel, described effective communication:

A hearer must be delighted so that he can be gripped and made to listen, and moved so that he can be impelled to action. Your hearer is delighted if you speak agreeably, and moved if he values what you promise, fears what you threaten, hates what you condemn, embraces what you commend, and rues the thing which you insist that he must regret, and if he rejoices at what you set forth as something joyful. ... the purpose being not to make known to them what they must do, but to make them do what they already know must be done. Its effectiveness largely depends on the quality of the relationships pertaining among speakers and listeners.

(Augustine, 1997, 4. p. 12)

Students respond in many different ways to what is put before them in their classrooms. Some are intimidated and others attracted by what they hear from their teachers. Some are confused, while others feel enlightened. Some are indifferent, while others are excited. Some are resistant to what is being put forward and reluctant to take it on board, while others warmly embrace it and are disposed to put it into practice. What can be said about speakers and writers applies equally to teachers: 'Rhetoric teaches speakers and writers that the listening or reading audience is always to be considered – for it is their reception, their reactions, their responses in affect, judgement, and decision, that complete the rhetorical process' (Hinze, 2004, p. 94). In non-inclusive language, Kenneth Burke makes the point that 'You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his' (quoted by Leith, 2011, p. 49). More earthily, Will Rogers observes, 'When you go fishing you bait the hook, not with what you like, but with what the fish likes' (quoted by Leith, 2011, p. 65).

Two processes occur in the course of rhetorical communication. The first of these is identification. The second is accommodation. As with audiences in other contexts, students' responses to the communicative efforts of teachers are influenced, often without them being aware of it, by a process of identification with the teacher. There are many factors which come into play, affecting the degree to which people identify or not with a speaker. These include the influence of age, gender and ethnicity, the educational background, vocabulary, accent and tone of voice of the speaker, his or her social status, life experience, level of confidence, even his or her dress and body language. All these can either assist or obstruct a student identifying with a teacher. And most of them are out of the control of the teacher and operate involuntarily on the part of the student.

More deliberately, in advance of a class and through an actual lesson, teachers must accommodate or adapt themselves to the constraints and possibilities and the particular needs of the situation they are in; they must discern what is fitting and what would be inappropriate today, here, with

this group of learners. Paul gives an example of such accommodation and adaptability in 1 Corinthians 9: 20–22:

Though I was free of all, I enslaved myself to all so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I made myself as a Jew so that I might win the Jews; to those under the Law as one under the Law (though I am not under the Law) in order to win those under the Law; to those outside the Law as one outside the Law (though I am not outside the Law of God, but under the law of Christ) to win those outside the Law. To the weak I became weak to win the weak. To all people I became all things, so that by all means I might save some.

Deciding what is fitting at least partly echoes what Cicero meant by *decorum* being a factor that should guide one's communication. What is fitting in one situation might be quite unfitting for another. In Cicero's use, *decorum* was less to do with being delicate, polite or complying with social etiquette, and more about speakers showing discretion and judgement in how they adapt to a situation in a suitable and fitting way, so that there is a match between the nature of a topic, an audience, the occasion and the purpose of the communication. Cicero wrote several works on rhetoric, modifying his emphasis on its key elements in response to changing political conditions in Rome (see 'On the Orator' in Cicero, 1971). Thus, to speak with *decorum* would be to say what the moment calls for, showing sensitivity and responsiveness to their audience and both self-awareness and flexibility in the manner of their presentation. *Decorum* implies that one's speaking is appropriate, both apt for the context and congruent with both the needs of the audience and the goal being sought. It is not about being decorous, in an aesthetic sense; rather, it combines an ethical outlook with the exercise of *phronesis* or practical wisdom.

Clearly, rhetoric can be and has been used for both good and bad purposes. More frequently than not, the word rhetoric has negative connotations for many people. It is 'empty', 'mere', 'phoney'. It is often linked with 'spin' in politics, more concerned with presentation rather than substance, wanting to make an impression, rather than doing justice to the truth of the matter. In such usage, rhetoric is viewed as something sleazy, dubious, manipulative, seductive and posturing. It is a double-edged activity. 'Even the favourable critics recognised that in its worst forms it was one of the most dangerous of human tools, while at its best it was what made civilized life possible' (Booth, 2004, p. 4). From its beginnings, rhetoric faced hostility. 'It is seen as the tool of demagogues and liars' (Leith, 2011, p. 15). Yet, even though it has gone into decline in much higher education teaching, after having been a principal educational focus for centuries in faculties of arts, it has not disappeared entirely. Modern versions of rhetorical thinking can now be found in the worlds of advertising and business, where attempts to persuade people to buy their products draw upon logos, ethos and pathos for their effectiveness. Teachers, as part of their initial formation, and also

as they reflect on how their work is being received throughout their career, would benefit from engaging with the key principles of rhetoric.

It is important to make clear that rhetorical thinking, which adjusts itself to contingent and changing circumstances, does not constitute the fullness of teaching. The attention given to contingency by teachers should be balanced and complemented by a commitment to coherence. And this means that justice must be done to the *logos* aspect of rhetoric, which might otherwise be lost sight of by over-emphasising consideration of *pathos*. If contingency is about responding to local, particular and changing circumstances, then coherence is about ensuring that what teachers offer holds together, that the parts of what is taught fit together into a unity. Rhetorical thinking, which is prompted by an awareness of contingency, will always exist in some tension with logical thinking, which concerns itself with rationality and truth. Rhetorical thinking promotes flexibility and sensitivity and takes into account persons and their needs. Logical thinking or speech, on the other hand, is strong on attending to coherence; it promotes truth; it protects itself against inconsistency and bending to the wind when that seems tempting because the truth is unpopular or uncomfortable. Both types of thinking, the rhetorical and the logical, are needed, but both are also open to abuse: rhetoric can slip into being a skilful form of manipulation, while logic can ride roughshod over people's lives. There is no magic formula for how to marry contingency and coherence, but we must not give up the attempt to achieve this marriage.

Graceful listening⁴

It is striking, even shocking, how little attention is given to listening in the literature on teaching, preaching, communication and rhetoric, or more generally in philosophy and theology or politics. I searched in vain in the index of many volumes in these disciplines to find what has been said on listening, mostly finding that this topic had been omitted entirely. Even in religious literature that does focus on listening – with the honourable exception of The Religious Society of Friends, more commonly known as the Quakers – this is often in the context of listening to God in discerning one's vocation; this is something quite different from listening to one another's stories in order to know them as persons better and thereby also to appreciate how God is at work in their lives. Yet market research, to serve business, and focus groups, to serve political advisers and campaign managers, does indicate the importance of listening to those we hope to reach and to influence. It is only very recently that the Catholic Church has recognised the vital necessity of authentic listening if the faithful are to be served by effective pastoral care, teaching that is accessible and meaningful to people in their everyday lives and if church leaders are to elicit responsible engagement by their congregations. The emphasis by Pope Francis on promoting synods on key themes – gatherings for discernment for developing church teaching and pastoral responsiveness that are preceded by wide consultation – is an example of a move towards a Church that listens

more carefully to the experience of her people. However, by comparison with the sustained attention given to speaking, across many different disciplines, listening has not received sustained attention in theological reflection or in church practice.

Two major exceptions to the lack of attention given to listening can be found in the ancient world, first, Plutarch (45–120), who devoted one of his works to ‘Listening to Lectures’, and second, Augustine (350–430), in *Instructing Beginners in Faith* who shows considerable sympathy for those on the receiving end of catechesis (Plutarch, 1927; Augustine, 2006). Yet, despite the emphasis on speaking, in authentic and effective acts of communication both speakers and listeners play a part; their interchange involves a necessary reciprocity of giving and receiving. For teaching to be fruitful, teachers need students to work with them and to develop the difficult knack of listening carefully. Plutarch (1927, p. 257) urges students to reflect on what they have heard and

put the rest together by their own efforts, and use their memory as a guide in thinking for themselves, and taking the discourse of another as a germ and seed, develop and expand it. For the mind does not require filling like a bottle, but rather, like wood, it only requires kindling to create in it an impulse to think independently and an ardent desire for the truth.

Listening matters, both to the one who listens, as there is much of value to learn from others, but also to those who are heard. Voice matters. It matters in politics, where it is expressed in voting, in debate and deliberation and through acts of representation of different viewpoints. It matters in music, blending physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of our humanity in multiple manners as we respond to our world and its features via our vocal cords and various instruments. It matters in writing, where authors gradually develop their own distinctive voice after a process of indwelling the voices of others and becoming familiar with these voices. It matters in education; we can only learn if our experience is treated as if it counts, if our voice is heard. It matters in everyday conversation, where we learn identity, belonging, commonality and difference.

Our story is unique – the life story of each one of us – and it is precious. Although no one else knows it from the inside, like we do, we need others to help us understand our personal story – to put it in perspective. We need their support, encouragement and affirmation. We also need their misunderstanding, their disagreement, their different perspective – if we are to grow in depth and maturity. It seems to me that many people’s difficulties with religion stem not from the fact that they can’t believe, but from the fact that they find they are not believed. Their voice is not heard. Repeated experience of not being listened to inevitably leads them eventually to not wanting to listen themselves.

It is precisely because of the endless particularity of the Spirit’s work in forming disciples that each member [of the Church] needs, and can expect, to *learn* from the other members, and to *go on* learning from them. ... The

Spirit's work, informing the differentiated Body of Christ, is to make each member's particular learning a gift to those around them, and to make each member receptive to the endless gifts presented by those around them.

(Higton, 2012, p. 160; emphasis in original text)

When other people give us a hearing, they help us to get a bit nearer to being able to say what we mean – and also they help us to understand more deeply what we are trying to say. And we can do the same for them. Very few things give people a greater sense of their own value and worth as individuals than being truly heard. Of course, we should be careful in our use of words. Pope Francis reminds us in *The Joy of the Gospel* that 'we need to listen to and complement one another in our partial reception of reality and the Gospel' (Pope Francis, 2013, pr40, p. 26, n.44). We learn to speak by hearing others do so. We get better at speaking if we experience ourselves being heard properly.

Offering our voice and hearing others into speech are two of the most important gifts we can give to the world; they require courage, patience, humility and a willingness to be vulnerable. This applies also to the world of faith and the Church. One's reception of the Word of God and the words of others contributes to a distinct configuration and an original expression of faith – in a unique dance between tradition, situation, conversation partner and oneself. Our reception of and response to God's Word and the words of others won't be complete; it won't be perfect; but it is needed and it does make a real difference. Thus, all of us need to speak and listen to one another in the Church. Furthermore, such listening should not be limited only to those who are comfortable with the Church; those who feel committed to it; those who are in good standing, but it should be extended to all, because, as Ormond Rush points out: 'If their perspective is sought, the inactive, the lapsed, the disaffected, and the marginalised may bring to the discourse of faith questions from the margins which are for the good of the church' (2009, p. 260).

A Presbyterian minister, writing about the power and importance of listening in mission and ministry, notes that 'loving listening encourages connection and depth, which contribute to life and health for individuals and congregations'. With regard to her work with young people, she questions herself: 'to what extent am I accurately perceiving the central issues the students are trying to talk about, particularly when I have a goal or agenda for the conversation?' 'When someone listens carefully to us, it helps us feel as if our lives matter' (Baab, 2014, pp. x, 6–7). A comment attributed to George Eliot illustrates how beneficial such being heard can feel:

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person; having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but to pour them all out, just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then, with a breath of kindness, blow the rest away.

In thinking about the importance of listening in the Church, George Dennis O'Brien's book *Finding the Voice of the Church* is helpful. O'Brien reminds us that 'The key to preaching the Gospel is not first defined by how one *speaks* but how one *listens*' (2007, p. 190; emphasis in original text). Christian communication, within and beyond the Church, has to begin with deep *listening*. Such listening affirms the uniqueness and intrinsic worth of the one being listened to. 'The point is to see the person standing right in front of me, who has no substitute, who can never be replaced, whose heart holds things for which there is no language, whose life is an unsolved mystery' (Barbara Brown Taylor, quoted in Goodfellow, 2015, p. 1314).

A fine example of the importance of listening as an essential foundation for Christian communication is the story of Jesus' encounter with potential disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13–35). In this story, before Jesus meets the two travellers, they were already engaged in conversation with one another. He comes alongside of them, listening to what they are saying and thereby tuning in to their concerns and state of mind. Then he asks them questions, getting them to articulate their understanding of the events that bother them and the nature of their perplexity, before setting out to address their confusion and dismay by his teaching. This teaching, both in words and gestures, connects the more effectively because the preceding process of listening had clarified for him, as teacher, and for them, as potential learners, what was needed at this moment. More broadly, we might claim that, so important is listening as a preliminary step in creating the conditions for learning and teaching, what is needed for more effective communication in and for the Church, as well as in school and universities, is not a bigger megaphone but a better hearing aid.

Where we listen modifies how we listen: thus, the nature and purpose of, and the feelings associated with, listening varies according to whether it occurs in church, at home, at work, in school, on a date, as a doctor with a patient, at a concert, interviewing someone for a job, or watching a political debate on television. And who is listening to us also makes a difference: 'The ear of the king, the confessor, the judge, the spy, the actor, the lover – each is different' (Gross, 2020, p. 83, quoting Alan Gross). It would be worth asking oneself how listening to a teacher differs from these other kinds of listening. It is also important to be aware of the necessity to listen to what is not said but is present in the lives and concerns of students. Furthermore, listening to oneself, being connected to one's own core, is a necessary contributing factor that supports listening to others. To be out of touch with oneself is scarcely a good basis for attending properly to others; nor can we relate authentically to others if we are at odds with our real thoughts and feelings.

An emphasis on listening as a central element in teaching and learning makes it evident that teachers and students are mutually dependent. Without students the teacher cannot function as a teacher. If mutual graceful listening is being enacted, the relationship and interaction between students and their teacher simultaneously brings the teacher into being as a teacher and the students as

students. One can also legitimately claim that, in the midst of this process, students are teaching and the teacher is learning.

In a powerfully thought-provoking book on listening and the ethics of attunement, Lisbeth Lipari deepens our understanding of how listening affects us and how it contributes to interpersonal understanding. Three points she makes are particularly relevant to the claims made in this chapter. First, that serious listening is more than merely auditory; it involves the whole person of the listener. Second, one should distinguish listening and hearing. Third, authentic listening allows the one being listened to, to enter into the listener; that is, it enables some degree of communion between them.

With regard to the first point, Lipari suggests that sound is picked up by the whole body, not merely via the ears. She asks: ‘do I listen not only to words with my mind, but also to the music of the voice in my ears, the posture and gesture of the body with my eyes, the vibrational rhythm of the others’ pulsations, movements, and intonations in my body?’ (Lipari, 2014, p. 9). This leads into her second point, that listening and hearing are not identical.

Etymologically, “listening” comes from a root that emphasises attention and giving to others, while “hearing” comes from a root that emphasises perception and receiving from others. ... “Hearing” tend(s) to foreground the self’s experience, while the ideas of attention and obedience resonating in the word “listening” tend to focus on the other.

(Lipari, 2014, p. 50)

There are two aspects of this distinction. Listening is what I do, while hearing is what happens in me, what I receive or pick up. That is, listening focuses on the active aspect, the effort we put into attending to others, while hearing attends to the passive dimension, or to the quality of our receptivity. In addition, we might say that listening is other-oriented, while hearing is self-oriented. As Lipari observes, ‘While it is certainly true that we can literally shut out visual but not auditory stimuli, it is also true that we can *hear* but fail to *listen*. For just as *seeing* can occur in the absence of *looking*, so can *hearing* occur without *listening*’ (2014, p. 196; emphasis in original text).

Third, Lipari proposes that listening creates the conditions for self-protective boundaries between people to be lowered and for a more intimate interaction to occur, one that facilitates each opening up to their interlocutor in a mutual sharing of their very personhood, not merely in an exchange of ideas:

In “the listening” I create a space to receive you, letting your speech enter me, flow through me. ... “The listening,” as opposed to “the heard,” does not absorb the other into conformity with the self, but instead creates a dwelling space to receive the alterity of the other and let it resonate.

(Lipari, 2014, p. 198)

If listening opens the door from within and allows others to enter, it is likely that there is a connection between our capacity to listen to each other and our capacity to be still and receptive before God.

Graceful listening requires attention, humility, patience, respect for the other, concentration, a desire to learn from the other, and freedom from self-absorption. It also depends upon the ability to let go of prior assumptions that might short-circuit our listening properly; to take seriously the value and significance of the uniqueness of the other; and the capacity to be self-reflexive – able to listen (graciously) to ourselves and able to question why we are hearing this person's words in particular ways – what baggage are we bringing? What filters are we using? According to Joseph Beatty, among the qualities that make someone a good listener are 'good will towards the other person, a willingness to take the time, the ability to focus and avoid distraction, some concern to understand, and a working memory' (Beatty, 1999, p. 281). The teacher who attempts graceful listening tries to step outside herself or himself in order to ask: how might they – their students – hear what I am saying? In graceful listening teachers convey to each student that, in their view, the class would not have been complete without their presence, questions, insights and involvement.

Thomas Aquinas claims that grace has five effects on us. First, our soul is healed; second, we will the good; third, we work effectively for it; fourth, we persevere; and fifth, we break through to glory (*Summa Theologiae* I–II q.111 a.3 co.). If we apply these effects to graceful listening in the context of education and as carried out by teachers, we may hope that such listening will be experienced by learners as healing rather than hurting. This entails inviting them to offer their voices, reinforcing their sense of being valued as individuals, affirming the validity of their experience, welcoming their insights, and taking seriously the weight of their questions, even if teachers cannot always answer them adequately. In this way, graceful listening by teachers conveys their benign intentions and conveys their willingness to strive with all the skill at their command, being enduring in their efforts, even in the face of reluctance to engage on the part of students. Such listening, we may hope, will be blessed by being ultimately fruitful in the lives of students, even if the glory of this outcome will often fail to be apparent to teachers.

Conclusion

For many years, Gerald Grace has been a powerful advocate, both for the cause of Catholic education in the face of criticisms from its detractors, and, most especially, for the need for more robust investigation into the degree to which the claims made on behalf of Catholic educational institutions can be substantiated by evidence. He has asked, for example, whether the mission is being carried out with integrity, whether spiritual capital is being replenished and whether Catholic teachers and leaders are being sufficiently inclusive of those for whom they are providing an education. Inevitably, for individuals and for

communities, there is always a gap between ideals and reality, between aspirations and achievement. The challenge that Grace poses to defenders of Catholic education to take the trouble to check out the nature of this gap – and then to reduce it – deserves to be taken up more widely by both researchers and practitioners. Stimulating awareness of the gap, creating a sense of urgency about it, and galvanising the motivation and energy to address it, all depend heavily on the kind of graceful listening and rhetorical skill that builds bridges and fosters collaboration between people with different experience, perspectives and skills, qualities win- somely displayed by Gerald Grace and which others now need to take forward.

Notes

- 1 Examples of terms used by Grace that have been picked up by practitioners include ‘mission integrity’, ‘mission drift’, ‘the strategic subsidy’ provided by Religious Congregations in the past and the concept of ‘spiritual capital’ and its role in Catholic education. See Grace (2010).
- 2 The phrase ‘philosophical muscle’ is borrowed from Mario D’Souza, whose tragically early death deprived the Catholic educational community of seeing more of his nuanced and soundly scholarly retrievals of previous Catholic philosophical thinking on education, such as that of Jacques Maritain and Bernard Lonergan (D’Souza, 2016). Grace has sought to champion the cause of Philosophy in the *ISCE* journal, commissioning a sequence of contributions from Brendan Carmody (2011), Sean Whittle (2014) and Paddy Walsh (2018) to address the philosophy of Catholic education. For a fuller discussion of this, see Chapter 10 of this volume.
- 3 In addition to the pervasive concern throughout Grace’s work to question how effectively church schools address the needs of the poor (interpreted broadly), the marginalised, the ‘sinners’ as well as the ‘saints’, and those ‘far from the faith’, he encouraged contributions to *ISCE* articles that were designed to improve better understanding of Jewish–Catholic relations, for example Miller (2013), Jardine and Brittain (2015) and Wansbrough (2016); and invited contributions on both sides of the debate on the ordination of women (Bourgeois, 2015; Droste, 2015; Grey, 2016).
- 4 The term ‘graceful listening’ seems apt because a constant feature in Grace’s approach to exploring Catholic education is his commitment to ‘listening to the voices of students and teachers’.

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