Experiencing Grace and Graceful Moments: In-Between Spaces in Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: Teacher education's dominant narrative is often one that accentuates sure-fire methods in the attainment of curriculum goals and objectives. We offer grace as an orientation that could serve to accentuate the profoundly relational generative space of teaching and learning, and to afford opportunities for taking time and making space in the classroom for inquiry into the living disciplines as a means to further understandings of self, other and curriculum matter. In this paper we explore and interpret Richard Wagamese's essay "On the wings of eagles" as a portrayal of moments of grace and put it into conversation with our own experiences in teacher education and curriculum theory. Although it is not in the nature of this project to conclude or profess definitive results or methods, our aim is to keep open questions of what it means to be graceful, and to act gracefully in relation to our students and to subject matters. We believe that grace is a way to be in the world that could be transformational for current pedagogical practices.

Résumé: Le discours dominant dans la formation des enseignants est souvent celui qui accentue les méthodes dans l'atteinte des objectifs du curriculum. Nous offrons la grâce comme une orientation qui pourrait servir à mettre l'accent sur l'espace relationnel de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage. Elle permet d'offrir des possibilités de prendre du temps et de faire de la place pour l'enquête sur les disciplines vivantes dans la salle de classe comme un moyen de mieux se comprendre soi-même, l'autre et le curriculum. Dans cet article, nous explorons et interprétons l'essai de Richard Wagamese « Sur les ailes des aigles » comme une représentation de moments de grâce et nous le mettons en conversation avec nos propres expériences en matière de formation des enseignants et de théorie du curriculum. Bien qu'il ne soit pas dans la nature de ce projet de conclure ou de professer des résultats

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> ou des méthodes définitives, notre objectif est de garder ouvertes les questions de ce que signifie être gracieux, et d'agir avec grâce avec nos étudiants et le curriculum. Nous croyons que la grâce est une façon d'être dans le monde qui pourrait être transformationnelle pour les pratiques pédagogiques actuelles.

> For me, every hour is grace. And I feel gratitude in my heart each time I can meet someone and look at his or her smile. (Elie Wiesel)

> I do not at all understand the mystery of grace - only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us. (Anne Lamott)

> You can have fantasies about having control over the world, but I know I can barely control my kitchen sink. That is the grace I'm given. Because when one can control things, one is limited to one's own vision. (Kiki Smith)

As educators working with pre- and in-service teachers, we are reminded of the need to dwell in the necessary tension between two curriculum worlds: "curriculum-as-plan" and "curriculum-as-lived-experience" (Aoki, 1986/91, p. 159-60). This in-between is often fraught with ambiguity, which can give rise to new teachers' desire for certainty and instrumentalist methods, following their deep experience in such patterns of learning and models of teaching. Rather than emphasizing or dismissing either side, we strive to live in and explore these tensions, to question and loosen such quests.

Technical orientations to curriculum posit knowledge understood as finite and predictable, under teacher and student control. Such orientations have been central to education for the last century, providing fertile ground for current neoliberal values of competition and individualism, focused as they are on business models for education that espouse students as clients, communities as stakeholders and outcomes as quantifiable data used to 'verify' that learning has taken place (Aoki, 1978/80; Biesta, 2013; Giroux, 2004; Grumet, 2006; Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2006 & 2008; Pinar, 2019). Teachers are accountable, and under significant pressure to meet targets, provide evidence, demonstrate student learning and the attainment of curricular outcomes. Such forces can serve to shape education in ways that may limit students, and

teachers, foreclosing opportunities to explore, wonder, linger and reflect during the school day.

Given such contexts, the authors of this article seek to explore moments and gestures of grace in education, and what it might mean for teachers to be graceful in our encounters with students and with subject matters. This interest in grace pairs well with our belief in understandings of the world as always and already situated in a particular time and place. We concur with those who understand teaching, learning and curriculum as living inheritances, which both condition and make possible enlarged understandings (Aoki, 1978/80; Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2006 & 2008). We call upon grace to help us understand how to honour the impermanent nature of living disciplines, and to create a space to consider possibilities not yet known. The generative tension between and among teachers, students and subject matters lives in an in-between space, one characterized by Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004) as the "true locus of hermeneutics" (p. 306). We draw in part on Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as he declares the importance of keeping ourselves and the world in question. Our attempt, as articulated by Caputo (2015), is not to definitively express an idealized notion of grace and graceful acts in education, but rather to catch grace "in the act"— in the concreteness of classroom life. We aspire to treat 'grace' hermeneutically within the context of Wagamese's "On the wings of eagles", and then in education. This article serves to explore how we, through grace, might foster an orientation that welcomes the arrival of the unanticipated, attunes us to otherness, opens us to understandings that are always on the way, and the implications and importance of these ideas for education. In what follows we will first explore understandings of grace, then present an excerpt from "On the wings of eagles", followed by an interpretation that focuses on three aspects of grace: 1. Being ready for moments of grace; 2. Responding to and with grace; and 3. Gratitude for grace. These facets of grace are not easily separated and there is fluidity between grace and being graceful.

Understandings of Grace

As notions of grace bely fixed, or enduring essences, they also exceed definitive knowability and mastery. However, grace is not merely an abstraction, but is recognizable among a family of resemblances

as it is enacted in lived moments. Possible understandings of grace and what it means to be graceful are inherited from many contexts such as philosophy, theology and literature, as well as embodied practices such as dance. In religious contexts, grace can be understood as a gift, one bestowed without judgement, or an expression of gratitude (as in saying grace before eating a meal) for a favour that is unmerited or undeserved (Louden, 2019), or "being held in someone's favor" (Thomas Aquinas in Sells, Beckenbach, & Patrick, 2009, p. 53). The impossibility of asking for or predicting grace – while often attributed to God, could be more human in that while it may be something to aspire to, grace is not fully knowable or attainable.

The word grace is not prevalent in educational literature. Montessori teachers are expected to model "grace and courtesy" (good manners and careful comportment, Schaefer, 2015). Rogers (2015) says that when we watch over children "our eyes should be wide open" and that "Grace is meaningless without attention" (p. 177). Grace in this context also means "a sudden awareness of the things we sometimes take for granted" (ibid, p. 177), or a "kiss of God" (p. 178). For Schaefer (2015), "The essence of grace and courtesy is presence; it is the presence of being human. The embodiment of these acts of grace and courtesy is nothing less than being present to life" (p. 33). Academic leaders understood an event of grace as requiring attentiveness, but also as "an experience … that produces a change in awareness" (Davison & Burge, 2010, p. 22). For tutors in alternative education, grace was a holistic seeing, a human-centred way to understand their students (Schoone, 2017).

Novelist Marilynne Robinson's (2018) exploration of grace offers multiple understandings and contexts:

> To me it means, among many things, a sense of or participation in the fullness of an act or gesture so that the beauty of it is seen whole, the leap and the landing. Ethically it means an understanding of the wholeness of a situation, so that everyone is understood in her humanity, the perceiver extending no more respect to herself than to others, understanding any moment as a thing that can bless time to come or poison it. [...] Theologically, grace must include the fact that we have untried capacities to live richly in a universe of unfathomable interest, and that we can and do, amazingly, enhance its interest with the things we make.

> Isn't it true that we actually add things to the universe, the great plenum? (p. 167)

This quotation establishes seminal notions of grace in this paper, the importance of situatedness, and therefore "understanding the wholeness of a situation". But also, the concept of blessing and poisoning – which in education might be akin to opening up as against foreclosing questions or topics for inquiry. There is a profound ethic that comes with grace and being graceful. As suggested by Paul Ricoeur (1992), "ethical intention is aiming at the good life with and for others, in just institutions" (p. 172).

The following short story by Richard Wagamese portrays a conversation about grace and graceful acts, as well as the pedagogical relation between the author and elder, Jack Kakakaway. Rather than a literal depiction of schooling, we treat the vignette as an opportunity to inquire into the complexity of the lifeworld and of grace. In choosing to closely read and interpret this short story, we strive to pay attention to this pedagogical act, outside the confines of the classroom, one that assists us in troubling our taken-for-granted, and predominant narratives of education.

Vignette

In the story, "On the wings of eagles" 1, Richard Wagamese (2011) tells of his yearning to become graceful. Ever since witnessing the seemingly effortless grace of dancers Gene Kelly and Karen Kain, Wagamese "craved the gift of fluid motion" (p. 21), and he has come to cherish and envy the ease and naturalness of the dancers' movements.

Wagamese fondly recalls "walking through the foothills outside of Calgary" (p. 22) with his friend and elder Jack Kakakaway. [What follows is an extract from "On the wings of eagles", reprinted here with permission]

> It was medicine time, and we were scouting sweetgrass to gather for ceremony. There was never a lot of conversation between us when we were out on the land.

[1] This story is in the EAST section of the book - a collection of essays pertaining to humility.

Jack believed that moving in silence was the best way to hear the land speaking to you. So we were content just to walk and allow our senses to become attuned. As we topped a small rise, we watched an eagle soar across a wide expense of bush. I felt honoured to witness the display of its strength and grace.

"That's how I've always wanted to be," I told Jack. "Graceful. Just like that."

He smiled at my words. We continued walking for a long time. Then Jack sat down on a log in a clearing and motioned for me to sit beside him. Those times were magical for me. Jack would talk openly about the land, share stories and teachings about how the plants around us were used and what they represented for our people. I was a rapt audience of one, and what he said to me that day has never left me.

"You only admire the display," he said. "The important thing is how the eagle learned to do that."

He explained that the eagle's grace doesn't come easily. The bird's flight looks effortless, but we miss the teaching if we see only the end product. Each eagle feather is made up of thousands of tiny filaments, Jack said, and the eagle has to control them all, whether the wind is blowing or the air is still. Only that skill will keep the eagle aloft. Just as importantly, the eagle must learn how to see the world, reading the treetops and the grasses for information.

There are no flying lessons. One day the young eaglets stand at the rim of their nest with the whole world in front of them. They can hear the call of their parents high above. [...] [E]ach of them must make that first frightening jump, test their ability to fly. The lessons for us in the eagle's first leap concern courage and faith. All of us need courage and faith to soar. [...]

[A]n eagle in magnificent flight can remind us [that] [i]t isn't easy to be graceful. You must learn to really see the world and negotiate it, and that takes humility. [...]

> Full of grace. Grace-full. Degree by degree, over the years, I've tried to practise the eagle's teaching in my life." (p. 22-23)

Throughout the story, Wagamese refers to grace as embodied in movement, in dance, in baseball and in flight, characterized as an effortless gift. Whereas Kakakaway explains the hidden teaching and learning in the grace of the eagle's flight, one not given or inherent, but hard-won, through practice, skill and understanding how to "really see the world and negotiate it". While Wagamese's narrative is replete with details depicting encounters, our interpretation will pay attention to three moments in particular: the arrival of the eagle; Kakakaway's smile; and the telling of stories. In these three moments we see a trajectory of grace: preparedness and openness for grace's arrival; response to the arrival of grace; and gratitude for grace. Within each of these three sections we explore an aspect of grace, then point to its depiction in the vignette, and then explore its pedagogical implications. The article concludes with a discussion of grace's potential contribution to education.

I. Being Open to the Arrival of Grace

> "Attention is the beginning of devotion." (Mary Oliver, 2016)

Central in discussions of grace is what, if anything, may precede its arrival, and opinions divide on whether grace is bestowed or whether it can be prepared for, hoped for or even encouraged. One possible understanding of grace is to be considerate or thoughtful (Merriam-Webster) and we might add susceptible or vulnerable to "possibilities yet unknown".

In the vignette, grace appears variously as silence, waiting, attention, and readiness. Kakakaway impresses upon Wagamese the importance of deliberately walking in silence as an opportunity to become more attentive and attuned to the ways of the land, as it is this silence that fosters a space for the movements of life to emerge. The eagle's arrival is unanticipated by the two men. Even

Kakakaway is pulled into the sway of the event in relation to the eagle, and to Wagamese. He cannot outrun such happenstances, nor can he know what to do prior to the event. They are gathering sweetgrass; their walking and being on the land has a purpose. Yet, they pause to pay attention to this unexpected moment – one which falls outside, and disrupts, any 'plan'. The men consider the eagle's grace in flight, a catalyst for Wagamese's contemplation of his own yearning to be graceful, just like the eagle.

The arrival of the eagle is an event, something beyond the men's "wanting and doing". Gadamer (2004) characterizes such an event as not part of "what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us" (p. xxv-xxvi). Whether we stop and pay attention to the happening, life continues to unfold regardless. The lifeworld belies certainty; events intersect with and interrupt our lives. As we get to know a place, we may treat the moment, topic, or question generously, or gracefully. Kakakaway is familiar with the land, and he has learned to carry himself in this space, to respond to the demands of the present. As such, he can be graceful, understood as open and responsive to the unforeseen event, generously accepting the unfolding of the lifeworld.

How do teachers gracefully respond to such an arrival? Rather than believing that we can control, predict or manipulate students or classrooms, or that we can always plan for every eventuality, the world happens. What often creates angst for us as teachers is that we do not think we will be able to respond appropriately in such moments. In our methods classes, this unease can be revealed in students' desire for teaching strategies, to know "what works" as a means to subdue or even erase uncertainty, or the need for responding in the moment. While teachers prepare to teach with intent and design learning opportunities, not all aspects of classroom life are within our bounds. As with the eagle, life's movements continue unanticipated, penetrating our taken-for-granted ideas. In teaching, unanticipated and unplanned opportunities frequently arise, often initiated by students, their lifeworlds, and wonderments. Any question, comment, or story may call for the teacher to loosen her pre-determined grip or purpose and welcome a contribution or change of course. Such deviations are often termed "teachable moments". To welcome such interruptions or deviations with grace, is not simply to see education as the amassing of verifiable knowledge, but to be open and susceptible and sensitive to the arrival of the 'not yet known'. The teacher can

see that to make space for such a moment will not be to go in irrelevant, trivial, or meaningless directions. In other words, not all interruptions are considered or included, yet those that are may be contradictory or represent a deviation. The teacher remains open and vulnerable, but not so open that everything can be on the table. To be graceful is to balance the moment to what is fitting, the interruption, the diversion, with the teacher's experience and wider contextual and curricular understandings.

To be graceful is to be open, to allow for unknowability, whereas the application of a ready-made method may foreclose on the possibility of things being otherwise, stifling "the grace of imagination, the upsurge of the possible" (Ricouer, in Macdonald, 1995, p. 177). The eagle's flight asserts itself; it is saying something that demands our attention and understanding. In such paying attention, there is a humility, to be graceful is to be sensitive and susceptible to the unknown, and to welcome and embrace, to be pulled in by the ways of the eagle's flight, to let the eagle speak to us in its "multifariousness". And for Gadamer (2004), "only in the multifariousness of such voices does it [the eagle's flight] exist" (p. 296).

II. Responding with Grace

> He felt at that moment, as though we were being clumsy and graceless with a mystery. He spoke of a kind of attention, different from scientific attention, a leaning toward the other without wanting to possess it or turn it into forms of knowledge, a way of listening that might over time deepen our sense of what it means to be in a place. (Herriot, 2009, p. 218)

Teachers are always called to respond to the complexities of students' understandings, misunderstandings, comments, questions, and silences. In this section we examine how responding gracefully might be understood and embodied.

In the vignette above, Wagamese articulates his quest for grace, "I have always wanted to be graceful just like that," to which Kakakaway offers a smile. Kakakaway's smile is an intricate response. At once Kakakaway is recognizing and acknowledging Wagamese's quest for grace, honouring his experiences and his

understanding. The smile can say "I hear you, I respect you, I understand you." But the smile is also a pause – a moment of delay; Kakakaway waits, holds something back, creating a sense of timelessness, but also of care, as he considers his next response. Eventually Kakakaway responds to Wagamese, continuing the thread of grace in their conversation.

While Kakakaway still knows something about the eagle, he is willing to dwell in the not-knowing, to treat the idea well as a space to contemplate. Wagamese's immediate relationship to the notion of grace was through his own connection to dance. And Kakakaway does not dismiss or ignore Wagamese's understanding and experience of grace to pursue their quest for sweetgrass; rather he stops, listens, and considers. Here, grace appears in the elder's humble recognition of the limits of his knowings, allowing his understandings of grace to be put into question. It is in these moments that Gadamer (2004) suggests we suffer, that is we come to recognize the finitude of our own understandings.

One way to be graceful is to create space, or a sense of space, in which to linger or dwell. Grace comes in knowing and deciding when, how, and what kind of response is appropriate in this moment with this particular student. And a grace period is a span "of time left or allowed before something happens or before something must be done" (Cambridge Dictionary Online).

As teachers we have a complex relationship with silence; it can even be feared, interpreted as weakness, perhaps signifying indecision from "not knowing". Yet the more complex the topic, or the question, perhaps the longer our pauses should be, signaling consideration, and pondering an appropriate response in the face of such complexity. In that pause we can feel the ethical weight (wait) of thoughtfully responding. And an understanding of how long and how much cannot be predetermined; deciding the right moment eludes an instrumentalist approach. Rather the moment calls for the teacher to act, to exercise judgment that is contingent, relational, and honours the particular. Grace or gracefully waiting here is akin to van Manen's (1991) notion of tact, "a tactful understanding of when to hold back, when to pass over things, when to wait, when "not to notice" something, when to step back rather than to intervene, draw the attention, or interrupt" (p. 151).

As with learning a skill such as conducting an ensemble, the basic gesture can be taught quickly but learning the weight, speed, style, and size of the gesture can take many years to understand

and is always re-understood in each new piece of music, context and performance. The answer to the questions: when, where or how do you smile? is always, "It depends". While we can talk about grace in the abstract, we can only point to it, just as good teaching responds to this particular moment with this particular topic. This judgment is not methodological, but requires ongoing attention, always to be thought about and considered again.

Education's utilitarian commitment to quantification and attainment of specified outcomes, and the efficiency of problem solving, can serve to overshadow opportunities to create time, both in solitude and solidarity, the opportunity to listen, to cultivate, to allow thoughts to germinate. Grace encourages and embraces a timeliness, a space, an invitation, a time that is necessary to honour the possibility of understanding anew, the flux of the world, and becoming experienced, without always demanding resolution. As Berry (2002) offers, "She has time for all things. Because she does not expect ever to be finished, she is endlessly patient with details" (p. 28).

A teacher's grace may provide students with space and time to struggle, and also to suffer – to become graceful in their own right in the acknowledgment of their limitations. Students are not a means to an end; there is an ethical call for this conversation, with this topic, and our pedagogy is to make time to walk alongside them, to be attuned to their wonderments, worries, questions, and experiences.

III. Graceful Offering

> In moments of grace you bring people together in relationship vignettes where they appreciate and are in awe of each other (Davison & Burge, 2010, p. 129)

The expression "to be graced by someone's presence" can mean to feel genuinely pleased or privileged to be around someone because they enhance and improve a situation, or a conversation, bringing an added dimension or perspective. Kakakaway's smile expresses this notion of 'being graced', as do Wagamese's words, "these times were magical for me", and "I was a rapt audience" [our italics have been added for emphasis]. These men are recognizing and valuing

the contribution of each other through their interaction and intersection on the subject or question of the eagle's grace.

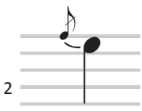
The vignette depicts a moment of teaching: "Jack would talk openly about the land and share stories and teachings about how plants around us were used and what they represented for our people" (p. 22). Kakakaway (Jack) contributes what he has observed to be true of grace, learned from his experiences, living on the land, and observation. Kakakaway is attuned to the aliveness and movement of the place, the territory, and has watched the lifespan of an eagle and how it comes to fly, as well as this particular moment of the eagle's grace-in-flight. Wagamese, through his observation of dancers, has come to understand and 'know' grace as a way of moving, and his image of what it means to be graceful sustains his yearning and quest for such grace. As Kakakaway insists, "we miss the teaching if we only see the end product," he brings forth his knowing, his authority, on how the eagle learns to fly and presents it gracefully to the student as an offering or invitation. His presentation is without certainty as to how Wagamese will respond.

It is not inevitable that Wagamese is going to be willing or able to accept his teachings. Kakakaway's approach is contingent, precarious and eludes any methodological certainty. His grace is being susceptible to the ways of the place and in wielding his teachings in proportion to the event. During the consideration of the eagle's graceful flight, Kakakaway contributes his own knowledge and experience in the manner of thickening the notion of grace. This interaction is the heart of the educative moment where understandings of grace are opening up to Wagamese in ways he may not have considered previously. His taken-for-granted thoughts about grace may be more: more multifarious, more complex than previously understood, living in other places, in other ways, in other disciplines. Kakakaway has the authority to speak about the eagle's grace from his time on the land, observing and coming to understand how eagles learn to experience flight. This is not to say his idea of grace is better or more true, nor is it fixed, it is different while also being true.

Similarly, in Music, grace notes adorn the musical line in the slightest of ways – so short they do not have a rhythmic value and

written almost imperceptibly in tiny script2. They serve to draw attention or bring weight to the important notes of the musical line but yet their proportion is not predetermined, so the length and weight of a grace note requires contextual understanding, interpretation and judgment in its execution. Kakakaway gracefully points to the eagle as embodying grace, to the event of grace, and to a possible (new) understanding of grace. Thomas Schwandt (2005), citing Shotter (1996), describes the ways we talk to one another: "For example, we 'point things out' to people ('Look at this!); give them 'commands'; 'remind' them ('Think what happened last time'); 'change their perspective' ('Look at it like this'); and so on. (pp. 388-389). Here, the practice of grace is knowing when such pointing or persuasion will be towards the good, when what we have to say will contribute value, or when the manner in which we contribute will be ethically situated.

As teachers we recognize that to take such a course of action is to assert ourselves in this educational moment as an opportunity to open up possibilities, potentialities, and further understandings in the knowledge that "any moment as a thing [...] can bless time to come or poison it" (Robinson, 2018, p. 167). The authors of this paper rely on 'foundational' course readings that appear every year. Yet, every year they re-read, and reinterpret familiar words in the light of how they and their understandings have changed. Even at the same point in the course, such readings take on new meanings with new students who themselves hold new experiences and interpretations from previous years. This situation negates familiar myths in education around stability and the fixed nature of knowledge, as Gadamer suggests, "The end keeps on delaying its arrival" (in Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 37). In such moments, we are called to make choices based on an interpretation and understanding, not following a method or 'applying' a theory. David Jardine (2012) contends that "Method doesn't help us get our bearings and learn our way around, because, so to speak, there is no 'place' to it" (p. 161). The limits in delivering methods (frequently understood as recipes) to future teachers is for such procedures to be understood and used as universal solutions, as tools that,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irrespective of context, or student, providing an armour against the uncertain flow of classroom life, rather than cultivating the teachers' attunement and sensitivity to the liveliness and worldliness of classroom life. To be graceful in these moments is to harmonize student comments and insights, honouring both the student's experience, the field, and the subject matter. When we hear students, and are moved by what they say, we recognize the truth of their experience as part of the topic, and while we recognize we may also want to question, or thicken, contributing additional understandings, knowledge or experience. There is a way of knowing and being in these moments that exceeds prescribed or preplanned content or outcome; we are always adapting to the moment, the situation, and making a graceful judgment as to proportion, weight, timing, emphasis. The decision that we make is to ethically cohere with the circumstances.

To What Ends Grace?

> "...the teacher is the glance" (van Manen, 2015, p. 83)

> "good teachers are more than they do; they are the teaching" (Aoki, 2005, p. 196)

This article has pointed to various origins and understandings of grace with the intention of claiming its possibilities for education in a system predominantly framed by technicist and bureaucratic orientations. While the notion of grace is not a schema, nor a set of fixed principles that possesses a single carry of meaning, grace is both a practice and a possibility of being. The three facets of grace pointed to above can be found in classrooms: teachers' careful, attentive waiting coupled with belief in students' contributions; teacher judgment as to how to respond in the moment with consideration; and teachers' acceptance that students' willingness and ability to respond is often beyond our control. The authors recognize that while notions of attunement, care, attention, judgment and relaxing belief in methods may not be new ideas to readers of this journal, we hope that our contribution is to offer grace and graceful moments as new ways to act and be with students.

As expressed above by van Manen and Aoki, to be graceful is become a certain kind of person.Becoming graceful is not something

to be mastered, nor will it appear in the same way or in the same place each time. To be graceful requires an ongoing reflective, reflexive, responsive attentiveness, just as the eagle in flight is not on autopilot but has to read, navigate, and negotiate the ever-changing conditions shaped anew by wind, temperature, precipitation and landscape. In the physical realm, whether dance or flight, to be graceful is to be flexible and pliable. For teachers, such grace may stem from humility and vulnerability in the face of what is known and unknown, continually asking, "What are we to do now?" while also asking "What are the possibilities for this student?", and to keep those possibilities open, to hold back while also offering the hope of this student, exercising their judgment towards the good.

Education is a profoundly relational (and therefore ethical) space, one which calls for grace in the tension between the known and the unknown: Kakakaway and Wagamese, teacher and student, mature and fledgling eagles. Rather than avoiding or eliminating such tensions, to be graceful is to dwell in the in-between spaces and grace is present in the willingness and ability to hear the voice of the other, to responsibly respond to what comes to greet us. To be graceful is to act in a way that strives to bring out the strength or the propositions of the other, a conviviality, rather than a subsuming of the other as another instance of something already known (Bowman, 2002).

To understand education as rooted in the Latin, educere, meaning to lead out, in this case to lead the young out into the world, is to participate in education as a furthering of freedom -- albeit while navigating freedom's embeddedness in communal understandings. In our ventures with others, and our inquiries into subject matters, as Jardine (2006) observed "[we] become someone (not just anyone) as a consequence of how [we] carry [our]selves in the world. With practice, [we] become more experienced in experiencing things in their abundance" (p. xxv). How we carry ourselves – grace or graceful – is to be balanced between the stability of what we know, our experiences, and what we do not yet know. The venture is moving into not knowing, and its corresponding abundance and ambiguity. We, students and teachers, are called upon to put our understandings at risk as a means to slacken the threads that bind us to our habituated ways.

For Arendt (1993), "The problem of education in the modern

world lies in the fact that by its very nature it cannot forgo either authority or tradition, and yet must proceed in a world that is neither structured by authority or held together by tradition" (p. 195). When we refuse to question the very things we think we know, they can morph into the mundane or the accepted, leaving little or no room for growth. When teachers act with grace, it may create a space for the student to tarry, linger, wonder, question, and play, a space that is both generative and intergenerational. We cannot control what is going to become of such spaces.

To be graceful calls for us to accept our situatedness in a time and place, while remaining ever vigilant to the arrival of the unanticipated, thus enhancing our ability to engage the world more equitably, lovingly, and responsively. Wagamese and Kakakaway are walking on the land, situated, but also attuned, in tune, paying close attention. The men gracefully commune with their surroundings and each other, open and devoted towards the unceasing movement of life, willing to relax the 'threads' that tie them to the world. It could be grace, and graceful acts, that may be part of the reorientation of (future) teachers towards the land and towards hearing what it has to say, and to fostering an other-oriented sensibility where we realize and humbly accept that our intentionalities and expectations for our students and the subject matters we study are always beyond the limits of our own understandings, located as they are already in time and place.

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