Between the lines: the transitional space of learning

Olivia Sagan
University of the Arts London

To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now.

Samuel Beckett

George Eliot, Daniel Deronda

What provokes us to think is always a traumatic encounter with some external Real which brutally imposes itself on us, shattering our established ways of thinking.

Zizek,2000:213

So when one enters a physical space such as a bar, school or home, one brings with one, embodied, certain quantities of different capitals. It is the physical embodiment of the different positions that the body has previously been able to inhabit. So one is always moving in and out of spaces carrying and sometimes increasing the value of different capitals. Although for some groups this may not be possible.

Skeggs, 1999:214

And then there are potential spaces. These are gaps that do not exist in or of themselves but are deliberately created for diverse aesthetic or communicative purposes. These are also intervals that are imbued with meanings of their own simply because they represent a missed beat of the heart's communion with the Other. The line break in poetry and a fumbling pause in free association constitute spaces of this sort.

Hooke and Akhtar, 2007:3

A space, like an image, crammed as it is with messages, symbols and metaphor, is never innocent, but rather enables particular ways of seeing (and being) while occluding others, situating and constituting subjects in specific ways; a vital detail to bear in mind as we continue our work to widen participation and to finesse our concept of inclusive environments.

Pedagogical space itself deserves to be dissected. It is clear, is it not, that it includes not only epistemological space (the space to think the impossible), but ontological space, in which the student can bring herself into a new state of being. The inspiring teacher, accordingly, gives the student space in which she can become more fully herself, to gain her own air, to become in an authentic way.

Barnett, 2007:116