Lifting the fog: A theoretical exploration of liminality and its place in Developmental Transformations

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Abstract

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This theoretical study will explore liminality and its place in the Drama Therapy method of Developmental Transformations. Focusing on revealing the inherent value of liminality in therapy, the composition of the liminal space will be thoroughly discussed. Connections between liminality and the method of Developmental Transformations will be made. This study will evoke further inquiries into the significance of transitional moments in Drama Therapy.

Acknowledgements

It is in moments like this when I often lose the words to express how I feel. I have never felt confident in my ability to express gratitude. I worry that I may miss something or forget someone completely. How could I possibly know every element that has helped me through this arduous journey? Should I thank the waters of the NWT? Or perhaps the companies that make that really great Rooibos tea?

I wish I could escape the task and merely say thank you to everyone. But again, in doing so, I may thank many undeserving things. I do not think that the skunk that has preyed on Farley deserves any thanks. On the other hand, perhaps it does. How can one be sure?

If this process has taught me anything, it is to allow the unknown to be a guide on occasion. More precisely, I have learned to trust. Thus, I will say much love and many thanks to Chris and Emma for your quick and amazing editing abilities, your guidance, and above all your friendship. To Bonnie, for always being there in the shape that was most needed at that time. And to Kim, for loving in the most precious, intuitive, and wonderful way.

To every step, every stroke of the paddle, every breath, and of course, everything in between, thank you.

"And in between the two, in between the sky and the sea, were all the winds"

-In "Life of Pi: A novel" by Yann Martel

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Subject area

"All our knowledge has its origins in our perceptions"

-Leonardo da Vinci

What does the 'space in between' imply, and what is it, exactly, that happens there? This space, which is referred to as liminality or the liminal space (Turner, 1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) and as a place of transition and transformation, has always intrigued, frustrated, and fascinated me with its ambiguity. Transformation is a layered phenomenon with many different elements occurring at molecular and molar levels. It holds a prestigious place in the development of a person, community, and the world. It has the ability to be all encompassing and full, but also exclusory and empty. It also can be very cloudy and difficult to navigate. Those in transition are often unsure of what direction to travel. A fog tends to linger in moments of change. For example, when one shifts the clutch in a car from first to second, there is a moment when the clutch is neither in first gear, nor second gear. This moment is not clear-cut. The moment is something and it is somewhere: it exists in time and space some-how, but it is also a place between two states. It is a gap. What is this gap? Is it a place of nothingness? Could this 'in between' place provide any useful information to the therapeutic process? By focusing this study on the Drama Therapy method of Developmental Transformations, I will examine the composition of the 'in between' space and explore how it informs the therapeutic process. I will determinedly place liminality in the therapy field.

Method

"A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step"

-Lao Tzu

My goal is to discuss a place that is often frequented, but also often ignored in therapy; as such, I will be approaching this study theoretically. A theory, as defined by the Oxford concise dictionary, is a "supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained" (p. 1486). Theory is often a key player shaping and understanding history. It attempts to present some aspect of reality. As highlighted by Galtung (1977), "*theory* is conceived of as a way of relating sentences; a *sentence* says something about reality" (p.190). A theory is a speculation created to satisfy curiosity. It is also a way of asking questions about the world in an attempt to comprehend something on a different and possibly a deeper level. Galtung refers to three different ways in which this attempt can shape itself:

1. *theory construction as a way of storing old knowledge about old reality;*
2. *theory construction as a heuristic to develop new knowledge about old reality;*
3. *theory construction as an instrument to create new reality.* (p.190)

Researchers may take any one of these three approaches, or combinations thereof to begin to construct their methodology.

Historical, or documentary, methodology has its roots in theory construction. A historian's goal is to "produce systematic, reliable statements that either increase the available pool of knowledge about a given topic or bring existing knowledge into a more precise focus by means of new interpretative patterns (Reitzel & Lindemann, 1982, p.

169). As theory is constructed to understand a phenomenon in reality, it is no surprise that the historical methodology stems from sociology and anthropology whose focus is typically on "understanding the other" (Vidich & Lyman, 1994, p.24). I will use this methodology to do just that. I will work to understand the other through developing new knowledge about an old reality.

Lexicon

"Say not, 'I have found the truth,' but rather, 'I have found a truth.'"

-In "The prophet" by Kahlil Gibran

Throughout my thesis, I will discuss two major subjects: liminality and the Drama Therapy method Developmental Transformations. Both these subjects are by nature anti-structural and are often satiated with confusion. It is therefore vital to be consistent with definitions and terminology. To remain transparent as possible, the parameters in which these subjects will be discussed are detailed below.

Liminality

The space in between point A and point B is not often looked at or written about. Attention is focused on either point, with a strong belief instilled that the most essential locations would be A or B. The middle space has, however, been a part of our world and inner workings forever. In many tribal and ancient cultures, a person who was entering a new phase would often leave their home and would be "removed from the old connections, bereft of the old identities, and stripped of the old reality" (Bridges, 2004, p. 133). They would be placed in the middle space to allow a change to occur before entering the new phase. Victor Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982), an anthropologist, often wrote about this middle space when discussing these ritualized practices. Turner (1982) calls these transition sites a "liminal space…a period and area of ambiguity…that ritual subjects pass through" (p.24-26).

Limen, a Latin word meaning *threshold*, will from this point on prefix any terminology I use to refer to the space in between. I will use the terms liminality, liminal space, and liminal period interchangeably. I will also use the term liminar, coined by Turner in 1974, to refer to any travelers in the liminal space. Ultimately, after exploring

the inner workings of liminality, I will place it within a therapy context for further discussion.

Developmental Transformations

The method of Developmental Transformations, created by David Read Johnson in the 1980's (Porter, 2003), is currently one of the leading approaches in Drama Therapy. It is based on the exercise "transformations" by Spolin (1999); typically it has the therapist and client engaged in flowing improvisational scenes. Developmental Transformations has at its core three basic concepts concerning our experiences in life. For Johnson (1991), how we situate ourselves in and outside our experiences, and ultimately how we move through life make up two of those concepts. The third and perhaps most important, is the belief that:

> this entire experiential world is not static, but a continuously changing and transforming set of feelings, perceptions, thoughts, images, and presences. The boundaries among these various elements (or representations) are permeable and are constantly changing as our representational world is revised and transformed throughout our life. A human being as a consciousness is always transforming, as the stream of inner life shifts, ebbs, and flows. (Johnson, 1991, p. 285).

Developmental Transformations is a method of therapy modeled in the image of human life. An approach of this manner is one that is formulated to mirror the human experience and can be extremely helpful for a client's therapeutic process. It can allow a sense of familiarity, one potentially only at the unconscious level, to be present in the therapy.

Developmental Transformations has its roots in many different fields, primarily psychotherapy (especially free association), authentic movement, and improvisation (Johnson, 1991). The developmental aspect of the method is key because Developmental Transformations "encourages expression throughout the entire developmental continuum: from silent imaging, to kinesthetic impulse, to movement, sound, gesture, symbolic enactment, role-playing, and verbalization" (Johnson, 1991, p. 288). Developmental Transformations allows for many different areas in therapy to be covered. Approaching therapy from a developmental standpoint, also allows the therapy to meet the client wherever they may be on that continuum.

My focus will be on the theory of Developmental Transformations versus the practice of the method; I will not include any case examples in this thesis. I will explore different interventional techniques used by Developmental Transformations therapists and discuss them in relation to liminality. I will continue to refer to the method as Developmental Transformations and practitioners of the method as Developmental Transformations therapists. The focus of this thesis will remain a theoretically inquiry without any in-depth analysis of the practice of Developmental Transformations as it relates to different populations of clientele.

The liminal space

She was alone in a fragment of nothingness. No light, no sound, no feeling...She blinked her eyes rapidly, but though she herself was somehow back, nothing else was. It was not as simple as darkness, or absence of light. Darkness had a tangible quality; it can be moved through and felt; in darkness you can bark your shins; the world of things still exists around you. She was lost in a horrifying void.

-In "A Wrinkle in Time" by Madeline L'Engle

The liminal space was brought to the world's attention most loudly by Victor Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982). Stemming from the ideas in Arnold van Gennep's paper "Rites de passage", Turner focused his work on the intangible liminal space writing many papers over his career on the subject. In his first, "Betwixt and between: The liminal period in *Rites de passage*", Turner wrote that all rites of passage "indicate and constitute transitions between states" (1967, p. 93). Beginning by looking at the word 'transition', Turner explained that he "prefer[red] to regard transition as a process, a becoming" (1967, p. 94). This was and is necessary to contrast with the word 'state'. He saw a state as a more "stable or recurrent condition" (Turner, 1967, p. 94) rather than something that evolved. The liminal space cannot be described as a static entity; it has many pieces.

A place of many names

The liminal space also has many different names. Bridges (2004) calls this place 'the neutral zone', "an empty space in the world and the lifetime where a new sense of self could gestate" (p. 133). The neutral zone and the liminal space are synonymous. Bridges explains that the liminal space, the place between different phases in life, is crucial to life itself. Even called by a different name, the liminal space is, as Bridges states:

> [a] time when the real business of transition takes place. It is a time when an inner reorientation and realignment are occurring, a time when we are

> making the all-but-imperceptible shift from one season of life to the next. Although such shifts cannot occur without an ending, and although they cannot bear fruit without a new beginning, it is in the neutral zone that the real work of transformation takes place (p. 154).

The liminal space is the place where all change occurs. As Bridges highlights, the liminal space is not only the place where change occurs, it is where 'the *real* work of transformation takes place'. It is a place of valuable development.

The liminal space can also be referred to by the Tibetan word *bardo*. Porter (2003) explains bardo as a "transition or gap between one situation and the beginning of another" (p. 102). Trungpa (1992) expands on this by stating that bardo is two-fold:

> *bar* means "in between" or, you could say, "no-man's-land", and *do* is like a tower or an island in that no-man's land. It's like a flowing river which belongs neither to the other shore nor to this shore, but there is a little island in the middle, in between. In other words, it is present experience, the immediate experience of nowness...(p.3).

More specially, Trungpa says bardo is "a sudden glimpse of experience which is constantly developing" (p. 24). It is the place between two extremes (Trungpa). There is a haziness surrounding the definition of liminality because by its nature, it is not one place, or another. It is difficult to pinpoint something that is in constant development. The liminal space can generate much confusion.

The liminal space has also been described as a place with ties to spirituality. As one Internet blogger who is deeply interested in understanding how "learning, sense-making, emotions and spirituality interweave" explains that God is directing human

beings towards the liminal space (Shum, 2008). Shum continues to quote various authors and highlights throughout his posting that "much of the work of the God of the Bible is to get people into liminal space, and to keep them there long enough so they can learn something essential...It is the ultimate teachable space, maybe the only one". To Shum, the liminal space is a fundamental piece of being. Coining the word *communitas* to encompass the shared experience of liminars (Turner, 1969), Turner (1974) indicates in a later paper that:

> communitas is a fact of everyone's experience, yet it has almost never been regarded as a reputable or coherent object of study by social scientists. It is, however, central to religion, literature, drama, and art, and its traces may be found deeply engraven in law, ethics, kinship, and even economics. It becomes visible in tribal rites of passage, in millenarian movements, in monasteries, in the counterculture, and on countless informal occasions (p.231).

Although Shum has used Turner's language in his discussion of liminality, he has nonetheless given it yet another quality. He has, just as Turner demonstrated in his works, identified that liminality is *everyone's experience*. It is something we should, regardless of what God, spiritual presence, or force is directing us towards it, pay attention to.

Three phases

Continuing to use Van Gennep's ideas, Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982), highlighted the three phases that are a part of all transitions: separation, margin (or limen) and reaggregation (Turner, 1974). Quoted directly from Turner (1974), these phases consist of:

> The first phase, separation, comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or the group from either an earlier fixed point in the social structure or from an established set of cultural conditions (a "state").
>
> During the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject (the "passenger", or "liminar") becomes ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification; he passes through a symbolic domain that has few or none of the attributes of his past or coming state.
>
> In the third phase the passage is consummated...(p. 232).

The three phases, as described above and discussed in depth by both Van Gennep and Turner, exist in every transition. For example, when a warrior heads off to war, or when an individual is granted special membership to a club, these three phases are present in the process (Turner, 1967). Not only are all three present in every process, but I hold that the liminal period could be applied to any transition. Turner himself, focused on initiation rites such as puberty, marriage, or initiation into a tribe, as "they have well-marked and protracted marginal or liminal phases" (1967, p. 95). Nevertheless the applicability of his research resounds loudly in many fields of inquiry.

Focusing on the liminal period and how it is described, the key ideas of my discussion are the characteristics given to liminality: *ambiguity*, *the passage through a symbolic place*, and *the symbolic place possessing of few or none of past or future attributes*. In assigning these qualities to the liminal space, Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) has given life to, as Bridges (2004) highlights, a place that is typically viewed as

> a kind of street-crossing procedure. One would be a fool to stay out there in the middle of the street any longer than was necessary; so once you step off the curb, you move on to the other side as fast as you can...(p. 134).

The characteristics of the liminal space affirm the value of its existence. They contradict the above stated belief by giving shape to the composition of liminality. With them, the middle of the street is no longer empty. Ultimately, Turner has shown that there are many pieces of the liminal space and that they can be grouped. It is these groupings, or Turner's three characteristics of the liminal space, that will be discussed in depth throughout my thesis. The inherent value in liminality will be further uncovered and the metaphorical fog will continue to lift.

The essence

"A full nothing is better than an empty something"

-Jan Henderson (personal communication)

In beginning to link liminality to the Drama Therapy method Developmental Transformations and the larger therapy field, it is important to dig into the composition of the liminal space. As noted previously, a metaphorical fog often clouds the experience in a liminal space. This cloud is threatening enough that people, as Bridges (2004) states, have the desire to move quickly passed it. Why is that so? What is the essence of liminality? Using Turner's (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) three descriptors of liminality, I will examine the molecular level of the liminal space. This examination will aid in answering the above questions.

Ambiguity

The first of the characteristics of liminality as described by Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) is ambiguity. He states that the liminar in the liminal space is "ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification" (1974, p. 232). By definition, ambiguity denotes uncertainty, which typically brings with it an amount of tension. It is in our nature and societal structures to require definite classifications. We all like to be "sure". When something is not certain, anxiety arises. Turner (1967) indicates that:

> the subject of passage ritual is, in liminal period, structurally if not physically "invisible". As members of society, most of us see only what we expect to see, and what we expect to see is what we are conditioned to see when we haven't learned the definitions and classifications of our culture. A society's secular definitions do not allow for the existence of a

> not-boy-not-man, which is what a novice in a male puberty rite is (if he can be said to be anything) (p. 95).

There is no clear place to put liminars and thus they become invisible in those moments of transition. In many instances, the liminar is physically hidden from the rest of the tribe (Turner, 1967). The liminar is seen as outside the normal societal structures. They are indefinite and have a vague quality to them. With all this in mind, the liminal space becomes a place that is often deliberately ignored.

Not only is the liminal space a confusing and disregarded phenomenon in societal structure, there is a sense of contamination that is also associated with it. Discussing Dr. Mary Douglas' study on pollution, Turner (1967) links her views to the liminal space. Turner, via Dr. Douglas, claims that "what is unclear or contradictory (from the perspective of social definition) tends to be regarded as (ritually) unclean" (1967, p. 97). Turner (1967) furthers this view and states:

> one would expect that transitional beings are particularly polluting, since they are neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere (in terms of recognized cultural topography)...[and] liminal *personae* nearly always and everywhere are regarded as polluting to those who have never been "inoculated" against them, through having been themselves initiated into the same state (p. 97)

The liminar is seen as unclean and therefore the liminal space is a place that is forcibly removed from a societal structure. Moments of transition or, as in Turner's (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) studies, initiation rites, must be experienced away from the normal flow of the society. It is not a place that is desired.

When one considers that uncertainty and contamination have been used to describe the liminal space, it is not surprising that liminality could also feel like an empty experience. Emptiness, defined as containing nothing or having no meaning or value (Oxford dictionary), fits the previous descriptions of liminality. To quote Hoff (1982):

> Many people are afraid of Emptiness, however, because it reminds them of Loneliness. Everything has to be filled in, it seems—appointment books, hillsides, vacant lots—but when all the spaces are filled, the Loneliness *really* begins. Then the Groups are joined, the Classes are signed up for, and the Gift-to-Yourself items are bought. When the Loneliness starts creeping at the door, the Television Set is turned on to make it go away. But it doesn't go away. So some of *us* do instead, and after discarding the emptiness of the Big Congested Mess, we discover the fullness of Nothing.

Panic, anxiety, and fear all play a role when the liminal space is exposed and felt. The liminal space is typically felt and seen as uncomfortable. Turner (1974) states that: "*cunicular*, 'being in a tunnel', would better describe the quality of this phase [the liminal period] in many cases, its hidden nature, its sometimes mysterious darkness…" (p. 232). Darkness is often equated with danger. Tolle (1999) highlights that psychological fear is created out of things that have not even happened, but rather something that *might* happen. One runs away from the liminal space as if it was something threatening.

Trungpa (1992), in further discussing bardo, speaks to one of his students about the difference between a nonbardo and bardo state. In Buddhism, in a nonbardo state there are no extremes and things can move back and forth freely (Trungpa). This might

be compared with a river, or a therapy session when it is flowing and fluid. In a bardo state, however, one is:

> completely stuck, you are trapped between two extremes, like extreme pain and extreme pleasure. You are trapped in it: if you try to go too far, you find yourself in extreme pleasure and you don't want to leave it; but if you go to the other extreme, you find yourself in extreme pain and you don't know how to get out of it. So you are sort of trapped in the situation...(p. 232).

Trungpa helps to solidify that to which Hoff (1982) was alluding. In the liminal space, one feels stuck and trapped. One feels the need to run away from extreme pain (loneliness) and run to extreme pleasure (classes, groups, or gifts for oneself). There is no tolerance for the liminal space. With the ambiguity of the liminal space and uncertainty, invisibility, and pollution all lurking within it, who could blame them! It is not likely that one would want to chose to be invisible, unclean and potentially removed from all structure. There is a negative connotation that surrounds the liminal space and its travelers. Since liminality has a huge amount of ambiguity associated with it, it would usually cause a reaction to something negative; a reaction of aversion or moreover, a reaction to escape for fear of what could happen. Ambiguity and negativity are big components of the foggy cloud plaguing liminality.

Symbolic place

The second characteristic given to the liminal space by Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) is that, in this space, the liminar moves through a symbolic place. In the context of cultural ritual practices, Turner discusses the different masks, descriptive language,

and costumes used to separate and distinguish the liminars from the rest of the tribe (1967). He notes that liminars are typically given masks to disguise themselves for the purpose of concealment and are often "buried, forced to lie motionless in the posture and direction of customary burial, [and] may be stained black..." to symbolize the death of their prior state (1967, p. 96). The liminar is assigned symbols that express the experience of the liminal space. With his focus on the experience of the liminar, Turner ultimately does highlight that the liminal space has a symbolic quality to it. Being an anthropologist, however, his focus is on the culture and societal impact of the liminal space. Studying liminality from the point of view of the liminar would offer him the most data. Crucial to my discussion, on the other hand, is not the liminar, but rather the liminal space itself. Therefore, it is important to ask how the liminal space gains its symbolic attributes. Turner's liminars are assigned symbols to demonstrate their experience; more pertinent to this study, is how symbols exist in the liminal space.

Primarily, the individual requiring symbols typically generates them. There can be symbols that exist on a personal scale, a community scale, or even a global scale. A symbol is merely an object that represents something else (Oxford dictionary); in actuality anyone can create a symbol. A symbol is thus not difficult to create. Hobson (1985) highlights that:

> following its own laws, the mind is satisfying a basic need, translating experiences into symbols. The sheer expression of ideas or forms of thought is a spontaneous human activity. It is a need as fundamental as the needs for food, bodily exploration, and sex. (p. 84).

Creating symbols is a necessary part of our existence. Hobson continues, stating that ideas are created out of all the "sense-impressions" one receives in one's daily life. Sense impressions come from the five senses, and even from "more organized perceptions" (Hobson, p.84). As a person experiences things, he or she receives information from these senses, or these perceptions, which are then translated into symbols. As Turner (1967) indicates, we would be "giving an outward and visible form to an inward and conceptual process" (p. 96).

Drama Therapy is unique, as it allows symbols to be central to the therapy session. The playspace, the area in which therapy takes place, is based on qualities that permit symbolism to exist. It allows the language of symbols to be accessible to the client. In fact, Drama Therapy is largely based on the main idea in Turner's (1967) quote in the previous paragraph: an outward form is given to an inner process. In Jones' (2005) latest book, *The Arts Therapies: A Revolution in Healthcare*, this inner-outer relationship is highlighted as vital to the practice of Drama Therapy:

> In arts therapy practice operating within a framework that acknowledges the unconscious, the relationship between *internal* and *external* is at the core of change. The basic notion is that the client's internal unconscious world, containing repressed material, becomes connected with the arts products, the materials used, and the process within the session....The arts therapies' engagement with the unconscious is seen as dynamic: linking art making, the process of the relationship with the therapist or with others [in a group setting for example], as a route to uncover, to create contact

where there is disconnection, and to allow healing to occur with material that is buried or split off (p. 155).

Just as Jones has stated, the internal and external processes are key in the practice of Drama Therapy. These processes enable the tools of Drama Therapy and the Drama Therapist to serve its clients.

Winnicott (1971) also spoke often of this inner-outer process. He called the place in therapy where this occurred the *potential space*, which he viewed as a mirror to the mother-infant symbiotic relationship. This very early interconnectedness is one that Winnicott viewed as the basis for all our later interactions in life. More directly, Winnicott contrasts "this potential space (a) with the inner world (which is related to the psychosomatic partnership) and (b) with actual, or external, reality" (p.55). Winnicott demonstrates that the potential space he describes is something that does not exist within or outside an individual. The potential space, to Winnicott, is "a place that both connects and separates inner and outer" (Abram, 1996, p. 311). It is a place of amalgamation. Most importantly, it does not exist with clear-cut guidelines, but rather as a place of fusion of many aspects.

Furthering Winnicott's (1971) description of the potential space and introducing another quality, Siegelman (1990) states:

> in this protected and protecting space a kind of benign illusion or 'as if' takes place: two can become one, the new becomes old, and just as important, the old becomes new. In this space distinctions between me and not-me, real and not-real, here and not-here, now and not-now blur and shift. This is symbolic space. It is the area of imaginative play in which the

most potent metaphor in all of psychotherapeutic work—the transference—is allowed to flourish and develop (p. 187).

Siegelman introduces the element of play and interaction in his suggestion of transference between therapist and client. Within the symbolic space that both Siegelman and Winnicott are suggesting, there exists the symbolism inherent in liminality.

The liminal space is a symbolic space. Similarly, the playspace harnesses symbolism and uses it to its advantage. Since "is in the imaginative realm [and] *consciously* set off from the real world by the participants" (Johnson, 1991, p. 289, italics added), the playspace has ingrained within it the illusionary quality so crucial to therapeutic growth. It has, as Siegelman (1990) pointed out to us, the symbolical aspect, that allows for a lack of responsibility or ownership of the information floating around in the playspace. The guise of masks in Turner's (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) initiation rites or a metaphor reflected in arts materials in Drama Therapy acts as a buffer. Symbols, as a representation of something else, gives us, as humans, a break from the fusion between the object the symbol is representing and the emotionality connected to it. Just as a liminar is hidden from sight during his or her transition, the playspace in Drama Therapy uses the symbolic process (internal vs. external relationship) and gives the necessary distance to the client.

Nothingness

The third and final characteristic assigned to liminality by Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) is the symbolic place's possession of few or none of the attributes of liminar's past or coming state. Since the liminar is neither fully in one state nor fully in

the other, he or she does not clearly and fully belong to or possess qualities of either state. Turner (1967), as per his research, labels liminars as having

> no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows. Their condition is indeed the very prototype of sacred poverty. Rights over property, goods, and services inhere in positions in the politico-jural structure. Since they do not occupy such positions, neophytes [liminars] exercise no such rights (p. 99).

In the cultural rites studied by Turner, being in liminality was associated with inferiority; those in this space were considered lesser in comparison to the other individuals in the tribe. Those in the liminal space had no rights. They had nothing.

Shifting the focus from Turner's (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) liminar to the liminal space, the final characteristic of liminality is an interesting one to consider. Since the liminar has nothing while traveling through the liminal space, one might say that the liminal space is nothing or, moreover, that it has nothing to offer. It would be simple to conclude it must be empty, but since liminality does not denote a fixed state, it cannot be only empty just as it cannot be full. The liminal space, however, can be felt as nothing, and yet be full. Although that seems to be an oxymoron, the liminal space can possess contradictory qualities since contradiction is an inherent composition of the space. The liminal space can be experienced as a nothing space, whilst being full. What then fills the liminal space? To explain contradiction, one needs to delve further into the molecular framework of liminality. At its core, liminality is nothing, though it still holds the possibility that it can be full. If it is nothing, it can therefore also be everything.

This can be further understood by returning to the second characteristic of the liminal space: Winnicott's (1971) view of the symbolic space. This becomes yet again an important piece to include. Winnicott's suggestion of potentiality allows a vast amount of information to exist in the liminal space. Information, here, means the amalgamation of the knowledge, questions, thoughts and feelings produced by a liminar or the interactions between a liminar and the liminal space. It is the container for all the psychic processes occurring in the liminal space. Liminality has a high level of probability ingrained within it; thus, the amount of information, as well as combinations of information, that could potentially exist within the liminal space is also high. More precisely, there is a lot of potential 'action' that could be present within a space that is typically viewed as 'empty, dead, or a nothing' [Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) and Porter (2003)]. The different combinations of these processes are too many to describe for the scope of this thesis, but it is important to note their existence and their immense significance to the fullness of the nothing quality of liminality.

Nachmanovitch (1990) helps to elaborate on this discussion. In his book, *Free Play*, he speaks of the energies that drive the improvisations in our life. Not knowing where or how to classify this energy, he states:

> I don't know what to call it—power, the life force. To use terms like *force* or *energy* can be misleading, however, because we are not referring to physical energy in the sense of mass times velocity squared, or to the metabolic energy that the body derives from food...what the shamans, artists, healers, and musicians are talking about is not a force or energy, though it is expressed or carried by fluctuations of energy (just as music is

> carried on the fluctuations of sound waves or radio waves). It is not in the realm of energy but in the realm of information, of *pattern*. (p. 33).

Here, Nachmanovitch highlights a key component of the liminal space: the information within it exists in patterns. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Hobson (1985) both highlight that the mind innately functions as an organization system; therefore, it is not surprising that patterns should exist within the liminal space. In fact, Csikszentmihalyi states that "everything we experience—joy or pain, interest or boredom—is represented in the mind as information" (p.6). The experience of the liminal space is represented in the mind as information. Tying this all together nicely, Mitchell (2005) states:

> human minds are interactive phenomena; an individual human mind is an oxymoron; subjectivity always develops in the context of intersubjectivity; we continually process and organize the enormous complexity of ourselves and our world into recurring patterns (p. 57).

Furthermore, between people, patterns, or more accurately, sequences occur. These may be regular or irregular, harmonious or cacophonous, but they are present. As Shaw (1990), in quoting W. Condon, states: "communication is thus like a dance, with everyone engaged in intricate and shared movements across many subtle dimensions, yet all strangely oblivious that they are doing so" (p.13). It could also be said that the liminar and its relationship with the liminal space (and the various combinations thereof) are all traveling as a continuous stream of rhythmic information. Porter (2000), demonstrating the relevance of the embodied encounter that occurs in Drama Therapy's Developmental Transformations, explains it through the realm of connectedness with her statement: "all human beings are connected energetically" (p. 311). The same relational spectrums

(regular vs. irregular and harmonious vs. cacophonous) still exist in the liminal space, waiting to be experienced, understood, and described even if they are perceived as nothing or as dormant. They, nonetheless, have the potential to be alive.

Sills and Lowan (2006) also discuss the idea of patterns in their article "In this body, a fathom long…: Working with embodied mind and interbeing in psychotherapy". Detailing three fields of attention, Sills & Lowan refer often to the patterns and connectedness between people. At the third field of attention lies the area we would equate with the playspace. According to Sills & Lowan, it is here that an "expansive and interconnected relational field opens up" (p.207). The patterns highlighted by Nachmanovitch (1990) are, however, located in the second field of attention, a place where "we come into energetic relationship with another and the challenge is to orientate 'this embodied mind' towards 'that embodied mind' (Sills & Lowan, 2006, p.207). This is the level where the fullness of liminality is uncovered and the core of liminality is exposed. Cox (1978) affirms that:

> [within a shared space], there are many fluctuating, transient, though undoubtedly observable physical 'signs' which might well have vanished by the time a formal organic examination was made, so that…[a] neurologist's report might be 'Nothing abnormal demonstrated' (p.16).

Ultimately, these signs are missed as they are occurring on a level to which it is difficult to attune to. Cox alludes to the crux of the essence of liminality: the information deeply ingrained in the liminal space occurs on a deep, non-verbal, very somatic level.

Concretizing this somatic level, Rodriguez (2001), in her dissertation "Dancing in the thresholds: Exploring the interactive field", discusses the underlying force in the patterns of information in liminality. Quoting Dr. Valerie Hunt, Rodriguez states:

> thought is an organized field of energy composed of complex patterns of vibrations which consolidate information. If the accompanying emotional energy is strong, the field is energetic and integrated. It persists and stimulates other fields to action, both the dense world of matter and other human beings. If one uses auditory memory skills to decode an information field, one hears sounds or voices. If one translates thought through visual memory, ones sees pictures or print. And if one processes vibratory information via olfactory of kinesthetic memory, one smells odors or has a motion sensation (p. 183).

What Rodriguez, via Dr. Hunt, is suggesting here is that the core of liminality is ultimately full of vibrations which are then consolidated into the patterns Nachmanovitch (1990) discussed. In addition, it is all exists at the somatic level that frequently goes undetected.

Barbara Brennan (1987), a former NASA physicist and current leader in healing by touch and connectedness to energy, basis her practice completely on this notion of vibrations. She discusses a Universal Energy Field (UEF) that not only exists but also can be scientifically measured. While discussing the science behind the UEF, Brennan states:

> Dr. John White and Dr. Stanley Krippner list many properties of the Universal Energy Field: the UEF permeates all space, animate and inanimate objects, and connects all objects to each other; it flows from one

> object to another; and its density varies inversely with the distance from its source. It also follows the laws of harmonic inductance and sympathetic resonance—the phenomenon that occurs when you strike a tuning fork and one near it will begin to vibrate at the same frequency, giving off the same sound. (p. 40)

Brennan is talking about a field of energy that exists in everything, even the often-viewed nothingness of the liminal space. Expanding her discussion on the Universal Field of Energy, Brennan, in her book, includes a thorough description of the Human Energy Field (or aura) and the seven chakras of a person. The area around a person's physical body "cont[ains] subtle energy fields" (Douglas, 2002, p.94). The chakras are parts of a person that run similar to a gateway, and allow the receipt and transfer of energy (Douglas, 2002). Ultimately, Brennan uses the subtle energy fields in a therapeutic session for healing. Using what she calls High Sense Perception, she is able to tell "which of the many holistic healing methods will work best for each patient by observing its effect on the aura" (p. 150). Brennan works at the molecular level, which is so vibrant within the liminal space.

Also working at this deep level, Sills and Lowan (2006) stand by the idea that "even without physical touch, an awareness of body and body-process, including sensations, feelings tones and body characteristics, can inform psychotherapeutic work" (p. 199). The essence of their viewpoint is rooted in Gendlin's (1981) often-quoted work about the 'felt sense':

> a felt sense is not an emotion. We recognize emotions. We know when we are angry, or sad, or glad. A felt sense is something you do not at first

> recognize—it is vague and murky. It feels meaningful, but not known. It is a body-sense of meaning. (p.10).

Sills and Lowan cite a number of different researchers in their chapter, and one amongst the group, Emoto, conducted research where water, exposed to negative emotions or thoughts, would produce fragmented and broken crystalline when frozen. Contrarily, water exposed to positive thoughts would produce beautifully formed crystalline (Sills & Lowan, 2006). Although it is difficult to see, this 'felt sense' is even recognizable in water.

Since these particles of energy are intermingling at the core of the liminal space, there must be fullness to the nothing quality of liminality. Life must be present. Tolle (1999) states that "when you reach a point of absolute stillness, which is nevertheless *vibrant with life*, you have gone beyond the inner body and beyond chi to the Source itself: the Unmanifested" (p. 131, italics added). Bridges (2004), as does Tolle (1999), also speaks to this life at the core of everything. Bridges highlights that, above all, the core energy is key in the process of liminality. He holds that:

> it is the primal state of pure energy to which the person (or an organization, society, or anything else in transition) must return for every true new beginning. It is only from the perspective of the old form that chaos looks fearful. From any other perspective, it looks like life itself, as yet unshaped by purpose and identification. But it is, of course, from that "old form" perspective that anyone who has just been plunged into transition views life, so it is no wonder that the neutral zone's emptiness and fluidity are frightening (p. 141).

Bridges continues with: "it is only by returning for a time to the formlessness of the primal energy that renewal can take place...the neutral zone is the only source of the self-renewal that we all seek" (p. 141-142). The liminal space is vital. People need the place of 'nothing'; it is imperative to our survival.

Above all, the possibility that life exists within the liminal space is remarkable. Turner's (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) three characteristics of the liminal space have all suggested a strong sense of negativity within each of them. The nothingness quality of the liminal space is, however, not necessarily negative. Jacques Lecoq (2000), a giant in the creative theatre field, speaks about the qualities of this liminal space in a different way. Working with the neutral mask, he teaches his students the neutrality intrinsic in the liminal space is "the start of the journey" (p. 36). In his view, this liminal space is a place of great meaning and importance. Explaining the neutral mask and its power, Lecoq states:

> the neutral mask is an object with its own special characteristics. It is a face which we call *neutral*, a perfectly balanced mask which produces a physical sensation of calm. This object, when placed on the face, should enable one to experience the *state of neutrality* prior to action, a state of receptiveness to everything around us, with no inner conflict. This mask is a reference point, a basic mask, a fulcrum mask for all the other masks. Beneath every mask, expressive masks or commedia dell'arte masks, there is a neutral mask supporting all the others. When a student has experienced this neutral starting point his body will be freed, like a blank page on which drama can be inscribed (p.36).

To Lecoq, the liminal space, the place of neutrality, is a gift in and of itself, a place where everything that comes after is supported by it. It is the core of his teachings as much as it is the core of life.

Liminality is often seen as an empty component of the transformation process. Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) asserts that liminars are viewed as equals to only those at the lower end of the poverty line. Liminars have nothing and by default, the liminal space is seen as a place of devoid of positivity, fullness, and life. However, by examining the characteristic of potentiality and the different layers of the information that can be present in the liminal space, the contrary proves true: there is much vibrancy within the liminal space. Albeit tricky to discern amongst the fog, the liminal space is, at its core, full of life.

The clinical picture

And it happened that both of them came to a place
Where they bumped. There they stood.
Foot to foot.
Face to face.

-In "The Zax" by Dr. Seuss

To this point, the qualities of liminality have been discussed separately. This was done deliberately to best highlight the key elements in how liminality applies and is applied in clinical practice. The first aspect of liminality examined was ambiguity. Next, the symbolic place was studied. Lastly, the nothingness quality of liminality was discussed. Switching the focus to how liminality fits within the context of therapy and more precisely, Developmental Transformations, these points will come together and the looming fog encircling moments of transformation should lift completely.

Essence united

The three characteristics of liminality outlined by Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) all seem to complement and contrast each other. Considering the composition of the liminal space, this is not at all surprising. This conflict between the characteristics is necessary, however, to enable the value of liminality to arise within therapy sessions. For example, the first characteristic, ambiguity, is not a feeling welcomed by most, whether they are in liminality or not. Ambiguity is often associated with uncertainty and linked to feelings of fear. This fear is crucial to therapeutic growth as it exposes the areas that require work. More precisely, when a client moves away from a moment as it arises in therapy due to fear or anxiety, it is referred to as an impasse. According to Johnson (1993), impasses "indicate blockages, resistances, and anxieties that require further work" (p. 181). Furthermore, in Developmental Transformations, an impasse is:

> a major interruption in flow characterized by a conflict between the needs of the scene and the desires of the participants...the impasse occurs when the participants are unwilling to let go or transform some element of their character, plot, prop, or behavior on which they feel reliant. The result is usually a series of repeated actions in which each person's attempts to influence the other person alternate with attempts to prevent them from fleeing the scene. Unlike simple binds, which are easily resolved through collaboration of the actors, impasses reflect deeper anxieties that lead to significant disruption in energy and flow (p. 289).

The unwillingness or resistance that Johnson highlights is the defense against the ambiguity of the liminal space. The client's, or even the therapist's, retreat from the exposed material is an attempt to mask an underlying fear. They are, according to Porter (2003), "sitting on a psychological edge" (p. 104).

The third characteristic of liminality, the nothingness quality, is, at first, complementary to the first (ambiguity). It was discussed by Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982) quite negatively; however, upon further excavation it was revealed to have a deeper positive quality within it. This nothingness contrasts the fear associated with ambiguity as it exposes the core of liminality, which is vibrant and full of life. Where the first characteristic alludes to a fearful place, the third speaks of a more calming place in which to exist. The first characteristic of liminality alludes to a place plagued with death; interestingly enough, Porter (2003) suggests that death is associated with the feeling of an end inside the client: a crucial and necessary moment on the path towards change. She states that "in Developmental Transformations, a sense of death is evoked in the ever-

shifting dramatic scenarios" (p. 103). The idea that death is equated with an impasse is a theme that resonates loudly in the mythology as well. In "Skeleton Woman", a myth discussed by Estés (1992) in her book *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, the Skeleton Woman (sometimes referred to as "Lady Death") plays a vital role in the "Life/Death/Life cycle". The Life/Death/Life cycle is a pattern that is followed in nature and is

> a cycle of animation, development, decline, and death that is always followed by reanimation. This cycle affects all physical life and all facets of psychological life. Everything—the sun, novas, and the moon, as well as the affairs of humans and those of the tiniest creatures, cells, and atoms alike—have this fluttering, then faltering, then fluttering again" (Estés, p. 137).

This cycle is present in the myth of the Skeleton Woman; the two lovers in the story must embrace her in order for their relationship to grow in love (Estés). In their relationship, the Skeleton Woman is similar to a deity, as she "has the role of the oracle...[she] is the one men are most terrified...and sometimes woman also, for when faith in the transformative has been lost, the natural cycles of increase and attrition are feared as well" (Estés, p. 138). Similar to the 'death' that Porter (2003) alludes to in a drama therapeutic impasse, it is as though it is the Skeleton Woman the client/therapist dyad meets when something fearful arises.

As stated above, the third characteristic implies life is possible within the liminal space. While the first characteristic takes the role of death as outlined in Estés' (1992) Life/Death/Life cycle, the third takes the role of life. The liminars in Turner's (1967)

studies were "likened to or treated as embryos, newborn infants, or sucklings" (p. 96). Just as frequently as they were given attributes linking them to death, they were also given qualities symbolizing birth or new life. The liminal space is therefore a place in which characteristics associated with both life and death are key components. Both qualities' presence is possible within the liminal space. For example, one could "resist change, trying to hold onto the old, not realizing that our suffering increases with our clinging and fear" (Porter, 2003, p. 105) and at the same time not see (or feel) the need to stay still with the core energies that are present. Both exist simultaneously. Furthermore, it is where and to what we direct our *attention* to that will highlight one over the other.

The second characteristic of liminality outlined by Turner (1967, 1969, 1974, & 1982), that of the symbolic place, completes the trio. This symbolic place is what allows the other two characteristics to be so dichotomous. Through its reliance on symbols, it holds the tension between the two opposing qualities of liminality. It permits their existence and their relationship to be one that is in constant transformation. More precisely, the symbolic place is what gives the other two characteristics the freedom to exist in opposition, to exist together, or to exchange places. Within this symbolic space, there is room to move. It also offers a place in which the full range of feelings towards either polarity can be played out. The playspace offers room for everything as it "embraces constituent elements of roles: pure movements, sounds, gestures, stillness, and suspense, and so may remain vague, illusory, and undefined" (Johnson, 1991 p.289). Furthermore, it is imperative to highlight that the playspace has at its source, a wonderfully rich quality: play, which "allows unconscious, suppressed, or nondominant aspects of the self to emerge without censure from the super-ego, internal critic, or social

mores (Dintino & Johnson, 1996). Within the symbolic place of liminality or the synonymous playspace, both life and death can be experienced, played with and worked through. The client is given a place in which conflict can be safely experienced.

A place in Developmental Transformations

Having examined aspects of liminality and Developmental Transformations throughout this thesis and more presently having explored the interaction between the three characteristics of liminality, these two subjects of study may now finally join together as I discuss the presence and clinical applicability of liminality within Developmental Transformations.

Liminality is very present within the process of Developmental Transformations. In fact, as a practice of Drama Therapy, Developmental Transformations is one in which the liminal space is most innate. The structure, albeit non-linear, of Developmental Transformations is similar to that of the liminal space. Johnson (1993) highlights that the structure within Developmental Transformations is "built up of overlapping structures, in which minute transitions and transformations are constantly being made, rather than a session based on a series of more or less discrete dramatic activities or theater games" (p. 181). Just as the liminal space has qualities that can at times overlap or oppose each other, Developmental Transformations is a method that embraces the bleed-over between moments. It incorporates the natural ebb and flow of daily living into its structure. The Developmental Transformations process is able to hold the full spectrum of experience. More importantly, it includes liminality within that ebb and flow. It does not disregard it; it leaves space for it.

Johnson (1982-2006) discusses the liminal space in many of his writings. At the end of various clinical vignettes, the therapist gives the instruction "take a minute" to the client. Having taken part in a Developmental Transformations session, I experienced this instruction as an indication the therapist would allow some time for the client to remove themselves from the play, and *transition* back into reality. Johnson is making use of the liminal space in its most literal way; that of threshold. The client within the therapeutic space is given time to process the play and to re-enter reality. For the most part, however, there is not a direct focus placed on liminality in Developmental Transformations. Within the practice of Developmental Transformations, direct attention is not focused on liminality as it is believed this would take away from the fluidity of the method. As Johnson (1982) states:

> shifts between media, from simple to complex activities, or from one structure to another, challenge each person to shift his/her relation to the environment, and thus cause a shift in his/her organization of self. This ability to adapt flexibly to changing circumstances is clearly an important dimension of healthy behavior, and one with which everyone experiences difficulties (p. 188).

Moving back and forth between the play scenes and what is occurring in the moments of transition is too much for a client in therapy. Many, if not all, people have difficulties with shifts in every-day life. Focusing on the moments of transition (liminality) deters from the flowing quality of the method. Stopping to focus on liminality would add more bumps to an already-bumpy road for the client. In Developmental Transformations, as it currently exists theoretically, drawing attention to liminality is an unnecessary pit stop.

Although the characteristics of liminality are very ingrained in Developmental Transformations, drawing attention to them would take away from the process of the therapy and could potentially weaken the effectiveness of the practice. Yet again, liminality is dichotomous. Developmental Transformations leaves room for it in its practice, but it does not draw direct attention to it. Doing one or the other would eliminate the fluidity of Developmental Transformations or the value of liminality. Rather than staying in the liminal space, Johnson (1982-2006) has created a method that allows clients to initially move past that space of awareness. The therapist, however, plays a key role in this dynamic. The therapist uses the "impasses [that occur in the therapy] to help them identify important issues for the client" (Johnson, 1991, p.289), and then will re-introduce those issues throughout the therapy's duration. For example, using the intervention called *Repetition* (Johnson, 1991), the therapist will bring back "a situation, image, conflict, word or action again so that the client has another opportunity to confront it" (Johnson, 1991, p. 293). The therapist can also use *Intensification*, which calls for the use of "exaggeration, dramatic presence, physicalization or staging to heighten the power of a particular scene or image, in order to stimulate a greater depth of feeling in the client" (Johnson, 1991, p. 293). The different interventions a therapist can take within the session allows the liminal space to continuously exist. The interventions help to achieve a balance between directing attention to the liminal space and allowing the space to exist. Guided by the therapist, the client moves through a desensitization process of sorts. The client, at their own pace, can move towards their psychological edge and face it. They are then gently pushed towards succeeding in this journey.

The therapist's guidance in a Developmental Transformations session is essential. It can help the client navigate the fogginess of transitional moments. Interestingly enough, rooted in both the liminal space and Developmental Transformations is the element of collective experience. The guidance of a Developmental Transformations therapist is strengthened by his or her active role in the therapy process. By being present as the guide in the therapy, the Developmental Transformations therapist "lives in the playspace and welcomes the clients when they knock on the door" opposed to a leader, for example, who "encourages them [the client] from behind" (Johnson, 1992, p. 115). The Developmental Transformations therapist is as much a part of the experience as the client. Correspondingly, the relationship that can emerge within liminality is also one that is tightly connected. Turner (1969) discusses at length the *communitas* that emerges from a shared experience within the liminal space. Communitas is a "social relationship" that possesses "homogeneity and comradeship" (Turner, 1969, p. 96). This social relationship (between liminars) and the active shared space in Developmental Transformations helps to establish the necessary trust, safety, and support for transformation, healing, and growth to exist. The significance of these qualities in a therapeutic process is infinite.

Developmental Transformations builds the required structure for the liminal space to emerge and be used for therapeutic growth. Porter (2003) illustrates this beautifully by stating:

> the therapist and client are in a state of continual flux as the improvisations transform moment to moment. As they move from one improvisation to another, participants become plunged into the *bardo* state and are challenged to tolerate this sense of transition and the unknown. As

> a result, Developmental Transformations is highly non-linear and requires participants to relinquish attachments to plots or feeling states evoked in dramatic play. Similar to the spiritual perspective of Buddhism (Johnson, 1999), this practice of non-attachment helps clients learn to witness their feelings states without grasping or becoming over-identified with them. This helps decrease personal suffering because as one learns to release rigid thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, new possibilities (including joy) can emerge (p. 103).

Perfectly summarizing liminality in Developmental Transformations, Porter highlights the brilliance within the liminal space. It is a space that allows for everything and nothing to be present at the same time. It allows for conflict and resolution to be simultaneously possible and exist within a structure flexible enough to hold the tension. Above all, liminality has an indispensable role within Developmental Transformations. It is at home in Drama Therapy.

Complementary ideas

Expanding on Porter's (2003) summarizing quote, throughout this last sub-section, I will briefly explore other areas that embrace liminality and the inherent characteristics within it. This exploration will complement the ideas that have come before it and further reveal their essence. The union between liminality and Developmental Transformations will be deepened.

As a result of the experience of the first characteristic of liminality, clients are often fueled with fear in moments of transition or transformation. Bernstein (2005), in a clinical vignette, highlights how staying with this uncomfortable feeling was helpful to

the overall therapy. He states that their "*willingness to linger in that very uncomfortable liminal space*, we both went to the edge of chaos where the experience did not fit the existing structure, but where we went through a 'creative reordering phase' where perhaps it could fit after all—and it did" (p. 52). The idea that they only had to stay within the discomfort of the liminal space to begin moving in the therapy again seems very simple. As Bridges (2004) reminds us, it is simple in theory, but very hard to do in practice. The imperative word in Bernstein's statement is *willingness*. It is the act of willingness to stay in a place that is uncomfortable and fear-fueled that makes the liminal space so useful in therapy. Both therapists and clients both need to be willing to stay still although their bodies and minds want to keep moving. Bernstein, in his brief example, highlights that it is not just realization that a liminal space exists, but the willingness to stay within it that holds importance.

The willingness of staying within the liminal space is an interesting suggestion of the clinical appropriateness and importance of the liminal space. The liminal space is a fundamental concept that is often masked. The willingness to stay with the space that developed between Bernstein (2005) and his client was an attempt to unmask that space. Tolle (1999) highlights this unmasking process. He states:

> so what happens if you withdraw your attention from the objects in space and become aware of space itself? What is the essence of this room? The furniture, pictures, and so on are *in* the room, but they are not the room. The floor, the walls, and ceiling define the boundary of the room, but they are not the room either. So what is the essence of the room? Space, of course, empty space. There would be no "room" without it. Since space is

> "nothing", we can say that what is *not* there is more important than what is there. So become aware of the space that is all around you. Don't think about it. Feel it, as it were. Pay attention to "nothing" (p. 138).

Here, Tolle outlines the essence of the clinical application of the liminal space. One merely has to pay attention to nothing, to the sheer space that surrounds oneself and be still within it. In a therapeutic context, a client and a therapist can both benefit from this spaciousness.

There exists different forms of therapy that focus on the qualities of awareness, spaciousness, and core energies. Most are linked with Buddhism or Buddhist psychology. Tolle's (1999) teachings are also linked with various spiritual concepts but seem to be mainly driven by Buddhist thought. Mark Epstein (1995), a Buddhist and a psychotherapist, does just this and discusses how what I have called the liminal space can be of use in psychotherapy. Dedicating a whole chapter on the idea of "bare attention", Epstein states that it is this that is central to Buddhist psychology. Citing different authors, Epstein explains that the practice of bare attention is:

> the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens *to* us and *in* us at the successive moments of perception...bare attention takes this unexamined mind and opens it up, not by trying to change anything but by observing the mind, emotions, and body the way they are. It is *the* fundamental tenet of Buddhist psychology that this kind of attention is, in itself, healing...(p.110).

Being present and aware of what exists in the therapy sessions is key. It is what Epstein is highlighting here. Furthermore, Epstein claims the therapeutic alliance must be "well

established to permit the patient to begin to repeating the unresolved emotions of the past" (Epstein, p. 193). Using bare attention, principally a meditative technique, in therapy will allow the patients to *be with* their feelings and learn "*how* to pay attention to what they are repeating in a manner that is both meditative and therapeutic" (Epstein, p. 193). Learning how to be aware of one's feelings and how to stay with them is the key to therapeutic transformation.

Another method of psychotherapy is also largely based on awareness. Core process psychotherapy, founded by Maura and Franklyn Sills, has its roots in the awareness of the core of humans. On their website (The karuna institute website), Sills & Sills state:

> In Core Process work, a depth awareness of what is happening in the present moment is used to explore our inner process. This awareness encompasses our energies, sensations, feelings, mental processes and their expressions in the body. The aim is not to alter our experience, but to sense how we relate to it, so that it becomes possible to move with greater creativity and flexibility in our lives. Core Process work is based on the understanding that within the conscious mind there is a deeper wisdom that moves naturally towards healing. Integration and healing come from insight into the ways in which we hold onto our suffering, and from a deeper connection with the openness, compassion and wisdom at the heart of our human condition.

As with Brennan (1978), Tolle (1999), and Epstein (1995), Sills & Sills list off the fundamental pieces that lie at the heart of the liminal space. To stay in the scary place of

nothingness in between two different states, between life phases (Bridges, 2004), or between impasse and repair, can expose the deeper wisdom that Sills & Sills use in their practice. In Core Process Psychotherapy, the liminal space and all its attributes are essential.

The liminal space has different qualities, all of which are exposed in therapy. Bernstein (2005) spoke of the willingness it took to be present, Epstein (1995) highlighted the essence of therapy, how to stay with feelings and become aware of them, and Johnson (1982-2006) provided the Drama Therapy structure to allow the potential of spaciousness to exist. It is vital to allow the spaciousness that is intrinsic in the liminal space to be present in therapy. The liminal space is at the core of energy, humans, and therapy.

Conclusion

A reed and an olive tree were disputing about their strength and their powers of quiet endurance. When the reed was reproached by the olive with being weak and easily bent by every wind, it answered not a word. Soon afterwards a strong wind began to blow. The reed, by letting itself be tossed about and bent by the gusts, weathered the storm without difficulty; but the olive, which resisted it, was broken by its violence.

"Bowing before the storm" In "Aesop's fables"

The liminal space is often ignored in therapy, despite its many revealing characteristics and how these can inform a therapy session. Directing attention to the liminal space may not be completely necessary for every transition, however, it is necessary to acknowledge its presence and help to guide clients through it. It is possible that not every transition requires an exploration, but the potential exists as there will be moments when a transformation away from the pain is not needed. Above all, it is the spaciousness inherent in liminality that is key. Tolle (2005) believes this spaciousness will change not only our own consciousness but that of the collective consciousness as well. Just as Turner (1967) did in his first paper on liminality, I invite "investigators of ritual [and any investigator for that matter] to focus their attention on the phenomena and processes of mid-transition...it is these...that paradoxically expose the basic building blocks of culture" (p. 110). It exposes the core of us all. In therapy, the liminal space is of incredibly value, and to open ourselves as therapists and as clients up to its existence, will slowly and gently allow more room for it flourish.

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