

The Shamanic Paradigm in Dramatherapy

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SHAMANISM

ARCHAIC TECHNIQUES OF ECSTASY

Mircea Eliade

- + *“...Of course, the shaman is also a magician and medicine man; he is believed to cure, like all doctors, and to perform miracles of the fakir type, like all magicians, whether primitive or modern. But beyond this, he is a psychopomp*, and he may also be priest, mystic, and poet” (1972:4)*

* guide of souls



Shamanism = *technique of ecstasy*
(Eliade, 1972:4)

Greek έκσταση= ékstasis
ex = outside
stasis = to stand
= to stand outside of something
= an altered state of consciousness

David Cole (1975). *The theatrical event.*

The shaman laboriously mimes the ascent or descent to the other world which his soul is at that moment making. This may involve, if it is an ascent, his climbing a mountain or flying like a bird; or, if it is a descent, his opening the earth and passing through it, crossing a narrow bridge, or swimming to the bottom of the sea.[...] The shaman must be something of an expert in vocal characterization, for in the course of one of these dialogues he may be called upon to produce everything from the sounds of a horse drinking to the hiccups of a god. In addition to mime and dialogue, the shaman may draw on such incidental performance skills as ventriloquism and puppetry to help render his adventures in the other world (p. 19).

The
closeness
between
shamanism
and
performance
highlights:

- That theater and healing are organically connected
- That the origin of theater is not only related to religious cults, but also linked to therapeutics.
- It challenges the basic assumption of western psychotherapy, which is based on words ("the talking cure").

Similarities between theatre, therapy and shamanism

Work with the “invisible” realm

Multilevel awareness

Role playing or impersonation

Special space

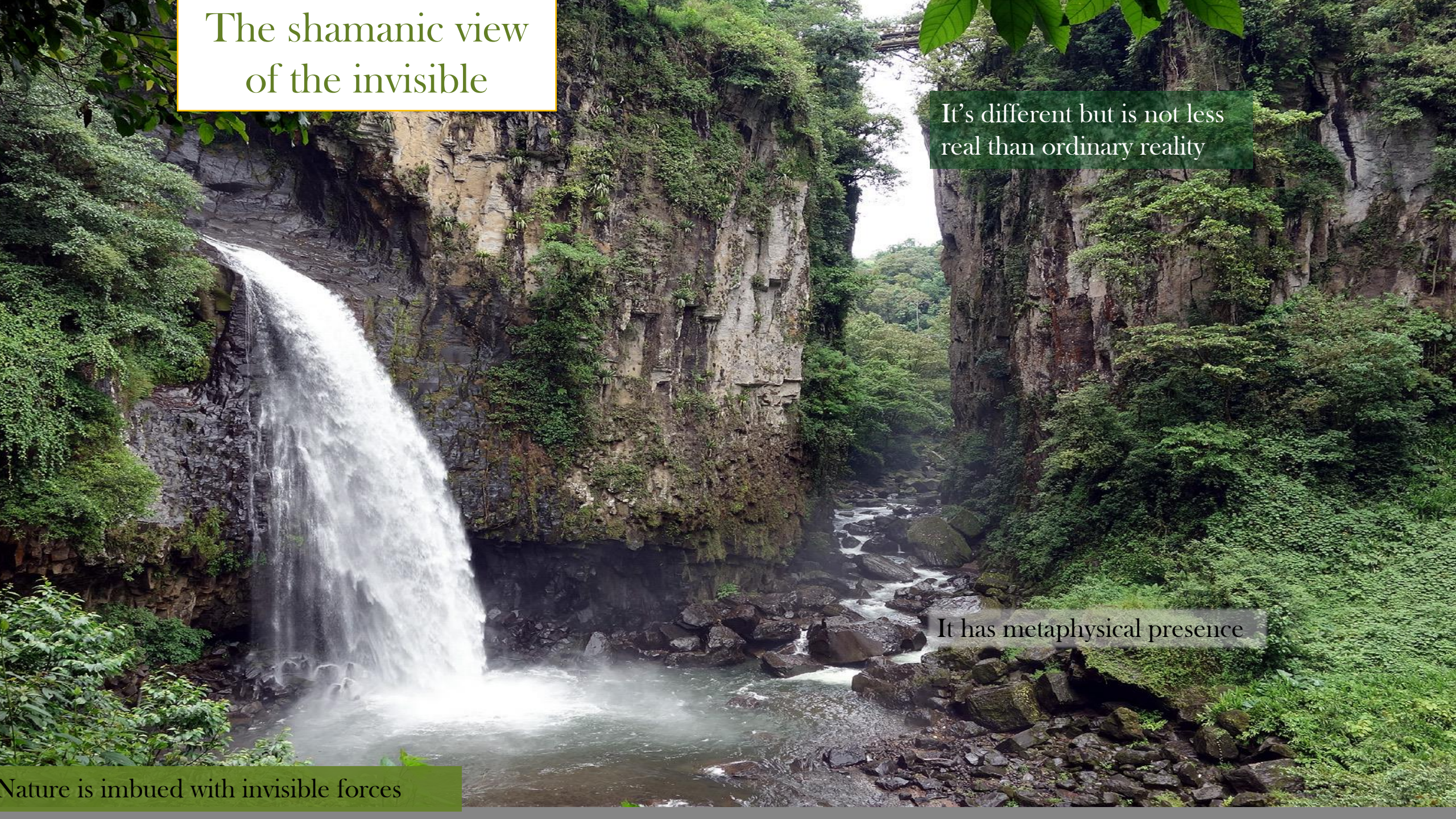
Ritualized actions

Training - didactic and experiential:
working with oneself

Some differences between the shamanic and the psychotherapy paradigms

The essence of the invisible realm

The aesthetic distance of the shaman/therapist and of the person to be healed regarding the invisible

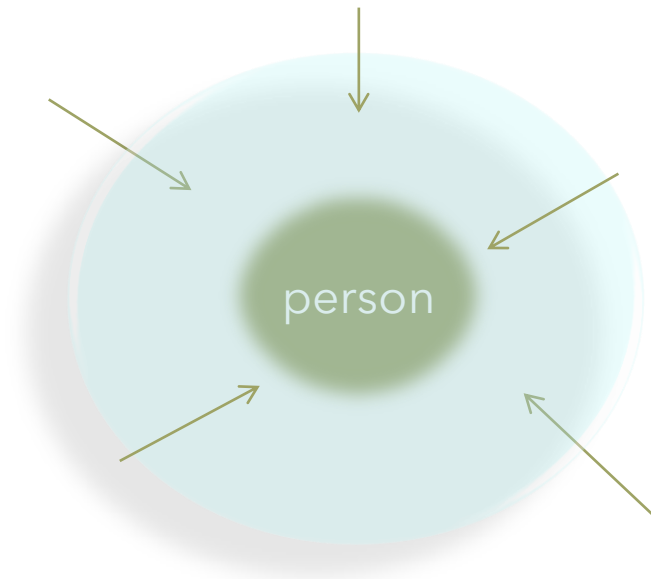


The shamanic view
of the invisible

It's different but is not less
real than ordinary reality

It has metaphysical presence

Nature is imbued with invisible forces



- + The invisible realm has metaphysical agency & presence
- + The invisible influences the person from outside (psyche & soma)
- + The boundaries between the invisible and the person are more permeable
- + The invisible is 'larger' than the individual

The Shamanic Paradigm

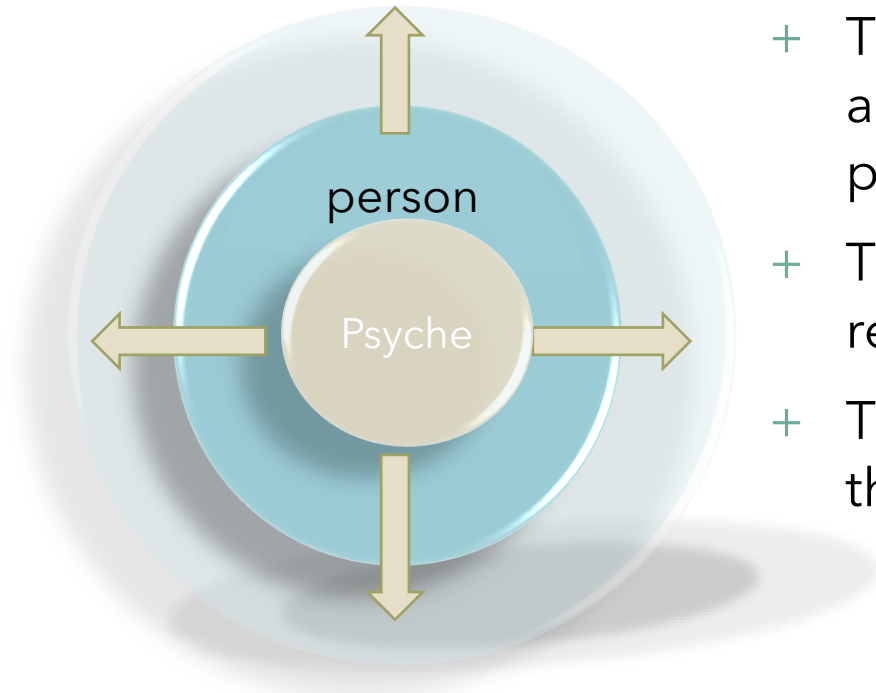
C. G. Jung

(1875-1961)

"Science has never discovered any "God, (...) but the psyche comes forward with the assertion of the experience of God. God is a psychic fact of immediate experience, otherwise, there would never have been any talk of God."

"When a person asserts that he has seen ghosts or that he is bewitched... we are dealing with a fact of experience... We are confronted with a definite complex of psychic facts which... are just as "real" as the light I see."

"I have to reckon with the fact that at all times and in all places the psyche has claimed to experience ghosts."



- + The invisible realm is a projection of the person's psyche -a metaphor for the psyche's inner state.
- + The invisible realm may or may not have agency: The psyche has agency and presence
- + The invisible is relevant in as much as it resonates with the psyche
- + The boundaries between the invisible and the visible worlds are more rigid

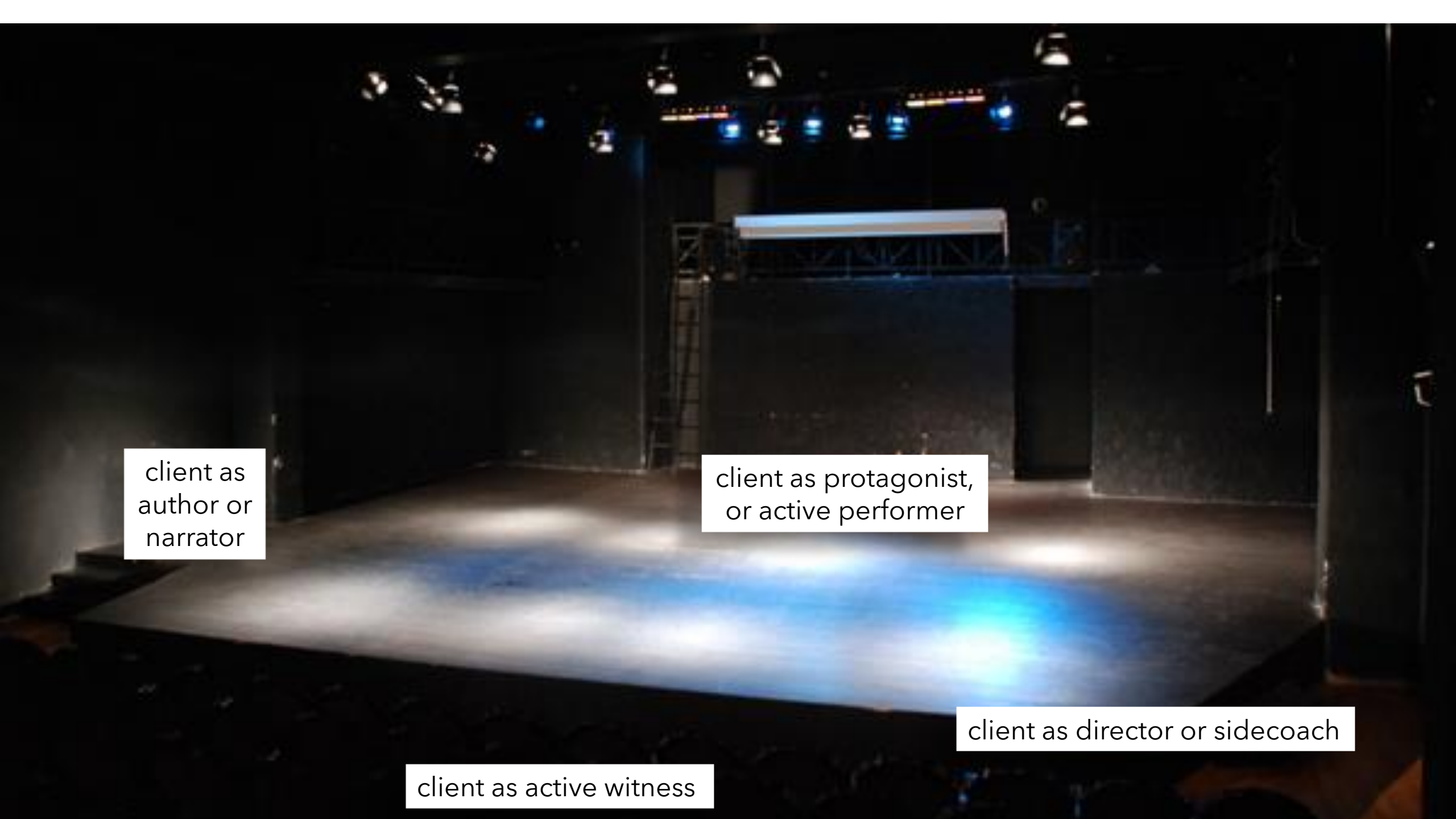
The Psychotherapeutic Paradigm

The shamanic paradigm



shaman

witness

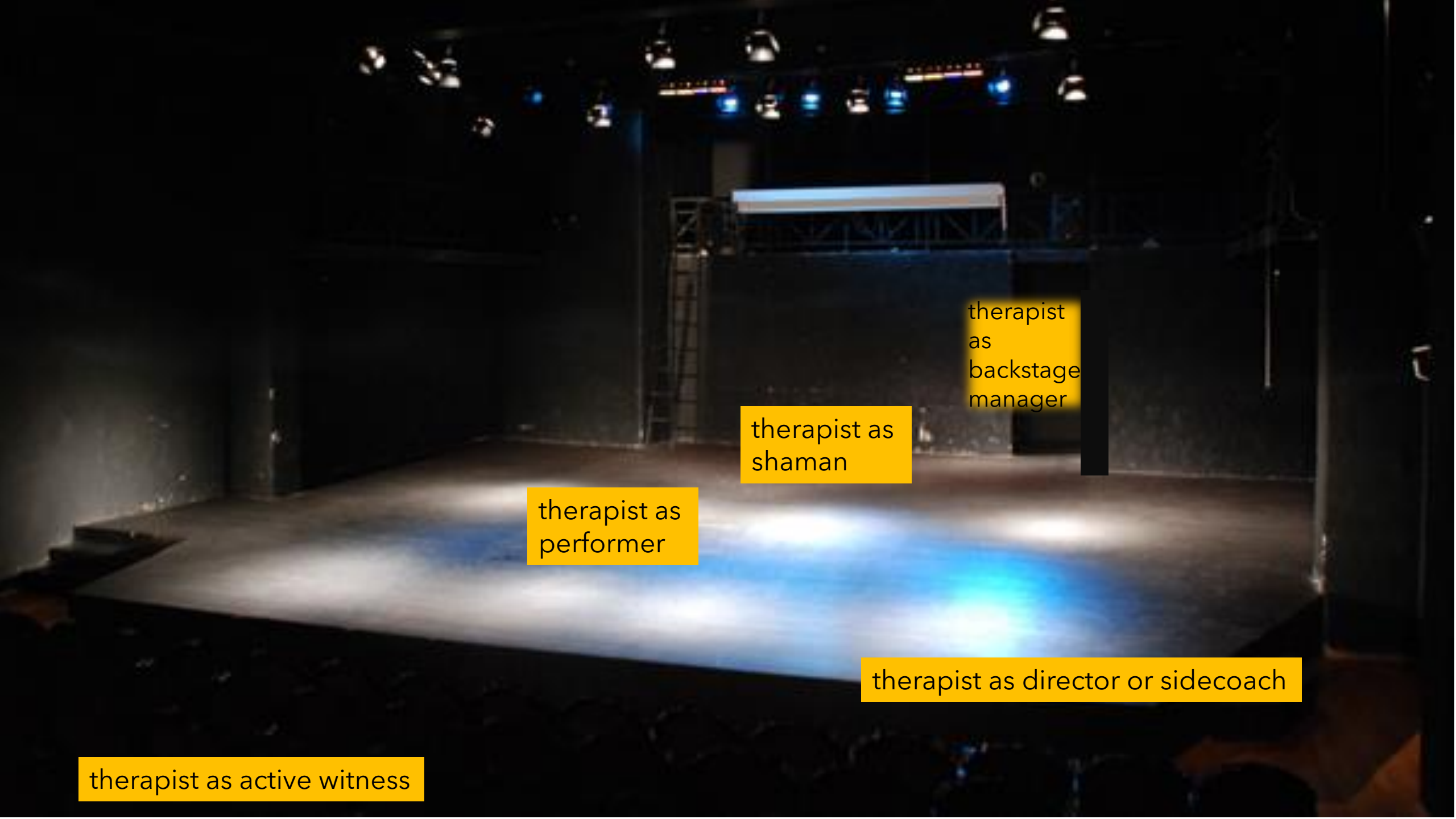


client as author or narrator

client as protagonist, or active performer

client as director or sidecoach

client as active witness



therapist as active witness

therapist as performer

therapist as shaman

therapist as director or sidecoach

therapist as backstage manager

The shamanic paradigm in dramatherapy

shaman

active witness

Dramatic resonances

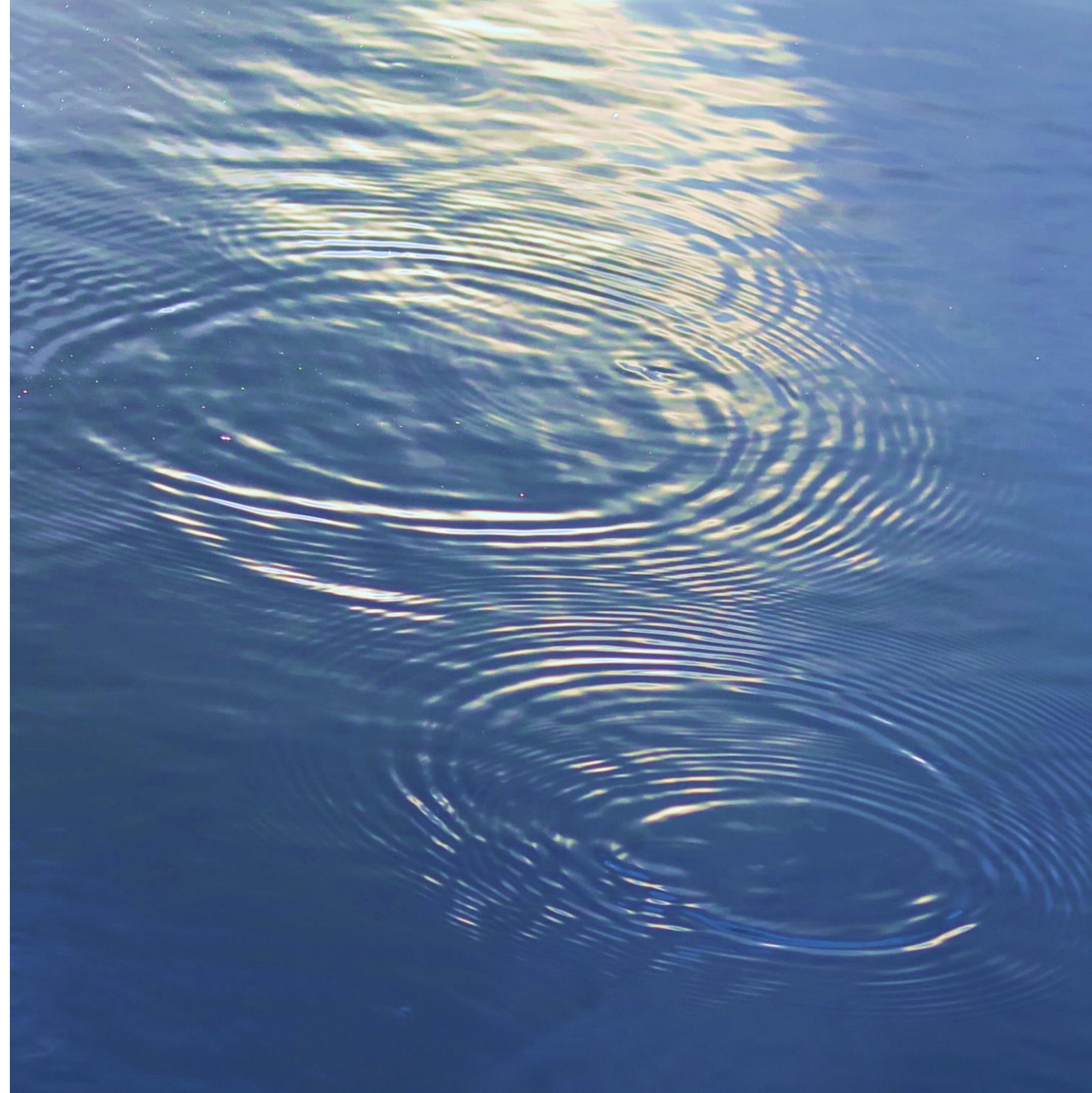
The approach grounded in the transformative power of dramatic reality and its ability to produce resonances in the human psyche.

It draws on the creative-intuitive responses of group members or/and the therapist to an “input” presented to them.

The input may be a personal experience, memory or dream, brought up by participants, or a non-personal source (such as a myth, story, or literary text) introduced as a therapeutic intervention.

The input is carefully handled and aesthetically developed from a place of empathy and awareness of the source.

- Resonance involves a receptive, empathic state that requires the ability to stay simultaneously in touch with ourselves and with the input or the input giver.
- The input is developed as sequence of aesthetic pulses, that encircle it and resonate with it, creating an expanding field that has a therapeutic effect.
- In a personal experience, the input-giver witnesses this process from the place of the audience, while the group or therapist perform the resonances.



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Henk Göbel; Ilil Land-Boss; Corinna Fock-
Wiedenmann; Franca Casabonne; Johannes
Remmel-Beck; Rhada Hammoudah; Anna Shraer;
Yuval Weintraub; Cathy Clift.

**De/constructing the past,
constructing the future:
A theatre-based and
trauma-sensitive project
on the perception of the
Holocaust by German
youngsters in Berlin**





- + The project tried to explore how the events that occurred in Germany between 1933-1945, including the Holocaust legacy, are formulated in the psyche of German youngsters today.
- + The target group were young people in the 9th grade from two schools in Berlin. They were the "source".
- + Applying trauma-sensitive dramatherapy methods, we collected the images and narratives put forth by the youngsters.
- + Using "Dramatic Resonances" this information was elaborated by the core staff as a filmed theatre piece that was presented to the youngsters for discussion and further reflection.
- + The intention was to see if the narratives handed down from previous generations needed to be changed and/or adapted to promote dialogue, develop trust and empathy, etc.

PHASES IN THE PROCESS

1- Consolidating a working team and exploring members' relationship with the topic

2- Preparation: Elaborating a "toolkit" of dramatherapy methods aimed at gathering the images/narratives and contacting schools that could hold the project.

3- Carrying out dramatherapy sessions with the youngsters and documenting the process.

4- Processing the information using dramatic resonances and elaborating a theatre/video performance.

5- Performing the piece for the youngsters leading into an exchange.

6- Reflecting on the process, writing papers and a manual, etc.

NEUKÖLLN SCHOOL



-
- Was it possible to go outside for a walk during the war?
-
- Why did the second world war happen? How did it come about?
-
- Where could one buy radios? From "traveling salesmen"?
-
- Was it publicized on the radio when "foreigners" were discovered?
-
- Which people were persecuted?
-
- Were there only right-wing radicals at that time in Germany?
-
- Were there only Nazis at that time? National Socialists? ("What does Nazi mean?")
-
- Who was gassed? Also, men, women, and children?
-
- Why did Goebbels kill himself and his children?
-
- Are there people whose last name is "Hitler"?
-
- Could Hitler have been voted out of office?
-
- Why did so many people support Hitler? ("Maybe they had the same enemies").
-
- If people didn't like Hitler, how did he have so much power?
-
- To whom did Germany lose WWI?
-
- Did Hitler also kill his own family?
-
- In what time period were 6 million Jews murdered?

**PRIMO LEVY
GYMNASIUM**



Sein Name ist Rolf.

Er ist jung und kampferprobt.

Er ist schon achtzehn.

His name is Rolf.

He is young and battle-hardened.

He is already eighteen.

Meinung im Stillen

Die Angst hält mich gefangen

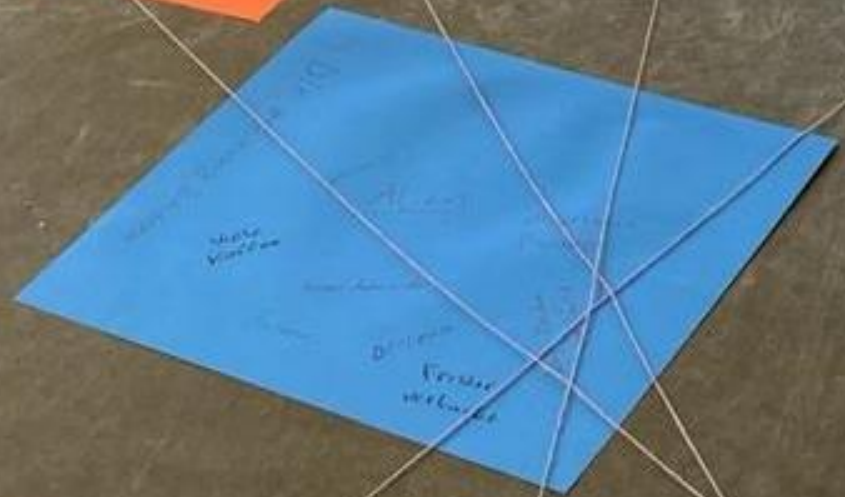
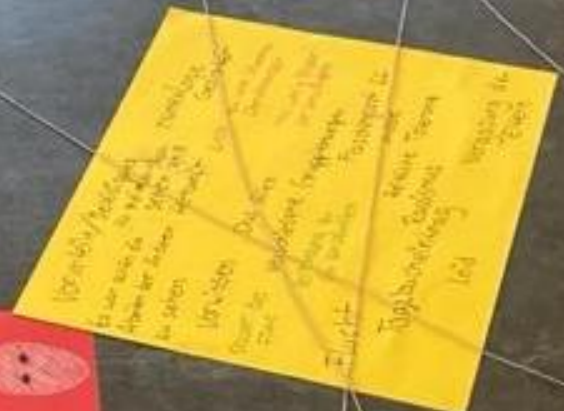
Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt

Opinion in silence

Fear holds me captive

Hope dies last

CLOSURE & REFLECTIONS



A woman with brown hair and glasses is smiling at the camera in the foreground. In the background, several young women are sitting at desks in a classroom, some looking towards the camera. The room has a tiled floor and green chairs.

Climate Change and Mental Health – a pilot in the making

First stop – Mexico

A collaboration between the Institute for Theatre Therapy (ITT), the German Association of Dramatherapy (DgFT), and the Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico



Phase 1

Consolidating a working team composed of community-oriented, applied theatre people, and students from the Intercultural Campus of the University of Veracruz at the locality of Tequila (Grandes Montañas), who are originally from the indigenous communities in which the project will take place.

Phase 2

Divided into smaller working groups, the team will visit two communities 3 times, to gather the people's experiences regarding climate change, their knowledge and the unique practices and rituals carried out in these communities to cope with it. Indigenous myths, legends, and ritual practices related to the topic will be collected.

Phase 3

With this data, the working groups will help to facilitate the performance of a large community ritual on the topic of climate change, involving both communities. One weekend will be devoted to preparation, and another to the performance of the ritual. On a third date, the ritual will be replicated in an event that will take place in the urban area of Xalapa, capital of the State of Veracruz.

Phase 4

Members of the seed group will visit the communities for a follow up a few weeks after the ritual. The "seed group" will meet again to reflect upon the process and discuss possible ways of disseminating the experience through film, writing articles, presenting at conferences, replicating the project in other areas, etc. The students of the UVI that took the course will review the project in their final papers.





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FIRST DAY OF COMMUNITY LEARNING SESSION

Salud mental y GI

Suicidio como problema

SM: proceso psicológico donde la persona esta estable / se relaciona con la GI / Se relaciona con el entorno dado y con la relación con las comunidades

- Comprender el papel de las emociones
- GI: canales de ayuda / actividades recreativas, religiosas, enfoque de género
- SM: Un derecho humano

Tiene que ver con estar en un medio ambiente sano

- GI: Fortalecer instituciones que contribuyen a la SM
- Aprovechar el territorio coexistiendo con su entorno: AXOLOTLA
- GI: creación de redes para afrontar desafíos de la SM
- Cuando se afecte el territorio se afecta la salud mental

GI: información, que se recupera de los saberes comunitarios, como comunicar

Dramaterapia puede contribuir a la salud mental / cuidado de nuestra cultura, de nuestra cosmovisión contribuye a la salud mental

Salud mental → estres / no se sabe cómo pedir ayuda / Alcohólico, drogadicción, problemas familiares afectos

Cambio climático y GI

Contaminación 2080 → 5° +

Humano actúa como virus

Desencadena problemáticas en los ecosistemas / Generará nuevas enfermedades

GI: contribuir con iniciativas o crear nuevas

CC: fenómeno global, evolución negativa de los ecosistemas / deterioro ambiental, micro-macro / GI: se relaciona con la sustentabilidad / aprender de las comunidades indígenas / acciones para el cuidado del territorio

Das cosmovisiones diferentes: una "coevoluciona" con los ecosistemas; otra los destruye

GI: Se articula con todas las EE

Recuperación de saberes tradicionales como alternativa

Antropocentrismo/capitalismo → contribuye al cambio climático

Alternativa al... una alternativa

Rituales y GI

Dramaterapia → transforma / Actividades performativas (Danza, actuación, juegos) → Generan cambio en terapia / Generar espacios seguros / procesar realidades

Del teatro se pueden derivar rituales / se relaciona lo imaginario y lo real / Manera diferente de acercarse a la realidad / Actividades rituales pueden abordarse

Ritual - Juego con componentes sagrados / Reglas son e los juegos: lo que las tradiciones a los rituales

GI: uso de rituales como herramientas

GI: etnografía

Relación ritual-conocimiento-creencia-cosmovisión

Un medio de expresión de duelos / pandemia: evita rituales de despedida

To raise consciousness about the psychological effects of climate change in the general population.

To facilitate the creation of a safe emotional container where participants can express and process their emotions and experiences regarding the psychological impact of climate-related events.

To promote personal resilience by restoring the participants' connection to their own feelings and sense of self.

To create and/or restore a sense of community resilience by connecting the experiences of people from different age-groups and cultural backgrounds through the development of a communal ritual.

The rituals will be followed by creative discussions and reflection groups with the audience with the aim of generating ideas and motivation for self-effective action in relation to overcoming the climate crisis.

Documentation and evaluation of the entire process, also in the form of a follow-up with the participating dramatherapists.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES