

# KOTEBA

## Survival Strategy from a Snail's Eye View

Being alone but still connected to the whole world

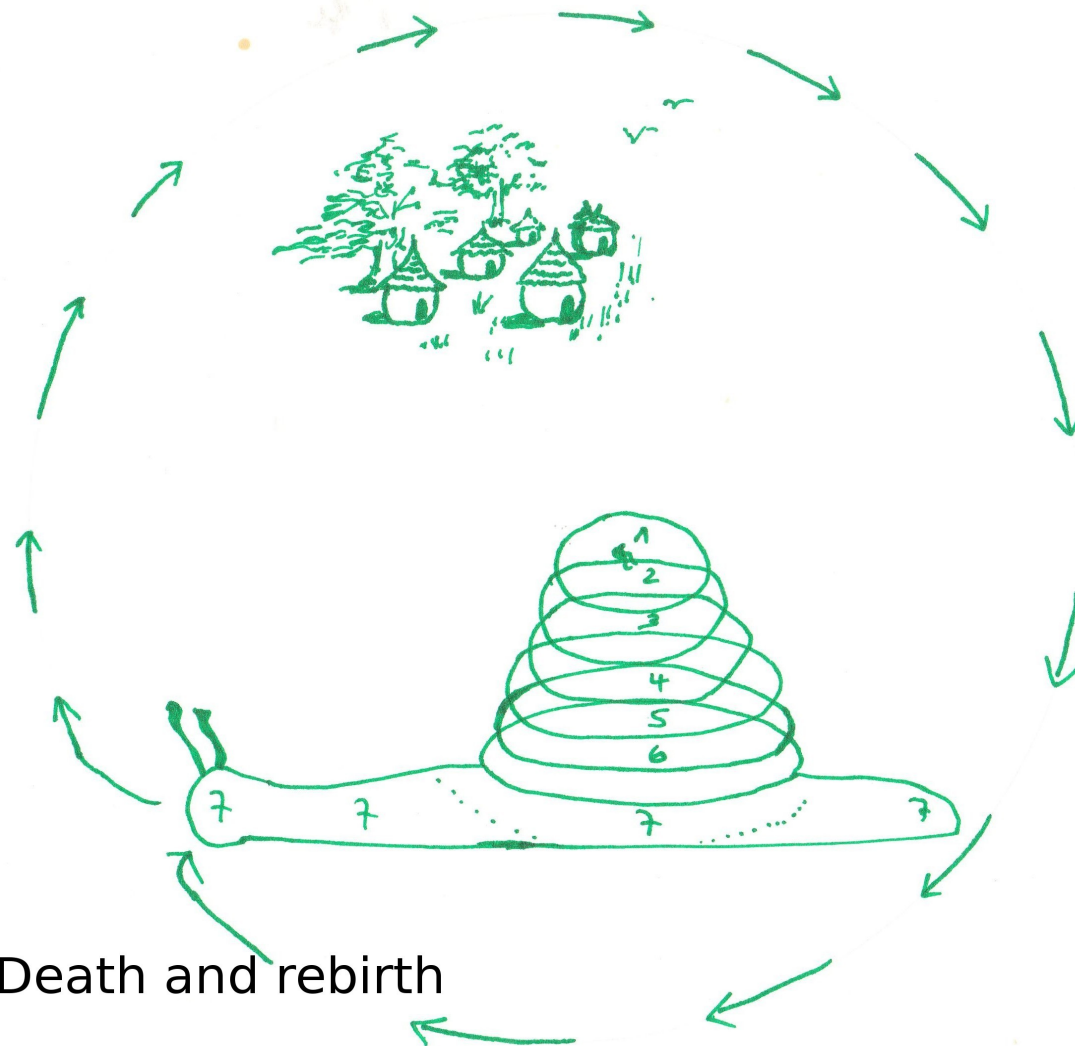


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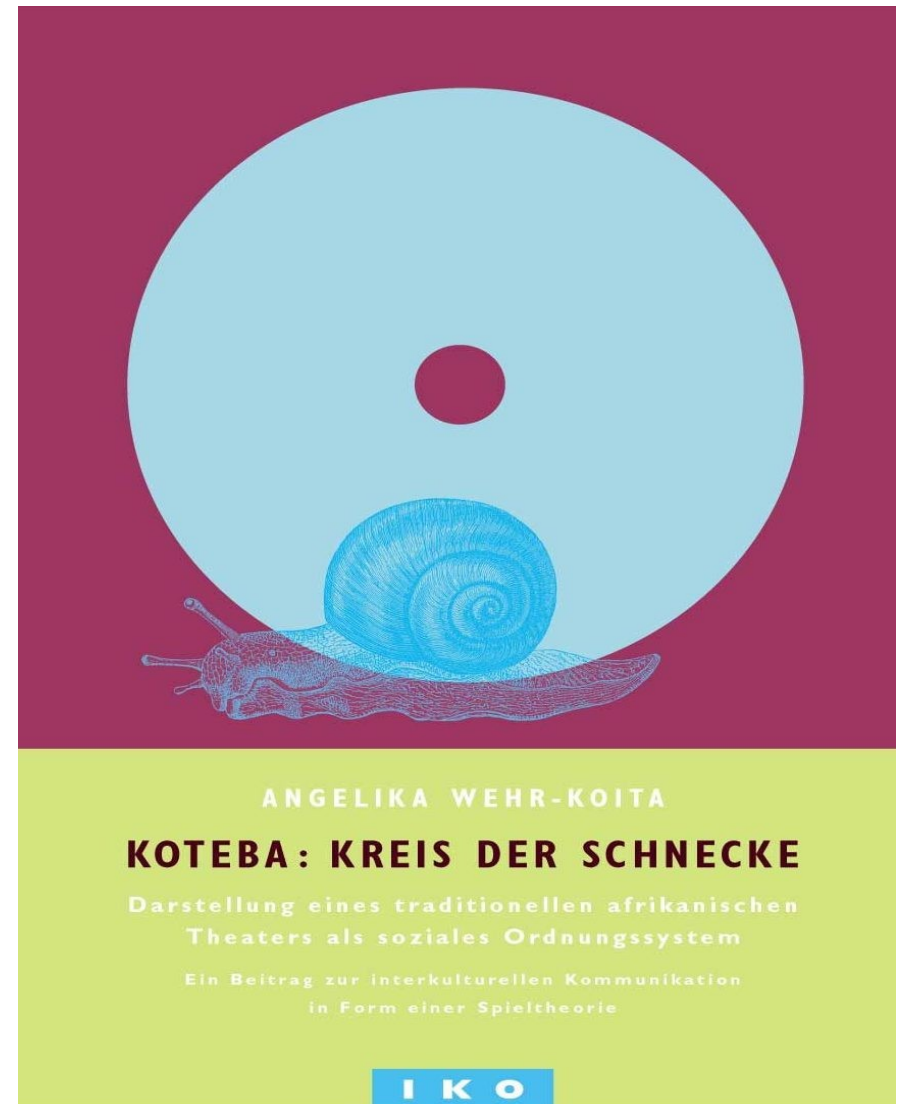


Koteba is an ancient form of theatre, an african gameplay that connects nature - culture, spirituality - profanity, seriousness - comedy.

It serves as relaxation, social criticism, entertainment, learning, conflict management and laughing and catharsis.

# “Koteba – Kreis der Schnecke” (Koteba - The Circle of the Snail) (Bambara, Mali)

- In the traditional Bambara culture the snail circles the village, looking out for order. The snail surveils disturbances and antisocial behaviour, and fights for the recognition of esteem.
- Once the whole village is circled, the snail dies and is born anew, enabeling a new Koteba (believe in the reincarnation).





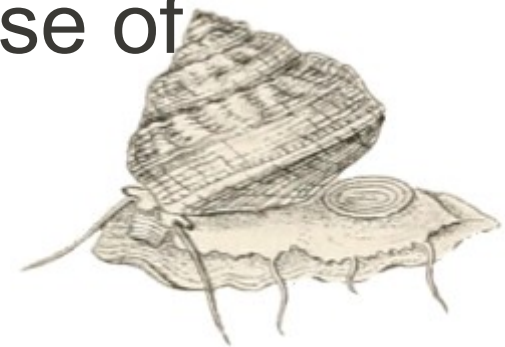
# Transmission

The dramaturgy of the archetype of the african village theater Koteba (ritual, dance, feast, test of courage, role play, comedy) can be transmitted to the needs of the globalised world.



# Aim of Koteba

- Discover the self-worth and make use of resources when overcoming challenges
- Keen on change and playfully acquire new points of view and behavioural patterns
- Discover ones capacity to take an active role and the common values
- Overcome barriers and discover commonalities
- Strengthen self-responsibility and sense of community



# Why the Snail?

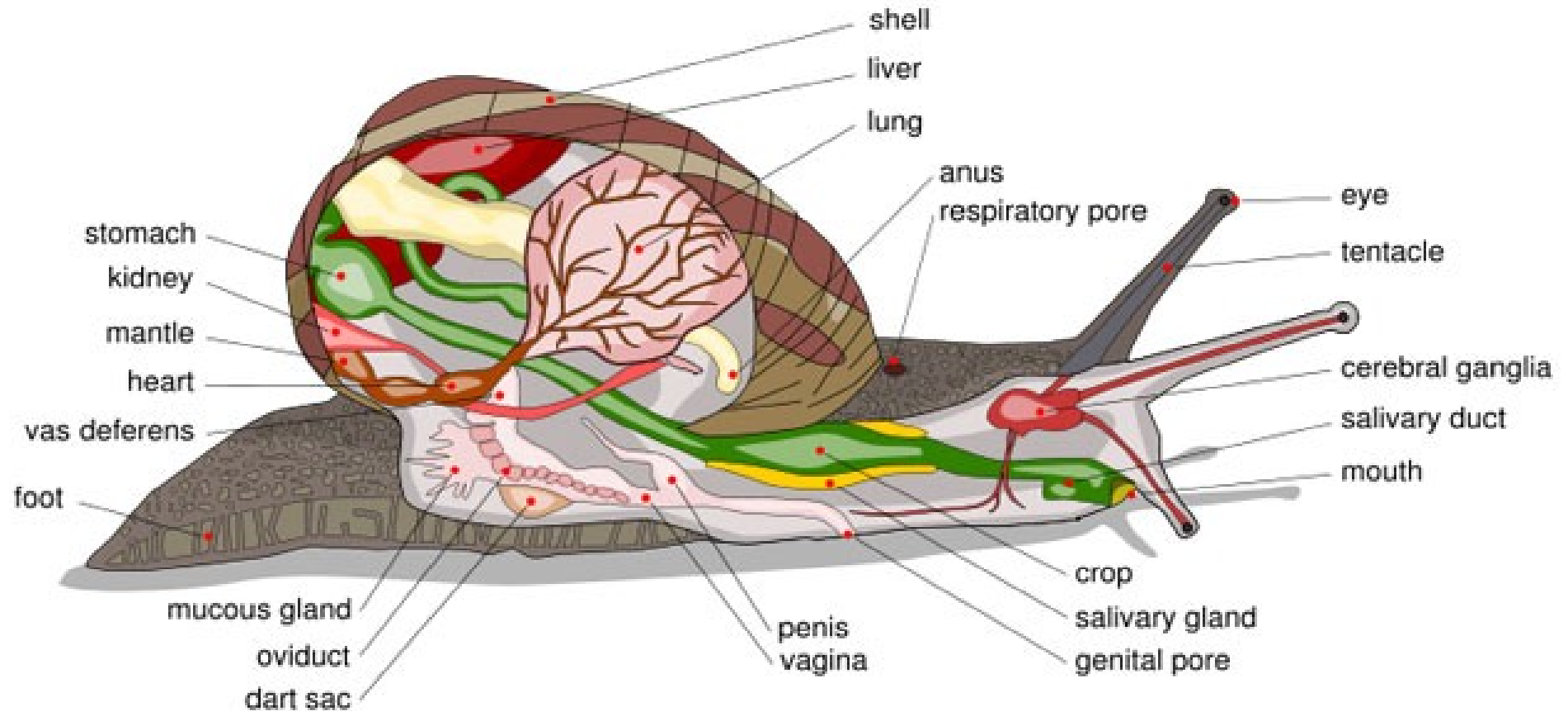
The snail represents:  
**slowness, down-to earth approach, feeling,  
persistence, patience, protection and  
peacefulness.**



Snails never hurt anybody!



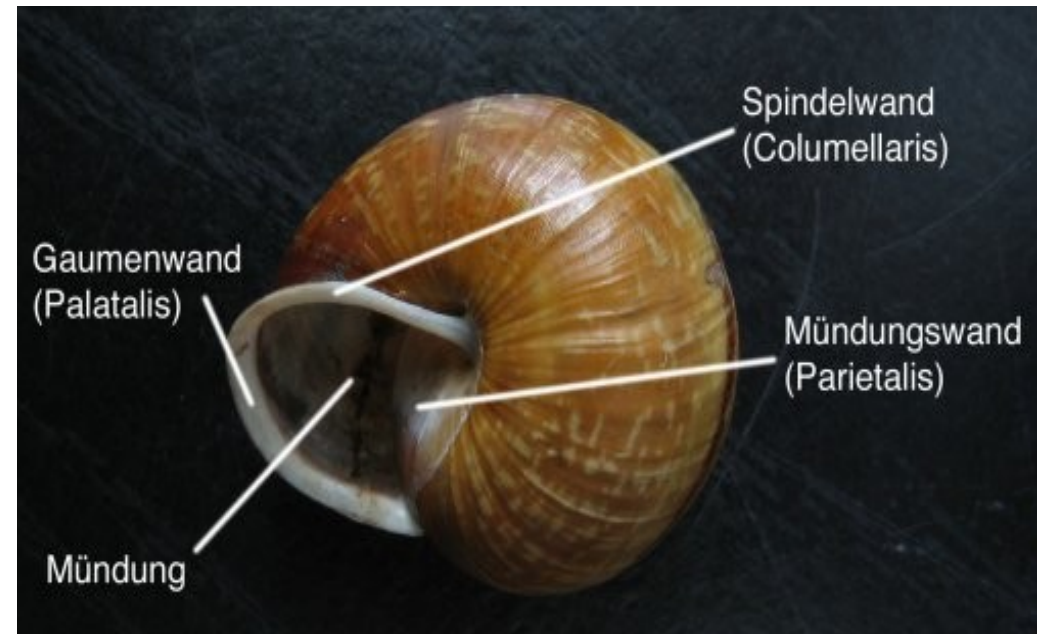
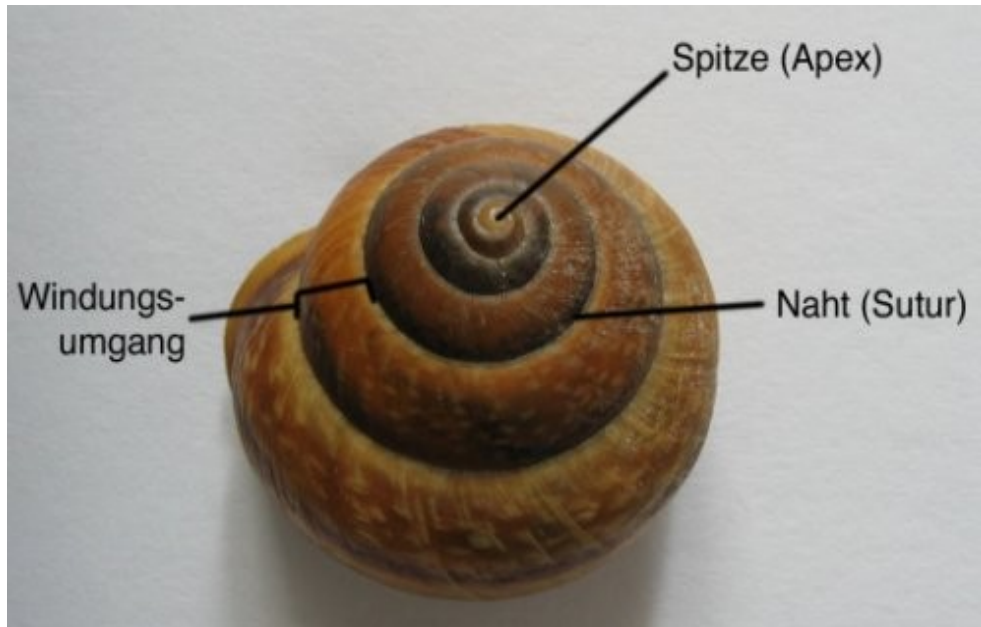
# Snail: Hard Shell Soft Interior



- Very fertile / autarkic: monoecious hermaphrodite (penis and vagina) / love darts
- Eat all the time (herbivorous, but also eat carrion), teeth on the tongue
- Archaical energy: absorb / reject, hide / come out of shell



# Shell of the Snail



- Many different forms. For every 12,000 snails with right turn there is one with left turn (queen)
- Shell keeps on growing on the periphery
- Shell (asymmetrical) can be closed with a calcium cover, protecting from cold and enemies
- Cowrie shells were used as money and divination in Africa

# Snails, Survival Masters



- Snails exist since the cambrian, for approx. 530 mill years
- Ability to adapt to different climatic conditions and environments: land, lake, river and sea
- Approx. 100,000 types of snails exist due to their ability to hide and quick reproduction
- Neurobiology discovered things through volutes
- Snails survive despite predators and snail and slug pesticide

# Snail Foot and Muccous



- Needs humidity
- Wave-like movement propels them forward. Speed of 6-7cm a minute.
- Type of movement: glide, slip, turn, stick and stand up
- The snail's foot produces mucous that helps moving, serves as repelling from enemies and protects the foot





# The Eye of the Snail



- Long tentacles: orientation sense, see light/dark, can be retracted and grow back
- Short tentacles serve to feel and smell
- Move like a telescope to all directions





# In German, the Snail's Eye:



Vatican





# In German, the Snail's Eye:



Kontoren-district Hamburg

Lighthouse Portugal



# Apex of the Snail's Shell

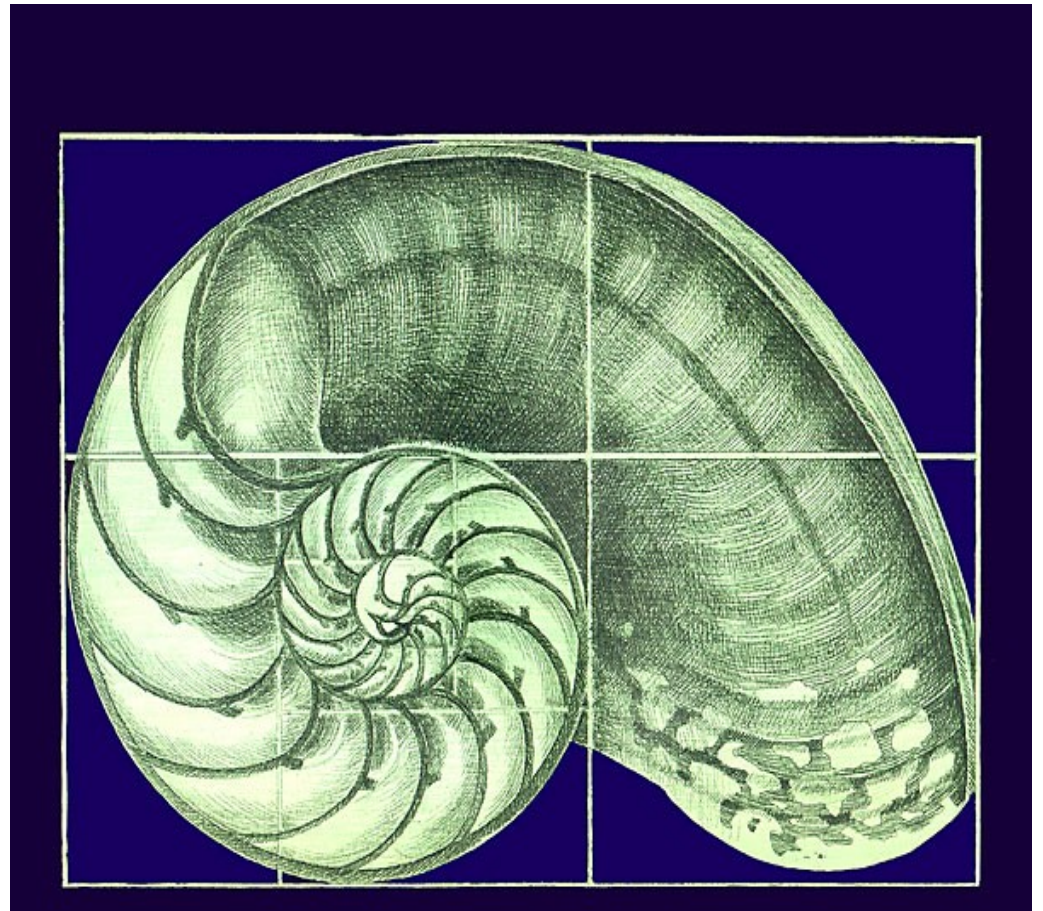
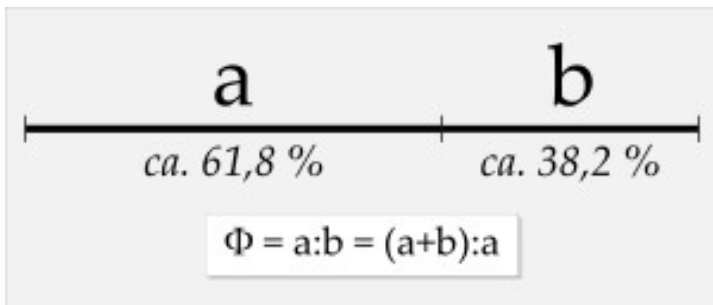


The apex of the snail's shell is the central point of the spires, which always have the same distance to the axis and open towards the top/bottom



# Golden Spiral

- Divine proportion
- Can be found in spiral galaxies and nautilus shells





# Decelerating / Pausing

In current times of carrying out tasks ever quicker, slowing down is becoming a real challenge and a vital quality for men.

Taking your time enables intensive perception, presence, mindfulness, attention and awareness of the own body and needs. Pausing enables to relax and centre oneself.

Pause and smiling leads towards self-love, empathy and forgiveness.



# Decelerating / Pausing



Pausing means interrupting. Stopping automatized moves and actions. It enables conscious breathing, straighten up and gain strength.

Lets learn to intuitively slow down and make use of the gained consciousness!



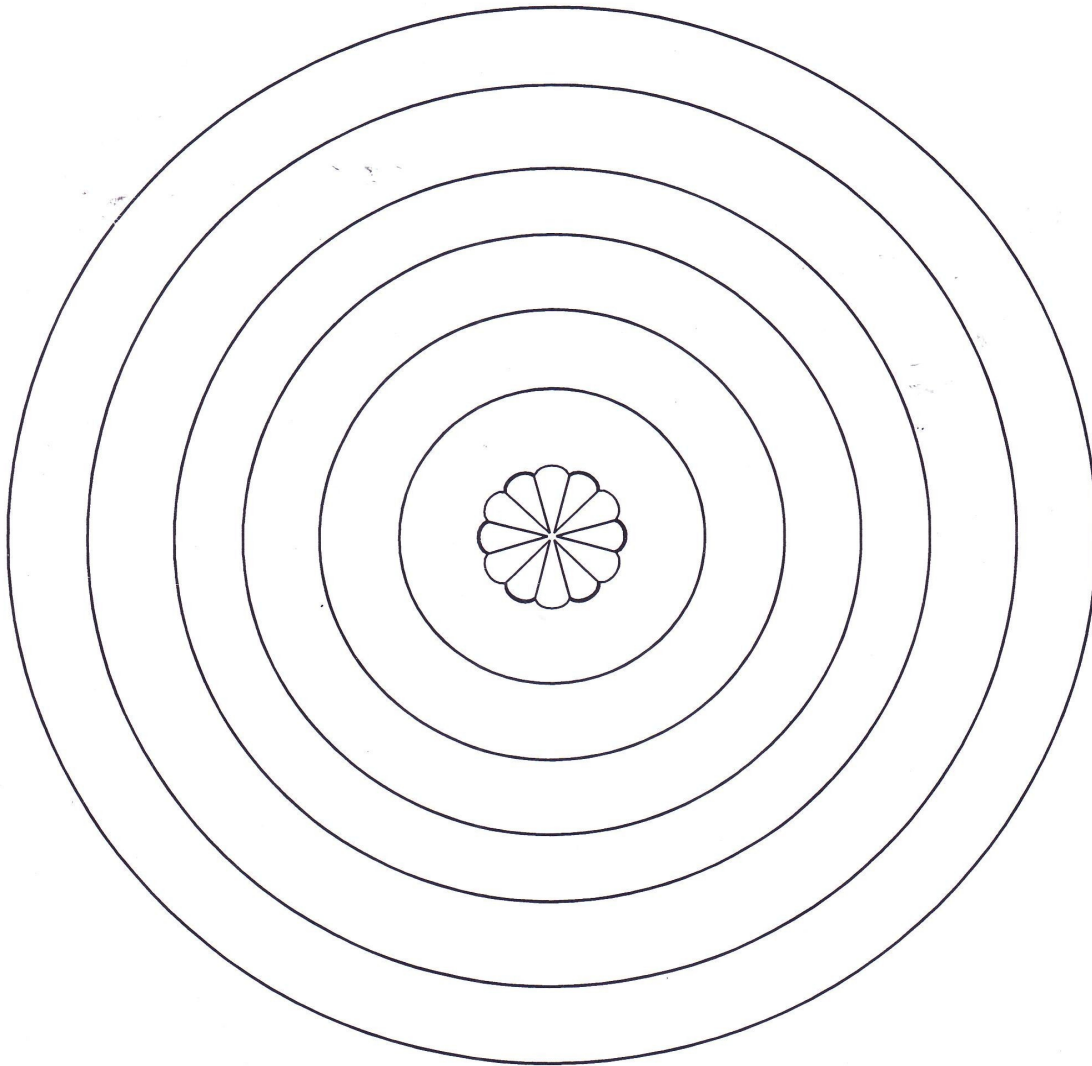
# Pausing and Accepting

Pausing is important in order to interrupt behavioural patterns (protect oneself from humiliations) and start new behaviours



# Koteba

The ritual is like an arrow reaching the target



The ritual has an opening and closing ceremony. It is an invocation, a dialogue and a repetition.

Purpose: healthy balanced state and harmonic adjustment.

Believe in syntony of cause and effect.



# The Ritual, a Feast of the Bambara



The ritual is like a feast with alcohol, dancing and ecstatic singing. In a playful way and in competition social criticism is carried out.

Everybody, old people, women and children, can participate and enjoy the eventful evening, a vivid cultural performance.

The environment is full of the feeling of freedom, trust and connectedness without division or hierarchy.

# Ritual and Dance

The **dancer** rotate inside the circle towards the right direction (centrifugal). The circle of woman dancing moves towards the left side (centripetal). The turns are towards the centre of the circle as well as towards the periphery and around oneself.

**Ecstasy**, connecting with the outside world and oneself. State of maximum integration.

During the **dance** energy is channeled and controlled, and a social balance arises out of the cooperation of the village in the ritual. Life requires balance between body, soul and mind.

**Music**: the rhythm is meditative, trance like and dynamic leading towards ecstasy. The drummers in the middle represent the pulse of the society. They create feelings of highs and lows, loud and piano. Singers: solo and refrain with clapping.



# Ritual and Weight of Carrying the Globe

Carrying a heavy weight and still being able to take it easy. Interaction between order and chaos (being spontaneous) structure and change.

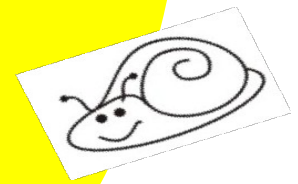
Contact to the source of life, wealth and health.

Transform weight and burden to desire.



# The Empty Room in the Ritual

- Serves as measure to prevent from the damage of the negative emotions (cleaning of the stage)
- Invocation of the positive energies (values of the culture)
- Food to reconcile with the positive spirits
- Become one during the dance: experience trance and ecstasy
- The fight / taming of the bird
- The acrobatic saltos and tests of courage
- Opening of the circle and introduction of the role of village leader. Permission to start with the satire.



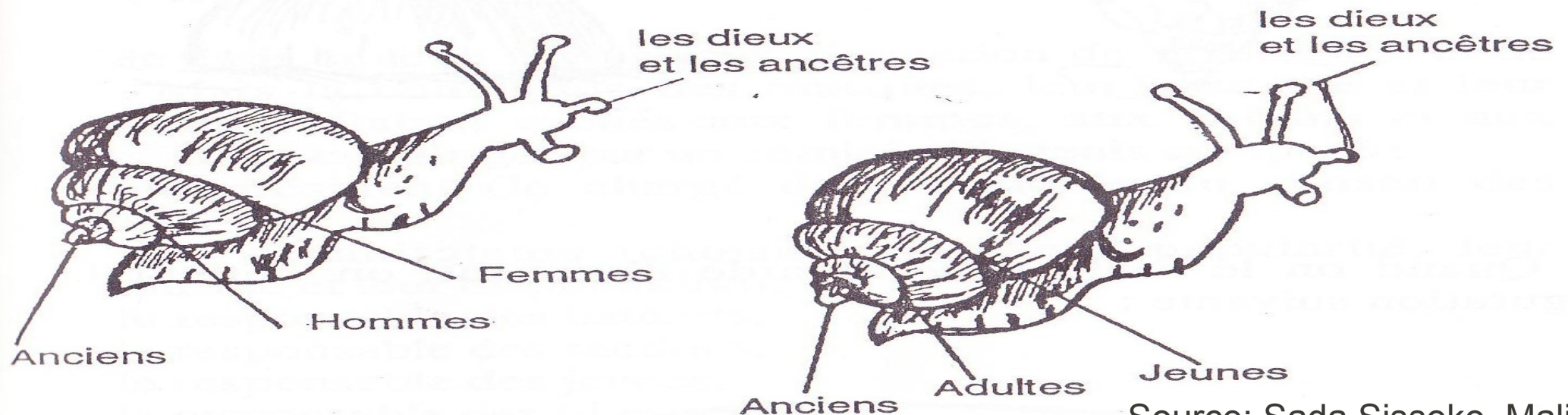


# Demarcation - Ritual

Bambara see the world like a mystery.  
The snail circles the village with its problems and conflicts.

The **foot of the snail** represents the ancestors and Gods who advance slowly.

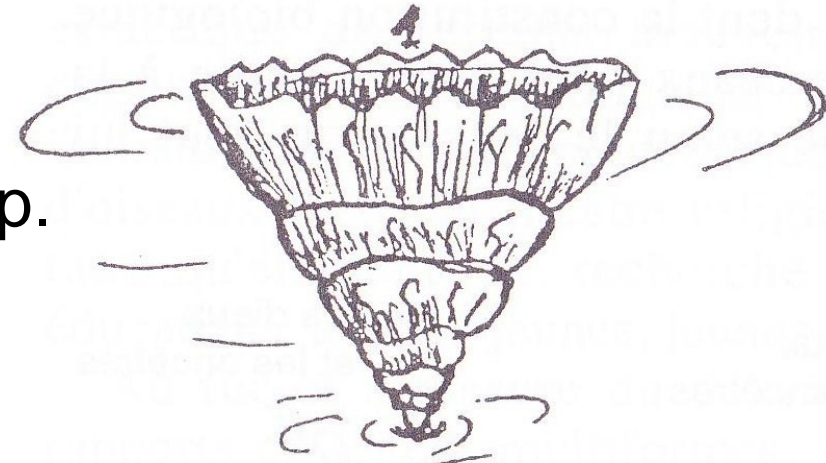
The **shell** transforms into a pegtop and results in the turning wheel of the world history with its inhabitants.



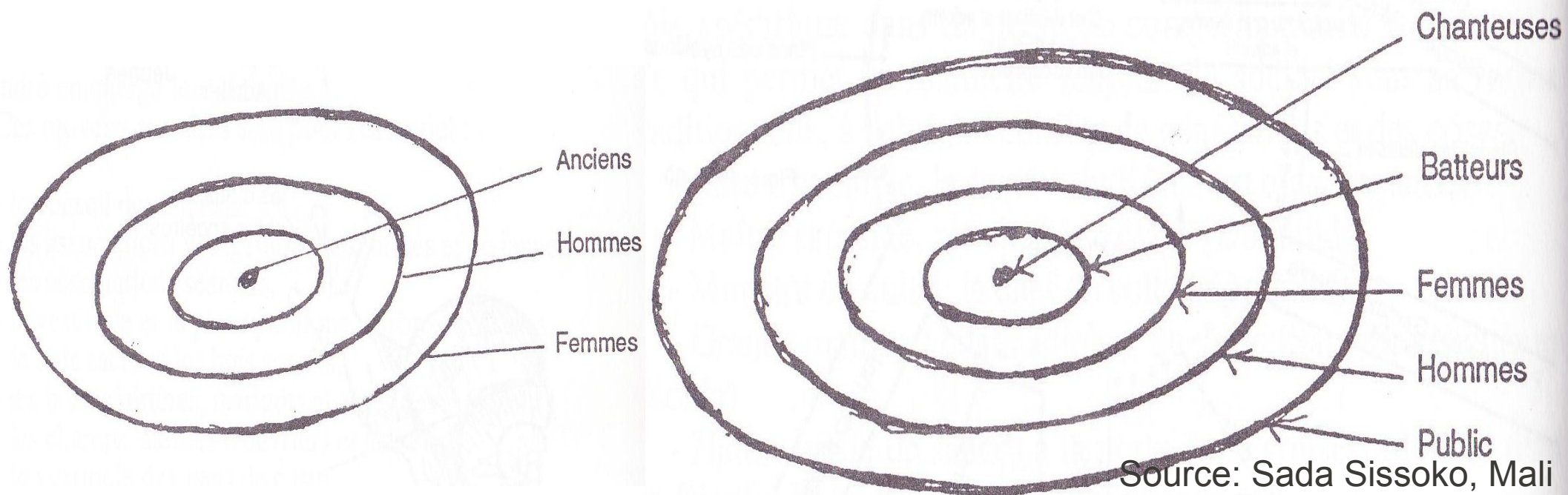
Source: Sada Sissoko, Mali

# The Ritual

1. Snail: Transformation into the pegtop.

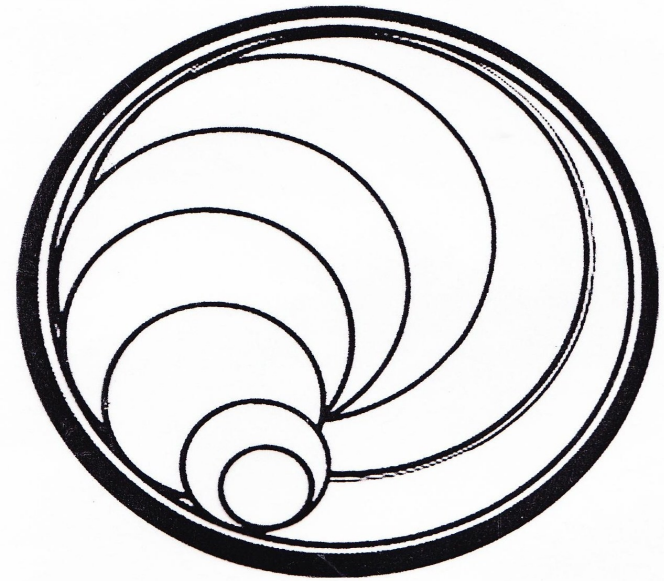


2. The spiral makes concentric circles when rotating.



# The Ritual

3. The illusion and the game of „as if“. The surface is bidimensional, the turning and space make it three-dimensional.

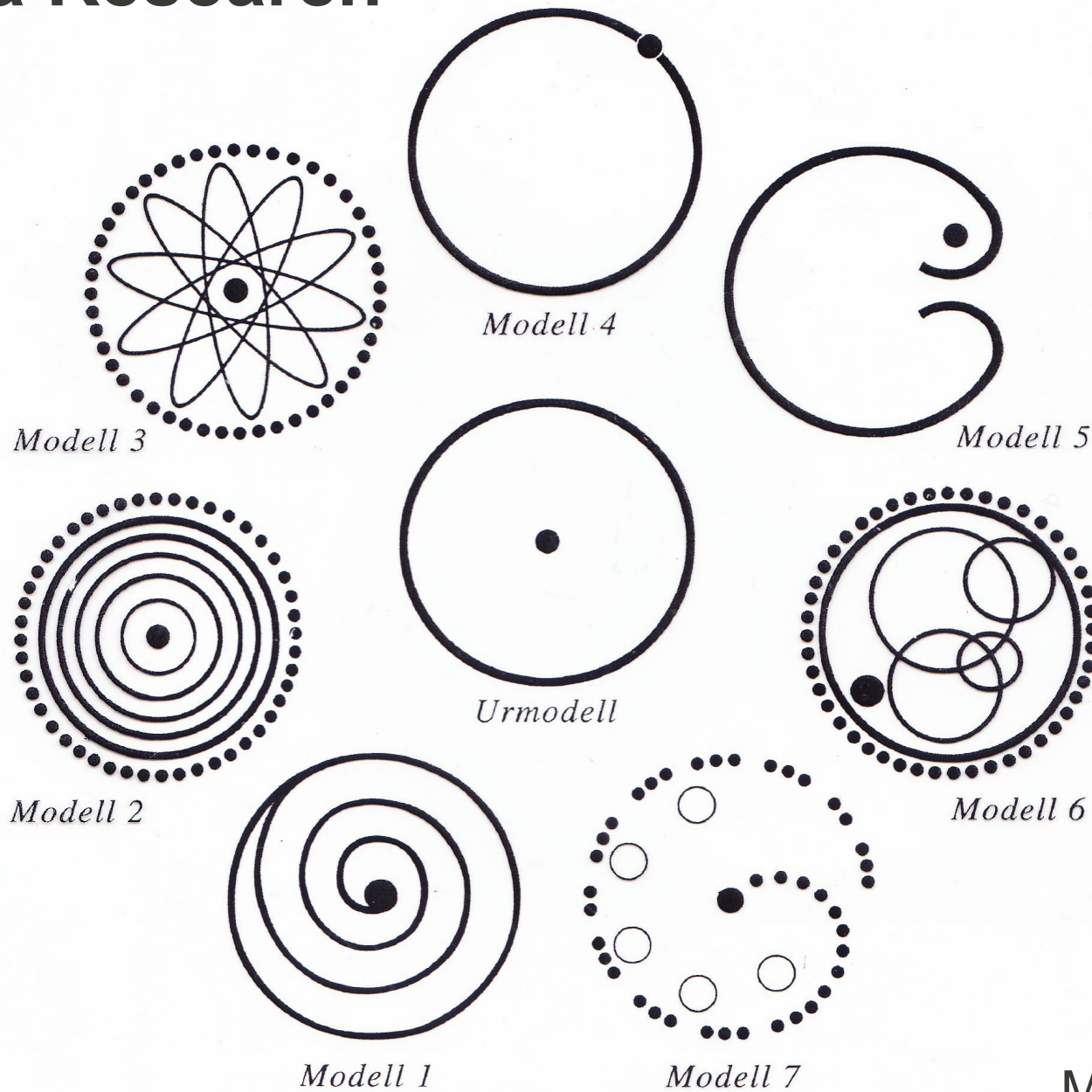


4. The end of the game and of the world.



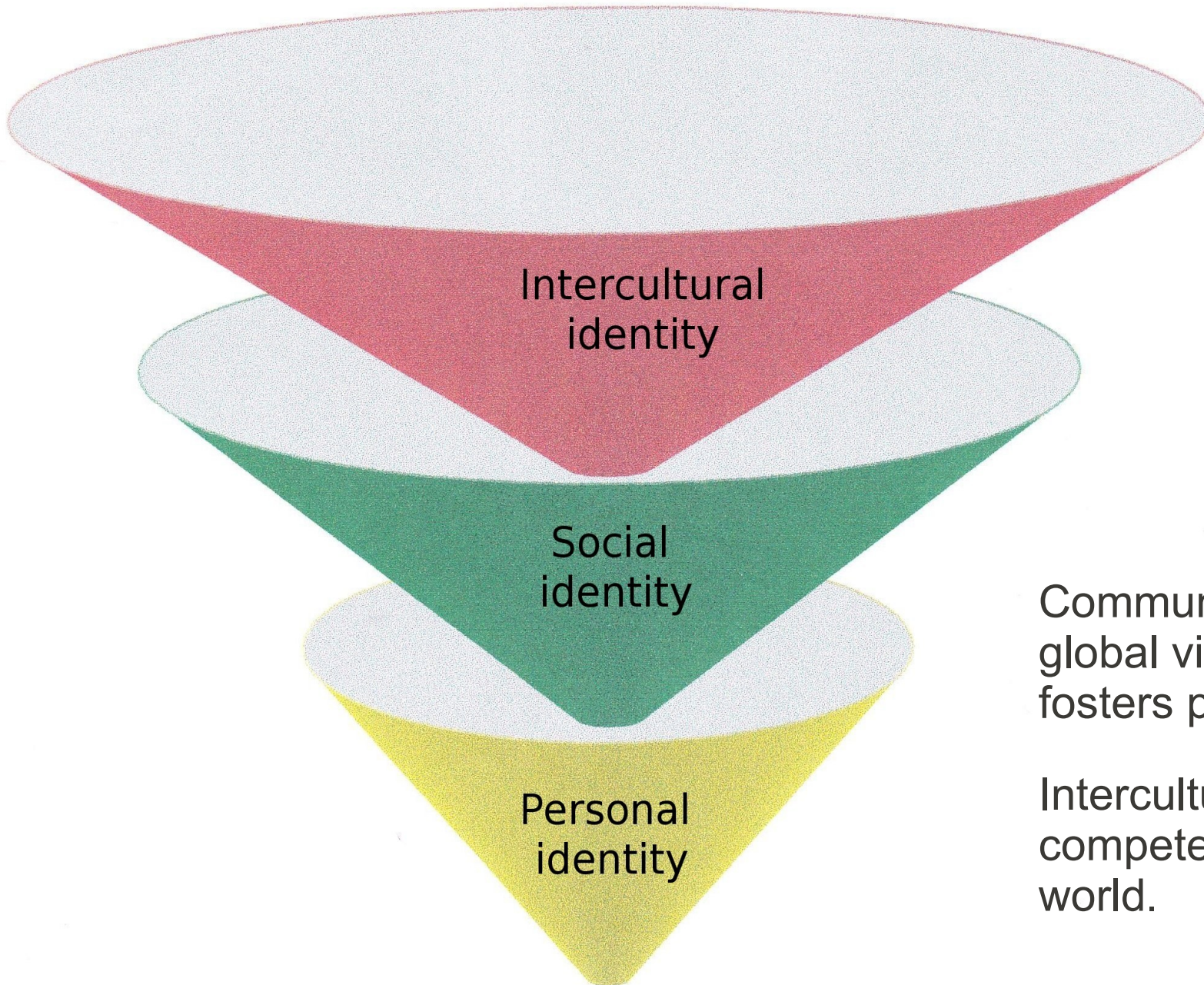


# Koteba Research



Model Wehr-Koita

# Citizen of the World



Community ritual in the global village that fosters peace.

Intercultural competence for the world.



# Conflict-transformation and humour

Rythm, ritual, interaction and humour has been used for centuries in westafrican villages and communities to solve conflicts (like power games, injustice, hierarchy...).

Through the game and the joint experiences a sense of understanding develops. This understanding favours the self-esteem of the participants and highlights their differences, making them positive. A feeling of relieve, unburden and integration develops.





# River - Bridge Model

Identification

Distance

Player

Aesthetical  
distance

Actors

Audience

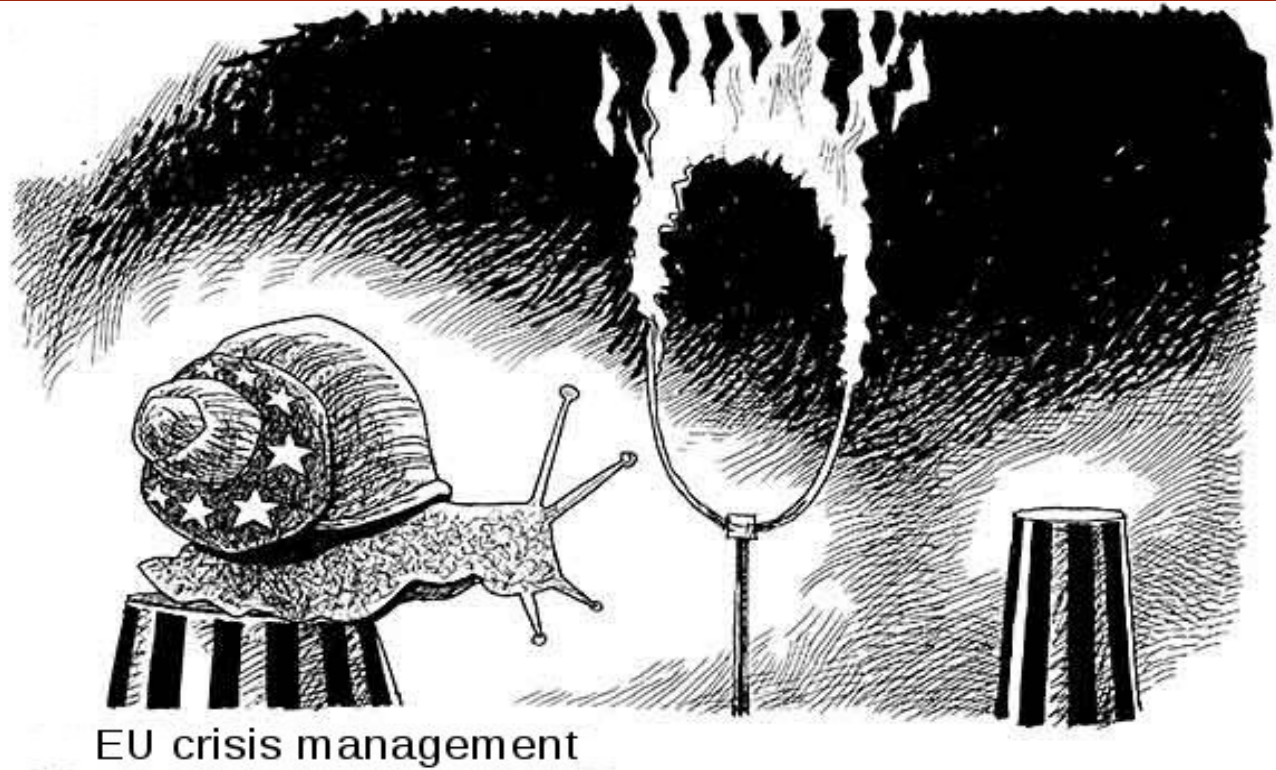
Connection

"Translator"



# Theatre

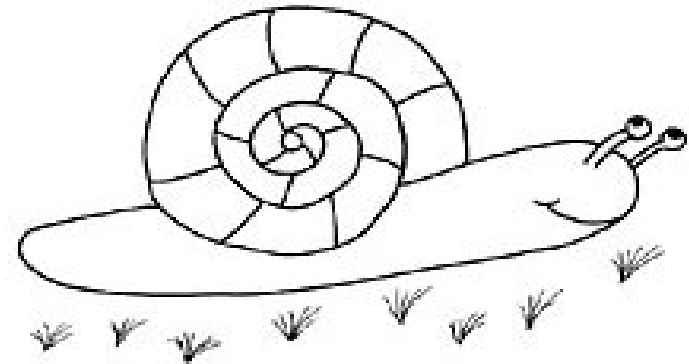
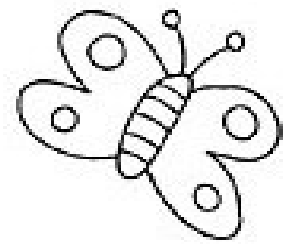
The theatre is provoking and subversive.



The actors / participants are allowed to be inpolite. During the play all are encouraged to express openly their expectations and dissapointments. Personal mistakes and weaknesses are approached with humour.

# Theatre and Phantasy

Ambiguity:  
the soul of the theatre.

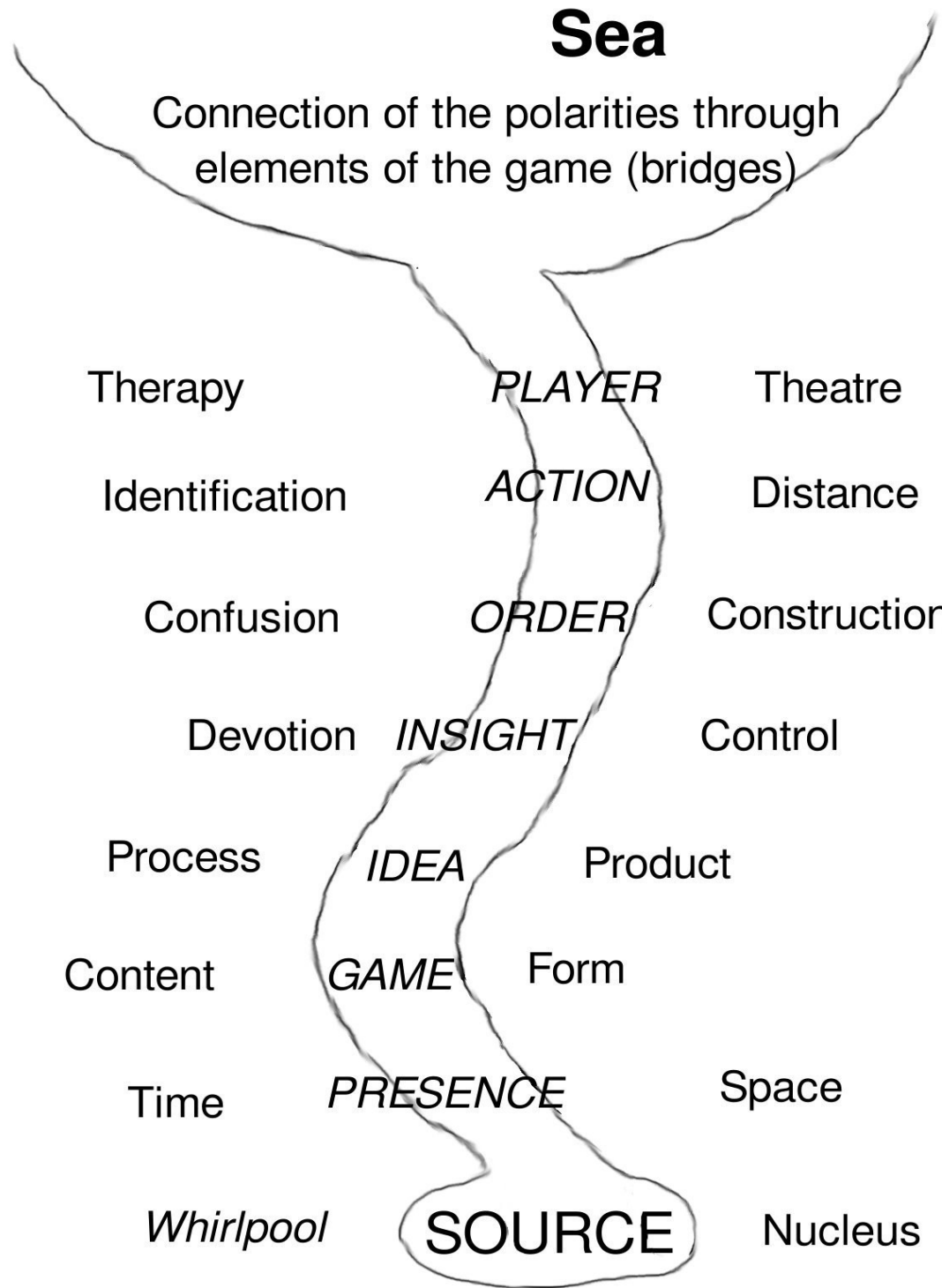


The aim is to pay and stage the link between the opposing poles and strengths and create a bridge between the polarities.

It is important to find a balance in order to meet in the newly created spaces.



## Shared mindfulness

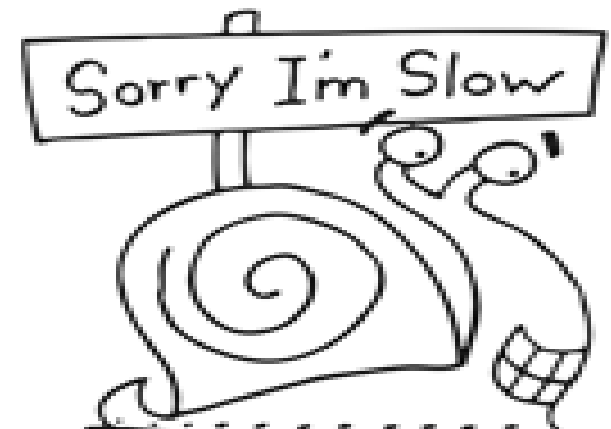


## Double game-playing process



# The theatre, a Shelter

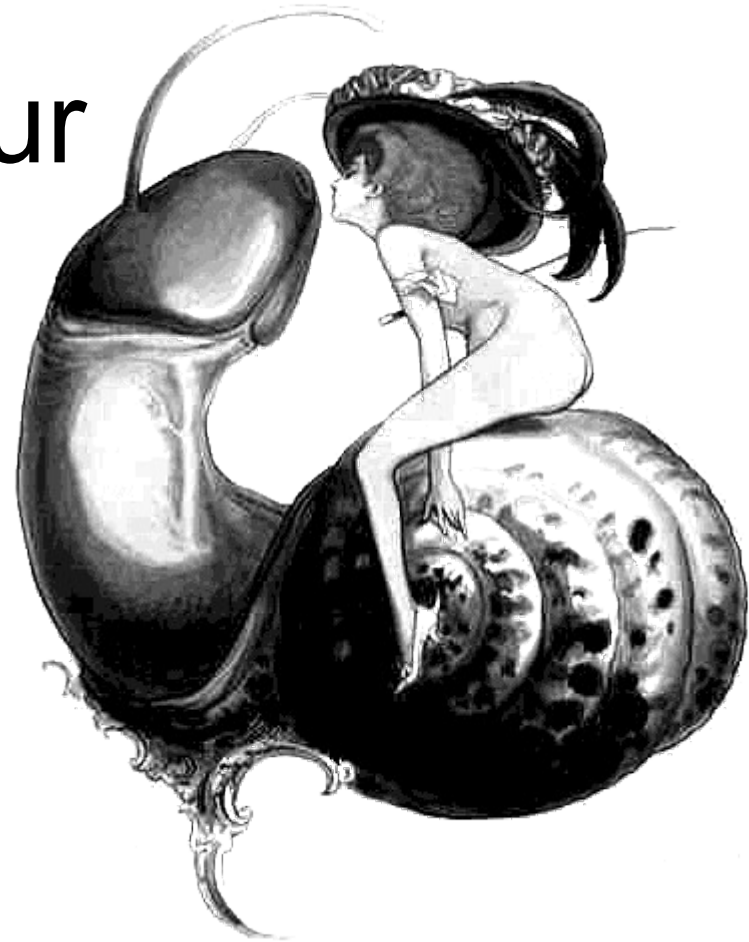
- After the circle has been opened for the games to start, short sketches and scenes that show antisocial behaviour are played.
- Improvisations 10-15 min.
- Comedy roundings (surprising and funny incidents)
- Be at the rock-bottom and still enjoy the surprises.
- Quick and funny word-games.
- Caricature and exaggerations, be flexible during the game.
- The plays can show tabus, conflicts and criticize the authority.



# Theatre: Tabu and Humour

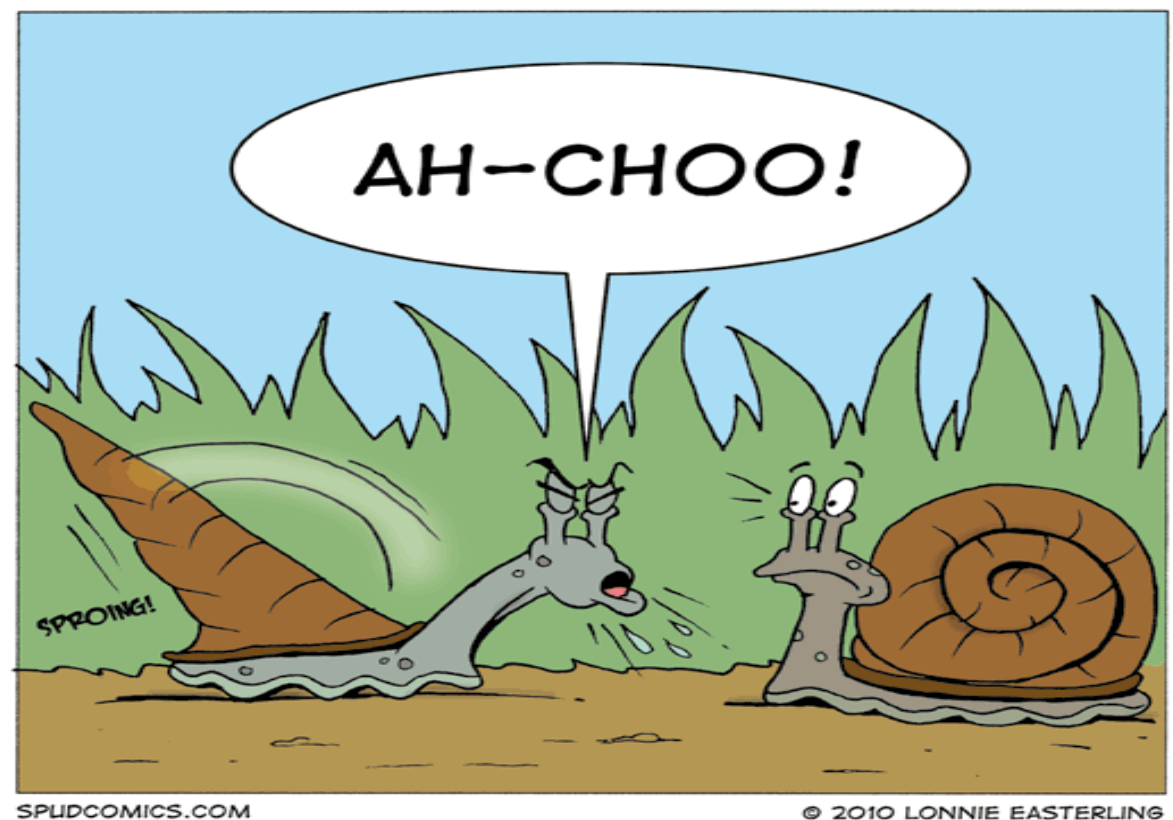
## Topics:

- Power / Misuse of power
- Stupidity
- Ignorance
- The 7 sins
- Everyday life topics through characters of the social environment (womanizer, cheater, blind, foreign, etc.)
- No limit for different topics





# Scope of the theatre



## Aim:

Enable and facilitate the co-existence through showing everybody's mistakes and weaknesses.

The happiness and ease in the co-existence creates magical moments and shows new ways of handling and communicating without violence.

# Transferability to an Intercultural Theatre

- Stimulation of feelings of presence, curiosity and vitality. Self-acceptance, self-love and self-empowerment.
- Foster the motivation for change.
- Learn to understand the play of forces.
- Improve tolerance of frustration and ambiguity feelings.
- Vivid cohesion.
- Surpass limits, discover commonalities.
- Feeling of human togetherness and integration into the greater good.



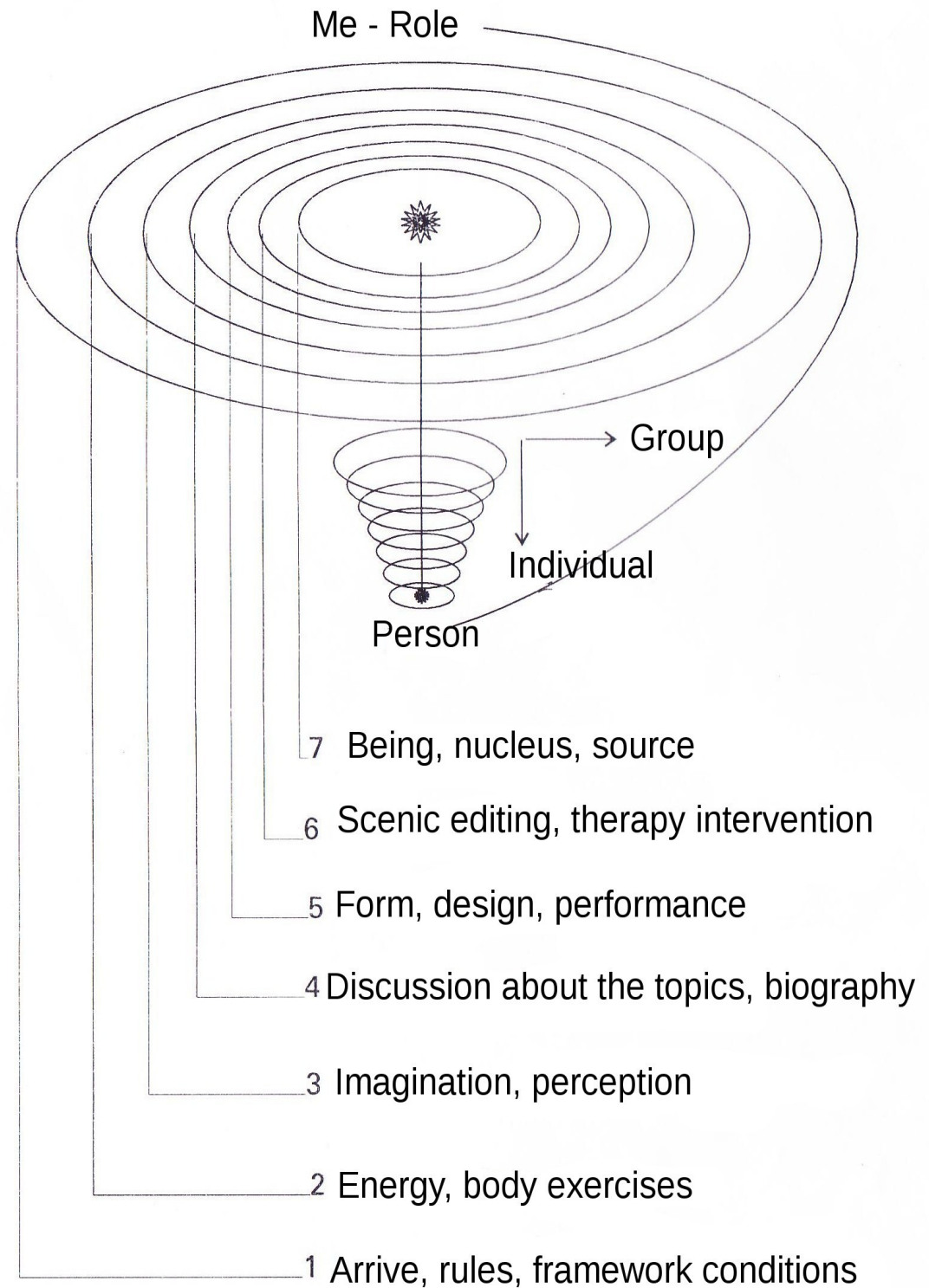
# Transferability to an Intercultural and Healing Theatre

- It is important to discover the child inside one, show it, fantasize with it, experiment with it and be present.
- Live and enjoy magical moments
- Experience resonance and enjoy the community
- Courage to start and live something new.





# Drama-Therapeutical Dimension



# Humour

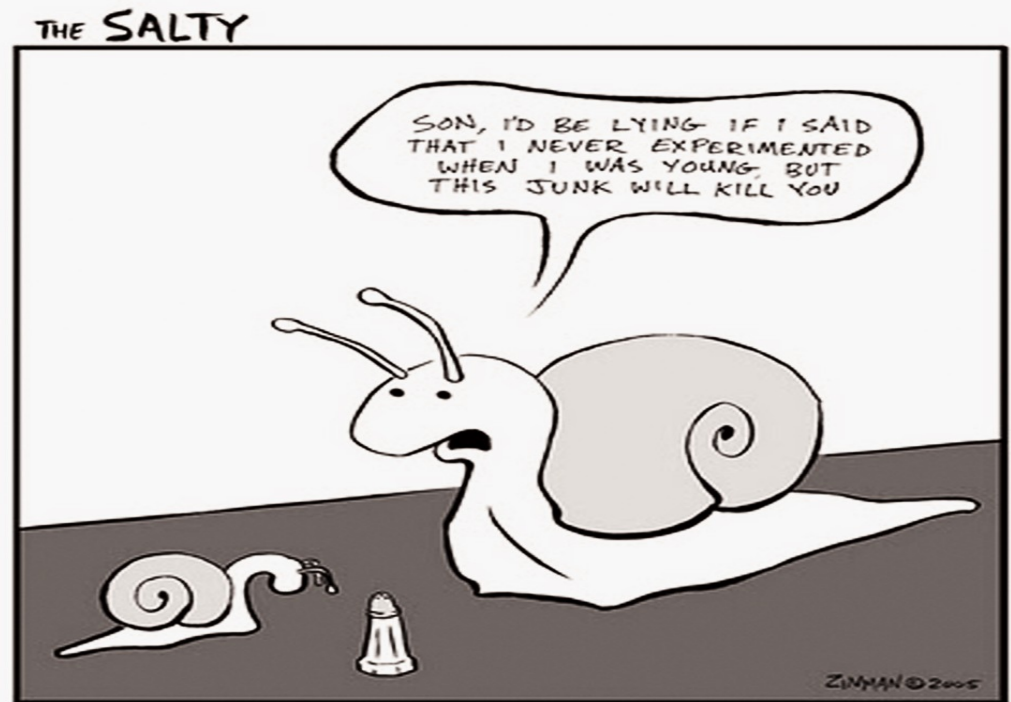
Lightness of being

Stress and tension reduction through laughing.

The reflection of one's dark side requires a distanced sense of humour that creates immunity from getting hurt or insulted. „Anesthesia of the heart“ (Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic, H. Bergson, 1900).

The community can overcome their negative feelings through the transference of real situations to the sketch and plays (social hygiene).

The man can heal from the tragedy of life, the pain and the sorrow through laughter.





# Humour

The diaphragm (source of laughter) separates the upper and lower part of the body. It is the central point of wisdom, the point where thinking and feeling meets, the fountain of physical life.

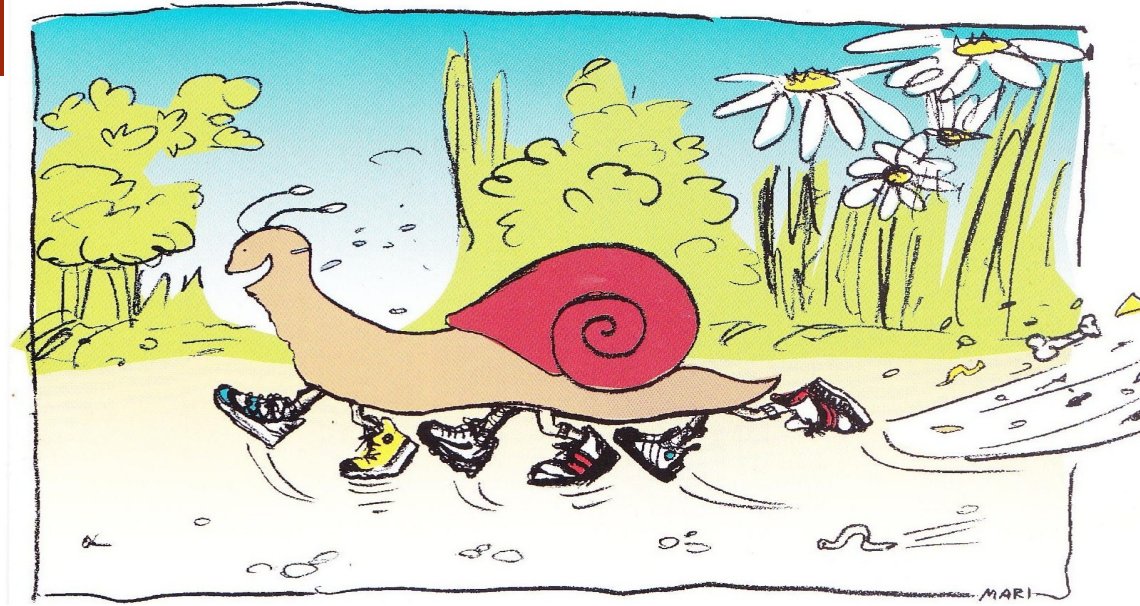
Laughing dissolves behavioural patterns, tensions and resistance.

The existential salvation is the death of the ego through humour.





# Humour for the Paradoxes of Life



„Every thing has three sides: a negative, a positive and a funny one.“ Karl Valentin

"Everything has three sides: the one you see, the one I see and the one we both do not see.“ Philosopher Laozi, China

I'M LIVING IN A SHARED FLAT  
NOW, I TOLD YOU SO!



# Humor

„Man is the laughing animal “ Aristotele

**Actor:** creates „laughing – spaces“ by showing embarrassing and ridiculous situations with surprising endings. In order to protect themselves they wear amulets.





# Snail Mucous, Strategy to stay young

Lubricant and glue: protects from the dangers of  
life and from getting old





# Snail Trail & Snail Pesticide



Denk Mal - Kupfer gegen Schnecken





# The Good-Tasting Snail





# Pegtop



Pegtop H. Kükelhaus





# Links Snail

**Short film:** Snail Trail (Philipp Artus, 2012)

[www.vimeo.com/49420983](http://www.vimeo.com/49420983)

**Movie:** The Strategy of the Snail (Sergio Cabrera, 2007)

**Book:** The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating (Elisabeth Bailey, 2012)

**Laughing Video:**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udINOIF\\_HKk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udINOIF_HKk)

