

What if

AUDIENCE

is
a

CHARGE

between

being

IN

and
being

OUT?

*The readers of this text
sit in front of a table.*

On the table is a book.

Ok, let's imagine
that the page is a theatre.

There is a minimalist performance
about to start in it.

This performance
is composed of

**a circular beam of light
in the center of the room**

**a duration of
say, 20 minutes**

Nothing else.

Just

the light,

the shadow,

and the time
spent in the space

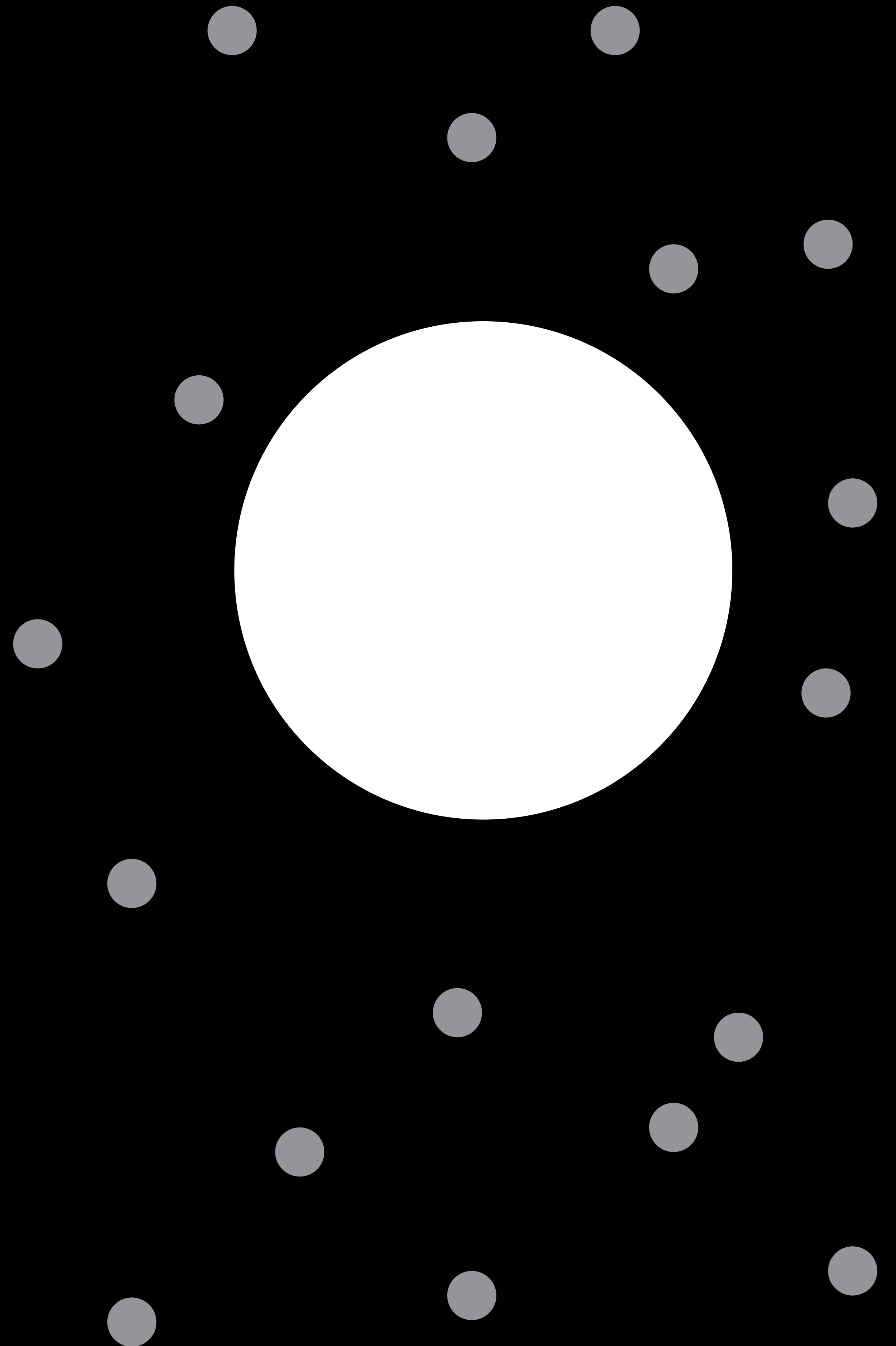
with the other audience members.



*The light
is landing.*

The people enter the theatre,
trying to find a safe place
in the room,

trying to figure out
what this performance
is about.

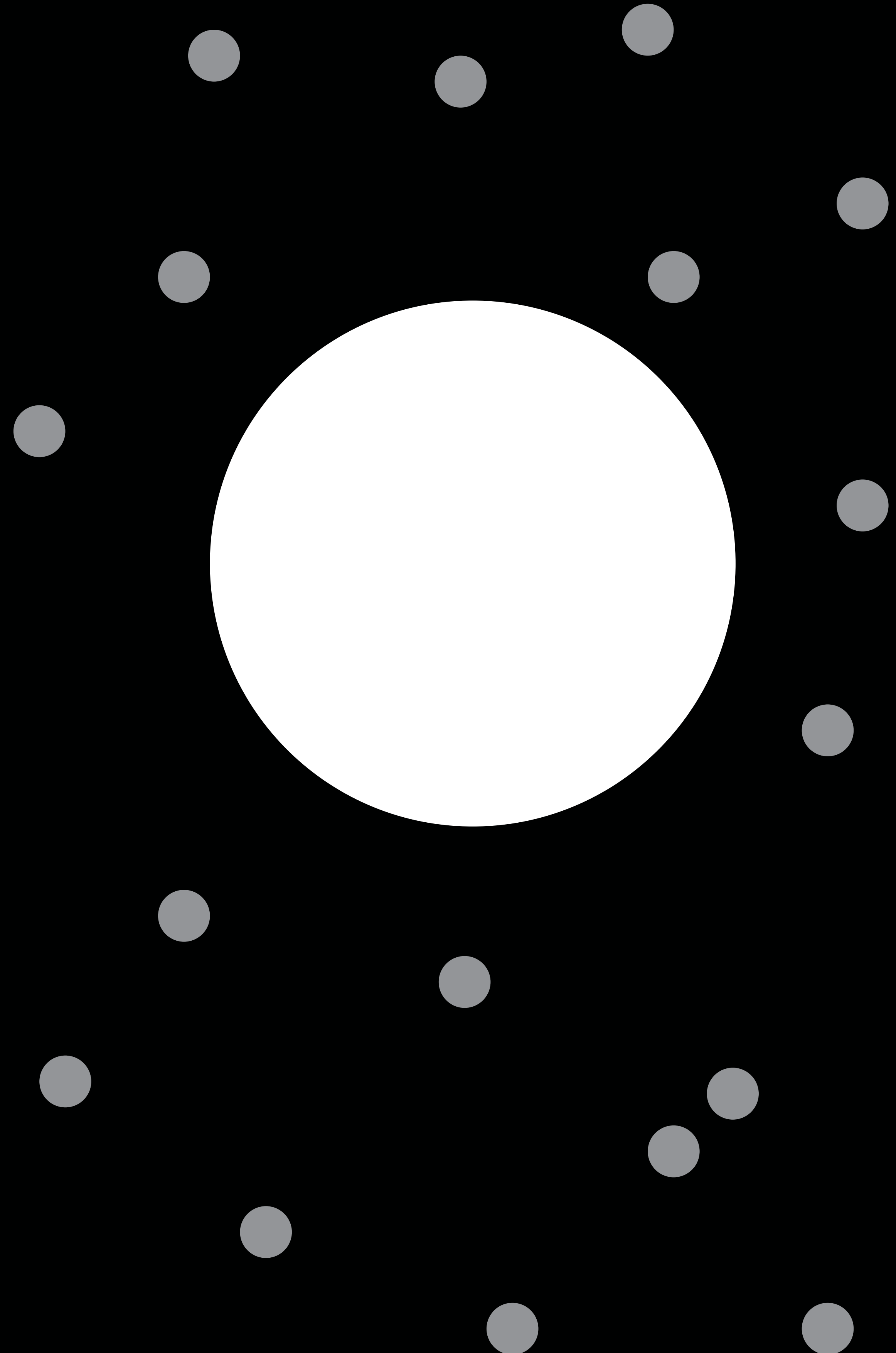


They do not yet understand
their condition.

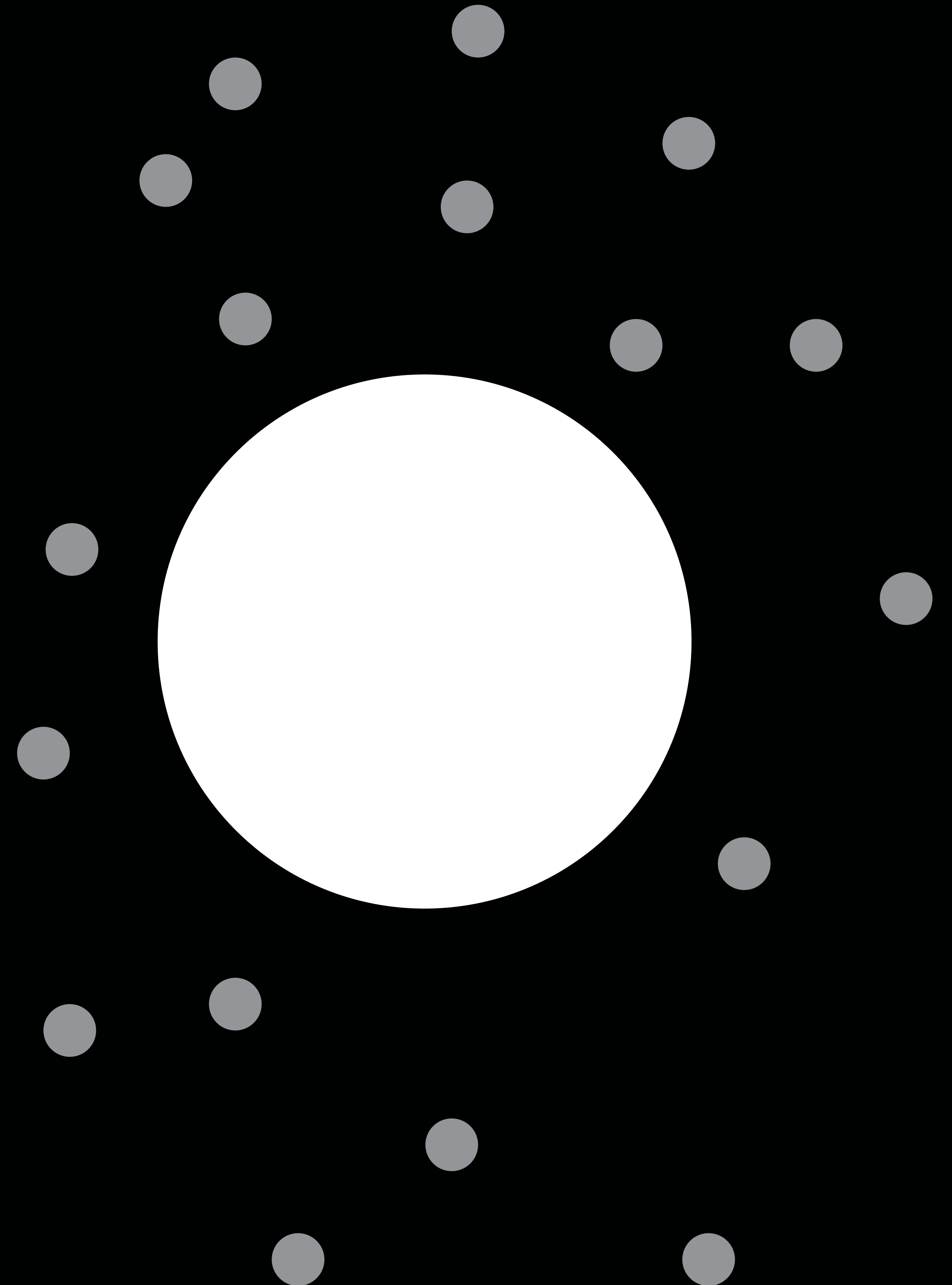
It is the
audience condition.

The audience condition is charged,
like a magnet.

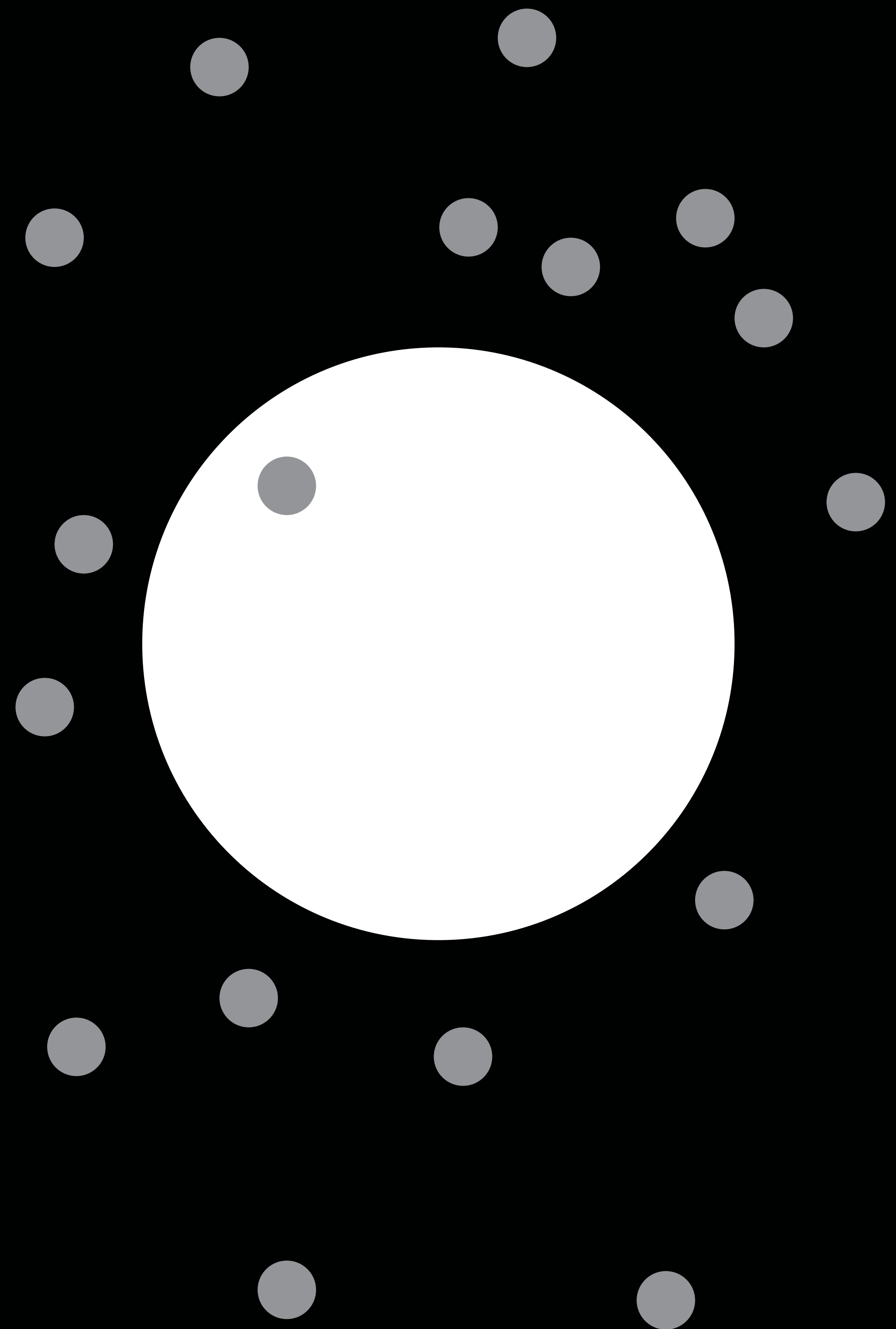
When they enter the theatre,
they become immersed in
a magnetic field.

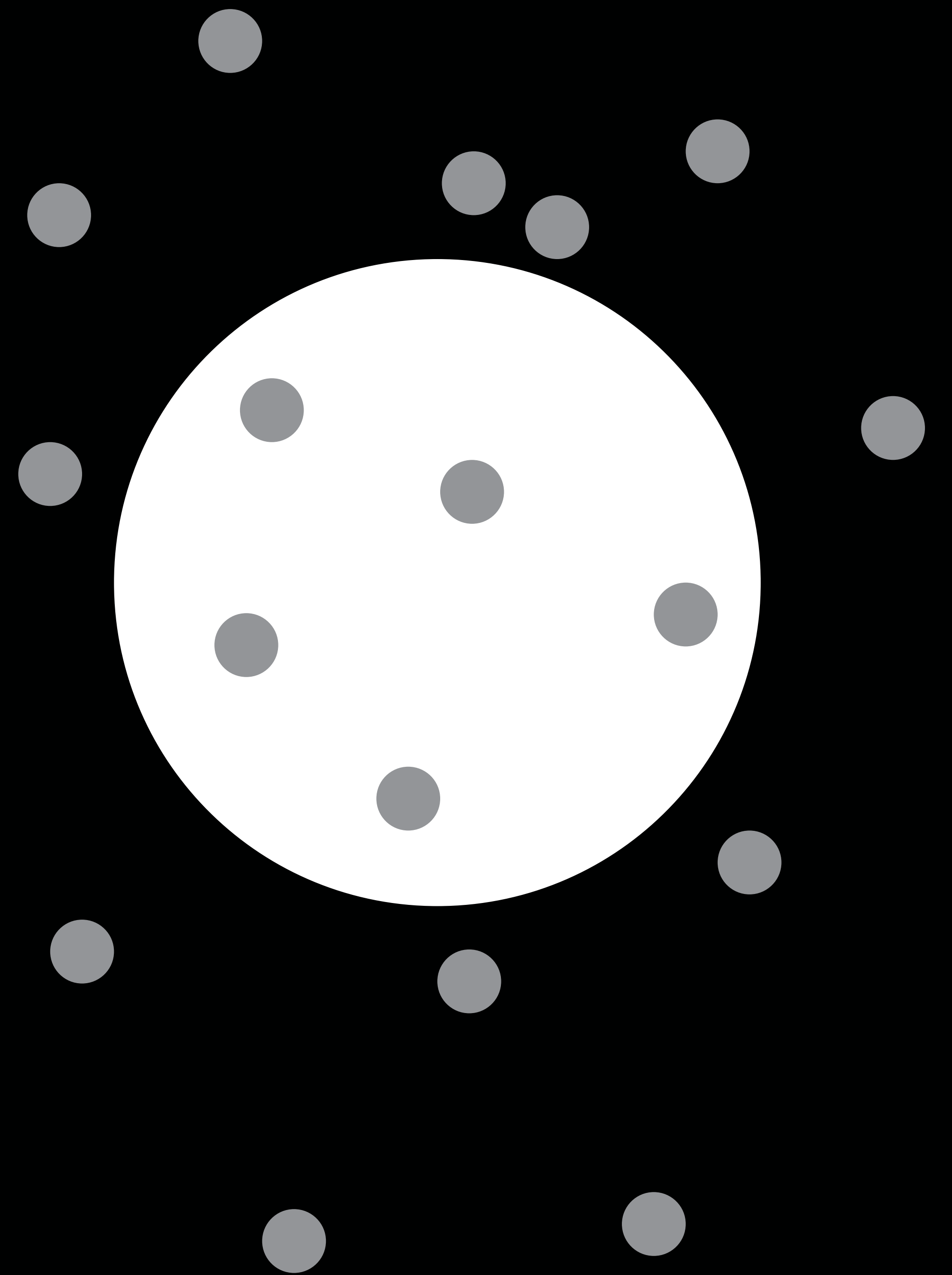


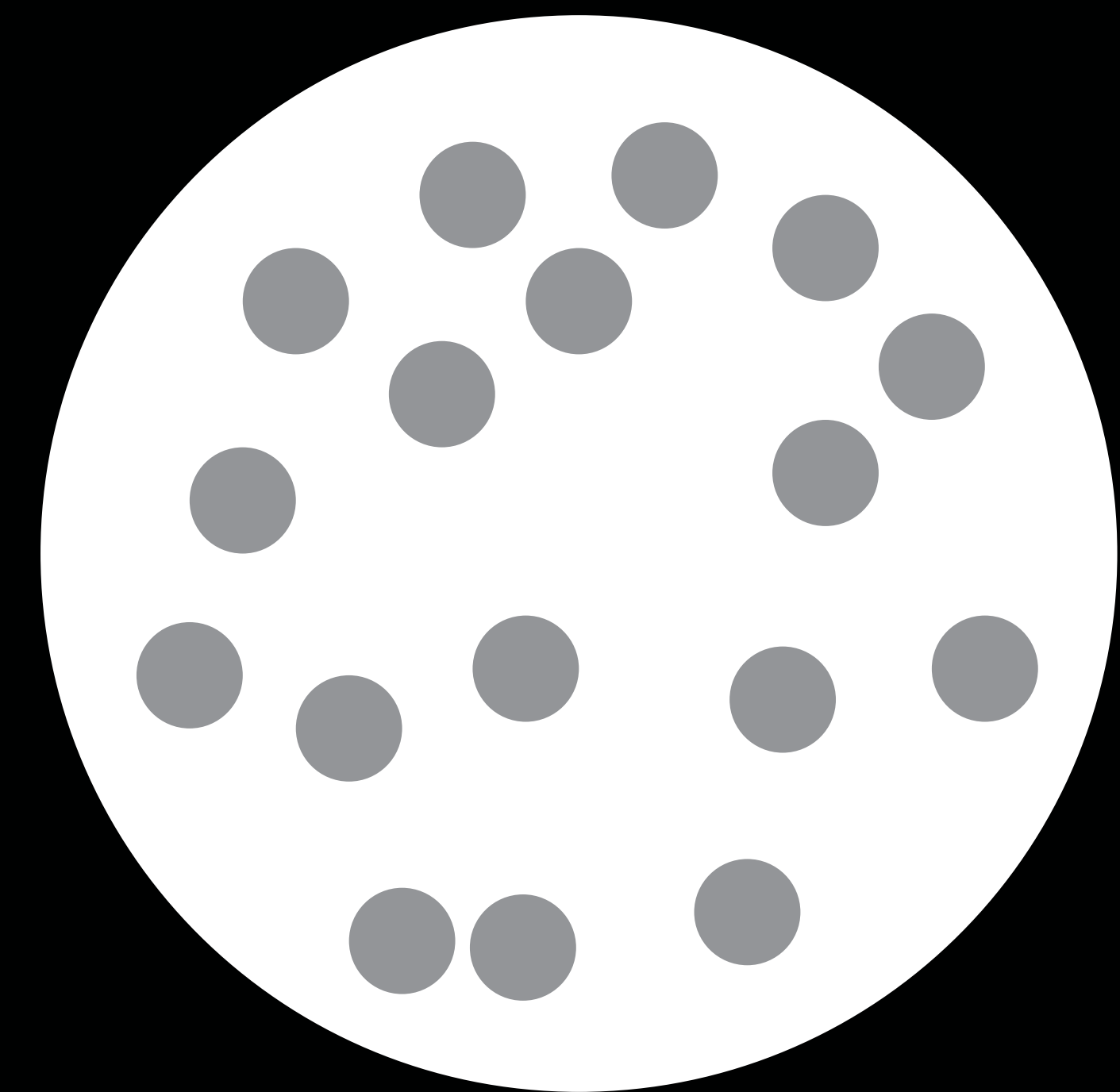
The audience might
leave the light untouched.



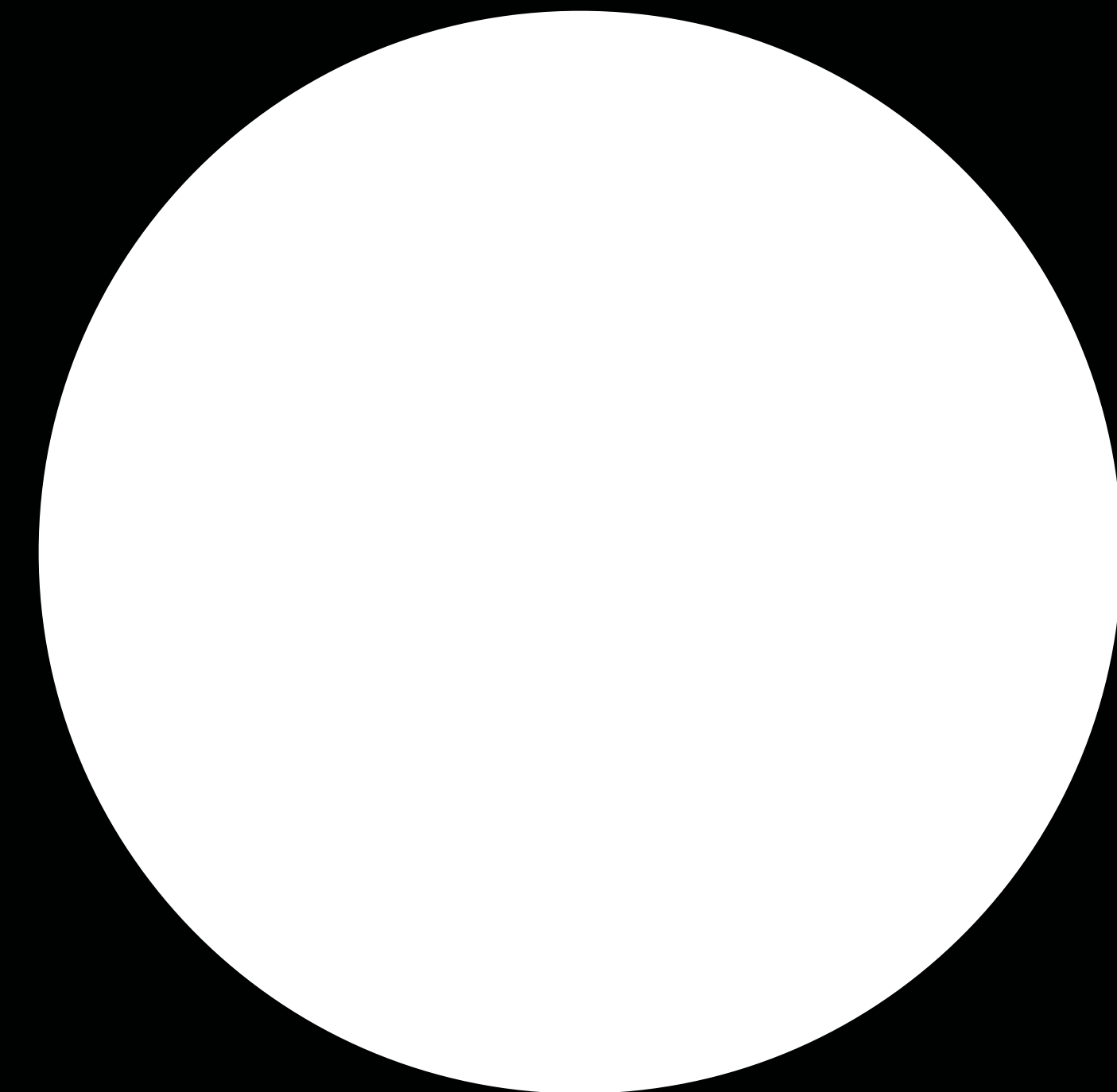
Or enter it, like a stage







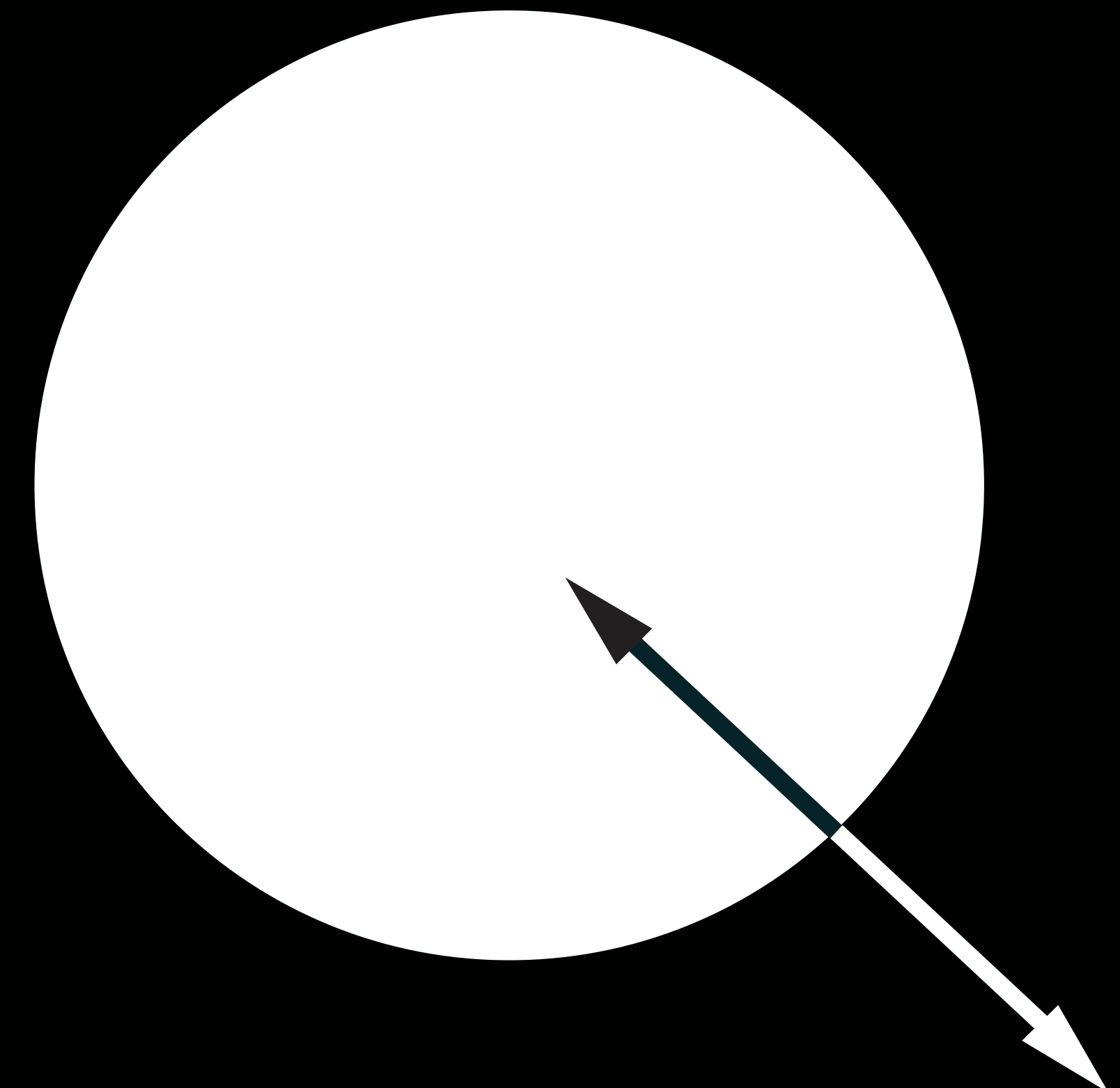
in 20 minutes,
they might even get bored
and forget about the light.



someone might leave the room

Any action or passion
would contribute to the charge
inherent in the audience
condition,

someone might keep their eyes
closed



the **out** and the **in**.

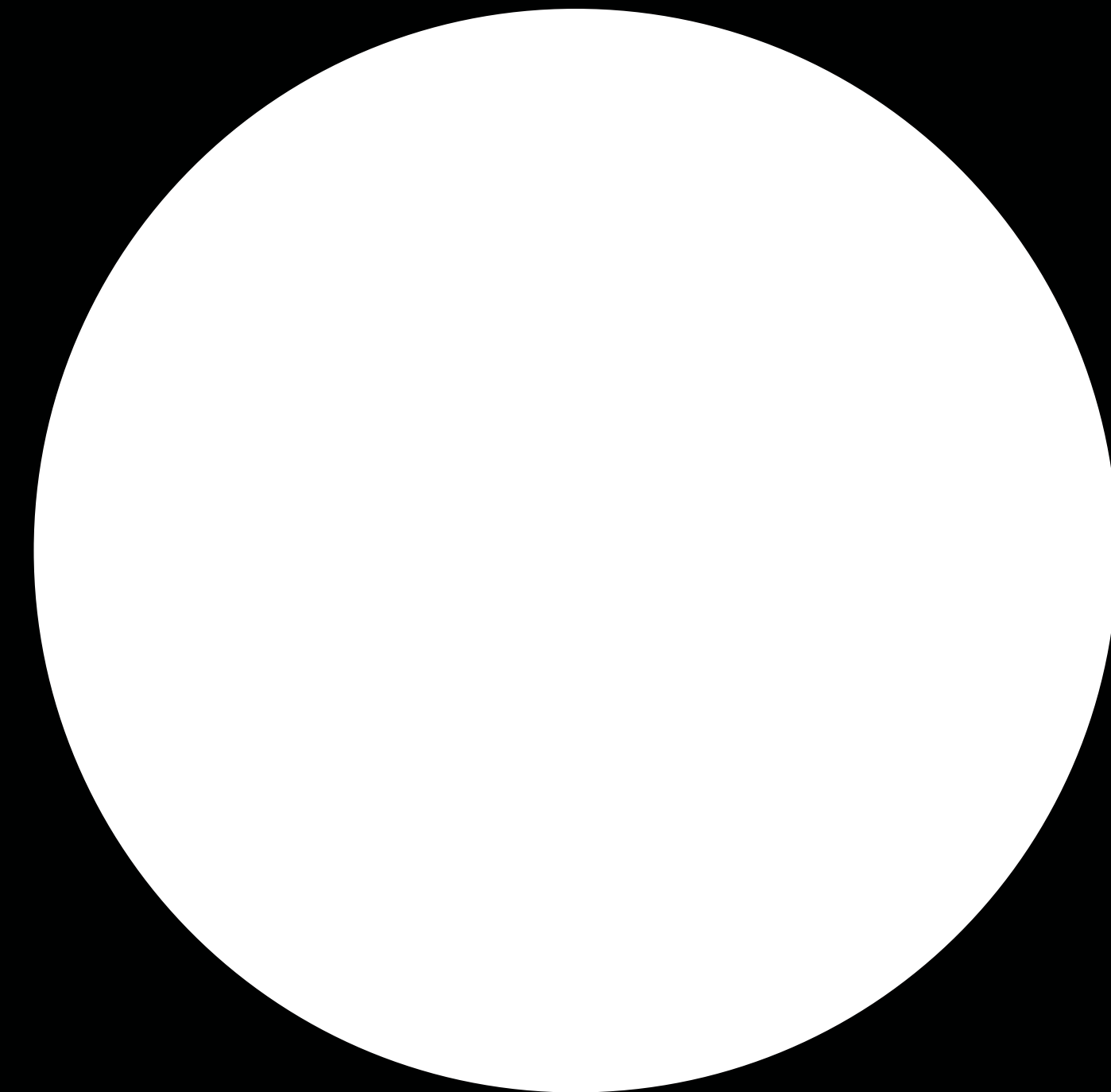
But in this frame, it
doesn't really matter.

This is one of the polarities
of the audience condition.

Without knowing it,
the audience is pulled by these forces.

They are neither in nor out.

Instead they are in constant motion
between those poles.



The readers are aware of each other.

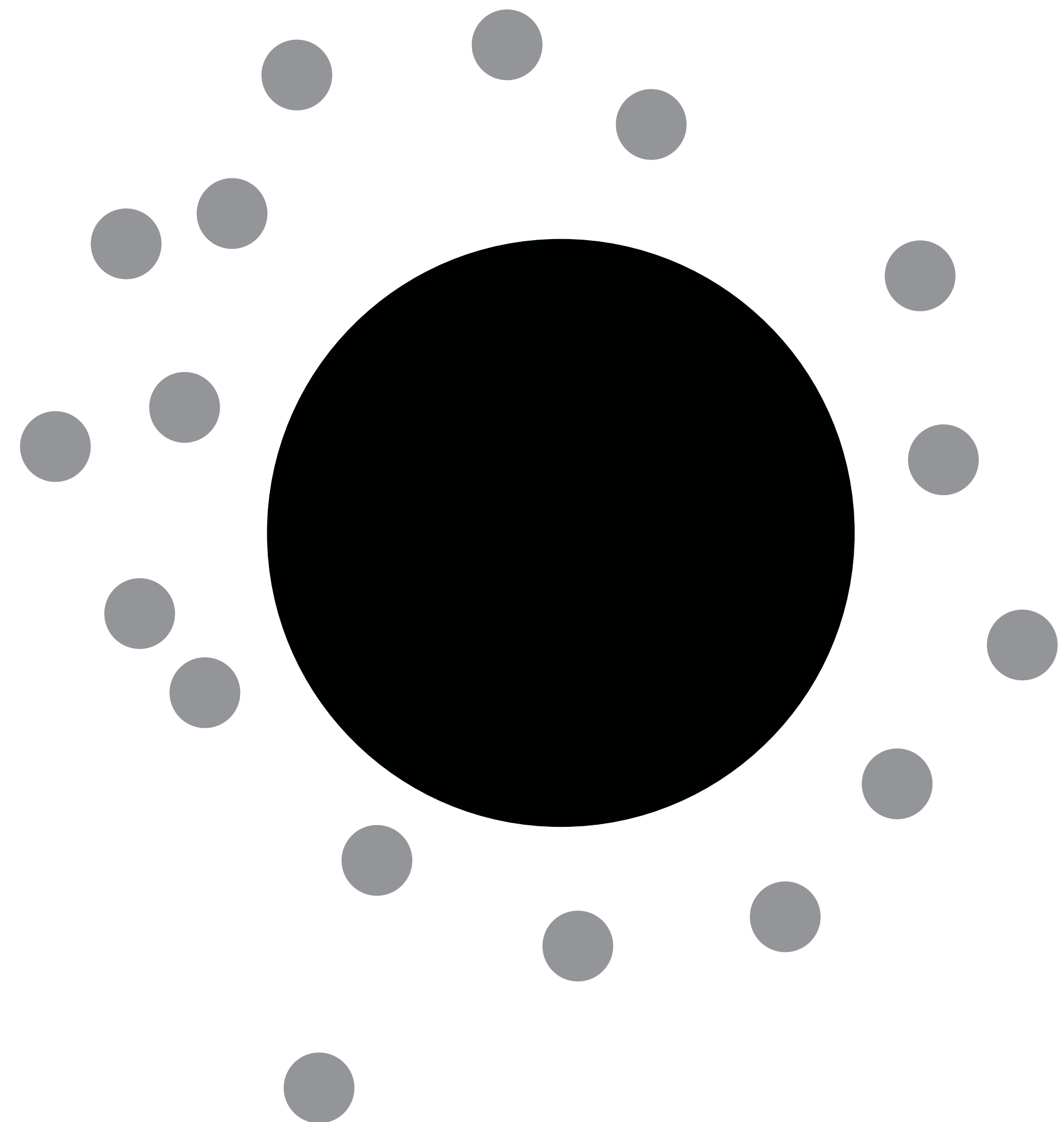
*They are aware of
the audience body
inhabiting the room.*

*They can see how the artwork
attracts the attention
of this audience body.*

If something interesting
starts to happen anywhere,
people tend to gather around
this interesting thing
in order to see it.

It may be that this is
what has taken place since time
immemorial, or prehistorically.

Whether the "stage event"
is a dance, a song, a fight, a
political speech or someone
injured in an accident -



the audience will
without difficulty
surround it.

Artist-researcher
Davide Giovanzana
writes that a circle is



A form that
was eventually broken
by the entry of a
stage.

The classic (or "golden") era
of Ancient Greek theatre
takes place in the fifth century BCE.

Theatre is structured
as an open air building
where the audience sits in
semicircular rows of

theatron

(1 - "the place of viewing")

and watches events taking place on the

orkhestra

(2 - "the place of dance").

skene

(3 - "tent") is a backdrop,
behind which the actors can change costume.

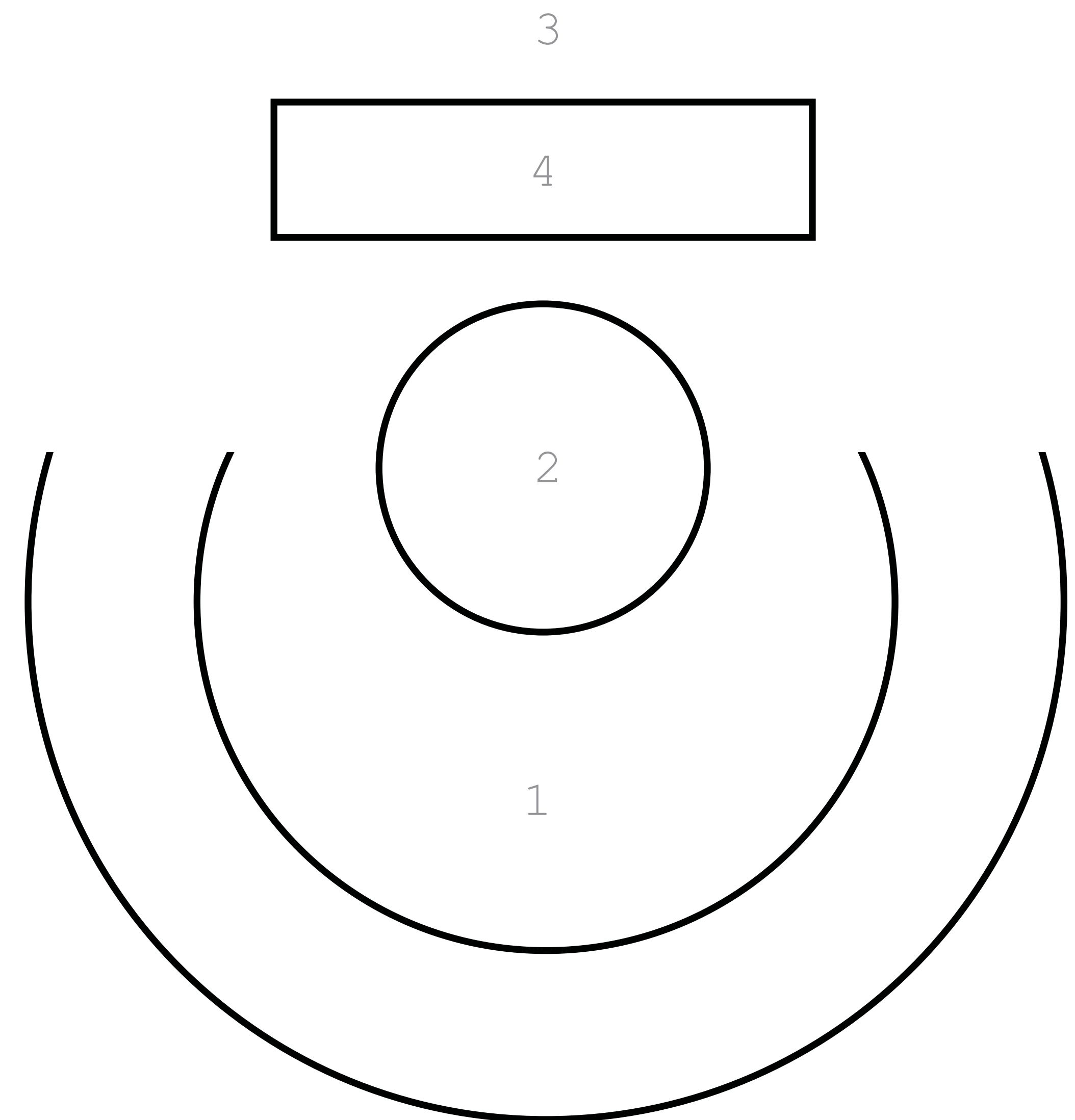
In front of it an elevated stage(4),

proskenion,

is built.

The events move on stage.

This theatrical system has in many ways
survived for millennia.



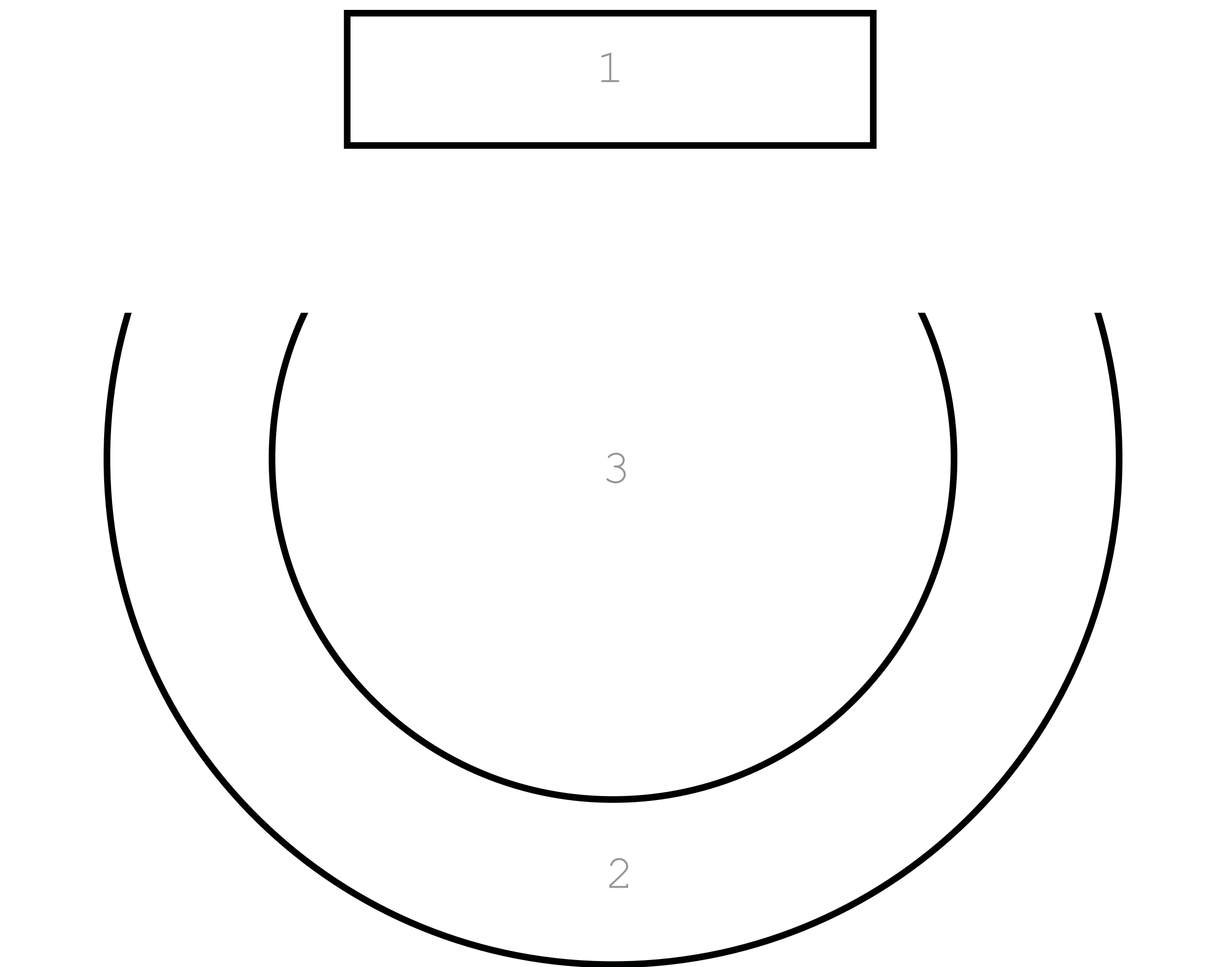
It is a classic spatialization
of the charge between
the outside and the inside.

By the 18th century the structure is reiterated in European theatres.

Jean Francois Marmontel observes how the audience condition of the theatres of his time reflects the political segregation of the people into classes.

Theatre is constituted of an elevated **stage** (1), several stories of semicircular rows of seats, i.e. the **gallery**(2), and in the center a **pit** (3) for the standing audience.

The pit "is where the spectator is the most uncomfortable, and where the tickets cost the least".

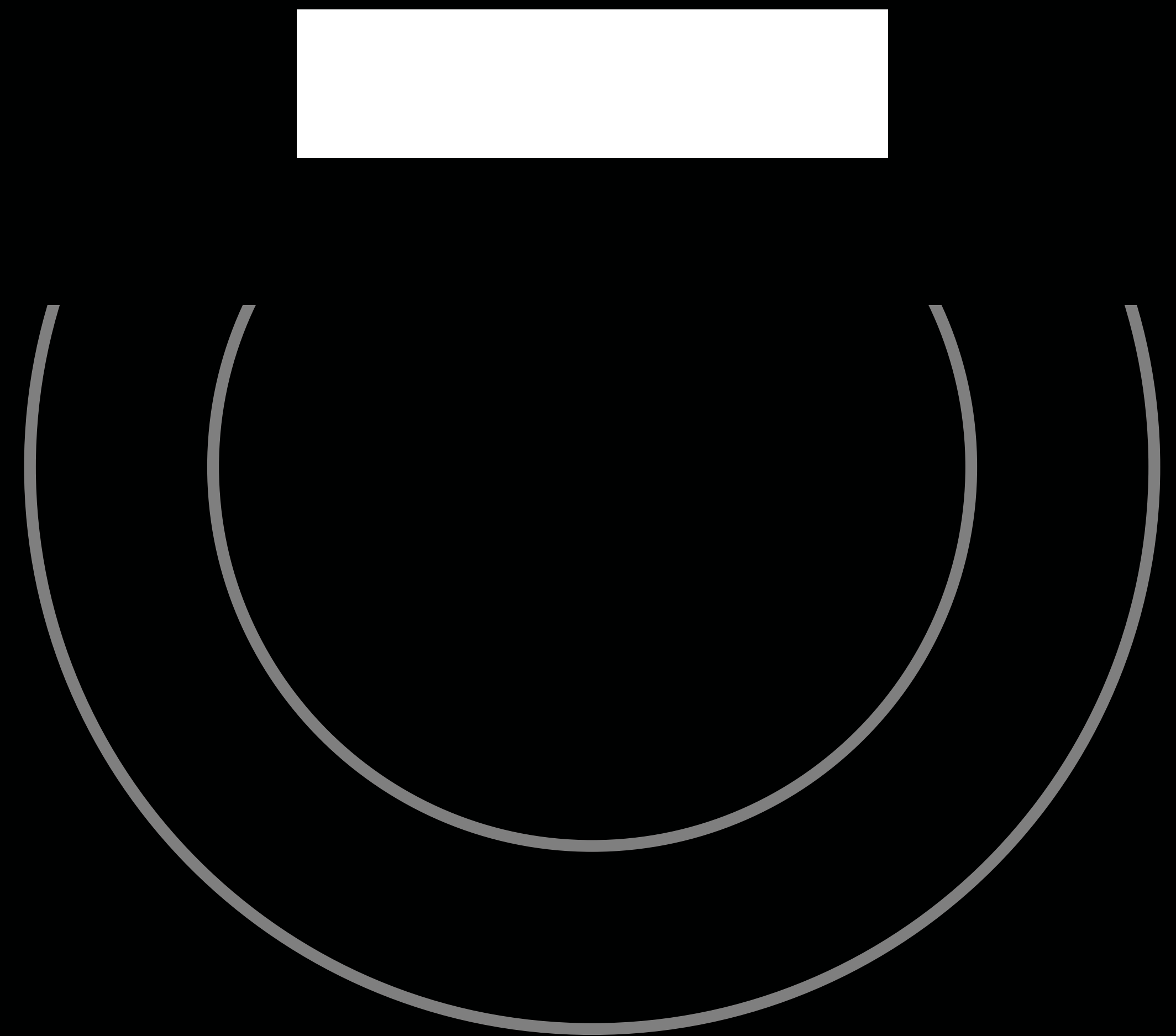


Marmontel elaborates how the class of the audience members determines their position, experience and behaviour in the theatre.

During the 19th century
the oppositional aspect of theatre -
its division into two
completely separate zones -

the stage
and
the auditorium

is further enhanced
by directing light on stage
and dimming the auditorium.



The 20th century popularizes a
form of
theatre architecture:

the black box.

There is no fixed auditorium built
into the space, instead there
are mobile structures, which can
be re-organized every time.

The stage and the
audience are still
kept separate, but the
spatial relationship
between them can
be included in the
aesthetics of each
performance.

Light and seating become the main
tools for the divide. In a black
space, light cuts things in and
out. The chairs of the auditorium
are assembled as squares, corridors,
circles, triangles, corners and other
geometrical formations.

The stage appears where the
gazes of those sitting on
the chairs are directed.

In the latter half of the 20th century,

performance art

emerges as new mode
of presenting bodies.

It does not follow the
conventions of theatre
in situating the
audience in space.

Performances are realized,
for example,
in art galleries,
artists' studios
and public spaces.

These spaces of performance
are usually thoroughly
lit, they rarely have seats,
and the audience

'visitors'

'spectators'

'passers-by'

are supposed to move
independently
closer or further from the
performers.

When something
interesting
starts to happen
on the site,
they gather
around it.

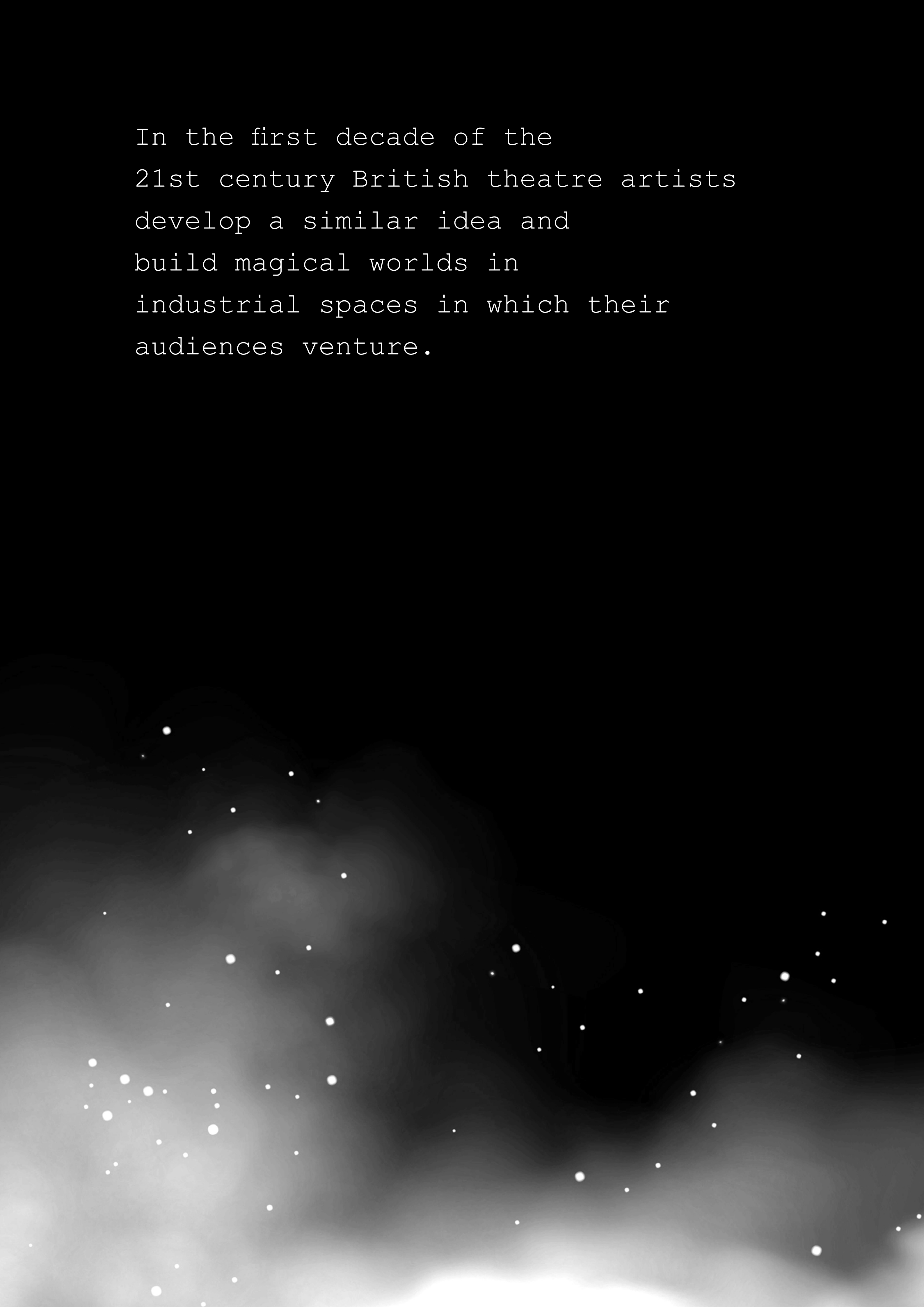
In the 1960s the artist-
researcher **Richard Schechner**
thinks about the theatrical
space and says something new.

Or it is not new at all,
but at this historical moment,
in this western context,
it seems new.

He creates the category of
“environmental performance”.

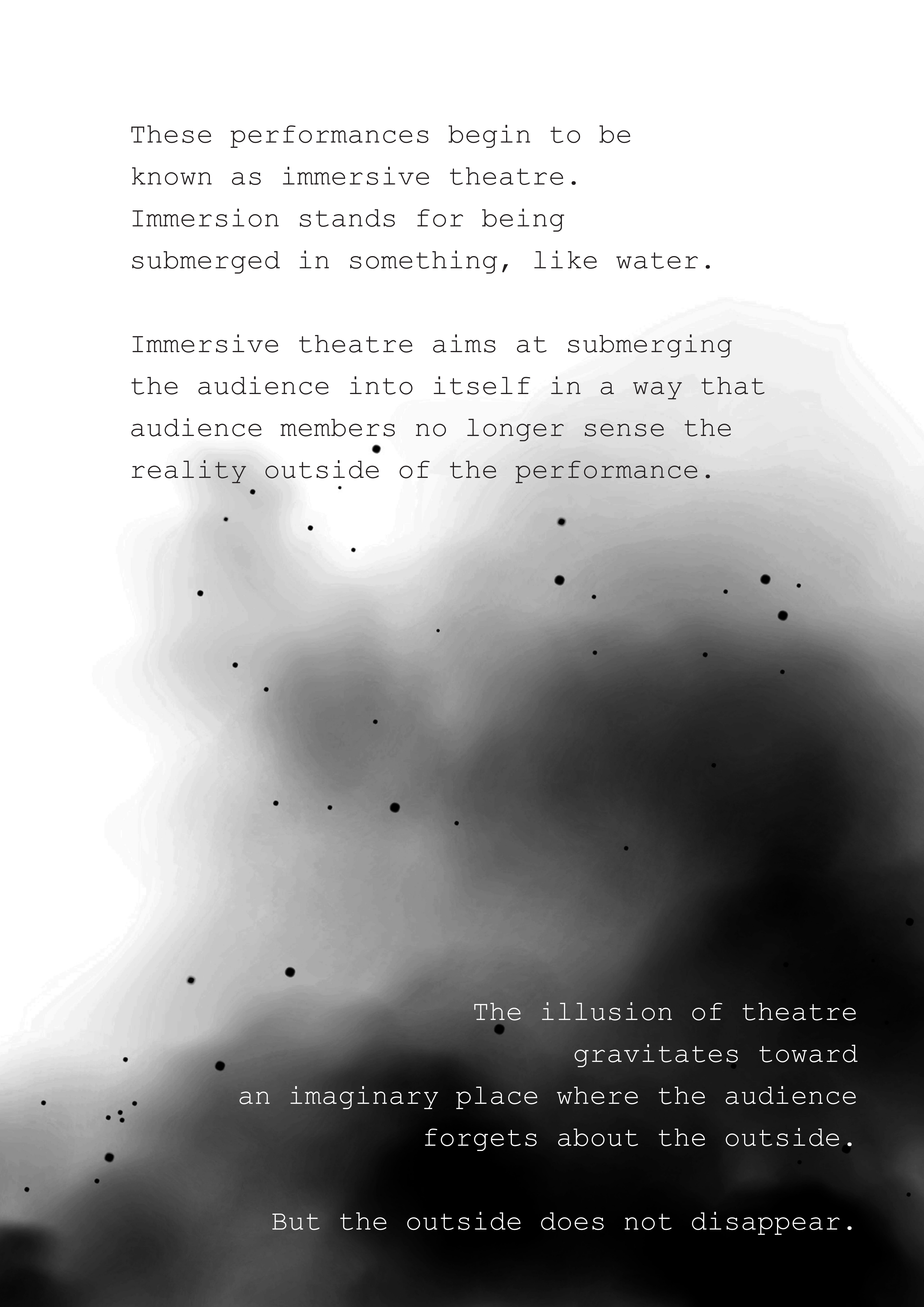
In environmental performances
no part of the space is
reserved for the stage or the
auditorium.

Instead the performance takes
place all around the audience
members.



In the first decade of the
21st century British theatre artists
develop a similar idea and
build magical worlds in
industrial spaces in which their
audiences venture.

These performances begin to be
known as immersive theatre.
Immersion stands for being
submerged in something, like water.



Immersive theatre aims at submerging
the audience into itself in a way that
audience members no longer sense the
reality outside of the performance.

The illusion of theatre
gravitates toward
an imaginary place where the audience
forgets about the outside.

But the outside does not disappear.

*The readers are immersed in this work,
like in water.*

*They sit in front of a table,
they inhabit the auditorium,
the stage,
the pit.*

*They enter
the pages
of the book.*

*They take part
in this ongoing story.*

*They are a tiny part of this history,
which is a tiny part of all histories.*

The philosopher, artist
and situationist **Guy Debord** awakens
to see the capitalist society as a

spectacle.

For him, we, as modern consumers,
are imprisoned in the outside,
in an alienated state of spectation,
without direct access
to lived reality.

Debord and his fellow situationists
think that instead of "art" we need
a revolution, to which end they
create avant-garde techniques to help
people break out of this distanced
imprisonment of spectatorship,
into directly lived experience.



Cultural theorist and activist Stuart

swallow all distinctions

Binary oppositions are also rarely neutral,

For

**white
men
masculine**

Hall points out especially how black

He offers it as an example of how 'the Other'

Black people are placed outside the

The spectators of this spectacle

Hall writes that binary oppositions often

into their rigid structure.

instead there is always a power relation within.

example

**black
women
feminine,**

bodies are represented in 'the West'.

has become a spectacle in western societies.

audience circulating these stereotypes.

consider themselves distinct

from the stereotypical
others they spectate.

For philosopher **Jacques Rancière** equality is not a goal but the initial situation of our lives.

He implies that theatre-makers do not appreciate spectatorship. Instead they aim to emancipate their spectators, activate them.

He suggests we could let go of the distinction between active and passive as well as the assumed hierarchies present in the theatrical situation.

In the topography of out and in,

Rancière's spectator is on the outside while not being an outsider.

The inside is not better, and distance is a way of taking part in it.

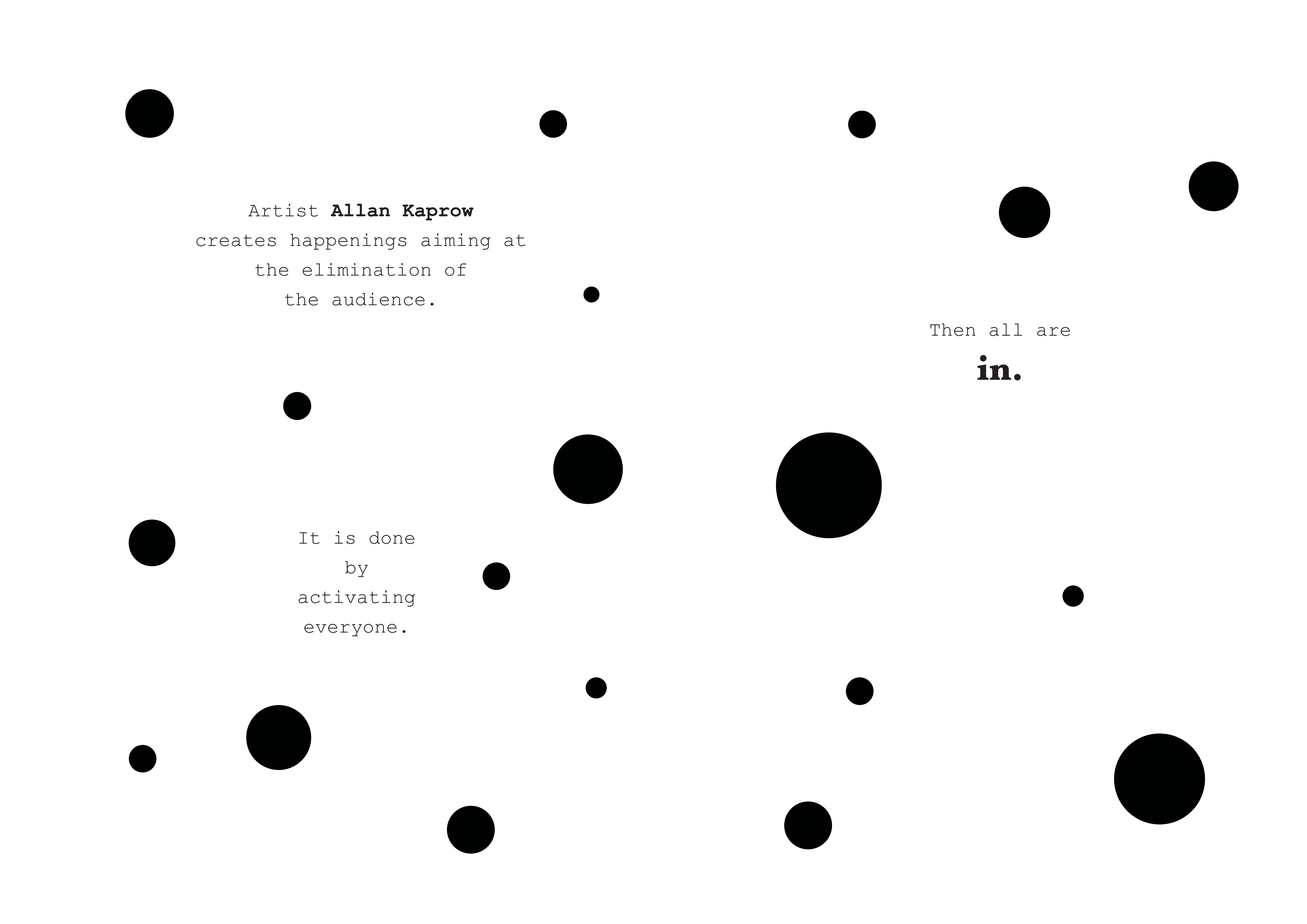
For philosopher **John Dewey**,
art takes place in the experience.

The audience is
constantly
inside experience.

There is
no outside.

While attending an art work
enables a shift, or a
heightening, of experience,
it nevertheless is only
a part of the terrain
of experience.

Or if there is,
it is out of our reach.



Artist **Allan Kaprow**
creates happenings aiming at
the elimination of
the audience.

Then all are
in.

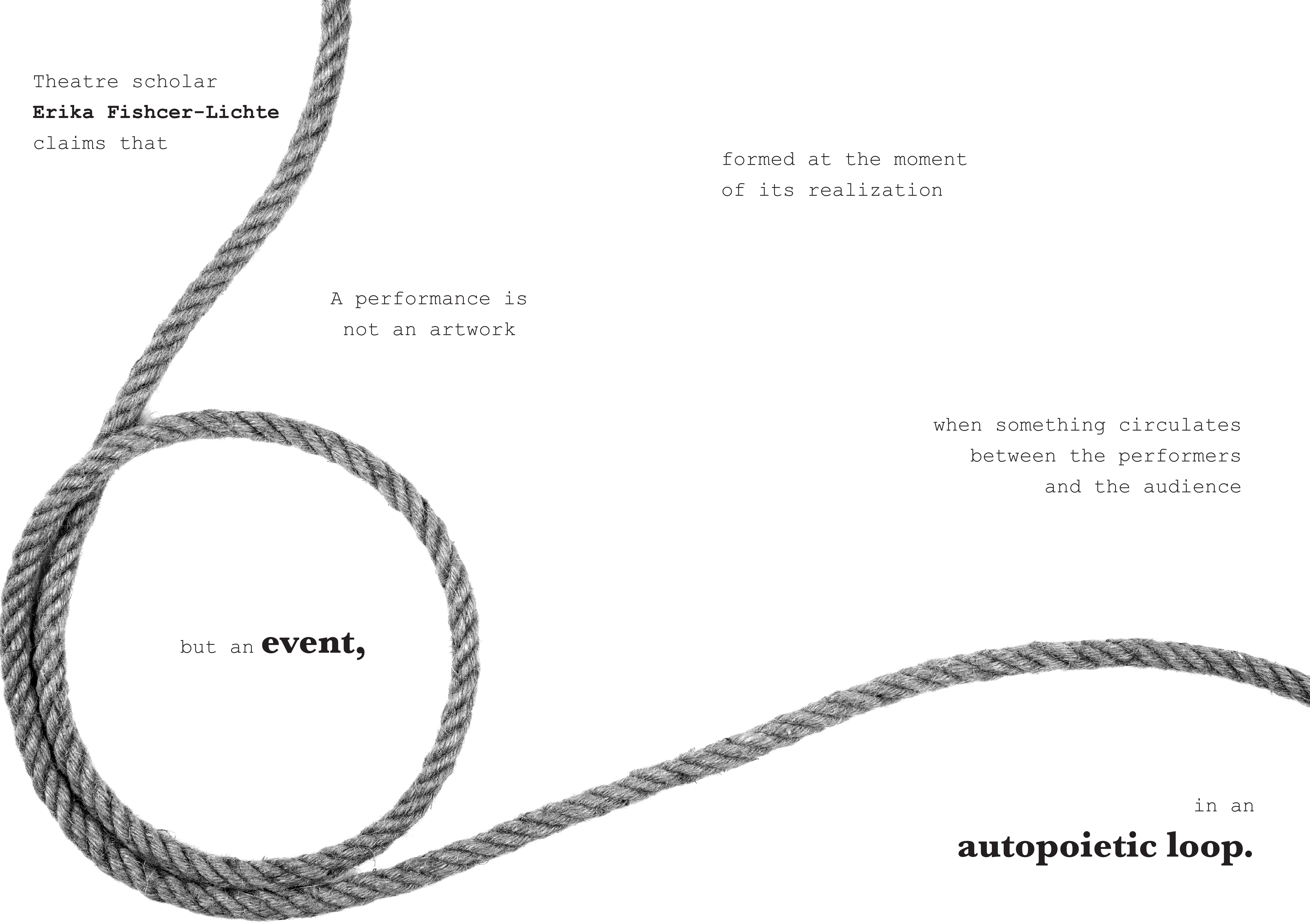
It is done
by
activating
everyone.

Artist-researcher
Vincent Roumagnac

translates Jacques

Derrida into

theatre: "There is
nothing outside the
stage any longer."



Theatre scholar
Erika Fishcer-Lichte
claims that

formed at the moment
of its realization

A performance is
not an artwork

when something circulates
between the performers
and the audience

but an **event,**

in an
autopoietic loop.

Then theatre scholar **Ana Pais**
proposes that
the function
of the audience is

affective resonance,

which is to say that
a performance needs an audience,
the affects of which vibrate
due to its influence.

Like Rancière,
Pais rejects the dichotomy
of active and
passive.



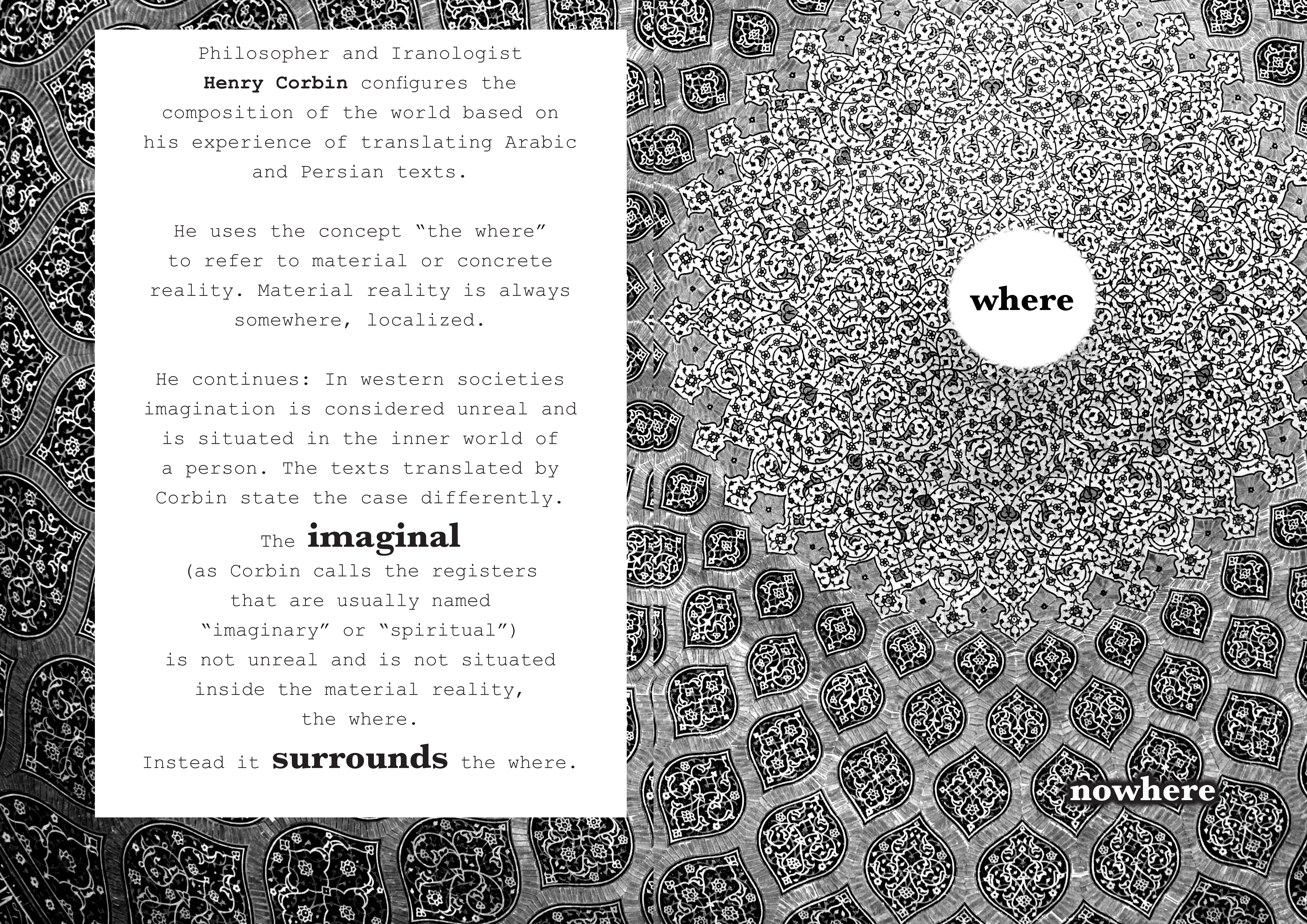
The Finnish
phenomenologist
Harri Mäcklin
writes about the
immersion
brought about by art
and proposes that
when one is
immersed into
an art experience,

one is transported elsewhere.

He does not suggest that
we enter another world,
but that being-there is
warped

in such a way
that there is no
there
anymore.

If the nature of space and
place are transformed,
how do we discern what is
in and **out** ?



Philosopher and Iranologist
Henry Corbin configures the
composition of the world based on
his experience of translating Arabic
and Persian texts.

He uses the concept "the where"
to refer to material or concrete
reality. Material reality is always
somewhere, localized.

He continues: In western societies
imagination is considered unreal and
is situated in the inner world of
a person. The texts translated by
Corbin state the case differently.

The **imaginal**
(as Corbin calls the registers
that are usually named
"imaginary" or "spiritual")
is not unreal and is not situated
inside the material reality,
the where.

Instead it **surrounds** the where.

where

nowhere

Debord: We are **out**.

Hall: 'The Other' is **out**.

Rancière: We are **out** for a *reason*.

Dewey: We are **in**.

Kaprow: We are **in** if we *act*.

Roumagnac: There is nothing **outside** the stage
any longer.

Fischer-Lichte: We are **in** a *loop*.

Pais: We are **in** *resonance*.

Mäcklin: **In** is *elsewhere*.

Corbin: The *where* is **in** the imaginal.

...if we combine Rancière's proposal,
that spectatorship is a specific
and necessary form of participation

and the idea by Pais,
that this form is affective and in a
vibrational relationship
with the artwork

and Mäcklin's paradox,
in which one immerses elsewhere

and Roumagnac's suggestion, that
the contemporary stage
is composed in registers
of time and space

existing beyond the reach of
our limbs and members...

*The readers of this text sit in
front of a table.*

On the table is a book.

They are on the last page.

This page is a theatre.