

The therapeutic effect of performing arts from a psychoanalytical perspective

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Abstract. This work analyses the therapeutic effects of performing arts and the different psychological processes that this artistic modality puts into play from the perspective of Sigmund Freud y Jacques Lacan. For this, it analyzes the concept of identification, first as a way of satisfying repressed desires, and secondly as a constitutive way of identity. The importance of sharing the emotional effect of a fiction to affirm the representation of a subject is then analyzed. Next, the function of two basic elements of performing arts is established: the setting and the curtain. It also shows that the importance of repetition and historization is revealed in approachment of trauma. The benefits of performing arts as a sublimation are exposed from the artist's *savoir faire*. As an original contribution, two structures that organize two models of artistic creation are established: beautiful creation and shocking creation. Finally, taking as reference the Sophocles Antigone, the ethical and moral function of the represented act is justified.

Keywords: Performing arts, theater, therapy, representation, sublimation.

[es] El efecto terapéutico del arte escénico desde una perspectiva psicoanalítica

Resumen. Este trabajo analiza los efectos terapéuticos del arte escénico y los diferentes procesos psicológicos que esta modalidad artística pone en juego desde la óptica de Sigmund Freud y Jacques Lacan. Para ello se analiza el concepto de identificación, primero como vía de satisfacción de deseos reprimidos, y segundo como vía constitutiva de la identidad. Se analiza entonces la importancia de compartir el efecto emocional de una ficción para afirmar la representación de un sujeto. A continuación, se establece la función de dos elementos básicos del arte escénico: el encuadre y el telón. Se pone también de manifiesto la importancia de la repetición y la historización en el abordaje de lo traumático. Se exponen después, a partir del *savoir faire* del artista, los beneficios del arte escénico como sublimación pulsional. Se establecen, como aportación original, las dos estructuras que organizan dos modelos de creación artística: la creación bella y la creación impactante. Finalmente, tomando como referencia la *Antígona* de Sófocles, se justifica la función ética y moral, del acto representado.

Palabras clave: Arte escénico, teatro, terapia, representación, sublimación.

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1. Introduction

We know that performing arts in the way that they present a plot that involves certain characters, may have a liberating, cathartic, inspiring, enjoyable effect... ultimately, therapeutic; as much for the creator of the work, as for the performers, as for the spectators. But what determines that beneficial effect? What allows us to recommend theater, cinema or dance to any subject, child or adult, sick or healthy, good or bad, smart or silly, imprisoned or free... Why does staging as an artistic expression stimulate, motivate, exert, unite, improve human beings? We propose to answer this question by returning to Freud's and Lacan's conceptual developments on identity, representation and sublimation as basic pillars for any current attempt to understand and enhance the therapeutic effect of performance art.

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2. Characters identification

2.1. Characters identification as satisfaction of repressed wishes

Let's start with identification concept, the most obvious mechanism that a stage representation brings into play: the spectator, the actor, and even the creator, identify in one way or another with the plot and/or with their characters. Thanks to identification we can be in that moment someone we are not or live what we have not lived. Freud (1995d, p. 306) said it this way:

Being present as an interested spectator at a spectacle or play does for adults what play does for children, whose hesitant hopes of being able to do what grown-up people do are in that way gratified. The spectator is a person who experiences too little (...) he longs to feel and to act and to arrange things according to his desires—in short, to be a hero (...) without pains and sufferings and acute fears [...] Accordingly, his enjoyment is based on an illusion [...] that after all it is only a game, which can threaten no damage to his personal security. In these circumstances he can allow himself to enjoy being a 'great man', to give way without a qualm to such suppressed impulses as a craving for freedom in religious, political, social and sexual matters, and to 'blow off steam' in every direction in the various grand scenes that form part of the life represented on the stage.

Enjoy as a child who wants to act the grown-up. Identify with heroes without endangering your life, unleash your repressed desires. The theater would have for Freud (1995d, p. 306) a social value because "it allays the pain of sacrifice" that society demands, expresses "It appeases, as it were, a rising rebellion against the divine regulation of the universe, which is responsible for the existence of suffering" Thus "Heroes are first and foremost rebels against God or against something divine [...] Here we have a mood like that of Prometheus, but alloyed with a paltry readiness to let oneself be soothed for the moment by a temporary satisfaction".

2.2. Characters identification as constitutive

The concept of identification is fundamental in psychology to establish the basis of learning, evolutionary development and social integration. But it is more fundamental, if possible, for psychoanalysis that considers that identification constitutes the origin, the true birth of the subject. In psychoanalysis, when human beings are born, we are not yet constituted as subjects in the full sense, we will still need to take a series of steps to feel that we occupy a place in this world, and we do it thanks to identification; Identification creates the subject.

The distinction of three registers that define human reality: real, symbolic and imaginary that we owe to psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, allows us to approach the notion of identification in a more rigorous and profound way. For a subject to be born he should have, first, reached consciousness of being alive, of his existence, of the inhabitation of his own limited body. We could call this, following Lacan (2006), imaginary identification because it is established through the identification with images that capture us through perceptions. The perceptual images that identify us are those that transmit us fullness and fixity, just what we need to affirm the consistency and uniqueness of our being. A being, until then, composed of fragmented, disjointed parts, born in the most helpless and forlorn state of the entire animal world.

The prototypical image of the imaginary identifications will be the image of the child reflected in the mirror. The virtual image that is reflected has the power to arouse that sense of ordered and grounded completeness. The moment of identification will be signalled by an observable change of attitude in the child in front of his own image after the age of 6 months: his interest in his reflection, his gestures, his joy, indicate that first recognition. Freud called it a narcissistic image because of the libidinal charge it contains and which must be transferred to the objects of the outside world; and Lacan (2006), in the moment of its constitution called it the Mirror Stage, noting that the result of identification with an image is the formation of the psychic instance we call *I* or *Ego*.

However, in the imaginary identification there will always be a lack of something, something that cannot be captured, something that cannot be imagined. That "something" will remain in a strictly real term. As Morpheus explains to the hero, Neo, in the famous series of movies *The Matrix* (Wachowsky A. y Wachowski L., 1999) as he is released from the imaginary prison induced by the Matrix program: "Something does not work in the world. You don't know what it is, but there it is, like a splinter stuck in your mind, and it's driving you crazy..."

The identity provided by the images is consistent in the moment, but unstable since the body, the world, the perceptions are subject to permanent change. Thus, the lack of something, "the splinter in the mind", will not cease to manifest itself. Imaginary identity is constitutive, necessary but not sufficient. The Ego is not even master in its own house, as Freud would say.

The fact that the Ego cannot differentiate itself from its image and remains captured by it, that at this level we cannot differentiate ourselves from others, our fellow human beings, constitutes the source of human aggressiveness for Lacan (2006, p. 79). Therefore, in addition to achieving a consistent imaginary identity, we will have to look for an identity that supports our particularities and differences. That way we could relate to one another without trying to be the same, without merging, without always comparing ourselves and competing... we will be able to love and desire someone while maintaining our uniqueness. This symbolic identity is acquired by partial identifications, not to an imaginary totality, but to differentiating symbolic features. Lacan will say symbolic because it is related to the symbols bequeathed by the culture, starting with one's own name. Symbols are usually more stable than images; our

name, for example, is bequeathed to us before birth, it does not usually change, it represents us, it even outlives us. However, the symbols being transmitted through language are subject to its laws: the basic elements of language, the signifiers, are not defined by themselves, but rather articulated to other signifiers that make them easily change their meaning, leaving the subject in a permanent uncertainty regarding their symbolic identity. One's own name is the prototype here: "I am (they call me) John Smith, that sets me apart from the others, but... who is John Smith?" Society will recognize us with names and titles, it will provide us with partial identifications, variable and shareable, but inconsistent. The symbols, as it happened with images but differently, will always be insufficient to give us a full identity.

Our relationship with perceptual images and cultural symbols will therefore be constitutive and at the same time lacking. It is not only that subject A can identify with another subject B to acquire a certain image of himself or trait that, from there, will become part of his identity, but that it will be B who will create, produce the birth, the entry into the world of A. And the representation on stage, of course, will be a privileged source of imaginary and symbolic identification elements for the constitution of the subject. It is good for us that Neo awakes to that splinter stuck in his mind. If there has been identification with Neo, the subject will not be the same as before. Performing arts, like any artistic creation, have the potential to arouse, wake up a new (Neo) subject.

3. Share a fiction to reaffirm a representation

*The myths never happened but have
always been there.*

Salustio

The consideration of the origin of the subject from identifications with images and symbols brings us to a fundamental psychoanalytic conclusion that directly concerns performing arts: truth has a fictional structure. That is, we only touch the truth through countenances that have something of the liar or deceit about them; through myths, for example, that constitute the origin of the theater. The Ego, that instance that affirms each human being against the disorder of the stimuli that bombard it, shares the same basis of deception, of fiction, of figuration of something strictly real that cannot be achieved. Our Ego, in which we all trust, constitutive foundation, is basically imaginary, fictional, illusory, deceptive, unstable... A hoax, yes, but necessary.

But also, the subject, in its singularity, is a pure linguistic representation that leaves out the real. If our name means nothing by itself, we will always depend on other signifiers and the search will be infinite.

Performing arts are pure representation and, unlike other artistic expressions, they are representation acted out. It allows a subject to be represented in its singularity because it provides identifications that give the Ego new consistencies in the imaginary plane and new meanings in the symbolic plane, but also allows spatial and temporal sharing of the emotion of the performance. This is fundamental because the truth of the being who speaks, beyond the representations, is its inconsistency and instability, but in performance that lack unites, synchronizes and updates itself. Like a bicycle that falls over if it stops, we always need new representations, but pedaling together allows us to go further. As spectators we are obligated to be credulous about the performance, to suspend judgment of reality and to share the representation: what does it matter if it is not believable? Like classic myths, they never happened, but they have always been there... for everyone.

On the other hand, if we consider performing arts, with its fictional structure, as a potential manifestation of a truth that cannot sustain itself on its own, we must conclude that representation on stage will be a manifestation more than what Freud, from *The Interpretation of Dreams* published in 1900, called formations of the unconscious. The formations of the unconscious are privileged expressions of something that crosses a barrier, that bypasses censorship, that arises from the most intimate and at the same time strangest parts of ourselves. Performing arts represent the subject of the unconscious, such as dreams, fantasies, neurotic symptoms, failed acts... with the advantage of sharing it, of being able to create a bond through its manifestation. This potential capacity of the play grants that bond peculiar characteristics and unique effects.

4. Setting, curtain and encounter with the traumatic

As a formation of the unconscious or manifestation of a strange and intimate truth that the most conscious and rational reality cannot sustain, performing arts incorporate a particular structure that we can call setting or frame, and a simple and effective element, but of extraordinary importance: the curtain (no matter whether it is a physical curtain).

The setting and the curtain place the art on stage in the game of what is hidden and what is shown, the same game that truth, eroticism and magic play. Something veiled, fleetingly, is located and revealed, the dark becomes clear, but as it is framed we can look away. The frame or stage structure establishes a spatial boundary in performing arts. Such a structure is shared by other constituent elements of the subject whose function, according to Lacan (1963, p. 50), is necessary to locate the real-traumatic event that happens: "The horrible, the suspicious, the uncanny [...] presents itself through skylights". And it points to three elements with the same frame structure: the mirror, which

frames the image it reflects; the mental projection of certain repetitive and strange fantasies of the subject that sustain desire and which he calls *fantasme*; and the manifestation of angst as a sign of proximity to the real-traumatic.

The curtain, meanwhile, separates the mundane and the divine. As a veil that promises to rise, it arouses desire and prepares one for surprise, emotion and strangeness. Just as psychoanalysis prepares for the opening and closing of the unconscious. The curtain raises the spectator's hopes, introduces a mediation, an essential temporary cut in every representation of the subject. It is essential, precisely, to preserve the subject from an excess of presentation. The curtain spares oneself from the traumatic impact of an encounter with something too real, in-mediate, that is, without mediation. When the curtain rises, we prepare ourselves to be able to look face to face with death, with the most primitive enjoyments, with forbidden passions, in a limited space and time. And when it comes down, we feel comforted, relieved... and we applaud.

5. Trauma, repetition and historization

What we cannot remember we act out. Freud (1995b, p. 539) is taxative when separating the processes of perception and memory. Remembrance depends on systems that alter the perception stimulate. These systems (unconscious and preconscious) will make the memory something totally different from the perceived. The memories of certain events will, therefore, be "Screen Memories" (Freud, 1995a), inevitably falsified to preserve the psychic balance. Like the forgetfulness that will only be symptomatic; defensive formations against the threat of a real excess, exceptionally not remembered. In staged fiction, the unbearable is partly transferred to the connection with the acting and the character. Therefore, it will also constitute a memory hoax to face the unnameable, like a false memory. Fiction will thus constitute a barrier against anguish and a coating of the traumatic. If the trauma must adopt a storitized structure to enrol in memory, fiction will give the scene to that story: it will place the subject and will allow him to obtain pleasure from a place in a story that radically exceeds it.

Subsequently, Freud (1995e, p. 14) will find the most reliable manifestation of trauma in repetition. What cannot be remembered, is repeated: "we may say that the patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (p. 150).

The real hole left by the trauma will sink its roots in the psychic apparatus producing singular manifestations that act repetitively. We could suggest, then, that all psychotherapy will try to produce, from that traumatic impact, something that makes this repetition able to be recounted. Recounted in both directions: the story and the accounting. Even knowing that there will always be an impossible in that operation; a real part, impossible to represent, that will maintain its condition as such. Performing arts will be constituted here as a privileged expression. They are at the same time, stories and accounts.

But why do we repeat the painful? If the psychical apparatus tries to defend itself against pain, why do we manifest repeatedly the trauma causing more pain? Why do we tend to emulate or repeat scenes reminiscent of trauma? Why do we like stories of fear, drama or tragedy? We can, with Freud (1995h), rehearse an answer: such stories try to place and secure the limits of that real hole, they try not to make the void that comes with it overflow, they try not to make its opening grow. For this purpose, the subject tends to remember, to reproduce, to reinvest (cathexis) his edges, his marks with psychic energy. The subject needs to repeat the painful representations that make trauma a limited vacuum, a localized and operable hole.

However, the psychoanalytic clinical practice shows us a fundamental difference in the repetitive temporality of the manifestations of trauma: some of them seem to constitute the product or the result of a work; and others simply repeat without apparent previous work. Performing arts exemplify the former they repeat a re-presentation outcome of a creative piece of work. The repetition of what is performed implies an attempt to record the trauma in the subject's history. Elements that try to find meaning, stage, symbolize, make sense of the trauma, are repeated. They are repetitions that open questions, which tend to change, affected by the time or the therapeutic work. Performing arts have that potential to surprise, question and modify the subject. In the face of it, there would be the repetition of what is simply shown without being performed. What is repeated as identical, without change or elaboration, as an echo empty of meaning that manifests itself every time as the first time and tends to repeat itself compulsively, without telling us anything, as an addiction (a-diction) or, as what Freud (1995h, p. 52) called Death Instinct.

Performing arts are the result of a psychic work capable of combining repetition and surprise, of transforming what is traumatic into a historical event, of connecting what is genuine with a story that progressively takes the condition of an articulated discourse. It is a story in which the subject himself is involved, represented before that real hole that he now borders, leaving a space for desire. How do we know where we're going if we don't know where we've come from?

6. Performing arts as a sublimation of the drives

*Just one thing alludes to a happy possibility
of satisfying the trend, the notion of sublimation.*

Jacques Lacan

6.1. The sublimation concept

Like any artistic creation, performing arts point to the sublime, that is, it participates in sublimation. Sublimation is a particular modality of drive satisfaction (Freud, 1995f) because it desexualizes the drive and can, therefore, circumvent the brake of repression exerted on the sexual drive. The term sublimation has its roots in alchemy (transformation of vile metal into pure gold), in chemistry (direct passage from the solid to the gaseous state, without going through the liquid state) and even in religion (purification or elevation of the soul over the body). Despite Freud's great attraction to art and that sublimation was pointed out by him as one of the four possible destinations of the drive, there is no text in his work dedicated to specifying this concept. He even confesses that he destroyed a piece of work dedicated to this. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Freud, 1995c, p. 178) he defines it as a deviation from the drive forces of his goals that enhances cultural achievements "Historians of civilization appear to be at one in assuming that powerful components are acquired for every kind of cultural achievement by this diversion of sexual instinctual forces from sexual aims and their direction to new ones—a process which deserves the name of 'sublimation'" and, in 1917 (Freud, 1995g), p. 376) he opposes the sublimatory capacity of the artist to that of the symptomatic neurotic. Where there is a symptom in the neurotic:

A man who is a true artist has more at his disposal. In the first place, he understands how to work over his day-dreams in such a way as to make them lose what is too personal about them and repels strangers, and to make it possible for others to share in the enjoyment of them. He understands, too, how to tone them down so that they do not easily betray their origin from proscribed sources. Furthermore, he possesses the mysterious power of shaping some particular material until it has become a faithful image of his phantasy; and he knows, moreover, how to link so large a yield of pleasure to this representation of his unconscious phantasy that, for the time being at least, repressions are outweighed and lifted by it. If he is able to accomplish all this, he makes it possible for other people once more to derive consolation and alleviation from their own sources of pleasure in their unconscious which have become inaccessible to them; he earns their gratitude and admiration and he has thus achieved through his phantasy what originally he had achieved only in his phantasy—honour, power and the love of women. (p. 376)

In sublimation, the drive is desexualized by connecting its satisfaction with certain ideals and moving away from selfish or utilitarian interest, or from the simple desire for recognition through the work.

Lacan's analysis of sublimation of his seminar 7 (1959, there is no English version) does not accentuate cultural value or desexualisation, but the ability of the sublimator to operate with a vacuum and shape it. According to Lacan, art is characterized by a certain way of organization around that emptiness, unlike religion and science which elude it in different ways. The artist outlines the emptiness as the potter molds a vessel, the emptiness remains in the center, but sublimation creates it. For Lacan, as for Freud, the artist puts into play a *savoir faire* (know how) in which he implies his own body. The work created does not have, in the first instance, utilitarian value, nor exchange value, but has enjoyment [*jouissance*] value. Enjoyment, for Lacan is not pleasure, it is an excess beyond pleasure and it connects with pain. Therefore, sublimation has something transgressive, it is not at the service of standardized forms, but rather frees them. And, in effect, the testimony of the artists verifies that the process of creating a work is not without suffering.

6.2. The *savoir faire* of the artist

From the contributions of Freud and Lacan we can define the sublime *savoir faire* of the artist:

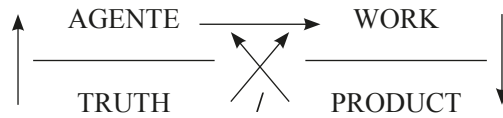
1. By endowing its object with a desexualized enjoyment, the satisfaction that this object entails is not evident or immediate; It is strange and is somehow in suspense. This suspension in which the subject remains, maintains and accentuates the desire to create and to share the creation, looking for something that is not known, but that opens up to a creative act. An *act*, from the psychoanalytic point of view, is not any action; it is something unexpected, which causes a real change; It is not acting for someone, nor repetition, madness, or suicide. It requires, of course, a determined desire. A desire that is not limited to sexual desire and that transcends it.
2. The desire taken to the act, in this case the desire to create, allows us to overcome certain limits regarding convention, shame, diplomacy, etc. If a desire goes beyond the sexual and provokes an act, this act is subversive by structure, breaks pre-established senses, opens up to the unexpected, which escapes any calculation. Therefore, creation as an act of the artist carries a mystery, a *duende* from Lorca, which opens up a multitude of sensations and interpretations.
3. The desire brought to the act is extremely contagious and its result, the work created, establishes a particular type of social connection, a meeting capable of establishing deep bonds and social cohesion between speaking beings. The art work fascinates but does not create passivity, it makes one share the desire to create.
4. The act of creation connects with a universal language, which is why it transcends different cultures. A language that unites and does not depend on meaning or syntax, which is pure shared emotion.

6.3. The two discursive structures of artistic creation

If, as has been stated, the performed work is able to establish a singular link between speaking beings, we will analyze that singularity from the so-called Theory of Four Discourses of Lacan (1970). This theory establishes four

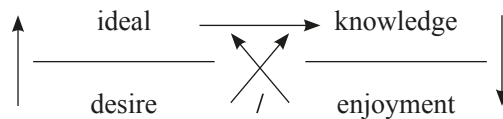
forms of discourse that allow a social bond or link based on a structure that this author defines precisely. The structure consists of four fixed places organized in a diagram. In each place, Lacan places a mobile element that will change place in each form of speech. We have, therefore, four fixed places and four elements that will have to be put into play, occupying different places each time.

Let's see the general structure first. It consists of four fixed places that are named and distributed as follows:



The two horizontal bars place in the upper zone the places most directly related to the conscious (place of the AGENT and place of WORK) and in the lower zone the elements most determined by the unconscious (place of TRUTH and place of the PRODUCT). The arrows indicate that there is a relationship of circular determination between the four places, but that this relationship is interrupted at the bottom by a barrier / that shows the impossibility of the place of the PRODUCT reaching and influencing the place of TRUTH. And, in turn, this relationship allows us to locate the TRUTH as a source of discourse, to the AGENT as a transmitter of that TRUTH, the place of WORK as a receiver of the transmitted impulse, and the PRODUCT as the final result of the operation. The interruption or short circuit that separates PRODUCT and TRUTH is fundamental because it will allow what Lacan calls a Time to Understand and, at the same time, a time to articulate the discourse that is established.

This fixed structure will harbour and determine successively the operation of the four mobile elements. These elements are: 1st, a desire or subject of desire; 2nd, an ideal-master; 3rd, a knowledge; 4th, an object of enjoyment (remembering that for Lacan the concept of enjoyment refers more to excess or disturbance than to pleasure). Every deep bond between speaking beings will have to put these four elements into play without exception. Let us see, as an example, the first historical form of link called by Lacan Discourse of the Master, in which a subject of desire located in the hidden place of the TRUTH or source, sends a pulsation to the ideal-master who will act as an AGENT who will transmit that impulse to a knowledge located in the place of WORK. The work done by the knowledge will PRODUCE an enjoyment object. But this object cannot reach or satisfy the subject of desire initial. Putting each element in its place, the structure of the Discourse of the Master would be this:

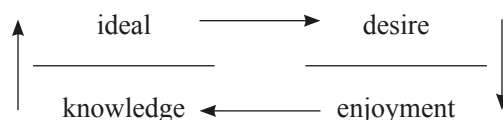


Lacan distinguishes four speeches, that is to say, four possible forms of connection arising at different historical moments. The structure is always the same and the elements rotate, their function depends on the place they occupy in each speech.

Let us now go to the form of linking that interests us: the link through art. Art would not be, for Lacan, one of the four forms of discourse he establishes. However, there is no doubt that art links. What is the particularity of that link? Taking as a reference its discursive structure, the linking established by art puts into play the same four necessary elements from the *savoir faire* of the artist located in the place of the source. But its operation would be different: art discourse would jump the lower barrier of the circuit. In this way it would achieve what we have already mentioned: to avoid the Time to Understand, the time to make sense, the time to articulate the discourse syntactically.

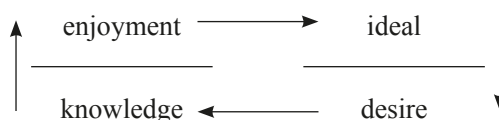
Sharing the peculiarity of breaking through the lower barrier we can differentiate two ways in the production of that achievement by the artist, both based on their *savoir faire*:

1. The first formalization responds to the connection of that knowledge with an ideal through an exemplary, beautiful creation, to constitute a reference that transmits and puts the desiring subject to work to produce an enjoyment object. An enjoyment object not so disturbing in this case because it is an enjoyment of the meaning that the work acquires. An enjoyment that reaches and gives meaning to the artist's knowledge and that can circulate without braking through the discursive circuit:



If we pay attention to the therapeutic value, this idealized creation will have the capacity to enhance the symbolic resources of the subject and make sense of its representation.

2. The second formalization corresponds to the shocking creation, which does not seek the transmission of the *savoir faire* of the artist through the ideal, which does not seek to be an example of beauty, virtue or meaning, but uses it as an agent transmitting an object of enjoyment (now disturbing) and that points directly to the real-traumatic:



The therapeutic potential of shocking creation is deeper. But so is the suffering of the creator who does not get the prize of the enjoyment of meaning and places the disturbing enjoyment of the work in the foreground. However, he manages to connect his work with an established ideal which he puts to work to produce a new desire, that is, a new wishing subject as a result. New subject with ability to achieve the *savoir faire* of the artist located in the place of truth and participate in it.

6.4. The ethical and moral act represented

Let us analyze, finally, the sublimating potential of the artist and the performed work in the latter case: that of shocking creation. Let us question, in particular, the ethical and moral value that the work can acquire based on what we have pointed out in the upper line of the diagram of the shocking creation:

disturbing enjoyment → ideal-master.

How is disturbing enjoyment connected, as a transmitter of the artist's *savoir faire* with the cultural ideal to which it questions and sets to work producing new subjects? Taking a representation of Antigone, the myth recreated by Sophocles. Antigone, daughter of Oedipus, defies the law that, under penalty of death, forbids her to bury and honor the corpse of her brother Polynice, invader of the city. The moral act of Antigone and the refusal of King Creon to forgive it trigger the tragedy. The work impacts by provoking the question of the law of men against a higher law, causing the ethical dilemma in the characters and their actions (Creon himself is an uncle of Antigone; Ismene, his sister, refuses to accompany her, but then he wants to die with her; Hemon, son of Creon and fiancé of Antigone, confronts his father...).

The act of Antigone does not produce an artistic work in itself. Contrary to what happens with Sophocles, for her everything is loss. However, it elevates its act to the highest ethical category because her sacrifice causes the change of the law and, at the same time, the moral legitimization of the new law. The act of Antigone establishes a civilizing link with others at the expense of herself, but only thanks to Sophocles it becomes a performed representation, a shared act. The *savoir faire* of Sophocles takes death as a disturbing object to make the ideal work and produce new subjects.

In conclusion: How to historicize, how to bring up to date, how to

confront the traumatic encounter with what's real, in this case a lethal law, if not through the shared impact of tragedy, or comedy, or reverie, or realism present in the stage play?

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