Theater and Compassion: the Aesthetic Criteria in the Theatrical Staging

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To Peter J. González,
lar familiaris.

1. Introduction[1]

When Faust, the wise man, is in front of the jail where Margaret lies buried, we can grasp his desperation and imagine that situation of hers, just like him. But in that moment, Faust says, "the whole unhappiness of human nature is pressing on my heart" (*Der Menscheit ganzer fasst mich an*) (Goethe []: l, v. 4406; Kaufmann 1992, p. 45). We are able to feel his "pity", his "deep pain", his "fear" for Margaret, but only in a non-original way; otherwise, we may feel an authentic, native and original "compassion" towards Faust, because nobody would like to see the beloved person in a situation as horrible as that of Margaret. There are two types of affective response in the scene: (1) that of Faust, where he "feels" a powerful passion towards Margaret, imagining her state –Faust's exclamation is shouted to the other side of the door-; and (2) that of the spectator, where he "feels" a kind of passion, not as intense as that of Faust and directed, precisely, to him. In the first case, we cannot speak about "compassion", because, as Aristotle says, "the people we pity are: those whom we know, only if they are not very closely related to us –that case we feel about them as if we were in danger

ourselves" (Aristotle 2010, 1386a18-20). Gretchen is Faust's beloved, so it is normal that he can not feel compassion, but similar emotions. As discussed below, the state of Margaret, imagined by Faust, infects him and, under Aristotle's account, it happens as if it were his own pain. Somehow, there is no distance between them... and there is a door!

Accordingly, we can suppose a spectator who feels great sorrow seeing Faust, considering that the wise suffers greatly after imagining the situation of his beloved Margaret. And we know that Faust "imagines" it because Goethe, through a quotation, tells us only that he is "at the iron door of a cell" (*vor einem eisernen Türchen*) and listens her "singing within" (*Es singt inwendig*). Some spectators –and readers-, of course, can suffer "compassion", "pity", "sadness", etc. But another director may have decided to show us the situation of Margaret, her bodily misery, her spiritual defeat, her abandonment feeling. Some spectators will have feelings more or less intense, more or less powerful, but it is strange that, at the grotesque sight of Margaret, some other spectators do not change their facial expressions showing a deep pain, almost visceral, more adequate to what they are seeing, *i.e.*, the situation or Margaret and her own emotional reaction to it. Both cases live together, in fact, in the theater, even in the same drama. Then, I can feel compassion for Margaret, Faust can feel pity for her, I can feel compassion for Faust and I can feel pity because of Margaret's state... or compassion… or anger… or…

It is clear that the choices of the stage director on the design of the scenic space and a concrete performing code for his artistic proposal constitute a pair of elements that, aesthetically, seek one dominant response in the field of the emotions. It is the way of the theory of art, and particularly theory of theater. I we would delve deeper in this way, we would study the dramaturgical theory of theater, the narrative quality of the spaces, the dominant aesthetic concepts of staging from the sensitive elements, the differences among an expressionist performative code, another Brechtian and other deconstructive and so on. But it is evident that the aesthetic criteria condition the spectators' emotional response when the stage director presents his own proposal. In other words, it is not the same experience "reading Faust that seeing Faust, because there is not an unique way of making it. Fortunately.

A good feeling to analyze the types of emotional reactions of the theatrical audience –theater and, in any case, movies- is "compassion", because the nuances that arise not only historically, but conceptually, open a wide range that allows a thorough study of the emotional life of the spectators. The open possibility of being a receptacle of the evil of others opens, at the same time, the need for the similarity between the other and oneself. The evil of another awakes in us a deep regret that opens a door to the subject itself: first, it is a passion that begins in oneself in front of an evil that appears painful to those who do not deserve it, that is, an evil that opens us to the contemplation of the others. The compassion gives us a *circumstantial* knowledge of the other, but, precisely because the other is

equal to us, compassion also gives us an *existential* knowledge of ourselves. Human beings, through compassion, become fragile and needy.

Aristotle's classic characterization of "compassion" defines it as one of the "feelings" involved during a tragedy. It requires a certain affective distance for the necessary analysis of the event the person for whom we feel "compassion" is situated in. In any case, the situation is "undeserved" or "disproportionate" in relation to the mistake committed and it is "exclusively" his. This need for contemplation, assessment and calculation of possibilities that the spectator have to fall in such a situation imply that "compassion" (1) requires "empathy" (sections 2 to 4), (2) an external perspective (section 5) and (6) a conceptual delimitation against sympathy. These three parts will allow us to address, from the study of compassion, problems like empathy, empathetic emotions, identification, emotional contagion and, finally, the possibility of suffering real feelings rather than fictional feelings in the experience of arts, through certain techniques of the art of theater. It is my intention with this paper to open a few channels to approach the field of the aesthetics of the theater considering all its complexity.

2. Empathy and compassion

The experience of compassion requires empathy. Empathy is a capacity which includes various intensity levels that correspond to different affective phenomena. The empathy requested by éleos has to allow an analytical assessment of the "outside" situation which, in turn, would open a check of the "own" status and an affective response to it. Aristotle's definition of éleos indicates that this affection opens a consideration of the spectator as "placed" under threat, namely, the same threat that arouses our assessment in the terms of a likely "possibility" of falling into that situation. Therefore, the exercise of "empathy" founding of "compassion" has to be placed in a medium degree of emotional intensity, that is, neither to a little of null "psychical distance" of the situation, nor to an excessive "distance" that places the spectator in a completely "separated" perspective from an affective or, even, experiential point of view. In this sense, contemporary works on "empathy" define it (1) like an open possibility of the spectator along his own process of expectation and (2) like a capacity based "on" and articulated "from" perception, imagination and memory through which is set a "figure" or "image" of the other's pathos (see Mehrabian & Epstein 1972; Brown 1987: pp. 86-89; Preston & De Waal 2002). The "empathy", finally, is a complex process (see Hoffman 1984, pp. 103-131) that has to be exercised, honed, refined and perfected in the recognition of emotions in others.

Accordingly, there are at least a transcendental limit and a hermeneutical guarantee: in the first case, although the "empathy" collaborates in the management of emotions and feelings of the "other" –in case of the theater, generally "characters"- the communicating channel is certainly narrow. It guarantees a comprehensive and personal "living" of the emotional states of

others from a standpoint based on "otherness", but it is not a capability (a) to "reproduce" such emotional states; or (b) to "recognize", without error, those feelings and emotions or (c) to "identify" with the "other". There are emotional phenomena in (a) which we will study later; there are clues –facial gestures, postures, movements or expressions- in (b). There are certain guarantees on the reliability of the approach to the facts, but (c) is impossible. Recognition is a distinguishing action of items within a domain; those items are identified emotions, *i.e.*, distinct emotions recognized through a perceptual identification and the consequent semantic donation. This characterization is widely accepted from the main models of approach and study of the intelligent management of emotions (see Goleman 1996; Mayer 1997; Mayer *et al.* 2001, 2004) and it is defined like a first necessary segment in any affective-emotive processing of the states of the "other" (see Moya-Albiol, Herrero & Consuelo Bernal 2010, p. 90). The spectator of a situation likely to arise "compassion" will never achieve "to identify himself with the other" in the fullest sense of the term. The metaphysical limit is precisely what compels him to interpret and imagine what happens "in there". If this were so and as phenomenologists have established (2), we would lose our own identity, not living "as if" we were in the place of the "other", but actually "being" the "other". For this reason, this movement of consciousness towards the apprehensive figuration of the "emotional state" of the others was, after the phenomenological review, no longer a "specular reproduction" or "identification" with the "other" –or the "object"- but a singular and genuine "production" of oneself. Consequently, the spectator who "empathizes" is highly qualified not for "reproducing", but only for "producing" his own affective states in response (1) to his understanding and (2) his consequent appraisal of the situation of the "other" (see 3). In this sense, I am agree with Feagin's account on the consideration on the "empathetic emotion" as, to some extent, a "shared emotion" in terms of affective coincidence (see Feagin 1997, pp. 53-54), but I think that "empathy" is not a singular kind of emotion, *i.e.*, empathetic emotion. When I empathize with Ichabod Crane, a circumstance exists where his emotional reaction (fear) to a target (the Headless Horseman) coincides with mine. This shared emotion is, for me, an "empathetic emotion". But this does not imply that empathy or the act of empathy is reduced to this. If I see Johnny Depp fleeing the headless horseman in the film *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), I can be afraid of what might happen to Ichabod Crane, but it is a low-level feeling in the sense of its intensity. Rather, fear is projected to the Headless Horseman and, only in a figured sense, both are confused, namely, my own fear of the Headless Horseman and that of Ichabod Crane. My excitement and that of Ichabod seems to agree; in addition, Ichabod's reaction within that situation can increase the intensity of my emotional response –if Johnny Depp, for example, plays more dramatically or tragically- or, maybe, decrease it –if Depp plays on a comic or parodic way. But in any case, empathy allows me to recognize Crane's fear; meanwhile, it seems that my fear follows its own path. In the case of "empathy" and "compassion", "one may, again, empathize with someone to whom one refuses compassion on grounds of fault: as a juror, for example, I may come to understand the experience of a criminal without

having compassion for the person's plight, if I believe him both responsible and guilty" (Nussbaum 2001, pp. 329).

Consider the character of Terry Malloy in the film *On the waterfront* (1954). Elia Kazan presented the character played by Marlon Brando suggesting that Terry was a good guy, plain and straightforward, but who has had the misfortune of ending up with bad guys for lack of opportunities in life, interest or maybe a mixture of both. In any case, it is clear that Terry is a person who can carry on their shoulders heavy weights and crammed boxes, but not big moral decisions, because they can collapse his strength and his own integrity. The viewer, in the process of his own expectation and from his own beliefs, (1) detects that Terry does not deserve to be in the situation that works as the dramatic engine of the film, i.e., to choose between private morality based on loyalty to the group I belong and between public morality based on the fulfillment of justice for all citizens above or regardless of race, family, status, etc.; (2) the spectator qualifies Malloy's suffering as excessive because of the loneliness, the lack of understanding by everyone, the threats made from both worlds or the terrible pressure of his own conscience for his indecision; (3) when he, the spectator, estimates that there has been a similar situation in his own life or there is a real chance of falling into such a situation, our viewer feels compassion. If I have been through a situation like this one, or, in fact, I'm living now something alike, it is likely that compassion is directed toward the poor Terry. Empathy allows us to imagine and understand the emotional state of Terry. But when we feel compassion, we evaluate the situation in relation to pain and pain in relation to the situation. Empathy is the condition for having a previous appraisal that, in turn, is necessary for "compassion", otherwise, a theory that is consistent by itself and coherent with the various contemporary accounts of "cognitive appraisal" in theory of emotions –at least, from Aristotle (see Nussbaum 2001, pp. 306-314)- that have been articulated in the last fifty years (see Arnold 1960; de Rivera 1977; Lazarus, R.S., Kanner & Folkman 1980: 189-217; Lazarus & Smith 1988: 281-331; Roseman 1984: 11-36; Frijda 1986; Ortony, Clore & Collins 1988; Smith & Ellsworth 1985, pp. 813-838; Weiner 1985, pp. 548-573; Manstead & Tetlock 1989, pp. 225-240; Omdahl 1995; Nussbaum 2001). According with all these theorists, our emotional responses depend on the spectator's perception and his appraisal, evaluation or assessment of the situation in which the subject is submerged. On the other hand, "compassion", like a specific emotion, is closely linked to this necessity of "appraisal" (see Nussbaum 2001).

Maybe the pain is enormous, but the situation is not "evaluated" or "appreciated" as sufficient to generate such pain. Then, we will suffer no compassion, but rather contempt, shame, embarrassment. This is the example of Seneca and his friend, Q., a Roman aristocrat, who knows that his shipment of peacock's tongues from Africa has been interrupted. Supposing that his dinner party that evening will be a disaster, he cries like a little boy and begs compassion for him nothing less than to Seneca. Obviously, the stoic laughs happily (see Nussbaum 2001, pp. 309); (Ben Ze'ev 2000, pp. 344-345). First, no one can ask for the birth of a feeling, because

we can only express our hope that this feeling occurs in the other. If the request for genuine feelings in the other were a guarantee to get someone to love us, it would be a disaster, at least, for the ninety-five percent of the world literature… the adventures of Werther would be solved with a simple request or application form! And secondly, Seneca, the great Stoic of the Roman Empire, cannot feel compassion for a situation that, for him, is not so serious to bring so much suffering. Maybe for another absurdly superficial aristocrat as Q. the situation would be worthy of compassion.

However, Seneca does not seem very sympathetic to Q. He judges him from his own beliefs and principles which help him to make a clear distinction between what it is important and what is not. Exactly like Q. Nussbaum thinks of his own example that we should not show compassion for Q., unless Q. was unaware of his social distortion of his preferences (see 2001, p. 372). But we can also proceed as a stage director, asking for the triggering event and working with an actor who had to play Q. In the absence of other information specifying the personal situation of this character, we are entitled to think in a dramaturgical way that (1) maybe Q. is actually a good guy with good intentions (2) endowed with an extraordinary sense of responsibility as a citizen (3) that, before buying the shipment of peacock tongues, had decided to organize an evening party for ascending in his own *cursus honorum*. If we were talking about T. instead of Q., a reader could think of Shakespeare's Timon of Athens. Even we can be less fine and more prosaic, more Brechtian and less Shakespearean… because, surely, the reader of this paper has some link with the Academy, as well as personal ambitions. We can imagine Q. as a young academic who only wants to be a good teacher and a good reference for the students. But, sometimes, a teaching position often implies to sit well with other colleagues not only by pleasing conversations about philosophy, cinema, theater or football, but also by personal favors (to grade papers, to design and to plan tutorials with students, etc.). It is likely to feel compassion for Q., is it not? In the very terms of Nussbaum, "compassion takes up the onlooker's point of view, making the best judgment the onlooker can make about what is really happening to the person" (2001, p. 309).

Secondly, if the manifestation of pain is null or minimal and the situation is "evaluated" or "appreciated" as sufficient to cause pain, we do not feel compassion, but admiration, respect, surprise. This is the principle that operates, for example, in the hagiographies of the Middle Ages and the use of humor as a permanent exhibition of moral superiority, faith in a cause, control over the body. The sense of humor and the ostentation of laughter in painful, terrible and undeserved situations tend to generate admiration, respect and a sympathetic respect. Maybe, this is the reason why the comic heroes please their readers, because they show no sign of pain to their archenemies, even when being tortured. Therefore, precisely, the Green Goblin attacks not Spider-Man, but his beloved Aunt May or even Mary Jane. If we don't care about our body or our possessions, perhaps the most important thing for us is "in there", i.e., other people and our feelings related to them. This is because we feel compassion not

when beloved persons are hurt, because, with Aristotle, "in that case we feel about them as if we were in danger ourselves" (Rhet., 1386a19-20). Spider-Man cannot feel compassion for Mary Jane, but I can feel compassion for him when I think that there are always risks of losing a loved person… although it is more likely that I feel anger and repulsion against Green Goblin. Fortunately, Green Goblin is not our enemy.

Finally, if the pain is evaluated according to the situation and this is coherently appreciated, we may feel compassion. When I see Medea crying for Jason's infidelity, I feel compassion not because of the elements that articulate the situation themselves, but rather by the structural relationship that brings them together. In other words, I do not feel compassion because of Jason's infidelity, but because I know there is always the risk of losing the person we love by the irruption of a third element that will probably be hated by us during all our lives. On the other hand, it is true that no one has done or proposed a version of what happened to Jason when he was subdued by the love of Creusa. Even though it is the oldest story in the world. Think, for example, on Robert James Waller's book The Bridges of Madison County, and the homonym film directed by Clint Eastwood and starring himself and a masterful Meryl Streep. I can feel compassion for Francesca, because she feels terribly guilty with Kincaid; and I can feel compassion for Robert, who has never been so in love with anyone as he is of Francesca.

3. The aesthetic criteria: example from a staging of Antigone

The three possibilities I have presented above, however, pose affective responses that are contrary to one another. We can feel compassion for Jason, but also for Medea; we can feel contempt for the Roman aristocrat, but also compassion; we can feel admiration for Spider-Man, but also compassion or even pity him… in other words, reality is complex and has many possibilities. Aristotle set some general criteria without going into excessive casuistry, but it seems that from the very definition it is recognized, implicitly at least, the existence of a close link between (a) the emotional response of that whom we see suffering and (b) the evaluation of such a response in relation to the situation in which it arises. Thus, at least in the most celebrated English translations, the Greek words is always translated considering both the aesthetic dimension of the situation –something appears serious, painful, destructive- as the epistemic approximation –something is judged as oppressive, painful, destructive-. We cannot separate the two dimensions, as Nussbaum recognizes two of their studies. So, expressions like "apparent mischief" Midgley (1685, p. 111), "apparent destructive and dolorific evil" (Taylor 1818, p. 135), "seemingly menaces" (Crimmin 1811, 1812, p. 235), "on beholding destruction" (Gillies 1823, p. 286), "an evil […] appearing to […]" (Buckley 1857, p. 136), "the sight of some evil" (Grant 1877, p. 88; Ross & Roberts 1910-1931, 2010, p. 77), etc. The spectator's compassion is not only

conditioned, therefore, by the content itself, although we can talk about common looks from a cultural, social or even epochal perspective. Actually, our emotional responses are highly conditioned by the manner in which the content is presented to the spectator (see Feagin 1997 pp. 57-58); (Hamilton 2007, p. 310); (Alcaraz 2011, pp. 36-39), in other words, by aesthetic and/or reception criteria.

A theatrical attitude of the spectator, based on the principle of generosity, on the suspension of belief and on the covenant of fictionality, predisposes to the acquisition of a specific emotional experience different from that which we could have on the street. If factors such as tone of voice or gestures provide information under normal circumstances and they condition our emotional response, the stylization of such factors in the work of art, "including the length of sentences, vocabulary and diction, shifts in voice, recurrence of images, allusions, and juxtaposition of episodes […] prompt our emotional responses to it, just as much as, or more than, and even instead of, our beliefs about what anyone would believe, desire, think of, or feel in real time" (Feagin 1997, p. 58). If, indeed, the spectator's emotional drag is influenced or conditioned –better than determined- by the criteria of representation, including not only technical criteria (e.g., need to change the position of some spotlights because adaptation to the space of representation), but aesthetic or poetic criteria (e.g., the change of position of the spotlights has altered the poetics designed for lighting and the light effects do not contribute more to scare), then it is evident that the creative decisions have enough power to soften or aggravate the importance of the content in relation to the beliefs about it. I think, moreover, that this conclusion is not surprising. It is one of the first principles we learn and assume when we deepen the study of Aesthetics.

This consideration of the criteria genuinely aesthetic that artists follow for arousing emotions is particularly important in theater, where compassion is one of the most complex feelings to be worked upon by the actors. I will focus on an example drawn from my own experience as aesthetics and philosophy teacher at the Higher School of Dramatic Art in Castilla y León. There, one of the acting teachers, Dr. David Ojeda, led a staging of Antigone with senior students of performing arts. Dramaturgical adaptation was made combining Sophocles' original text and Anouilh's version, thanks to the good work of the young author and teacher of dramatic writing, Dr. Alberto Conejero. Finally, I was responsible to explain to the young actors and actresses the conceptual differences between compassion, empathy, pity and so on. In addition, at the express request of Ojeda, I had to tell them some notes about the risks of certain aesthetic drifts that could lead to poor or erroneous staging of compassion.

The first phase of the rehearsal process, an analytic period that was implemented in dramatic art by Konstantin Stanislavsky, was the "active analysis" within the general framework of the "table work" (Knébel 1996, pp. 13-28; Leach 1999, pp. 254-277; 2004, pp. 6-52; 2008, pp. 131-141; Thomas 2009, pp. xxii—xix, pp. 1-37; Archer, Gendrich & Hood 2010, p. 115). This moment is one of the most

important in the staging process, because it is then when both actors and director
–and sometimes the very playwright- collaborate, sitting at the same table, in the
construction of meanings and in the design of the ways of presenting to the
audience the staging proposal, making it particularly useful for anticipating the
most likely affective responses. The poetic space is chosen, the codes of
interpretation, movement, speed, and, in short, general statements of the
aesthetic presentation of the play are designed[2]. In the case at hand, Ojeda told
the actresses that the first scene had to be built taking into account that if the
spectator was paying attention to Antigone or to Ismene, in both cases the
personal dignity of the heroines could not arise the characteristic paternalism of
pity. We feel pity or sorrow for an abandoned puppy on the street; we feel pity
for The Kid of Chaplin or, under some circumstances, even for Charlot. But we
must not feel pity for Antigone or Ismene, Oedipus' daughters. The actress who
played Ismene had no major problems in working this way, as, indeed, Ismene's
temper is wiser, unhurried and generally much closer to the spectators (Adams
1955, pp. 48-49; Knox 1964, pp. 62-90; Jens 1967, pp. 296-299; Oudemans &
Lardinois 1987, pp. 169-175) than that of Antigone, who has the charm of the
idealist and the tenacity of the adolescent. In this regard, Goethe told Eckermann
that Ismene was "a good measure of the ordinary" (ein schönes Mass des
Gewöhnlichen) (Eckermann 1827, p. 101) and just for that reason she is always
beyond heroic diseases and closer to human weaknesses. For achieving that
closeness was necessary to address the audience, choosing some techniques of
aurisecular soliloquy and leaving Antigone in the back of the stage. This way of
presenting Ismene aroused not only the compassion of the spectators, but their
sympathy or, better, their commiseration (4). But through both positions, the
spectators (1) faced the serious dilemma that Ismene had to face, namely, break
Creon's law to help her sister and subvert public order… or breaking the laws of
the gods to maintain public order and sacrificing family duties, (2) and, on the
other hand, they were able to feel compassion for a resolute and determined
Antigone, whose loneliness and physical distance in relation to the spectator
increases her appearance of emotional isolation and lack of understanding of who
she is the only victim.

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[2] When we say that such issues are a matter of "choice", we defend the thesis of
contemporary radical separation between "art theater" and "dramatic literature"-in the
present case, in line not only with the claims of theorists and specialists in aesthetics, but
by the directors as well. In other words, what Hamilton called "text-based tradition" is, in
effect, an outdated tradition that does not respond to the genuine essence of theater as an
autonomous art. As Hamilton says (2007, p. 310), "it is false to hold that there is
something in or about texts written for performance that must guide performers when
they decide how the words are to sound, at what speed and in what tone(s) they are to
be delivered, what gestures are to be made, and where attention is to be focused at each
moment. All these decisions and more are usually taken to be unspecified in the text-
based tradition. The aims in the service of which decisions are made are also taken to be
unspecified. In short, there is room for stylistic variation in the tradition; and the concrete
performance use of any text, even within the text-based tradition, is subject to substantive
variance in conventions and aims."

This was the director's scenic proposal. But it could be different. In fact, the actress who played Antigone suffered a pathetic drift that led her to the adoption of a pathetic sentimentality: a lack of simplicity or naturalness within the psychological code adopted for the acting work and a certain temptation to reduce the character to its most basic features. In short, she took refuge in a querulous style, in a haughty tone, drawn, pompous. This gave her character a dramatic force inversely proportional to the dramatic interest aroused in the spectator. After two minutes, this desperate, tearful and exhausted Antigone also exhausted the pleasures of our theatrical excitement. This is a typical movement of the drama students when they feel lost in the acting process: using a superficial increase of the dramatic intensity. In terms of Stanislavsky, they increase the rhythm of the voice, the movement of the bodies, the facial or body gestures... but the dramatic action itself does not seem to need it. Perhaps the work of the actress might have made sense in a different staging with a different performative code, expressionist or even farce. But she affected her oral expression to arouse sadness, confusing the sadness proper of compassion with that proper of pity or shame; her voice, which should sound firm and passionate, was soft and pitiful; her movements, which should have been displayed in favor of her moral resolution, were conveyed in a pantomimic work that was incoherent with the rest of the elements of the staging proposal. Therefore, it seems confirmed that the way of presenting the theatrical play to the spectators "conditions", rather than "determines", their emotional response. Consequently, (1) the chosen rhythm by our actress does not work and (2) she has not been able to reconstruct the dominant feeling of the character as something related to the overall presentation of the staging.

Summarizing,

(1)   the empathy is a capability that, through perception, imagination and memory, allows us to understand a subject emotionally;

(2)   this capability works for providing us a picture, image or figure of that person's emotional state, a imaginary representation sanctioned by the very contemporary neuroscience (see Moya-Albiol, Herrero & Consuelo Bernal 2010, p. 89);

(3)   this emotional state is not judged in isolation from other elements, but in relation to them when they are articulated within a specific situation;

(4)   by transitivity, empathy is necessary to make a cognitive appraisal, assessment, review or evaluation of that situation in relation to the subject's emotional response to it;

(5)   the emotional response of the spectator will be aroused by that appraisal, assessment, review or evaluation, so this assessment precedes the emotional event itself and causes the ensuing emotion;

(6)   The content of the situation, i.e., its meaning and implications, are aesthetically articulated, something that determines or, at least, conditions the emergence of some passions rather than others.

4. Phenomenological approach to empathy and compassion

Edmund Husserl wrote that it is impossible to speak *sensu stricto* about "empathy" (Einfühlung), because "I cannot get into the other, I can only figure out how would I feel if I be the other, how I would be, in which case, strictly speaking, I'm not myself, I cannot keep my identity", so it's an "imaginary representation" (Husserl 1973, p. 338; 1952, pp. 167-169). Heidegger, in the field of the existential analytic, defined this ability, "which is not too happily designated as empathy (Einfühlung)" as the capacity closely linked to the existential structure of man for providing "the first ontological bridge from one's own subject, which is given proximally as alone, to the other subject, which is proximally quite closed off" Heidegger (1962, p. 162). It was, above all, (1) a condition of possibility for "understanding" (*Verstehen*) the "other's" frame of mind (2) in a hermeneutical sense (3) and when the target is the acquisition of a figure or image of that "experience" (*Erlebnis*) that is, in any case, non transferable. The "empathy" was phenomenologically understood as an aid to philosophical thought in the partial resolution of one of its classic and fundamental problems, namely, the possibility of communication between people endowed of mind and the guarantee of reaching agreements for coexistence and mutual understanding. This supposes an interpretation that, although obviously subjective, was far from being subjectivist, because the generated "sum of looks" would achieve a range of objectivity equivalent to all the "subjects" (Husserl) or "existents" (Heidegger), center of all epistemic controversies about the objectivity of "understanding" and "knowledge". Thereby, "empathy" became a fundamental capacity in the encounter with the "other" and his own inner world.

The most important objection against the notion of "empathetic identification" came from a short and blunt text attached to the phenomenology and written in 1916 by Edith Stein to obtain her Doctorate degree. Printed and published a year later, she started her study on the criteria of her own director, Husserl himself, who had determined the process of "empathy" in three steps: (1) apprehension of "experiences" of others, not only affective-emotional, but also epistemic-cognitive; (2) self-perception of them and emotional response to; (3) epistemic sanction of them from the inter-subjective and collaborative condition between the "self" and the "others". Edith Stein thought that the contents of the experience of "other" were given from a "non native" perspective as opposed to "original" in which these "experiences" are lived. In other words, there is an insurmountable leap between the "original experience" and that "figured", "imagined" or, in conclusion, "empathized experience". Therefore, there is always a hermeneutic exercise propitiated by the need to overcome the gap between the "experiences" of the other and those of the spectator.

The next time I see Ophelia falling into madness, I will respond with my "own" and "original" affections, motivated by the apprehension of her passions, "improper" for me. When I "empathize" with her, I value her situation, but only and once I have understood her emotional state. Consequently, the recognized

emotions of Ophelia are "improper" for the spectator, but absolutely "proper" and "authentic" for her. Thus, Stein distinguished "empathy" (*Einfühlung*) from an "emotional sharing" (*Mitfühlen*). In the first case, the spectator that sees Ophelia has a "non original" experience to the extent that he has obtained an affective representation of the other. The "madness" of Ophelia or the "sadness" of Hamlet at the scene of the wedding feast of Claudius and Gertrude are reconstructed by ways of "recognition" (acting exercise, facial gestures, affective tone of words, ultimately, elements endowed with meaning). Those ways direct me towards a hermeneutic interpretation of the other's passion, but also simultaneously to the emergence of an affection that is "originally" mine. However, the case of "emotional sharing" is different. When we "share an emotion", we have "originally" "joy", "sadness" or any passions, since we have "empathized" with the "other" his own "experiences" in a "non original" way.

The "emotional sharing" is, in that way, "coincident" with the affections of the "other" after an assessment of the situation. For example, when a director works on Guillén de Castro's *Las mocedades del cid* and he reads in the text that "a curtain is run and the altar of Santiago appears and in it a fountain of silver, a sword and golden spurs", the spectator can "apprehend" the sublimity of the scene or the pity of the Cid, but in a "non original" way, *i.e.*, "empathetic". But, if he is "happy *with* him", because the spectator knows about the important meaning of the "apparition", "we can understand the original act like 'congratulation' (*Mitfreude*) or, more generally, like emotional sharing (*Mitfühlen*)" Stein (1917, p. 14). If, on the contrary, the "pain" is the dominant feeling and this is articulated on the "fear" that reverts on the spectator, we define it as *éleos*, *i.e.*, "compassion" (*Mitgefühl*) rather than "congratulation". It is more than likely that we will feel "compassion" for someone who has lost his house, especially, in this time of crisis, because "we feel pity whenever we are in the condition of remembering that similar misfortunes have happened to us or our kind, or of expecting them to happen in future".

The "shared joy" and the "empathized joy" do not need to be the same according to the content. In fact, depending on the quality, they are not, because the first one is an "original experience" and the other is "non-native" or "non original" (see Stein 1917, p. 14). For example, Rodrigo's "devotion" in the play *Las mocedades del Cid* may be more intense than that of the spectators, but if the stage director wants to endow the knight with an element of melancholy, perhaps the opposite happens and Rodrigo thinks in front of the altar in terms of "disappointment", "lie", "betrayal"… despite the consternation of the respectable audience. This is again a moment to study the proposal, either from the table work, either from other working of discrimination of meanings and aesthetic construction. Returning to an earlier example, I can empathize with the fear of Ichabod Crane to the headless horseman, but maybe I have more fear of the headless horsemen and, to some extent, his reaction is, probably, a fact very important to me, but closed to my own passion. Again, this is an aesthetic criterion: if Johnny Depp had not endowed the character of dramaturgical

elements based on the reactions of a hysterical teenager –in his own words- and he had built it making Ichabod feel a more dignified, serious, and Gothic terror, then, probably, the viewer's reaction could have been different[3].

The philosopher Noël Carroll, not many years ago, turned to the old problem of "identification" and its characterization as the most emotionally intense degree of "empathy" (see 1990, 2001, p. 262). His conclusions were as clear as stentorian: the capacity that we have as theatrical spectators for placing us in the place of the others does not sanction an identification process, because "when Oedipus is racked by guilt, we are not; we feel pity for him". That is, we suffer mixed passions: on the one hand, we understand what "guilt" means from an emotional point of view, because, after all, we all have felt guilty occasionally; on the other hand, we feel "compassion" for Oedipus, because we could be the victims of a similar situation… probably we will not be accused of having killed our father and of committing incest with our mother, Freudian ravings aside. But, like Oedipus, we can be victims of our ambition to know the truth even though it ends up destroying us, for example. In this sense, what we feel towards Oedipus is "compassion", because there's a situation of equality between the viewed subject and the subject that contemplates. In contrast, what Faust feels at the cell doors where Margaret is unjustly imprisoned, alone and desperate, is "pity", "shame", rather than a genuine "compassion" (*Mitgefühl* or *Mitleid*), *i.e.*, because the wise man is looking down into the "pit" of Margaret's misery. Otherwise, I can also feel compassion for Faust, because I too could sacrifice the happiness and welfare of another beloved person to satisfy my own ambitions. Finally, when we feel "compassion", this passion is unleashed in second place, being different from that suffered by Margaret, Ophelia or Oedipus. There is not, in conclusion, "unipathy" or "feeling of oneness" when we feel "compassion". It cannot be possible.

Summarizing,
  (1) empathy became a fundamental capacity in the encounter with the other and his own inner world,
  (2) and it is a condition of possibility for understanding the other's frame of mind in a hermeneutical sense, being the target a figure or image of that non-transferable experience;
  (3) the empathized experience is proper of the subject who sees and judges the situation, therefore, the empathized sentiments, feelings or emotions are not original, but only understood and, sometimes, shared (3);
  (4) "emotional sharing" is one of the possible forms of "empathy" and it is defined in terms of emotional coincidence;
  (5) Compassion, generally speaking, is a specific case of "emotional sharing".

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[3] Although, if so, the Burton universe would have collapsed and the film would have been probably worse.

5. "Compassion" and "emotional contagion": the "external perspective"

Why reason cannot be articulated compassion on emotional contagion? Remember the Faust's sentimental infection and why we said that there could not be. An "empathetic emotion" is an "infected emotion", that is, an emotion that coincides in form and in content with that of the seen subject. The "emotional contagion" diminishes the exercise of "imagination", absolutely necessary for feeling compassion, making to swing the spectator's emotional response from "observation" to "imitation" and *vice versa*. And "imitation", which is the third cornerstone of "empathy", provides an element of unconsciousness and automaticity that cannot supply all the required steps in compassion. In this sense, the "emotional contagion" is defined as an unconscious, automatic process that occurs when the viewer does not reach an enough "psychical and/or physical distance" that allows him to be placed in a proper perspective. In the terms of Susan L. Feagin, an "external perspective" specifically characterized as the critical position of the spectator in front of the work and the contents thereof (Feagin 1983, pp. 95-104; 1996, p. 146).

Sometimes, however, our tears are those of Jocasta. The character's emotional life, the very formal structure of the situation or the tone of the play itself resitue us under certain limit situation in which a spark is enough to move us from the "emotional sharing" of compassion, for example, where we (1) see, imagine and empathize, (2) we evaluate under the specific conditions of the game expectation and (3) we respond emotionally from (1) and (2), to a "emotional infection" where (1) we see, imagine and empathize, [eventually, (2) evaluate under a circumstance almost non-fictional] and (3) we respond emotionally from (1) [and, eventually, (2)]. When we are infected to such an extent, it seems as if there has not been a genuine empathetic response in the sense of an "emotional sharing", but a "specular" or "mirror" response. We cannot deny that sometimes there is a kind of "mirror reproduction", *i.e.*, "mimetic" of the affections of the others. It is no wonder that Jocasta's tears are reproduced on the spectator's face or, rather, that the spectator "mimics" the affection and the gestures of Jocasta. This "reproduction" of the affections, even her facial expressions remains a personal and non-transferable "production", because of the monadic nature of the subject. Rather, it seems that the "non-originality" condition of the "empathetic emotion" disappears, but there is only an illusion of identification because it is articulated in most cases from a theatrical attitude based on the spectator's generosity, on the covenant of fictionality. This "empathetic identification" (Neill 1996, pp. 175-180) precludes the necessary "distance" and "exclusivity" requested by the theatrical spectacle. If there is an "empathetic identification", the spectator can be very happy "feeling" *fictional* sorrow and *fictional* terror" –like, for example, during a "tear-jerking drama" or a "horror film"-, but he can be very unhappy, too, when certain limits are broken. In that case, the spectator may be reluctant to enter the game, because it can be harmful to his own emotional integrity. This situation will hinder the entry into the theatrical game by "*real* anxiety", "*real*

anguish", "*real* despair" or "*real* repugnance"… or, worse than all this, "*real* indifference". And this is not a desirable response. The "personal distress" can be motivated (1) by a breach of the covenant of fictionality that derives into a negation, from the spectator's point of view, to play with those rules, where one or many of the affects are not fictional, but real –*i.e.*, some performances of the *Wiener Aktionismus*, like those of Otmar Bauer, Rudolf Schwartzkogler, Günter Brus, Otto Mühl-; (2) by traumatic memories that have been updated or remembered in the very expectation –*i.e.*, there is a legend about the actor training for *The Brig* (1963), a proposal in the light of Artaud and staged by *The Living Theater* on a text of Kenneth Johnson, and the reaction of a former marine who, against the ideas of Judith Malina, decided to leave the casting claiming that he had had enough of that reality (see Tytell 1995, pp. 179-194); (3) by physiological responses, like disgust or repugnancy, that react to the object because it "is represented as it were obtruding itself for our enjoyment while we strive against it with all our might" and "the artistic representation of the object is no longer distinguished from the nature of the object itself in our sensation" (Kant, *KrU*, 48); (4) by psychological responses in which the spectator is subjected to such emotional stress that the situation gets to break the dam of "fiction" and turn "*fictional* pain" into "*real* pain" born in the very expectation. In all these cases, the "personal distress" can make an appearance and get us out of our expectation because of an overdose of reality.

Artistic and/or theatrical strategies that look for a spectator's emotional contagion may fall into "personal distress", which is a typical response to that "overdose of reality". It is obvious that the "emotional contagion" is a very intense and powerful form of "emotional sharing". But it is also clear that this may break the limit of "pain *fictionally* true" and fall into the "*real* pain caused by fiction". We must think not only in cases of sentimental or maudlin people. For example, it is not surprising that the work of Lessing, *Nathan the Wise* (*Nathan der Weisse*) was represented by at least 245 times in Berlin in the period between 1945 and 1950, instead of other works of a political nature and clearly antifascist, such as *The Illegal One* (*Die Illegalen*) of the playwright Günther Weisenborn. While the old Lessing received the approval of much of the Berliner public, the work of Weisenborn was much performed, but destined to a minority who, having been silenced since at least 1933, demanded a historical memory difficult to satisfy when "the memorized content" was, virtually, the proper yesterday itself. In other words, *The Illegal Ones* was soon forgotten and filed as a topic (see Koepke 2003, p. 242). Brecht, on the contrary, did not choose after his exile the representation of the work his own work *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* (*Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*). He preferred a staging of Sophocles' *Antigone* with the introduction of a prologue with the ruins of Berlin as backdrop (Fehervary 1997, pp. 408-409). This "curved way" guaranteed a sufficient distance to the audience not to fall in personal distress.

Contemporary neuroscience has managed to clear the mechanism of this "emotional contagion" in three stages: "mimicry", "feedback" and "contagion".

Focusing on the first, the mimicry reveals that this case of "empathy" is very basic and primitive, but it also indicates a strong specular condition by the subject that guarantees, in some way, the conversion of consciousness in "mirror" of the emotions that we recognize. And this is, precisely, the basis for Lipps' theory of "inner imitation" (see Lipps 1900 and 1907). Basically exposed, the knowledge of others presents two tendencies: first, a tendency to reproduce the foreign gestures and, second, a tendency to associate an affective response to them. The "projection" is the magical word for explaining the phenomena that in Stein's account was called "feeling of oneness" (*Einsfühlen*): if I see the acrobat, I feel like the acrobat through the projection that allows me to imitate internally and even on the outside, through gestures and posture changes. This is precisely the main objection against Lipps' doctrine of identification around the concept of "unipathy" (*Einsfühlung*). Stein focused it on necessary distinction between "unipathy" and "empathy" (*Einfühlung*). The treatment of "empathy" in terms of "identical reproduction" of other's emotional states falls into the paradox of the simultaneous "non-originality"-and-originality of the spectator's involved passions. In her very terms, "I am not one with the acrobat, but only 'almost', *i.e.*, not just that I do not make the movement outside, which also emphasizes Lipps, but nor what correspond 'internally' to the movements of the living body –the 'I move' experience- is original in me, but non-original" (Stein 1917, p. 17).

This "imitation" or "mimicry" does not imply" identification" in a strong sense and, obviously, it is not a *conditio sine qua non* for the exercise of "empathy". For example, if I see my students mourn heartbroken for having failed the exam, I can feel a deep sorrow, I would really like to embrace them and tell them that such thing happens, that the next time it will be better, that, *in memoriam* of Charles Bronson, pride and revenge are a good combination for success. I have felt pain, sadness or pity for them, I have seen their appearance from a sensorial point of view; then, I have understood their gestures and I have ascribed them a specific meaning; last, I have an affective response to those meanings and that situation. But it is not necessary "to cry" with them for being "empathetic" with them. I can "feel" "compassion", "pity", "anger", "sadness", but without "imitation"… and, however, there is "empathy". The "imitation", in conclusion, is not necessary for the understanding of the gestures and emotions of others and it only explains a part of the phenomena, in particular, that corresponding to a high level of emotional intensity where there is a real "emotional contagion". In this sense, Zahavi and Overgaard say that "Lipps' theory might explain why a certain experience occurs in me, but it doesn't offer an explanation of how I come to understand the "other", because Lipps' account on empathy is better for the elucidation of phenomena like *motor mimicry* or *affective contagion*, rather than for explaining empathy (Zahavi & Overgaard 2012, p. 3). In fact, we tend to confuse "being empathetic" with the ability of some people to show their extraordinary sensitivity face to the others. Probably for these people, a calm and serene "evaluation", "assessment" or "appraisal" will be more difficult in some situations. Although this does not imply that it was impossible for them, or that "being

empathetic" was necessarily to be a "specular reproducer" of the others' emotions.

(Alex Neill 1996, pp. 175-194), in the early nineties, accepted the challenge of recovering and redefining the concept of "identification" for contemporary Aesthetics, hoping (1) to avoid the repetition of problematics of early twentieth-century and (2) offering a terminology that could be useful to outline the analysis of the theatrical and filmic "expectation". The first step consisted in making an operational distinction between "empathetic identification" and "sentimental imagination", which allows us to imagine the feelings of the "other" taking away from them and suffering "found or mixed feelings". According with this, the "sentimental imagination" involved in "empathy" swung between the question about "how would I feel in that situation", for example, that of Ophelia, and the subsequent "how I feel with this", after the rudeness showed by Hamlet and like an external spectator. In contrast, the "empathetic identification" raises a radical "location" into "real" affections in front of the play, in other words, emotions that depart from a breach of the fictionality pact and, consequently, the play of theater. This phenomenon might degenerate into feelings like anxiety and bordering on despair, where the enjoyment gives way to pain, either by a "remembrance" of analogous situations where the "original" affective answer is updated, or by certain types of situations that lead to the spectator from his "theatrical" or "aesthetic awareness" to his "analytical awareness". In other words and following the conception of Kendall Walton, it is not the same to feel a pain that is "*fictionally* true" than a "*really* true" pain; one thing is to see how the character of an acrobat makes us believe that he is falling. Another thing is to see how the performer falls[4]. The emotional intensity of the situation of both individuals generates in the viewer, in the first case, a process of "sentimental imagination" that keeps us from losing our status as safe and sound spectators; in others – besides, perhaps, that people with little capacity for empathy or maybe accustomed to this type of accidents, *e.g.*, medical staff or personal trainers- a "empathetic identification" is manifested even with gestures, facial mimicry, posture changes, etc. The "emotional contagion" admits both levels: (1) that of

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[4] This is, in short, the position of Kendall Walton about theory of mimesis and the use of props in imaginative activities, *i.e.*, make-believe games. In these games, the position of the viewer is vehiculated on the classical suspension of belief. The distinction between "knowing what is fictional" and "knowing what is real" is temporary and willingly neutralized, *i.e.*, it remains *fictionally* inoperative, but it never ceases to exercise its influence. There are two emotional levels in the expectation process: (1) *fictional* feelings or emotions that work *analogously* to these *actual* feelings or emotions; (2) *actual* feelings or emotions. The question of truth or falsehood affects the objects that bring up such and such feelings, rather than the nature of these feelings, as both are, in fact, passions, because it seems that the difference lies in their intensity and the degree of commitment that the viewer takes in terms of emotional integrity. But we leave this for another time and we refer to other more serious studies (Walton 1990, 1997; Hjort & Lavert 1997; Feagin 1997; Dorsch 2009, 2011; Alcaraz 2011). Walton's thesis can be summarized in the famous words of Plutarch about Gorgias: "he who is deceived is wiser, because the mind which is not insensitive to fine perceptions is easily enthralled by the delights of language" (Plutarch 1936: 509, 348c).

"emotional imagination", where "feelings" that are "*fictionally* true" are apprehended in the sense of a temporary and voluntary suspension of the fictionality of fiction; (2) that of "empathetic identification", where "feelings" that may or may not be "fictionally *true*" in the actor or actors are apprehended as "actual". When the feelings are very intense in a bad sense –*i.e.*, anxiety-, we talk about the phenomenon of "personal distress". In this case, the spectator's reaction when he seeks a perceptive refuge outside of the representation –in his feet, his hands, in the playbill or over my companion's shoulder- is the natural response to this collapse of the "theatrical attitude" based on the painful confusion between what is *fictionally* true and what is *only* true. The reasons for this contemplative break can be varied, but the fate of all of them would be the same: to change the "theatrical attitude", to stop the expectation through the closure of the "imagination" or "observation" involved in empathy. The spectator is emotionally shaken and the perspective is changed to a different state, where there is not an enough psychological distance to approach the representation from the external perspective required by complex feelings as compassion.

Summarizing,
(1) The "emotional contagion" diminishes the exercise of "imagination" and is articulated on "mimicry" and "imitation", making to swing the spectator's emotional response from "observation" to "imitation" and *vice versa*,
(2) something that does not work for feeling compassion,
(3) because "compassion" cannot be a kind of "emotional contagion", because it needs not only "imagination", but "distance" for evaluating or making an appraisal that was calm and serene, *i.e.*, the "external perspective".
(4) The "empathy" and, consequently, the "compassion", do not need "imitation" or "mimicry".
(5) The "emotional contagion" can be an aesthetic target of the stage director, but it can generate dangerous and non-desirable responses articulated on "personal distress".

6. Individual "compassion" and "intersubjective" sympathy

The spectacle *DJ Peep Show: the last days of Don Juan* is a theatrical performance premiered in Sevilla at the Lope de Vega Theater on October 28, 2010, directed by the Spanish artist Juan José Villanueva for the theatrical company *Excéntrica Producciones*. It was a cabaret led by a master of ceremonies, the Andalusian actor Juanfra Juárez, who guides the spectator with a keen sense of humor through a reflection on society of the spectacle and the media use of cultural icons. A spectacle for the spectator, who enjoys seeing the traumatic epiphany of Don Juan when he reveals his own nature as a false myth or a cardboard literary topic, rather than seeing his classical death and his fall into hell. At the scene of Don Juan's death, in the inside of the mysterious and gloomy grave, Villanueva decided to light not only the stage lights, but also the lights of the stalls. Through this brief

scenic gesture, Don Juan discovered the spectators who had witnessed his death and, really, his self-revelation and also his fall as a myth. At the same time, he recognized that his life was a fable, a falsehood, a game for others' enjoyment. However, the act of lighting the stalls implied that this character, midway between Don Juan and Augusto Pérez from *Niebla* of Miguel de Unamuno, opened a dimension in which, suddenly, audience and character were placed in the same situation. In a recent interview, Robert Redford said to hate when someone referred to him as a living legend. He probably would have sympathized with the Don Juan. But the rest of the audience thought in terms of compassion, even if it was, in effect, the same situation.

Neuroscience, behavioral psychology and social psychology have delved into the problem of distinguishing "empathy" and "sympathy". In fact, the achievements and progress in this area have given rise to a characterization that is far from being definitive, but that seems to draw a common place, to the extent that it offers striking similarities with Scheler's ancient and phenomenological considerations. For example, in the *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* published in 1986, two famous articles aimed, precisely, to a necessary distinction between these affective responses. (Gruen and Mendelsohn 1986, pp. 609-614) presented their proposal from a strictly empirical perspective and a controlled analysis with laboratory subjects, while several months before, Dr. Wispé, from a more philosophical perspective, subtitled his own paper with an eloquent warning: "To call for a concept, a word is needed" (1986, pp. 314-321). The conclusions reached by the three specialists underpinned in a scientific way the original Schelerian consideration from phenomenology, considering that "sympathy" refers more to the "situation" in which "we" are and only reaches its meaning "in relation" to the others and including myself among them. The difference with compassion seems to be the difference in emotional intensity, being compassion more intense than sympathy; the difference with empathy is clearly exposed by Nussbaum, when she thinks of "a malevolent person who imagines the situation of another and takes pleasure in her distress": he "may be empathetic, but will surely not be judged sympathetic" (Nussbaum 2001, p. 302).

David Krasner, in a stimulating account about empathy and theater, defines sympathy as a "feeling" that "differs from compassion in that I might be unconcerned with justice or fair play", because "my feelings are in line with the actor's, and his or her plight is what moves me" (Krasner 2006, p. 259). Despite agreeing in general terms with Krasner's definition, I believe, however, that the phenomenon we are talking about is not reflected well enough. From my point of view, Krasner (1) explains generally what does it happen to the spectator when he "sympathizes" with the actor, but not the nature of the "situation" in which all the spectators are in the same state of mind with the actor and/or the character; (2) this idea of sympathy only contains one of the, at least, two possible attitudes of the public theater, namely, a disposition based on the contemplative closure rather than collaborative openness. But, is it possible to "sympathize" with a character?

Edith Stein's position denies the possibility of "empathy" to be a **"feeling of oneness"**, in terms of identification with characters or other spectators… but this case is different. The phenomenon we are talking about is not a "feeling of oneness" based on some kind of "emotional contagion" in front of a "strange situation", but rather it points to that moment within all or almost all spectators where they have the same emotional response "with" the characters in a play, besides degrees of intensity. For explaining this structure, Stein imagines a newspaper that proclaims the fall of an enemy fortress. "As we hear this, all of us are seized by an excitement, a joy, a jubilation", in other words, "we all have 'the same' feeling" (Stein [1917]: 17). This does not mean, on the one hand, that the limits of the monadic subjects have been dropped and, on the other hand, broken the metaphysical engagements of phenomenology. But this case cannot be treated as a mere "illusion", because it implies the emergence of a higher unity which could be called "we". Max Scheler, saving the distances with Stein (see 1917, p. 18), but in line with her, dedicated the famous text *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (1923) to this singularity, that he called, precisely, "sympathy" (*Sympathie*). According to him, the key to solving the problem of sympathy lies in the fictionality of the characters. Scheler, like Stein, considered that the "empathy" may sacrifice the "real" condition of the character with which we "empathize", something that is not possible in "sympathy". According to this, "empathizing" with both the read and the performed Hamlet could be a normal response, being impossible to sympathize with them. "Thus we can easily *reproduce* in ourselves the joys and sorrows of characters in fiction, or the persons in a play (Faust or Gretchen, for instance), as the actor presents them; but so long as we maintain a generally aesthetic attitude, and do not, like the novelette-reading teenager, take their part as if they were real, we cannot have genuine *fellow-feeling* for them" (Scheler 1973, p. 98). In short, we can only "empathize" but never "sympathize" with performed Hamlet, except in those cases already studied, in which there is any kind of emotional identification, as he points to the teenager's attitude.

Really? I do not think so. Scheler, like many other philosophers and thinkers, missed the point and, according to custom, he confined the concept of aesthetic experience to the "dramatic reading" rather than opening the effects concerning the very "theatrical expectation". I think, with all due respect, that Scheler did not go to the theater… or only saw theatrical forms based on the contemplative closure of which we spoke earlier and Krasner selected for speaking about differences between "sympathy" and "compassion". According with him, there can be no sympathy for Ophelia, but in any case among the characters of *Hamlet* or among the spectators, because they can be in the same situation. But when we theorize about theater, it happens something similar to the bullfighting in Spain: everyone knows everything just because everyone recognize the bull and the bullfighter in the arena. However, theater –and bullfighting, of course- are so complex, rich and varied art forms that the philosopher, generally, disclaims any intent of conceptualization. At worst, he can be tempted by analysis that ignore

the audience and its responses to the spectacle, focusing all his worries in huge theoretical and semiotic constructs in which the "sema", unfortunately, only they recognize. In other words, it is necessary to study the "expectation" from within, i.e., as a spectator, but not from outside. We have to go more often to the theater for theorizing *from* it rather than *about* it; secondly, we must recognize that it takes a lot of shapes, in addition to the purely dramatic or textual (Hamilton **[etc.]**). The experience shows that when we go to watch a play, a genuine form of sympathy can be forged between the character and the audience, and not only among spectators or characters being in the same situation.

Case (A). Sympathy among spectators. When a spectator falls asleep and starts snoring, persons who surround him look at each other and sympathize mutually, while they live a situation that is as annoying as, probably, funny and the same for everyone; when the staging is extremely boring, sometimes we slid the look for something or somebody more interesting, maybe for finding the look of anyone, *i.e.*, an "other"… and we snorted greatly, but quietly, to indicate him how much we are bored. Maybe we get a wink of complicity which reveals the same condition for "us" because of a "situation" that is the same for both. Consider *The Trojan Women*. I think of a spectator who decided to place his attention not on the assembly of outraged wives and women of Troy, but on the different facial reactions of the audience. Probably, this spectator would find a mood that would seem the same for everyone, at least formally, appearing under various degrees of intensity, from the moral repulsion to the compassion, from indignation to shame, from the sphere of feeling to that of emotion… and vice versa. According to this, the spectators would have come to a sort of emotional communion with the "other" spectators, becoming to compose a distinct entity, *i.e.*, a "we". The "empathy" of the first spectator, which inevitably involves a distance from the focused characters and a strictly individual response to the "recognition" of the other's feelings, is able to open the doors to a "we" when we recognize that there is one same situation for everyone. We live a kind of "sentimental communion". If I had to express what happens to me in one sentence, I would say that "I sympathize with them", because my pathos is with that of them and we are under the same circumstances, *i.e.*, the same situation.

Case (B). Sympathy between spectators and actors. Sometimes it is even possible that sympathy arises between the actor and the audience, for example, in those moments where the "acting game" is broken by "illegal" or "unforeseen moves". I remember, in this regard, a representation of Lorca's *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife*, directed in 1994 by the renowned director Luis Olmos with the company *Teatro de la Danza*. When the leading actor, Roberto González, had to put the *cartelón* (picture scroll) in the corresponding stand, it fell to the floor of the stage on three occasions, but not at the beginning of the monologue which tells the famous story about the patient man and his terrible wife, but on three separate occasions during the recitation. If the performer had not broken the game of expectation at any time, we probably would have felt sorry for him… or even compassion (after all, many of us can get to be in similar situations, namely, trying

to get something done right in front of an audience and, however, failing miserably due to reasons beyond our control). But the actor, Roberto González, sought our sympathy with a knowing wink, literally, while he directed a surreptitious glance at the audience and half smile, as if he had been telling us, "the third time lucky". This last case is a genuine encounter between actor and his audience through the "sympathy".

Case (C). Sometimes, the very rules of "theatrical play" allow and ensure a genuine "sympathizing" with the "character", easing the hardness of certain clauses of the "covenant of fictionality" and against Scheler's conclusions. In this regard, artistic interventions that articulate their performative game including, among their own materials, the "collaboration" of the spectator as a legitimate element of the game itself, and even necessary for the course of it, are not uncommon. There are a lot of traceable examples not only in the history of theater, but even among their own forms, *e.g.*, the game of the clown in the circus, with whom the children are able to sympathize easily, since he makes them believe that he is a big boy with situations similar to theirs; *e.g.*, the *apartes* (asides) of the aurisecular Spanish theater, in which the actor addresses the audience to communicate his intentions, desires or experiences, and whose use "has been criticized in an ingenuously conception of performance, but contemporary staging has rediscovered its virtues in terms of its dramatic force and dramaturgical effectiveness" (Pavis 1998, pp. 29-30); *e.g.*, the street proposals of pantomime or the diffuse forms of the "street theater" (in Spanish, *teatro de calle*) or "actions" (in German, *aktionen*).

There is a paradigmatic case of a real "sympathy" between "spectators" and "character": Shakespearean soliloquy as a specific and deeper form of aside. The technical interpretation of the Elizabethan theater and Spanish aurisecular theater conceived the "theatrical play" of soliloquy as a kind of dialogue in which the actor said his text guided by the reactions of the spectators, they were trivial (coughs, sighs, etc.) or more blunt (laughs, cries or oral statements, such as insults, words of encouragement, and so on.) Today, the company that produces the spectacles of the new *Shakespeare's Globe* in London aims to rebuild that intimacy with the audience which was established not only in commercial theaters in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, but also in the Spanish corral of comedies (*corral de comedias*) or in Italian spectacles of *Commedia dell'Arte*, etc.. In 2008 the company commissioned the young director Lucy Bailey's staging of *Timon of Athens*. In line with earlier and later works –such as the *Hamlet* currently on tour, played by the young actor Joshua McGuire and staged by the theorist of theater and director, Dominique Dromgoole-, the work of soliloquy was executed following the directions of the audience, who could "sympathize" with a defeated Timon in the strict sense of the term. This could be possible thanks to masterful "game" played by veteran actor Simon Paisley Day, expert on Shakespearean performative techniques.

7. Silence, the curtain *does not* rises... yet: the "testing ground" of the theater pedagogy

The field of theater pedagogy is certainly instructive for understanding this dimension of acting as capable of generating a genuine "sympathy" with illusory characters, revealing a same situation for character and audience. The teachers in the Department of Performing Arts of the Higher School of Dramatic Art of Castilla y León worked, hand in hand with their coordinator, teacher and actor Carlos Martínez-Abarca, in a staging entitled *Lope y Shakespeare: trabajo sobre escenas* (*Lope and Shakespeare: scenes work*) on the *IX Festival of Classical Theater* in Olite (Navarra, Spain) 2009. One of the most attractive proposal contrasted two ways of approaching the famous soliloquy of *Hamlet*, *i.e.*, that of "to be or not to be": (1) the method used by the traditional Russian acting school, characterized by a great deal of physical work and the closure of dramatic space with respect to the spectators, *i.e.*, the "fourth wall"; (2) the method of the English school, worked in the light of texts and studies of the stage director and pedagogue of theater, Declan Donnellan (Donnellan 2005). This second option on the Shakespearean soliloquy in *Hamlet* showed students, teachers and spectators of Olite the dramatic power of the "collaborative event" (Homan 1980; Hapgood 1988, pp. 1-25; González Fernández de Sevilla 1993, pp. 45-70; Ackroyd 2005, p. 343) as an essential art form of the European aurisecular theater. But those of us who checked the actors' work even before the final staging, we could see the ruling principle of a proposal over another, thanks to the invaluable open classes of teachers involved in the work. Thus, while the young actor Luis Enrique García Conde worked and polished the usual problems of his proposal, based on the techniques of master William Layton (Stanislavsky's follower and trainer of the responsible teacher for the staging of these two Hamlets), the also young actor Luis Alberto Heras managed to break, after initial resistance, the convention of the "fourth wall" inviting spectators to join his soliloquy. In the context of a legal move, his eyes, his gestures and even his voice modulation were continually readjusted by audience's reactions although these were minimal. A cough, a sigh, a smile or a look of censure were, in Declan Donnellan's terminology, their "targets". Spectators were directly confronted with a Hamlet who, in turn, was "with" them, creating a same sphere of intimacy where his doubts, his disorientation, loneliness and misunderstanding were not only "empathized" individually, but shared by a "we" who sympathized with the situation of the young prince, and, therefore, with him. Again, the aesthetic presentation of the doubts of Hamlet provoked the spectator to feel no doubts about whether or not to kill Claudius –questions that only concerned the young prince-, but the pressure on human existence itself that exerts this kind of crossroads, when we do not want to do what we have to do, but we know that we must do what we do not want to do. Suddenly, we passed from feeling sorry for Hamlet to feel sympathy for him because we were also in the same situation.

This young Hamlet played by Heras made us his confidants, better than Guildenstern and Rosenkranz; and he gained quickly our sympathy rather than our compassion: his fate was in our hands, because to some extent Hamlet begged us not to continue the representation. That soliloquy was a point of no return. Meanwhile, the spectators faced directly, without falsehood or trap, a Hamlet who was not a mere "character", but a real "person", in so far as Heras managed to generate the same situation for everyone making us partakers of his own situation. I think this situation, at least, undermines the principle of asymmetry between real emotions and fictional, because we would like to say: "Don't worry, I'm with you, I know what you're feeling right now."

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