Guilt as a theme in Therapy
An Introduction to a new Music Program in Guided Imagery and Music (GIM)

8. th European GIM Conference
Fevik, Norway, September 19th and 20th, 2008
The GIM – Program (only for travellers ready for confrontation)

1. Elgar: Dream children Nr. 1 (Andante) in G - moll (3.27 min.) Halle, Mark Elder CBE, Lyn Fletcher
2. Alwyn: 5th Symphony, Tempo di Marcia funebre (5.55 min.) Royal Liverpool Orchestra, David Lloyd-Jones
3. Tschaikowski : Symphony Nr. 6, Pathétique, 4. movem., Finale (11.14 min.) London Symphony Orchestra, Igro Markevitch
5. Fauré: Pavane op. 50 pour orchestre et choeur (6.38 min.) Orchestre sinfonique et chœur de Montreal, Charles Dutois, DECCA
Guilt and guilt feelings

• Some thoughts on my personal and professional background in Germany as a German, born shortly after the war
• Guilt as a theme in GIM
  (there is no GIM-Program focused on guilt)
The semantic field around the German word „Schuld“ and „Schuldfähigkeit“

Guilt

- Guilt, sense of guilt, conscious of guilt, joint guilt, collective guilt, bad conscience
- Blame, to lay the blame on someone, to bear the blame,
- Debt, to admit a debt, to be in someone’s debt, debt ridden, debtor, to enter the debit side, to owe s.th. to s.o.
- Fault, to be at fault, actual fault, it’s his fault
- Liability, to assume or exclude liability, for the liability to
• Responsibility
  criminal responsibility,
  personal responsibility,
  social responsibility,
  sense of responsibility,
  joint responsibility (f.ex. for the survival of our earth)
Objective and subjective Guilt

Objective Guilt

- Guilt in *crown law* (crime, violation of rules): reduced liability in case of mental incapacity (f.ex. because of drug intoxication, impaired consciousness, lack of intelligence, etc.)

Subjective Guilt

- Guilt in respect to ethical and moral conscience: existential guilt, transgenerational transferences/transmissions
Existential guilt

- The potentiality to cause wrong by acting and failing to act lies in our human condition, because we are primarily interested in our own surviving and our personal concerns (f.ex. need for appraisal, affiliation, etc.). By that, if we want or not, we easily become guilty in an existential sense.

- It is not necessarily a consciously negligent conduct and often tragical (see Milgram experiment!) to become guilty.
Existential guilt

- We become guilty if we only „do our duty“, if we hinder ourselves to grow personally and spiritually, if we do not take responsibility for ourselves and humanity.
- Not only individuals become guilty, also groups and nations.
- We all become guilty in an existential way of not stopping the destruction of our planet.
As existential guilt feelings might not be conscious, they can show up as symptoms

**Physiological level:**
f.ex. posttraumatic stress diseases, disturbances of the immune system, dementia

**Psychological level:**
f.ex. affective diseases (depressions, anxieties), addictions

**Cognitive level:**
f.ex. weakening of volition, weak will to **want**
Defence reactions without clinical symptoms (social diseases) (can lead to clinical symptoms later)

- hardheartedness, callousness, lovelessness, unkindness, recklessness, ruthlessness, violence
- but also:
  - keeping low-key,
  - falling silent,
  - congealing, repressing feelings,
  - losing control,
  - bellyaching about everything,
  - compulsive striving for personal success and power

(Defence reactions without clinical symptoms (social diseases) can lead to clinical symptoms later.)
Transgenerational transmissions of existential guilt feelings on the 3rd generation (persons now between 30-45 years of age) can be f.ex.

- parentification (be the parent of your parents)
- spoiling (my children shall have no restrictions)
- indifference, callousness, lovelessness (because I did not get love my children do not deserve it either)
- other
General Therapeutic Issues

- Development of acceptance of one’s existential guilt.
- Exploration of one’s mental representations of cultural influences and one’s collective history
- Exploration of one’s illusions, ideologies, normes, myths, beliefs, values that influenced one’s styles of thinking, feeling and behaving/acting
General Therapeutic Issues

To develop volition to accept and live through emotional qualities like despair, longing, hope, remorse, shame, forgiving, desillusioning, sorrow, reconciliation, etc. until one is willing and able to take personal and social responsibility.
General Therapeutic Issues

It is not a therapeutic intention of feeling free of guilt, there is actually nobody who can appease or forgive in a moral sense.
The goal is to overcome guilt feelings by bearing them and taking responsibility

This needs indulgence, emotional resonance, appraisal and compassion from the therapist and stimulation by the Co-therapist (the music)
The Intention of the GIM-Program

Guilt

- When the client is ready for a tough hero’s journey
- to experience the aesthetic qualities of the musics as a message to fill them with one’s own experiences and
- to provide a time and place to explore one’s (bad) conscience and its unconscious or not conscious embeddedness in one’s individual and collective background, to explore repressed and/or the transgenerationally transmitted existential guilt feelings.
The Intention of the GIM-Program

- to give the client a chance to go with the help of the music through a process of detecting cognitive and emotional illusions, go through a symbolic death in order to find connection to human values beyond the Ego-centeredness (f.ex. personal and social responsibility for the wellbeing of life on this planet).
Elgar: Dream children

“We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been....”.

The clarinet as the protagonist of this music seems to express the dream of the missing chance and longing for what could have been possible and the being of two minds about hope and doubt. The music does not give a final answer, but leaves the end open.
Elgar: Dream children Nr. 1 (Andante) in G - minor (3.27 min.)
Elgar

Form: A-B-A

A Part: The clarinet introduces the main theme in a G minor cording.
The melody is dreamlike and searching, supported by the strings in a rocking three bar measure.

0.32: The clarinet repeats the tone “D” as if it would pause and it seems to question the search.

0.43 by a descending melody.

However, at 0.52 it is calmed by the orchestra.
The last tone of the A part sounds in G major.
The **B-part** starts at 1.09. It sounds as if with the **E flat** a memory of a vision came up. The mood lightens up.

1.40: The dynamic development and **intensification confirm** the importance of the vision.

A’-part: The wind instruments produce chromatically descending dissonances and return from **E-flat** back to **G-minor**. The message of the B-part **does not seem to become true**. The whole seems to stay open.
The end with the G minor chord seems to give notice of something sad, however, the strings surprisingly build up a B and then a D and thus this part does not end in G minor, but in G major. Due to the fifth of the G-major chord, the D in the soprano, the end remains as an open question.
A "Friends sit together and are having dinner. I am not with them. I have not been invited. They have forgotten me....

B. They try to make amends for that, but they don’t apologize... I am angry.

A‘. They try to give me the feeling to be blamed.."
“But man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing nativities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery in the infamy of his nature.”

(Sir Thomas Browne, 1605-1682)
This piece of music moves between doom and the all-clear. The ambivalence of man’s nature is demonstrated. The music can let break through what had been repressed, what was not allowed to show up and what could not be reflected (conscience) and it opens a space for an ambivalent grief.

Alwyn
Alwyn: 5th Symphony, „Hydriotaphia“
Tempo di Marcia funebre (5.55 min.)
The 4th section of this music starts with an eerie bell’s C- D flat – E, supported by strings. At 0.33 The strings and wind instruments take over this motive. The atmosphere becomes very mysterious and weird because the major cords mix into dissonances.

Slow ascending tones remind of heavy steps at a funeral. 1.50 incalculable accents by the brass players intensify the tension up to a very aggressive and violent climax.
The wind instruments play quick rhythms in a martial and brutal way, the strings sound noisy and shrill. At 3.18 the tension explodes with loud gong beats, brass and percussion. A peaceful F major chord at 3.41 cannot really appease the situation. Below the threshold a cello plays a short grieving and melancholic melody. From 4.00 a mood arises in which hope and doubts interfere with each other in a decrescending major chord and dissonances. This ambivalence is confirmed when the rolling timpanis and the high D-flat tones of the wind instruments seem to question the harmonic F major chord. This again leaves an open end.
„Sunday bells. Threatening. Something threatening is up, I have to escape, but I can’t. I am still lying in bed, I cannot get up. Heavy clouds are covering my house, they try to destroy my house. I am helpless. Somebody has burgled. They are looking for me. They mingle and search for me. I need help ... The orchestra is disturbing me ... The strings are having a discussion: One is softsoaping, the other one not.“
Composer’s Intention: to destroy all impetus, confidence, blissful innocence and faith. The music really confronts with the giving up of one’s illusions and rationalizations of what could have been if one only had.....
Tschaikowski: Sinf. Nr. 6 Pathetique, Finale
(11.14 min.)
and opens a space for grief and melancholy.

The deep bass voices hold the listener in the emotional depths. The motive enfolds with the strings up and downwards and is combined with the wind instruments. At 1.50 the alienated entry of the horn leads into the depths to the end of this A-part.
At 2.30 the B-part starts with a warm consoling Andante theme in D major.

The theme is intensified by chromatism and change into an insisting knock. At 4.57 min. one is forced to give up. If there are guilt feelings about repressed feelings, missing experience, grief, pain about things that cannot be repaired they can come up now and can be experienced. 5.00: final break down.
The sigh motif returns at 5.30 and seems to confirm how sad and desolate it is, although at 6.30 a flicker of hope reappears with the comforting Andante motive. But the intensification, the increasing tempo and the beat of the Tamtam at 7.40, which allows a last rebellion, do not help.

At 8.12 the coda starts with a remote beat of the Tamtam and a somber choral of the brass instruments above a pedal point B.

At 9.12 min. the Andante theme appears as a variation in minor at the end until the movement dies in hopelessness, resigned and tragically in a B minor chord of the deep strings.
“I feel like the basson. I resist the strings, but I am alone, without power. They want me to be the way they are. I say no, no is always good. But I am lonely. The harmony is getting on my nerves. I do not need advice, but answers. I want to be convinced, but it is not possible. They make demands and demands: you have to! You have to otherwise you will regret. Shit!! I am excluded. Nobody understands me. .. Now they want to console me, but I can‘t take that, it is only appeasement. They make everything so complicated: up and down. But I do not want to take part. They say I have to join them. They tear me, take my clothes away...They are too powerful...I see a procession. Somebody has died. People carry a coffin. I think I am lying in it. Yes”
Ah! Do not reject my sinful soul!
Hear my cries and see my repentance!
Help me, Lord; Haste thee to rush to me
And take pity on my distress.
Of vengeful justice, Deflect the blows, my Savior!
Divine Redeemer! O Divine Redeemer!
Pardon my weakness!
In the secrecy of the nights I shall shed my tears,
I shall mortify my flesh under the weight of the
hair shirt;
And my heart, altered by the bleeding sacrifice,
Will bless the merciful rigors of Thy hand!
Gounod: Repentir (female voice) (6.13 min.)
Gounod

Form: A-B-C-B- (Coda)

A cello-solo in C minor winds up from the very deep into the upper tones, finally ending chromatically back in the low register.

The orchestra comes in at 0.18 followed by the oboe and the female voice that begins her lamentation in g’.

The melody enfolds carefully supported by modulations, and diminished and minor chords rising until she reaches the g” (2.16) in dire straits. Half-tone steps support the impression of remorse. The A-part ends at 2.30 in an imperfect cadence which also supports the impression of supplication and plead.
The B-Part begins at 2.32 min. without dissonances in a light C major procuring a feel of encouragement.
This continues in the short C-part from 3.33. The minor ninth (c’ to d”), modulations and frequent diminished and minor chords express hope for forgiveness and salvation.
This harmonic and serious B-part ends at 5.07 with the Coda with a strong intensification that also refers to the short C-Part. The end in C major is peaceful and erecting.
„My soul is dead... I can see a flame. It is cold. It looks hot, but it is cold. You can touch it. It is very powerful, lively, erotic, but not threatening... The flame wants to reanimate my soul. But it does not work, the flame is cold. It tries again, but it does not work. My soul is dead. The music is shallow...“
This Pavane leads to a positive end, however, the middle part and its focus on the Lydian mood seems to call for one’s will to take a decision: f.ex. to decide to detach oneself from helplessness und dependencies. This might remind us that it is never too late to develop our free will and take responsibility.
Fauré

Allegretto molto moderato
pizz. etc. Fl.

pp p

music notation
Fauré: Pavane op. 50 pour orchestre et choeur
The A-Part begins with a soft flute solo in F sharp, which is tritone step from Gounod’s ending in C major. The wood wind instruments play in the relative key A major and the strings back up by pizzicato accompaniment. That leaves a melancholic impression.
Faure

1.33: the female choir repeats the theme, the male voices answer as if they would discuss the theme. 2.27 they come together.

The B-Part begins 2.30 with the strings forcefully moving downwards in Lydian mood on the keynote D as ostinato tone. (The Lydian mood includes a tritone which can resolve in 2 directions. The tritone provides the largest freedom to
decide between 2 options, therefore also called “diabolus in musica” (and Lucifer – the one who questions things- is the lightbringer). The repeated D of the male voices an octave higher sound as if they insisted on taking responsibility, whereas the instruments in the orchestra move up and down as if they looked for answers. This is repeated after 3 min one tone lower.
3.08: the female voices enter again and the discussion continues until 3.32 a harmonic resolution to C sharp changes the atmosphere for a moment.

5.22: in the A’-Part with the repetition of the main theme the wood wind instruments and the flute return. The choir carries the melody, however, sighing as if it would confirm how grievous everything was.
Fauré

Imagery by „Doris“

„I like this music. It is not threatening. The music asks me how I am. It says: „What a pity that you are suffering“ and „I feel sympathetic with you“. This feels nice.... 2.15 I do not like the choir. They shout too high. It reminds me of dominant people.... 3.30 I am glad to hear the flute again, very soft, but not weak.... I am sceptical, I can’t hear the flute...the choir tries again to softsoap...what a pity the flute joins them ca 5.00....6.00 What a pity!“
Ramona
Ramona, born 1965 in the GDR

Ramona’s Journey is an example of similar journeys of children of parents born between 1930 and 1945. In the early forties of the last century both her maternal and paternal grandparents had experienced flight and displacement from the former east provinces. They and Ramona’s parents who where of course children at that time were traumatized from the terrible circumstances during that flight. Both families had to settle in East Germany where they were badly treated by the population as refugees and which later was under Russian “protection”.
The children grew up in the GDR where they met as grown ups and married. They had 3 children, Ramona was the oldest one. Ramona’s father was very critical against the system of the GDR and therefore was constantly spied on by the secret service (STASI). Somehow they managed to leave the GDR at the end of the seventies - maybe the Westgerman government payed for that - but they had to restart their living from absolutely nothing.
Ramona was 13 years old and experienced the leaving of her homeland in a similar way her grandparents had experienced the leaving of their home in the former Eastern territories. She felt like a foreigner in Westgermany and suffered very much, but never talked about it. On the contrary, she felt responsible for her parents. She was actually parentified by taking care of her parent’s emotional insecurity. Because of the strong binding problems in her own later marriage which ended in a divorce she went twice in psychotherapy.
Her existential guilt feelings related to her parentification. She was afraid not to be good enough to help her parents and to disappoint them. In other words she failed to live her own life. Only when her relational problems became too evident she realized her existential guilt feeling had prevented her from taking responsibility for herself.
1. Music: Elgar

At the beginning I was in that trecking on the ice with the refugees. Now we are on the road. My father asks for a glas of water. We do not know where to go (how is that for you?) I feel lost... (what about the music?) the music helps to bear that.
• 2. Music: Alwyn

It is as if I had the suspicion something bad will happen (are you still in the treck?) No, I quit quite quickly. It is the day when we passed the border to Westberlin... As if all hope would be destroyed (hope?) yes, that everything would turn out to be fine. (What is now?) We are still on the street and look back at the treck (3.45)... now the earth breaks and everybody disappears. It is awfull, terrible!.. I also feel indifference, a distance... everything is so inevitable. [cries]... (4.55) ... There is a swan (does he notice you?) yes, he approaches us, he has a tray and serves water, funny, ...now he disappears.
We are in a fairytale world. We are on the road, but it is raining gold, reminds me of the “golden west”! My father does not fit into this, he seems so alienated…. My sister and I go forward and look for a good way. My parents can’t do that, but they join us.. We find a meadow and move into a dark forest… (2.44) (say more) I found “it”, but the rest of the family is not satisfied (what did you find?) …I wanted to splash water on the others to show them how nice it is here…I also pushed my father under the water, he became angry and disappeared, but now he comes back (7.00) (what is happening?)....
(8.12) before I held distance to him, but when he got so angry I was frightened, I had to take care of my sister and explained to her why he is like he is. I take my sister by her hand and we go away. My parents have to solve their problems by themselves. They stay in their foggy place...

*(what does it feel like for you?)* My sister wants to go back to them, I tell her: “it is not possible”, I feel very unhappy. It is so hard and cruel to take my sister away although she wants to stay with the parents.
4. Music: Gounod

I am feeling how lonely my sister is feeling [she cries] ... I put a lot of cotton wool around her, but it does not help (let yourself feel your pain) [she cries hard] .... (2.05) I have put her on a large lotus bloom on the water (how is she there?) a little better. I hold the lotus bloom at the leaf and we drift away (what does the music say to that?) "you cannot do more for her at the moment" ...that is releasing (can you take the music into that feeling?) yes...(how is it to leave the parents behind?) it is sad, but we are getting used to it. The water is healing... there is more light, the sun is shining, there are fields.
We step out of the water and climb up the bank slope (how is that for you?) I feel optimism and trust in life. We are among people.

We could stay there but we move on, jumping in big steps over the fields (big steps?) yes, it is fun (how is your sister?) pretty well. She had put on her ballet costume.. (4.05) we have a rest. My sister takes her miracle stones out of her rucksack.....(can you do magic?) no,. the stones are not mine. I do not know what will be (what does that feel like?) it is o.k., it is nice where we are, we are having a picnic. We are writing a postcard to our parents. We write: “We are fine. You can come”... (you can come?) Well, we do not know to which place they can come. We need a place...a place where one feels meant to be.
Thank you very much for your attention
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