

Spirituality as an aspect of the holistic treatment with Ancient Oriental Music Therapy

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I want to start my speech with a story, which has happened during my work certainly three years ago. I was giving a workshop for a group of patients, who were suffering from the apalic syndrome. These patients had made it to regenerate to a certain level, so that they were no longer in stationary clinical treatment, but they also were able just to a certain point, to live an independent life. In concrete, that means, some of them were in care with their family, because they could not live alone, others were able to live in self responsibility in an own flat, but were far away from working in a regular job, as most of them did before they experienced the moment, that kicked them out of their "normal" live. To make it more clear, these people had experienced a heavy accident, a bad run clinical operation, a stroke of apoplexy, ore other situations, which had a heavy neurological consequence in their brain. All of them had been in a state, which is commonly known as "Coma with open eyes". The chance to regenerate completely from this apalic syndrome is very low, because the human brain is such a sensible and complex system, that damage over a certain level can almost not be compensated. But as mentioned, all of the participants of the workshop, which was organized from a self helping group of patients and relatives, had already left the clinic and the stationary rehabilitation canter.

As You can probably imagine, the physical damage of such a person is only one aspect of something, that had changed their live forever. The other aspect is of cause, what has happened in their psychic. Besides the fact, that what has happened to them has changed their personality, they will more or less for sure, never live their old life again, which also means, that they never will work in their learned profession again, if they will work ever.

So in this group, I was working with, there was a young woman, who was always a little bit aside from the group, she was participating in the work with the music, but she was not talking or communicating with the others. In general she looked a little bit sad. Later I learned that she was a former police woman, who had a heavy accident while doing her work, and was not able any more to work in her job again.

During the day, we worked with the music in different ways, also with the Active Musictherapie Movements. This movements are part of the Ancient Oriental Musictherapie, and were developed with the permission from these spiritual traditions out of different dances, which have a historic spiritual and ethnological healing background, such as the Baksidance, an old shamanic dance from central Asia, or the semah of the Bektashi dervishes. In progress with these movements, we worked with a special movement to activate the shoulders. As many of my colleges, I always try to bring in the work some aspects of humor and joy, but also I am trying to find points which are able to build a bridge to the nature and which may be are a little

substitute for a lack of nature experience. In concrete, to the shoulder activating movements, I play pentatonic music, and give the patients a supporting imagination of the movements of birds, an in progress while playing, also of horses. These things I did also in the workshop I'm telling about.

At this point it is necessary to mention, that pentatonic music is used very often in several ethnic ceremonies, because of its possibility to induce trance, and for the same and other aspects, it is used in most music therapeutic methods, not only in the Ancient Oriental Musictherapie. Also birds and horses are in many spiritual traditions symbols of a special divine force, and shamans imitate in their music and ceremonies often the movements and sounds of these animals, to get better connection with the divine and creating force. This is important, because it is an example, how these ceremonies are not the products of some mysterious fantasies, but has a concrete holistic background, which sees the human being not as an isolated individuum, but in connection to all the other creation. I consider myself not to be a shaman, but I think it makes sense, not to just use one aspect of this old knowledge, that we can proof as useful in our today's understanding, like for example the pentatonic music, and isolate these aspects from its original setting, because we see it in general as primitive ore ridiculous. This "Grabbing what I want to use" from old traditions, and to bring it in a modern context with other parts of traditional healing ceremonies, may be a good construction for a lot of therapeutic situations, but it causes also the danger of a kind of arrogance like digging the treasures that we can understand with our point of view out of traditions, but leave the hole traditional context, which was developed for maybe hundreds of years, behind as rubbish. Maybe there are more important aspects in these old ceremonies, than we cannot understand in the moment, but which may be important in some moments in a therapeutic situation, and if I don't respect these aspects, they will not at the benefit of the patients. The story I am telling about, shows maybe, what I mean. Let's go back it:

When we were practicing this shoulder movement together, I said while playing the pentatonic music on the Ud:" Now we imagine, that we are sitting on a horse!" and I made the imitation of a horse sound with my voice. Suddenly the young woman began to smile, a visible change was in her face, and from that moment on she participated more intensive in the group. After we had finished with this movement she came to me and asked me:" Are you also brain damaged?" Surprised about this question, I didn't know what to say, but she continued:" Because of my accident, I had a lot of work with different therapists, but none of them did something like this sound of a horse. You can not be a normal therapist!" and with a smile she gave me her hand.

What had happened? Together with the pentatonic music, the imitating of a horse sound is similar to what shamans are doing in their ceremonies. I did it just to give the input of "natural sound" but it had touched her deeply, and she expressed it with her words "Are you also brain damaged?" This means, she had accepted me as the first among her therapists (this must have been a lot of) who can experience almost the same as her, and she expressed it with the question, if I also would have a brain

damage. She saw me somehow as being on the same level as her. This also expressed, that she has reached to trust me and maybe saw me to be a kind of mirror to her. As we know from the general theory of therapy, it is a very important point for the therapist, not to be a kind of teacher to the patients, but to take them from where they are, and to accompany them during the therapy until the point where they can find stability out of their own resources. So, an old shamanic behavior, the imitating of an animal sound, which is from a “scientific” point “senseless” while a movement practice, was a key to a change in the relation between me and this patient in this workshop, and it brought me more closer to her personality, than a lot of therapists were before me. The rest of the workshop she was very active, and in the end she expressed, that she had taken a lot of hope out of that workshop.

I am working as a musiktherapist now for more than ten years, and I am mainly using the method of the Ancient Oriental Musictherapie. Thought this therapy method has its roots in the Islamic high culture thousand years ago and had its highest development here in Turkey in the time of the Ottoman Empire, it was in Austria, in Europe, that it found again back its way in the regular medicine and social treatment system. Dr.Oruc Güvenc, who had refunded this complex Musictherapie system, gave his very first class about this topic in Vienna, Austria, and I am grateful, that I was in this class in October 1989. The education, which was in the beginning a private class for some “lunatic” people, who believed in the possibilities of that old method, became after some years more and more accepted, and today Ancient Oriental Musiktherapy is a known method of therapy in Countries a Austria, Germany or Spain. I personal like the fact that a good part of my music therapeutic work happens in institutions of the catholic “Caritas” organization. A method from the Islamic based culture is used in institutions of a Christian catholic organization – I think a nice example of working together for the benefit of people, based on spirituality, no matter from which religion, but with the higher moral of spirituality in the background of the work, that often lacks in non spiritual based institutions. In my life and work, this music has become a bridge function between the so called orient and occident, not only in therapy and concerts, but also in my teaching work, which is Islamic spiritual music in Europe’s only official accepted Islamic technical school and in Europe’s only Islamic pedagogic study for Islamic religion teachers with university level, both located in Vienna, and official accepted and financed by the Austrian republic.

From the beginning of the education of Ancient Oriental Music therapy it was clear, that, beside modern psychology and therapy knowledge, not only the structure and the using of the makam music would be an important part of the method, but also the philosophical and cultural background, that has enabled people to have the idea to use music in the regular hospitals in the old times. This very humanistic philosophical background you can describe with the words “Islamic Sufism”, a knowledge, that has brought to us important facts, like for example a remarkable saying from the blessed prophet Mohammed about music and the Ud, brought to us by Abdulkadir Geylani. As you know, we are celebrating this year the 800 the birthday of the great Mevlana

Rumi. Some of the instruments like the Ney or the Rebab, which are strongly connected with his name, are very important basic instruments in the work with Ancient Oriental Music therapy. It is not only the knowledge and the technique of playing these instruments; it is also the complexity of their sounds, together with all the spiritual meaning, for which they are considered. As an example, just listen to the sound of the Ney, the instrument, which is the theme about at the very beginning of Mevlana's great Methnevi. If you listen to it, it is not only the melody; it is all the meaning of the situations and connection to the moments, when this instrument is used. I think, no one sees it as an instrument for a discotheque, but as an instrument in a spiritual context, that touches the people from the first moment, they are listening to it. This is not only true for people in Turkey, but also, as I experience in my every day work, for the people in Europe, which are not living in an Islamic based cultural surrounding. There are many things in the treatment with Ancient Oriental Musictherapie, which is neither only therapeutic nor only religious / spiritual. To stay with Mevlana Rumi, there is of course also, sometimes as tourist attraction misused, Sema, the praying dance that I use in the therapeutic work. Since many years I am leading an anti stress and burnout prevention group in Vienna, were certainly only people who are working in a social profession like psychotherapists, social workers, a Christian bishop or medicine doctors, take part. Among other techniques I use whirling with them and I got the feedback, that it is a very strong therapeutic and regulating method against stress and helps to regulate the hard working people to find back their own balance and refresh their body and mind. Of course the sema is more, it is, depending on the point of view, a prayer, a ritual or a therapy, it is all together, and it is not useful to say it is just the one but not the other. And, important again, to leave some basic parts of the ceremony out of it while doing it as a therapy, would mean to cut its possibilities for the patients.

In the Middle Ages, the world and the universe was understood as a perfect built, divine inspired, construction, and therapy was seen as something to put people who are ill, and from this point of view out of the systemic balance, back into the universal balance. Music as the "divine language" was a well used method for this. Later the science brought out more and more, that the earth is not in the middle of the universe and that illness is something that has complex reasons and has to be seen very individually. According to that, also the treatment with music changed from the idea to bring patients back to the universal harmony, to a psychotherapeutic based using of music and the analyze of the personal situation. So in our times we experience the farrest point ever reached in the individualization, with all its positive and negative aspects. But to our astonishment, the modern science like the quantum physicians are showing us, that all the materia is linked and that not one atom does a movement, without influencing all the others. So it seems that there is a connection between us all and to everything, you can call it a spirit, a system or whatever you like. This doesn't mean, to leave the perspective of seeing every human being as self depending and individual, but it may mean to think about, that maybe in the old perspective of an all connected order there was something, that can be important also in our days. The old time spiritual understanding of music was, that music is

following the rules of the unity – and this is not new - like we consider music to be a mirror of nature. We know, that physically, every existing thing is in permanent vibration, and if we could have an organ for it, we could hear the every time existing sound of the creation. Or, to express it with spiritual based words, out of the holy Koran, everything is in remembrance of Allah, but we cannot understand it. But not only is the material stuff itself vibrating in an organized way. Every tone is defined from its base ton as an overtone; every interval can be shown as mathematic fraction, and correlating to that as a physical distance. From this perspective, to look at modal music, like the music in Europe was in the middle ages, and the makam music of the orient and here in Turkey is maybe its highest developed example, means, that every makam has its own complex structure, defined from its basic. So if a patient gets a 20 minute receptive treatment with ancient Oriental Musictherapie, he or she gets a 20 minute impulse of a natural structure, which is received by the patient. An important point is, that the history of tuning and the development of music changed the natural tuned ton system to the physically “wrong tuned” (without a moral meaning) tempera system that enabled the harmonic music, that in the orient does not exist, and in Europe had not existed before 300 years. In the same time, as men were becoming a more independent person, the music changed also from its divine order to the personal expression, and there seems to be a correlation in losing the old knowledge about music as a regulating therapy in the same time.

I mentioned the importance of the oriental music instruments as Ney, Rebab or Ud for the work with Ancient Oriental Music Therapy. They have, compared to their European children as Traverselflut, Violin or Guitar, fewer overtones, because more of them would make harmonically music impossible. In short: In every tone you can hear a lot of higher sounding tones according to the natural definition of the intervals. The higher they are, the more difficult you can hear them, but physically, they exist. So if a patient is treated with the Ancient Oriental Musictherapie, it is not only the structure of the makam, that is giving an structural influence to him or her, it is also the sound of the instrument, that gives the impulse of its complex overtone structure to the listener. So if we would use instruments with fewer overtones, as the classic European ones, in our music therapy, we would lose the structural effect of the sound - and often in my work I get the feedback, that the sound of the oriental instruments, that I am using only, is what touches the patients most and deepest.

Some musicians say that music is not something that is produced by the musicians himself, it is something that is in the space around us and the musician only makes it hearable. Maybe some music technocrats cannot experience that, but it would be the explanation, why many spiritual ways and religions, such as the Islamic Sufism of Mevlana Rumi, Hacı Bektaş, Ahmet Rûfai and others, mention music as the golden way to unity, to regeneration, to god, or let us express it in other words and the perspective of therapy, to a healing in under the perspective which treats the patient as a person in all his complexity.

Here in Turkey is the fountain of many important parts of this perspective and this is not the question of a scientific nationalism or colonialism. The Person of Mevlana

Rumi is a great example that, whatever is good for mankind, doesn't belong to one nation only. He was born in Afghanistan, wrote his poetry in Persian, lived in Turkey and doesn't belong to just one of these countries, he belongs to mankind. It is the same with the methods, that help people, to bring them back health and balance, methods which may come out of the context of a certain culture, but are for the benefit of all people. At least it is the same with the Ancient Oriental Musictherapy, which has a very international story, like its modern "comeback", which has started in Turkey, and was fulfilled in Middle Europe. At this point, I want to thank Dr. Oruc Güvenc, for refinding this old tradition and giving it new life nowadays. I hope, after being accepted in Europe since many years, it will find back its way to the regular treatment for the people in this country, with all the respect and usefulness of the old spiritual traditions, in a modern, reflected time.