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Music and Affects Psychoanalytic Viewpoints

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In this article I will discuss some connections between music and affects. I will take it as self-evident that when we listen to music we experience affects. But what kind of affects are evoked? The same as in other fields of human experience, or are they specific to music? We can proceed and ask: what properties does music have, as contrasted to the spoken language, that renders it prone to affect evocation? Can we identify general properties in music? I think we can and I intend to show this by discussing theoretically some traits in the world of sound that facilitate affect evocation. Material for the discussion will be taken from my own affective associations to short musical examples. These associations are not given with the intent of creating a musical “affect glossary”. They are given in order to provide material for a more general discussion of the worlds of sound, music and affects.

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Problems due to the nature of music

This discussion is preferrably introduced by two quotations of Freud, where he makes some of the few statements he ever made on music. In “The Moses of Michelangelo” (Freud, 1914), he describes how works of art exercise a powerful influence on him, especially those of literature and sculpture, less often of painting. Facing such works, he spends “a long time before them trying to apprehend them in my own way, i.e., to explain to myself what their effect is due to”. Then comes something interesting for our discussion:

Whenever I cannot do this, as for instance with music, I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure. Some rationalistic, or perhaps

analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me (p. 211).

Parenthetically, we might assume that the somewhat defensive tone of this statement reflects the fact that Freud was indeed affected by music, but in some unpleasant way. This has been pointed out by many authors, e.g., Reik (1953) and Hummel (1985).

However, for our purposes, we can extract something more relevant from the quotation. Freud wants to know *why* he is affected and *what* it is that affects him. These questions are difficult indeed to answer in the realm of music. Music is not a translateable language, elements of music do not “mean” this or that. Some lines above the aforementioned quotation, he speaks of a problem that is close to these questions of “why” and “what”:

I have often observed that the subject-matter of works of art has a stronger attraction to me than their formal and technical qualities, though to the artist, their value lie first and foremost in these latter. I am unable rightly to appreciate many of the methods used and the effects obtained in art. (ibid).

If one confines the study to the “subject-matter” of art and excludes its formal or technical qualities, one is naturally in danger of overlooking the specific, artistic values of art. This tendency in psychoanalysis to concentrate only on the “hidden” content and not on the formal aspects has often been criticized (see, e.g., Langer, 1942; Deri, 1984). As can be seen above, Freud acknowledges this danger, a danger that I think is especially obvious concerning music. In music, it is particularly difficult to differentiate form and content, the essence of music being to a great extent “the methods used and the effects obtained”.

In order to expand the study from content solely to form and content alike, psychoanalysis needed (in the field of music as well as in other fields) a psychology of the ego. I will not follow this interesting track since it falls outside the scope of my study. The reader is referred to Noy (1966–67) for a very extensive and scholarly review of psychoanalysis and music.

Problems connected to the selection of material

On what material shall we base our conclusions? To us analysts, the most evident method is to get it from our analysands. But here we run into

difficulties. I have been waiting, and I think in vain, for the kind of musical associations that I think are necessary for this type of study. Not that my analysands have been completely silent about music, but my method (from which general conclusions will be drawn) is to investigate what singular elements in music give different affective associations. Trying to obtain these associations from a clinical situation would be impossible to unite with the goals of therapy.

I will thus rely upon the associations that naturally were the instigators of my thoughts on music: my own. It is easy to criticize such a procedure on the grounds that its results are idiosyncratic and that my introspection is hampered by my own defences. On the other hand, I hope to show that my ideas concerning music and affects are generally applicable; this being so also in the frequent cases where one does not concur with my associations to the music. After all, this subjective foundation of a theoretical model is nothing new in psychoanalysis, from “The Interpretation of Dreams” (Freud, 1900) and onwards.

LISTENING TO MUSIC

Before I set out to describe the musical examples, a few words about listening to music are appropriate. We listen in many different ways. I refer, e.g., to the difference between walking in a department store, hearing soft music in the background, as compared to listening intensely, alone at night to a stereo set-up. The kind of listening that has given me the most intense experiences has, not surprisingly, been of the latter type. I am talking about letting myself become slack, regressive, drowsy, yet apprehensive. Letting the affects flow, and yet keeping an eye on them; very similar to the transference regression that we hope our analysands get involved in, or to the analyst’s evenly suspended attention (see, e.g., Nass, 1971). If we visit a concert hall, we see features aimed at facilitating this kind of listening. The light is low, the musicians are dressed darkly and discretely. Some of us close our eyes while listening. A cough or a murmur can be felt as immensely irritating (c.f., when there is a ring at the door in the analytic consulting room!).

THE MUSICAL EXPERIENCE – AN EXAMPLE

My main example will be from symphony no. 40, in g minor, by W. A. Mozart. It comes from the first movement, its very first theme.



Musical example nr 1: W A Mozart, symphony nr 40. First movement, first theme.

I experienced this as beautiful, I fell into a peculiar mood: a mixture of sadness, melancholy and – rebellion. These feelings could be influenced by my knowledge of Mozart's desperate condition when he wrote this music, but I do not think that offers any tangible explanation. Instead, I think there are properties in the music itself that enable me to easily get into these moods. I will concentrate on the first five bars of the musical example above, no. 1. This will naturally create an atomistic analysis of the music, considering the fact that we experience music much more "en bloc". However, I do find this detailed analysis necessary for understanding the ways affects are represented in music. The method has its similarities to analyzing singular elements of a dream.

The first portion (see "a" in musical example no. 1) is associated by me with a *sigh*. I think this is because the phrase "collapses", just like a sigh, from the tone of E flat to D. As can be seen, this happens repetitively. Furthermore, the note E flat is under harmonic tension. This is because in the first bar of the symphony, the violas have marked the basic harmony of the theme, that of g minor. E flat is outside the chord, while D is part of it. I claim that one does not at all have to be trained in music to experience the harmonic tension. We are imbued with this harmonic world from the beginning of our lives. Thus, everyone knows that E flat is out of place, though not all of us know the name for it.

What the first figure, "a", has in common with the sigh is thus the collapse and the release of tension. What happens next is a figure striving upwards, from D to B flat. To me, this figure conveys optimistic feelings. I think this is because the connection of upward movement with hope and optimism is so natural to us humans. A happy person looks upwards, as compared to the melancholic, who stares at the floor. In the afterlife, we prefer to go to heaven, rather than going down to hell. We are permeated by this symbolism, which I venture to call firmly rooted in our primary process. Another fact is that it is not evident why we call this change of tonal frequency "upwards", since this word primarily denotes movement in space. Children can be seen having difficulties in understanding these

things. I once heard a musically talented boy ask why it was called an upward movement when he moved his fingers on the piano from E flat to E. He meant that he moved his finger downwards, the black E flat key after all being higher up, spatially, than the white E key! He needed an explanation to better differentiate his visual from his auditive impressions.

After experiencing this short surge of optimism, I now turn to the third act of the little drama. I refer to “c”, where the scale falls down from B flat to C. In analogy with the first act (“a”), we have something here which could be conceived of as several “sighs” successively. Thus, the drama finishes in a mood of resignation. Another, yet related, way of experiencing this piece of music was provided by a patient in a monograph by Vanggaard (1979). The author tells us of a borderline girl obsessed by hateful feelings towards a person she otherwise liked a lot. She deliberately evoked this Mozart piece, since “she considered the theme itself to be sinister and yet Mozart had succeeded in turning the total impression of the movement into gaiety. Thus, to her relief, Mozart had succeeded in reconciling two important opposites, the dark and the light. And, as has been said, her hateful feelings disappeared”.

I can think of several objections to this way of analyzing my musical experiences of the Mozart piece. Obviously, it is easy to foresee alternative ways of experiencing. It could, e.g., be maintained that this is not a tragic piece at all, but that it is brisk and happy (a friend of mine even associated it with the theme of the television series “The Cartwright Family”). Of course, none of us is right or wrong. On the contrary, good music is characterized by what Pinchas Noy (1979) ascribed to “perfect form” (he used the same Mozart theme as an example):

Perfect form in art is always a dialectical form which represents opposing ideas or feelings and reconciles them into a unity in the most simple and economic manner (p. 247).

Another objection could be that this way of analyzing the musical experience is too secondary process oriented. I respond that I do formulate myself in secondary process terms, but that I do so afterwards, as a construct to enable me to understand my associations. Thirdly, and conversely, the objection could be made that I take too much support from primary process thinking. However, I maintain that persons who enjoy music do so because they find properties of the primary process in the music. This is indeed one of my points: that when we listen deeply to

music, and allow ourselves to get involved in it, our minds become more primitive and bodily oriented, i.e., towards a primary process functioning. Now all this would be easier if we had a theory of music as language: if only music could be found to symbolize distinct affects! But we have already seen some of the difficulties: the responses were different from person to person.

MUSIC AS LANGUAGE

It is meaningful to conceive of music as a language, but of a non-discursive type. This has been shown by the American philosopher Susanne Langer (1942, 1953). To repeat briefly: discursive language is, e.g., our common language:

Language in the strict sense is essentially discursive. It has permanent units of meaning which are combinable into larger units; it has fixed equivalences that make definition and translation possible (Langer, 1942, p. 96).

On the other hand we have:

... a wordless symbolism, which is nondiscursive and untranslatable, does not allow of definitions within its own system, and cannot directly convey generalisations. The meanings given through [discursive] language are successively understood and gathered into a whole by a process called discourse; the meanings of all other symbolic elements that compose a larger, articulate symbol are understood only through the meaning of the whole, through their relations within the total structure. Their very functioning as symbols depends on the fact that they are involved in a simultaneous, integral presentation. This kind of semantic may be called "presentational symbolism" to characterize its essential distinction from discourse, or "language proper" (p. 97).

This kind of symbolism has no fixed connotation, no vocabulary. Yet it is a language; note, e.g., that she uses the word "semantic". The connotations are instead related to more global experiences, emotionally tinged. To Langer, music is a kind of nondiscursive symbolism, peculiarly adapted to the explication of "unspeakable things".

The real power of music is in the fact that it can be "true" to the life of feeling in a way that language cannot ... Music is revealing where words are obscuring, because it can have not only a content, but a

transient play of content. It can articulate feelings without being wedded to them (p. 244).

It is possible for music to achieve this because:

... there are certain aspects of the so-called inner life ... which have formal properties similar to those of music – patterns of motion and rest, of tension and release, of agreement and disagreement, preparation, fulfillment, excitation, sudden change, etc. (p. 228).

The aim of my study is connected with the above lines of Langer. I want to study what are the similarities between these aspects of inner life and music. And along what paths are those in the realm of music translated into the other, into the realm of feelings? Another way of putting it is to borrow terms from Gestalt psychology; to propose that our mental life has Gestalts similar to the Gestalts of music, and then proceed to investigate the connections between these two types of Gestalt.

To conceive of music as a non-discursive language can be regarded as a helping hypothesis. With its help, we change the formulation of what happens in the listener from “I associate the music with this or that” to “The music symbolizes this or that for me”. Evidently the two expressions are close to each other, but with the latter it becomes easier to answer two important questions: *what* is symbolized in music, and *how* is it being done? Before I proceed to do so, I would like to present further material concerning musical experiences, i.e., what music could symbolize, for me.

THE MUSICAL EXPERIENCE – FURTHER EXAMPLES

The next example comes from my early teens. It springs from a spontaneous reaction to another Mozart piece. My associations pointed this time not as much to affects as to “basic human categories” (I will explain this concept presently). I was having a lesson with my clarinet teacher. We studied Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto, the first movement. In the development, there is a passage in minor that my teacher was not satisfied with. “You must play it with more vitality, you must phrase it better!” I can still remember my initial perplexion, I did not understand at all. But I thought and thought, and suddenly said: “Ah, now I know! It is as if a girl asks her father for permission to go out dancing. This is “a” (see musical example no. 2). I continued: “The father says “No!”, that is part

“b”. The same story is repeated in “c” and “d”. I do not know how the story ends, since the last part, “e”, does not end on the keynote”.

Musical example nr 2: W A Mozart, clarinet concerto, first movement, from bar 115.

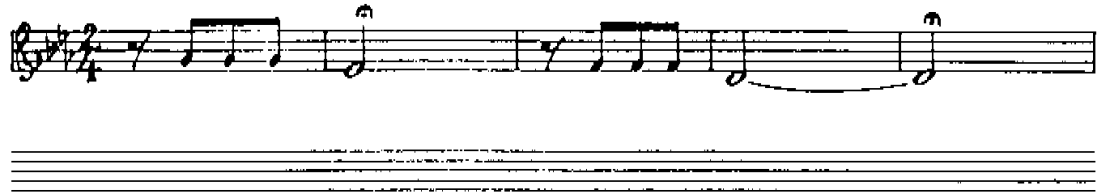
How did I experience all this? Today I interpret my associations as follows: The parts “a” and “c” were associated by me with something female, because they are in the high register. Furthermore, they are “round” in their shape, which corresponds to female forms. The phrases “b” and “d”, on the other hand, “become” masculine for similar but inverse reasons: they are deeper and have a more edged and angular pattern (cf. the tendency, in modern symbolic language, to replace the old Roman symbols for male and female, from Mars and Venus, with the square and the circle).

But in my associations, there was more: not only did I talk about a girl and her father, but also that they were pleading and prohibiting respectively. I think this came about through my associating the wave-formed “girl” theme to the gesture of a pleading person. And, again inversely, the “male” figure bore a Gestalt similar to when an admonishing person wags his finger, as when a parent prohibits a child.

I now explain the concept I introduced above, “basic human categories”. I thought of it as a label under which I wanted to subsume musical associations that could not be termed just “affective”. What I have in mind are concepts that we create early in our lives, such as “male”, “female”, “dead” and “alive”; important, global categories, affectively tinged indeed, but not identical to affects. Another trait typical of these categories is that they are built upon very bodily experiences. The infant notes, e.g., that certain persons have some characteristics in common: a certain level of voice, a typical tonus when touched, a certain hair style,

odour, shape etc. Thus, a category “female” is created, probably by way of categories like “mother” and “mother-like”. (My term is very similar, if not identical, to the “schema” of Piaget.)

Let me give an example of another “basic human category”, viz, death, in music. The connection between anxiety and sudden, quick, especially irregular heart activity is universal. I think the following well-known piece of music has characteristics similar to those of an outburst of cardiac palpitations, and therefore gives us feelings of being in danger, being doomed by fate:



Musical example nr 3: L v Beethoven, symphony nr 5, first movement, beginning.

From this “extrasystolic” piece of music by Beethoven I go on to another of his:

A piano score for the beginning of the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Presto' and the dynamics are 'ff'. The music features a complex, dissonant chord structure with rapid, irregular rhythmic patterns. The second system continues the same musical texture.

Musical example nr 4: L v Beethoven, symphony nr 9, fourth movement, beginning.

The example from his ninth symphony conveys to me affects of unpleasure, distress and anger. I have before my eyes the image of an unsatisfied, screaming infant. Musically, we are dealing with a compressed, dissonant chord that is being unfolded upwards as well as downwards. It is this unfolding movement of the tones that to me has the same formal characteristics as the infant, screaming and kicking about.

Later, in the same movement, the composer lets the tenor start with the words “O Freunde, nicht diese Töne, sondern lasst uns angenehmere anstimmen, und freudenvollere!” (“O friends, no more of these sad tones! Let us rather raise our voices together in more pleasant and joyful tones!”). It is natural for me to see these words as a consoling comment in a psychic drama centered around distress and consolation.

In this connection, we could study the lullaby. There is a wide repertoire, such as “Rockabye Baby” or “Schlafe mein Prinzchen, schlaf ein!”. We could then note a similarity in many songs of this kind: that they often contain a melodic pattern of a wave-formed type, which evokes associations of rocking movements. They have a movement-Gestalt in common with the cradle, a fact that probably helps in rendering them “effective”, viz, soothing.

MUSIC AND AFFECTS

I can now make a short summary of what I have been discussing so far, viz, what it is that music symbolizes.

Music is especially fit to symbolize bodily expressions of affects and certain so-called basic human categories.

I want to discuss the term “bodily expression of affects”. I wish to do so briefly in order to evade entering into a discussion of the general psychoanalytic theory of affects. The many authors that have written on this topic agree at least on one point: that it is indeed a very difficult area. Freud already signalled this in the chapter on anxiety in his “Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis” (1916–17).

And what is an affect in the dynamic sense? It is in any case something highly composite. An affect includes in the first place particular motor innervations or discharges and secondly certain feelings; the latter are of two kinds – perceptions of the motor actions that have occurred and the direct feelings of pleasure and unpleasure, which, as we say, give the affect its keynote (p. 395).

(To my knowledge Freud’s language is not rich in musical metaphors. It is noteworthy that right here, when discussing affects, he uses the word “keynote”, in German “Grundton”.) The quotation above not only points to the composite nature of affects; it also provides us with a good working

definition of the affect. When I speak of the “bodily expression of affects”, it is precisely to these “motor innervations and discharges” (cf., the Freud quotation above) that I refer. To take musical example no. 1, Mozart’s symphony no. 40, as an illustration: it is not the idea “I am sad” that the music symbolizes (as a matter of fact Freud does not even include the idea in his concept of affect, as can also be seen in “The Unconscious” (Freud, 1915)). Neither is it the general feeling tone of being sad (corresponding roughly to “the direct feelings of pleasure and unpleasure”, according to Freud). Instead it is “the motor innervation” of sadness, in this case, the sigh, that is symbolized in music.

If this hypothesis is well-founded: are there special properties in the world of sounds that make it especially suited to symbolize these bodily expressions? At first glance, it might seem strange that experiences from one sensory modality (hearing) can symbolize experiences from quite another modality, that of bodily perception. Still I think this to be the case, and in order to formulate myself, I will take help from two psychoanalytic theorists, René Spitz and Lajos Székely.

HEARING AND COENESTHESIA

In his book “The First Year of Life” (Spitz, 1965), the author discusses “a system of ‘sensing’ basically different from the system of perception that operates at a later age and with which we are familiar”. The first one is labelled “the coenesthetic organization”, the second “the diacritic organization”. As to the former:

Here sensing is extensive, primarily visceral, centered in the autonomous nervous system, and manifests itself in the form of emotions. Accordingly, I prefer to speak of this form of “perception”, which differs so fundamentally from sensory perception, as reception” (p. 44).

On the other hand, we have the diacritic organization ...

... where perception takes place through the peripheral sense organs and is localised, circumscribed, and intensive; its centers are in the cortex, its manifestations are cognitive processes, among them the cognitive thought processes (p. 44).

It is clear that to Spitz, hearing is grouped together with seeing as belonging to the diacritic organization, and that he gives vision the leading role

as it forms the first distance percept: the mother's face. To this two objections could be made.

First I wish to state that hearing has properties both of the coenesthetic and the diacritic organization. It seems strange that a sensory modality, operating already in utero, should be grouped together with vision, which does not seem to be operative until at least a few weeks of age. The second objection comes from Terhune (1979). He points out, from his own experience as a pediatrician and from others' studies, that the infant seems to differentiate between voices before faces, i.e., it recognizes mother's voice before her face, hearing before vision. Mother's voice would therefore, according to the author, seem to be an earlier organizer than her face.

Furthermore, when I want to emphasize the coenesthetic properties of hearing, I rely upon a simple fact of physics: not only is sound created when physical masses vibrate, exceeding a certain frequency. The reverse is also true: we experience vibration when hearing. This is easy to confirm, e.g., in the setting of a pop concert. Another situation that highlights the vibratory, almost tactile qualities of sound, and hence its coenesthetic properties, is when we are singing in the bathroom. The special acoustic characteristics of the little room, with its tiled walls, help promote an experience where the song is perceived both by the senses of hearing and proprioception.

It could be argued that there is indeed a great leap from the simple joys of bathroom singing or the ecstasy of a pop concert to the much more refined pleasures of listening to music, such as the Mozart and Beethoven examples quoted above. This is of course undisputable. When arguing for the coenesthetic qualities of sound, I only wish to stress one property that I think has been overlooked in the literature, and which has become clear to me when analyzing my musical experiences. In order to illustrate this coenesthetic tendency, I have deliberately chosen the "crude" examples of the pop concert and bathroom singing. I would call the coenesthetic part of the musical experience the primitive, yet indispensable part of the thorough musical experience.

When seeking proof of the idea that hearing has more of coenesthetic properties than does vision, I can also turn to language: it is replete with expressions connected with diacritic aspects of the visual world: "picture", "perspective", "image", "sight" and "gaze". They point to detachable portions of the visual world. They have no counterparts in the audible world. We even have to make strange inventions like "I have an auditive

image of his voice”; and consider the title of this article: ... “psychoanalytic *view-points*”: The corresponding word, “hearpoint”, is an impossibility! On the other hand, when we want to describe feelings of belonging together, of mutually understanding each other, we tend to use auditive metaphors: we say that we are in harmony. Or even better, cf., the German “Zusammenhörigkeit”, literally “hearing together”.

Thus, what the infant hears is first organized in the coenesthetic modality and not until later in the diacritic one. This transition involves a sacrifice: “The coenesthetic organization has become muted in the consciousness of Western man” says Spitz (1965, p. 45). It seems that Spitz, imperceptibly, changes his mind towards the end of his book concerning the role of the coenesthetic organization and its importance in hearing. He gives a lengthy summary of the coenesthetic modalities. As can be seen here, he includes many categories that belong to the world of hearing.

... equilibrium, tension (muscular and otherwise), posture, temperature, vibration, skin and body contact, rhythm, tempo, duration, pitch, tone, resonance, clang ... (p. 135).

I will give a summary, in a more poetic vein, by quoting an analysand of mine. He had been thinking of the afternoons at home during his childhood. Normally he was quite afraid of his mother, but at this time of the day she used to take a nap. At these times, his mood used to change: he felt peaceful and alone in a pleasant way, yet feeling her background presence. He continued: “I come to think of when I tune my guitar ... I strike the tuning fork and the string at the same time ... they vibrate together ... it’s a nice feeling, quite special ... It’s like a meadow full of rare and delicious mushrooms”.

Put in our less poetic terminology: he had a memory of a “good” mother, at the same time as he associated to auditive and vibratory sensations, in a mixed and decidedly coenesthetic fashion.

I hope to have shown the close connection between the world of sound and the special coenesthetic functioning of the early infant period. But which is the bridge that sound, and later music, traverses from having been part of a primitive world of experiencing to becoming a carrier of symbolic connotations? In order to answer this, I now turn to Székely.

ARCHAIC MEANING SCHEMATA

In his article “Meaning, Meaning Schemata and Body Schemata in Thought” (Székely, 1962), the author discusses how primitive sensory

impressions come to be organized into consistent and meaningful perceptions. He takes as a starting point an observation of a child, not quite 2 years of age. The child sees a bird defecate and exclaims "Birdie do big!" How does this come about? The child has probably not seen its own products of defecation, and, besides, its own fecal products do not have the same colour as those of the bird. What the child does is to connect a coenesthetic experience (that of something falling out from the behind of the body) with a diacritic one (the sight of the bird and its faeces). At this age, this happens along rigid schemata, which is proven by the fact that the child, seeing a parcel dropping out from a car, will exclaim "Car do big!".

The child apprehends the visual world by incorporating his visual impressions into his body schema. Since this incorporation takes place along definitely describable lines, I suggest that the results of these apprehensive processes be termed archaic meaning schemata (Székely, 1962, p. 303).

In this case, the archaic meaning schema would run as follows: anything that is seen falling out from the back of something will be equated with the process of defecation. Incidentally, we note here that the infant connects experiences from different sensory modalities (here proprioception and vision), a point I referred to above.

Could this reasoning be applied to the field of hearing as well? I believe it can. I propose a triangular connection between coenesthetic reception, affects and perception of sounds. The child has coenesthetic memories of affective expressions. It knows, e.g., the sigh, and the primitive affects associated with it, affects that we, from outside, may call "hopelessness, release of tension", etc. To these two connected phenomena are added the third corner of the triangle, *viz*, the perception of the sound: first of the sigh, later of "falling" sounds. The connection to real music, such as our "sighing" Mozart theme, obviously comes much later. But I do think that we preserve a lifelong propensity to associate even very complicated sequences of tones with these simple body memories.

Thus, I believe it safe to say that the principle of archaic meaning schemata can be applied not only to the visual, but also to the auditive world. Note that the "basic human categories" referred to above, are also built up like archaic meaning schemata. They are constructed by the infant, through connecting various coenesthetic and diacritic impressions,

to levels where, e.g., everything stiff and immobile is labelled “dead”, and where everything round and soft is associated with female, etc.

In a recent article, Recharadt (1985) uses the concept of archaic meaning schemata as a tool for answering his question:

How is it possible, for instance, to transfer thoughts and feelings, and senses from different modalities such as muscular, visual and visceral into the auditive sphere? (p. 106)

By introducing the concept of archaic meaning schemata he finds:

The musical idiom does not appear to be so puzzling any longer. It provides the forms empty of content and the meaning schemata that have their origin in non-verbal bodily comprehension. It then remains for the listener to apply these forms to the experiential world of the moment, to vest them with contents of his own. (p. 108).

I hope to have shown that when it comes to music, these schemata are built upon the bodily expressions of affects and those affectively tinged “basic human categories”. Recharadt writes that “... music represents abstract forms of feelings without any specific content”. Something in his formulations, especially the word “abstract”, implies a non-relationship between the musical forms and the affective associations, or to put it another way: between form and content. Since I have pointed out the similarities between musical and bodily affect expression, and since I have traced this to a common coenesthetic root, I cannot agree with this view. To the extent that our affects have a limited number of expressive possibilities, so do the musical forms. Imagine how strange it would seem if someone listening attentively to our Mozart theme would exclaim: “I come to think of moods like laziness, *laisser-aller* etc.”. I think we would react thus because feelings of laziness do not have bodily expressions which we could find similar to the forms of the Mozart theme.

STARTING-POINTS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

It is tempting at this point to outline some further possibilities for investigation, and to add a qualification: I have used simple melodic Gestalten as the material of investigation. I have not split them up into well-known musical categories such as pitch, tempo, clang, rhythm, etc. Neither have I dealt with the formal aspects of music, i.e., how are the raw musical

ideas transformed and elaborated into immensely complicated forms, thus changing simple tune fragments into great compositions? For psychoanalytic contributions here, see e.g., Friedman (1960) and Sabbeth (1979).

Secondly, when dealing with affects and music, it is obvious that we could formulate a question:

Most intriguing of all is the possibility that psychoanalysis might be informed by music rather than the opposite: that a study of how affect achieves auditory representation might say something about the nature of the affect in the mental life (Feder, 1982, p. 303).

It is natural that the success of such a venture depends upon the degree of knowledge regarding the psychoanalytic theory of affects. As I wrote earlier, this is a point of confusion in our theory. But this much could be said: should the psychoanalytic study of music give a contribution here, it would be in the field of what Freud called “the motor innervations or discharges” and the perception of these. Or, to put it another way: what are the somatic parts of the affect, and how do they achieve mental representation?

Should this contribution be made by our continuing to investigate melodies, rhythm patterns, etc., further, and our affective associations to them? When we study the similarities between music and affective expressions, could we benefit by, e.g., refining our description of the different affects? Or – should we instead direct our attention to the state of mind that the listener is in? Could this state that we might call regressive, tell us something about the origin of affects, and how the coupling between somatic sensations and their respective ideas are made early in life? I leave these questions open for further study.

Thirdly, connected to the second point above: what are the similarities between listening to music and to our analysands – and their listening to us? It is frequent in the literature to see this similarity pointed out (see e.g., Nass 1971; Greenson, 1967). One could discuss whether there is some kind of sensitivity necessary for the analyst that could be conceptualized akin to musicality. This is not to imply that the analyst must be musical, in the sense we normally use the word. No, rather that he needs a talent, among many others, that could be termed “coenesthetic sensitivity”. In the Swedish language, we have a word that describes just this sensitivity, “lyhörd”. Etymologically it has two roots, from “sound” and “heard”. It can have an acoustic denotation: we can use it to describe a room that is

insufficiently sound-proofed. But we can also use it in a psychological sense, meaning “intuitive, with a sensitive ear”. This word thus uses audition as a metaphor for psychological sensitivity. This quality of being “lyhörd” is also active in the analysand, a fact that is well-known to all analysts. Little sounds that are neglected in everyday life acquire a strong, affective importance during the analytic hour. I refer, e.g., to an analysand who said: “The other day I thought I heard you sighing. I got terribly afraid. I immediately thought that you considered me hopeless!”

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We can see music as a non-discursive language. It symbolizes above all the bodily expressions of affects and certain so-called basic human categories. Certain characteristics of sound and the function of hearing facilitate this symbolization: sound is perceived both with the sense of hearing and vibration. The function of hearing is already active during a period when the coenesthetic organization is in the foreground. During this stage, the primitive affects consist mostly of bodily changes and the infant’s perception of them, the ideational content being decidedly in the background, for obvious reasons.

Sound, later tone sequences and finally music, will therefore be especially suited for symbolizing these affective bodily expressions. This is being done through the infant’s, and later on the adult listener’s, associating to similarities between the affect-expression and the world of sound. This is accomplished according to the principle of archaic meaning schemata.

Returning to the questions I posed at the beginning of this article, I hope to have shed light on those concerning what properties music has that renders it prone to evoking affects. I also asked what kind of affects are evoked. As can be seen, they are of a fleeting kind, easily interchangeable, their ideational content being close to nil. In one word: primitive. (Though it is true that music can indeed evoke affects that are non-existent in the infant: genital excitement, courage, nationalistic pride and what not. When I speak of primitivity, I refer only to this preponderance of bodily, as opposed to ideational, expression.)

And this is probably one of the keys, and an important one, to understanding the pleasure that many of us take in listening to music: with its help we are transported back to a more primitive way of experiencing

affects, something which in itself seems pleasurable. Well, to some people it proves to be definitely disagreeable, as may have been the case with Freud.

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