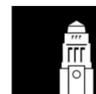

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Grief, Ritual and Experiential Knowledge: A Philosophical Perspective*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/133991/

Version: Accepted Version

Book Section:

Scrutton, AP orcid.org/0000-0002-8335-7464 (2017) Grief, Ritual and Experiential Knowledge: A Philosophical Perspective. In: Klass, D and Steffen, EM, (eds.) Continuing Bonds in Bereavement: New Directions for Research and Practice. The Series in Death, Dying and Bereavement . Routledge , pp. 214-226. ISBN 9780415356206

This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in Continuing Bonds in Bereavement on 13 November 2017, available online:
https://www.routledge.com/Continuing-Bonds-in-Bereavement-New-Directions-for-Research-and-Practice/Klass-Steffen/p/book/9780415356206

Reuse
Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown
If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/

Grief, ritual and experiential knowledge: a philosophical perspective

Anastasia Philippa Scrutton

Introduction

Rituals are significant for continuing bonds theory. The decline of rituals during World War I was partly responsible for the shift towards prescriptively short periods of grief, and the emphasis on severing bonds. Conversely, ancestor rituals were influential in the move back towards the idea that continuing bonds with the dead can be healthy and even beneficial (Steffen and Coyle, 2012). Self-help grief literature often advises people to create their own rituals, frequently in ways that involve continuing bonds, and empirical studies suggest that rituals are an effective way of alleviating painful elements of grief (Norton and Gino, forthcoming). Because of the decline of rituals, modern western societies are sometimes regarded as having insufficient therapeutic resources for grievers. Continuing bonds theory responds by turning to other cultures for wisdom that includes ritual when helping people respond to grief, and pointing to new rituals that are emerging informally within western society.

Despite the importance of rituals in continuing bonds theory, rituals are under-theorised in continuing bonds literature. This chapter will explore some reasons why rituals are important and powerful, contributing to our understanding of therapeutic practices for responding to grief. In order to set the scene for this, I will outline the rituals of two very different communities - those of Shona people in Zimbabwe and of Pagans in the United Kingdom – pointing to ways in which these might be seen to respond to features of grief highlighted by continuing bonds theory. Truth claims (formal doctrines and informal statements about the nature of reality) are often taken to be the most important and powerful aspects of religion and related phenomena, but I am interested in the ways in which the ritual

aspect of religions and of human life more generally are important and powerful in distinctive ways. In particular, as I will argue, rituals are distinctively important and powerful because they are diachronic and narratival. As a result, they provide experiential knowledge or understanding of the view of reality that truth claims (for example, about the continued existence of the deceased) express more thinly. Furthermore, rituals are typically narratives that are sensorily rich, and so they enable the imaginative conceptualisation of perceived realities. In addition, because they are bodily, rituals can provide people with a more embedded and recalcitrant form of cognition than the more superficial forms provided by propositional means. Experiential and bodily forms of cognition are relevant when considering grief, because bereaved people undergo significant changes in their views of reality and relationships to it. In grief, this can include gaining a sense of the intelligibility of the deceased person's absence, and yet of their continued felt presence, and of a continuing but changing relationship with them. Ritual's relational character also contributes to its power and importance, because it enables grief to be shared and makes it a qualitatively different experience. At the end of the chapter, I will point to some of the implications of the account of ritual I have given for how we respond to grief in practice.

At the heart of this chapter is the idea that, while much talk of cognition is to do with asserting facts about the world that we can articulate in propositions (for example, the proposition 'the earth goes round the sun'), not all cognition is of this propositional sort. Some cognition is experiential rather than propositional, such as knowledge of what it is like to see colours or what it is like to feel pain. This kind of cognition is experiential because it is acquired by having experience (e.g. of seeing colours or feeling pain). Furthermore, it can *only* be gained through experience – we would not really know what seeing colours or feeling pain is like purely from someone else's description of these things. The idea that I put forward in this paper is that experiential cognition is at the heart of ritual's power and

importance. Because ritual is experiential, narratival, bodily and sensorily rich it provides us with experiential cognition, which goes beyond the propositional cognition offered by truth claims. This makes ritual relevant for grief, because grief involves not only changes in propositional cognition (for example, ‘the person I love has died’, ‘the world is now a different place’, ‘my relationship with the person I loved who has died continues but is changed’, ‘my relationship with others around me continues but is changed’). Grief also involves seeking and struggling to experience these things as true. Ritual’s ability to provide experiential cognition is therefore relevant to grief, because it is a significant way in which people come to experience these and other elements of grief as real.

Rituals and continuing bonds: two case studies

Shona bereavement rituals in Zimbabwe

Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, there are around seven kinds of ritual that follow a person’s death, which begin at the moment of their death and are spread over a number of years. Washing the body, mourning and comforting the family, burial, and honouring the deceased person, all take place within a few days of the person’s death. Outside the times at which the rituals take place the grave is not visited because it is believed that the deceased person must be tired and need time to rest and should not be troubled too much (Mwandayi, 2011, 212). Around two weeks after the person’s death there is a ritual of purification, the purpose of which is to ‘cool’ any ire being felt by the spirit.

The ‘kurova guva’ ritual takes place between one and two years after the person’s death and has as its purpose the reintegration of the dead person into the family as an ancestor. Correspondingly, as Canisius Mwandayi says, ‘Grief, desire, even other things that may have been obstacles between the living and the dead are supposed to be brought to an end by this feast’ (Mwandayi, 2011, 218). Prior to the ritual, the spirit wanders the earth, and

if the kurova guva ritual is not performed, the spirit may sulk because the world has not shown proper respect or concern for them (Mwandayi, 2011, 218). At the start of the kurova guva ritual, the entire community gathers and a small pot of beer is offered to the ancestors, informing them of the ceremony. A formal address is made to the spirit of the deceased person, telling them that this is their cleansing beer. Once this formal element of the beginning of the ritual is at an end, people drink beer and dance to music in honour of the deceased. The next day, the beer-offering is carried in a procession and is poured over the grave. Formal address is made to the deceased person to 'come home'. What happens after this differs among the various Shona people. Among the Valley Korekore, a pathway is made from the grave to the family home. There is singing, and the personal belongings of the deceased are distributed.

Following the kurova guva, the deceased person is treated as one of the ancestors who protects the family, and is honoured approximately annually at doro raanasekuru (or 'beer of the ancestor') ritual. The Shona say that 'once dead one is good', and ancestors are generally regarded as benevolent and protective presences. In cases where the deceased person was a significant moral failure, however, the kurova guva is not undertaken, and so they are not regarded as among the family ancestors (Mwandayi, 2011, 223). Despite the fact that the ancestor is generally held to be good, nevertheless they may sometimes fail to protect the family adequately. In this case, the formal address to the ancestor at the doro raanasekuru is accompanied by reprimands and complaints (Mwandayi, 2011, 221). Once these grievances have been aired, people clap and dance and drink beer in honour of the ancestor. In some circumstances the ancestor may also be regarded as angry and as having withdrawn their protection: in these kinds of cases there is also an appeasing ritual. The rituals of appeasement vary widely, and tend to depend upon the relationship between the victims and

ancestor, the crime that may have provoked the ancestor's anger, and the nature of the misfortune that has befallen the family (Mwandayi, 2011, 222).

Pagan Samhain

Paganism is a new religious movement that includes Druidry, Wicca, Shamanism and other groups, which take as their inspiration traditions of the past such as pre-Christian Saxons, Norse and Celts. The feast of Samhain (pronounced SOW-in) is thought by some to have its roots in pre-Christian Celtic religion and is celebrated at the same time as the Christian and secular festival of Halloween. In addition to being a time of harvest, Samhain is regarded as a liminal time when the boundary between this world and the other world can more easily be crossed, and a common saying in Paganism is that Samhain is the time at which 'the veil between the worlds is thin'. Many Pagans will do something to mark Samhain such as put out food for the dead or light candles for them, and some describe it as a time when people who have a 'talent' for sensing the presence of the dead actively seek to contact departed loved ones.

Some Druid Pagans observe Samhain at a ritual in Avebury in Wiltshire, one of the most sacred Pagan sites. At 11pm on Samhain Eve, the community gather at the Red Lion pub and walk the avenue of stones that links Avebury town to the Sanctuary. The ritual begins about midnight, with the Keeper of the Stones beginning by 'calling the quarters': turning to the four directions of the compass and welcoming the spirits associated with that direction. This is a typical way for any Druid ritual to begin and it is a way of setting the sacred space for the ritual to be done. The Keeper will then explain that Samhain is the time of year when the spirits of people who have died that year pass from our world to the 'Summerlands' – a place of afterlife peace which the living are still able to connect to when invoking the ancestors. Druids commonly believe that while people die throughout the year,

at Samhain they are gathered together and pass to the Summerlands together. Following the calling of the quarters everyone takes an apple from a bucket, and dedicates it to someone they know who has died. Sometimes the dedication is for a recent death, and sometimes it is for someone who is remembered every year. Following the dedications, people disperse, with a small group going back to the Keeper's cottage in the village where they hold a vigil over the apples for the remainder of the night, which takes place amid much drinking and joking. At dawn, the Keeper goes on his own to Swallowhead Spring, the source of the River Kennet - at this point, the Keeper will drop the apples as a symbol of life 'renewed and recycled' (Wildcroft, personal correspondence, 9th November 2015).

Kurova guva, Samhain, and continuing bonds

How might these rituals relate to grief? Central to continuing bonds theory is the idea that that in grief people often look for ways to continue to relate to the deceased. Furthermore, finding a way to continue to relate to the deceased can be and often is a healthy aspect of grief. As Phyllis Silverman puts it, 'the bereaved maintain a link with the deceased that leads to the construction of a new relationship with him or her [….] Many mourners struggle with their need to find a place for the deceased in their lives' (Silverman, nd). Rituals such as the kurova guva and Samhain seem to make space for a continuing relationship with the deceased, rather than demanding that people sever ties with them in order for their grief to be healthy. In the case of the kurova guva, the deceased person returns to the family home; as an ancestor rather than a living family member his or her relationship with the living continues but is significantly changed. Samhain enables both a 'letting go', though not a 'breaking' of bonds, with the deceased, and the possibility of reunion with them at particular times in future years.

A second way in which these rituals are to do with grief relates to the fact that, as continuing bonds theory recognizes, healthy grief is often lengthy and recurrent, and may even recur throughout a person's life, rather than being the swift process some psychologists have posited. Furthermore, grief can involve positive and life-enriching as well as negative hedonic experiences (Rosenblatt, 1996). Relatedly, grief is best understood as an experience through which people need support rather than a problem to be solved or an illness to be cured (Davies, 2002). Shona and Pagan rituals make space for a much longer period of bereavement than has often been regarded as healthy within western psychological and psychiatric literature, and for joyful as well as sorrowful experiences within it.

So far, (hopefully) so good – but on the points just mentioned we might substitute 'doctrines' (or 'truth claims' or 'statements about reality') for 'rituals', and make much the same points about how some religious traditions facilitate continuing bonds and make space for lengthy and recurrent grief. In what follows, I will explore some of the reasons why rituals in particular are important and powerful, and thus lend support to the continuing bonds intuitions that rituals are indeed significant and worth attending to in the context of grief.

Ritual

Ritual and experiential knowledge

One area of scholarship in which ritual is significantly theorised is Pagan Studies, since ritual is generally more important for Pagans than are doctrines or formal religious tenets, and since Pagan Studies scholars engage (as scholars and often also as practitioners) with Pagan understandings of ritual (see Ezzy, 2004, 7). By emphasising ritual, some Pagans perceive themselves as challenging the preference for the intellective, non-physical and non-emotional that has often been found in western (and especially post-Enlightenment) culture. Thus, Douglas Ezzy argues that it is precisely the emphasis on the experiential, somatic and

relational that draws many people to Paganism (Ezzy, 2014, 15). Taking as a case study the erotic festival Faunalia, Ezzy describes the experience of one Pagan, an ex-Catholic, who finds that 'While she stopped believing in the burning fires of Hell, it was only after her ritual work […at Faunalia] that the fires of Hell "didn't feel real"' (Ezzy, 2014, 11, my parenthesis). In Ezzy's words, through the ritual she moved from simply 'knowing cognitively' that having sexual desire would not cause her to go to hell, to having her feelings about herself transformed in a deeper way (Ezzy, 2014, 14 – 15). Therefore, symbols and rituals should not be understood only in terms of the cognitive, but also in terms of the experiential, emotional, aesthetic, somatic and relational - and to regard these as secondary is to miss aspects that are essential to ritual's power and importance (Ezzy, 2014, 2 – 5; 9; 14 – 15).

Ezzy is surely right when he highlights the power of the experiential, somatic and relational in ritual and indicates that it affects people in ways that go deeper than is possible solely through assent to propositions. To use Ezzy's own example, solely assenting to the proposition 'sexual desire will not cause me to go to Hell' might not transform a person's feelings about themselves as effectively as attending a Faunalia ritual, precisely because in the ritual the idea is experienced as true. At the same time, I argue that one important amendment is needed to Ezzy's analysis. Ezzy's account is problematic in that Ezzy in fact affirms a dualistic (intellective *vs.* bodily and affective) worldview by separating the experiential, emotional, somatic and so on from the cognitive. This is not only (as I interpret him) contrary to Ezzy's aims, but it also fails to be true to lived reality by overlooking the existence of experiential knowledge, with which emotions and the body have a particularly strong relationship. Recognising the existence of experiential knowledge can help us to make sense of the power and importance of the experiential and somatic elements of ritual in a way

in which we cannot do if we regard experience, emotions, etc. as an amorphous, non-cognitive 'other'.

Experiential knowledge is knowledge that can only be known through experience and that is not reducible to propositions. That there is this kind of knowledge can be shown by the following thought experiment. Imagine a neuroscientist, Mary, who has researched everything about colour perception but has been confined for the entirety of her life in a black-and-white room so that she had never seen colour. If she were released from the black-and-white room into a world with colour, we would say that when she saw colour for the first time, Mary learned something new about colour and about perception of it - something inexpressible via propositions and inaccessible until she had had experience of it (Jackson, 1982). We might say that Mary had moved from having solely propositional knowledge of colour perception to having experiential knowledge of it: a particular kind of knowledge which can be gained by having experience of it and through no other means. Therefore, there is a kind of knowledge that is experiential, that is distinct from propositional knowledge, and for which propositional knowledge cannot be a substitute.

Of central importance here is that experiential knowledge is knowledge. As such, it is genuinely cognitive. To exclude experiential knowledge from the realm of the cognitive, for example by classing it as something else, is to adopt both the dualist's way of carving up human nature and, implicitly, even the prioritisation of propositional and 'text book' forms of knowledge by classing these alone as knowledge and as cognitive.[1] When we recognise that experiential knowledge is genuinely cognitive, we can see that the transformation of deeper feelings that the person attending the Faunalia ritual reports is (like Mary's perception of

[1] This presupposes that we attach a positive value to knowing and to cognition; however, this seems uncontroversial so I don't argue for it here.

colour) not an additional and separate thing from 'knowing cognitively', but is a crucial - and infungible - element of it.

Experiential knowledge and narrative

Because it provides experiential cognition, ritual is distinct from the more propositional elements of religion articulated through truth claims (e.g. doctrines). In part, this is because ritual is narratival and narrative is particularly well-equipped to provide us with experiential cognition. As narratives, rituals involve imaginative construals of (real or fictional) events that become more alive to us by virtue of our lived experience of them. Thus, for example, the Christian eucharist is a narrative about remembering or participating in the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and it involves other narratives within it, such as the story of the Last Supper conveyed in the Synoptic Gospels. The Samhain ritual is a narrative about in some way letting go of and in some way being in contact with the deceased, and it also involves a narrative about their journey to the Summerlands and continued existence there. The Shona rituals include a narrative about the journey of the deceased person, beginning from the time of their death when they are regarded as shocked and upset by their departure from the world of the living, to being reintegrated as one of the family ancestors. Thus rituals have the potential to bridge the gap between assenting to propositions such as that 'Jesus suffered and died for us' or 'the veil between the worlds is thin' or 'the deceased person will return as one of the family ancestors', and having a more complete form of understanding or experiential cognition of what these things actually mean.

A related aspect of the fact that ritual is narratival is worth drawing attention to, despite being rather basic. This is that rituals, as narratival, are diachronic: rather than being instantaneous, they take place over a period of time. Time matters, because it gives us the possibility of having a richer kind of experience of something, and this contributes

significantly and infungibly to our understanding of it. If we read a plot summary of a novel, even if it maintained the main elements of the story in compressed form we would be left with something far thinner and less powerful than if we immersed ourselves in the novel itself. By the same token, doctrines – often derived from religious practices rather than the reverse – are often compressed versions of what religious people think; they do not themselves give us adequate understanding of a person's religious worldview or what their faith entails. That rituals take place over time, as well as being narratival in the sense of telling a story, furthers our ability to see how rituals contribute to experiential knowledge and understanding.

The senses and imagination

Rituals are distinct from at least some other kinds of narrative (for example, novels) because rituals are often particularly sensorily rich. In keeping with the idea of narrative given above, anthropologists have sometimes understood healing rituals, in which we might include at least some bereavement rituals, in terms of Claude Lévi-Strauss' idea that in ritual an affliction is mapped onto a mythic landscape, and that healing occurs through the metaphorical journey from ritual to health, which causes changes in attention, cognition and experience (Lévi-Strauss, 1967). Rather than implying that the mythic landscape is necessarily fictional or false, 'myths' in Anthropology are the cultural lenses through which we all interpret our experiences. 'Metaphor' refers to thinking of one thing in terms of another – this might include not only words but also images (Kirmayer, 1993, 172). Thus, Bruce Kapferer argues that, 'the efficacy of much ritual is founded in its aesthetics', since rituals dramatise the journey from darkness and affliction to goodness and harmony in diverse sensory ways (Kapferer, 2006, 129). Cremating someone who has died and sprinkling their ashes in a special place, digging a path from the grave to the family home, and letting go of a dedicated apple in a sacred space, are sensorily rich metaphors of the deceased person's

and the bereaved people's transitions, enabling the imaginative conceptualisation of particular narratives about what has happened, in a way that is more powerful than non-sensorily rich narratives are able to do. The involvement of the senses, through its ability to stimulate the imagination, is a further respect in which rituals contribute to distinctively experiential forms of cognition.

Bodily ritual and bodily knowing

Discussion of the involvement of the senses in ritual highlights the fact that rituals frequently involve bodily activity in ways that assenting to religious doctrines (while requiring a physical brain) typically do not. Reflection on knowing how to play a musical instrument, ride a bicycle, or perform a dance suggests that distinctively bodily forms of cognition are one kind of experiential knowledge. For example, knowing how to play a musical instrument is both bodily and experiential, and is distinct from having propositional knowledge about how a musical instrument is played. If I read and perfectly understood and remembered a manual on how to play the flute but had never played it, I could not pick up a flute and begin to play it fluently. Might the idea of distinctively bodily forms of knowledge help our understanding of the importance and power of ritual?

Elsewhere, ritual has received attention not primarily in terms of distinctively bodily understanding and memory, but, rather, distinctively bodily forms of learning. Kevin Schilbrack argues that religious practices such as lighting candles (or, we might add, digging a path from a grave, or returning an apple to the earth) may be cognitive prosthetics or props, enabling us to investigate relevant aspects of reality – perhaps in these cases, to do with illumination and enlightenment, the return of the deceased to the family home, or the naturalness of death and the emergence of new life (Schilbrack, 2014, ch.2). From an early age we gain our understanding of reality from our bodily engagement with the world,

reflected in spatial metaphors such as 'progressing in our career', 'growing apart from a friend' and 'getting sidetracked' from our tasks. In similar vein, Schilbrack argues, religious rituals and symbols can lead to the formation of abstract concepts which have the potential to correspond to propositional forms of knowledge.

This seems right to me. However, I think we might add to this that rituals and symbols might not only be a basis for abstract philosophical reflection, but also for bodily cognition that we might associate more with experiential knowledge and understanding than with the propositional cognition we associate with doctrines and religious tenets. This is perhaps why rituals are significant and potent not only for normally intellectual adults who might engage in abstract thinking about the nature of the world, but also for small children and adults with intellectual disabilities whose abstract cognition is undeveloped but whose bodily cognition is not. While understood in terms of the psychic unconscious rather than bodily cognition, this resonates with Jung's idea that symbols are powerful because they open up a psychic level that is primordial. We can explain some of this potency with reference to the interplay between past and present in body memory. As Thomas Fuchs puts it, 'In body memory, the situations and actions of the past are, as it were, all fused together without any of them standing out individually. […] Body memory does not take one back to the past, but conveys an implicit effectiveness of the past in the present' (Fuchs, nd., 91). In a ritual involving lighting a candle, for example, we remember and bring with us in a general, unconscious and bodily way past examples of lighting candles, their meanings in those contexts, and the people who were with us at the time. In this way, bodily rituals can act as cognitive prosthetics for or means of gaining distinctively bodily cognition such as body memories. Body memory is an especially powerful kind of cognition because it is typically deeply embedded and recalcitrant (Fuchs, nd.). Thus, practices such as rituals that create and draw on body memory are particularly powerful aspects of human experience.

Relationality and emotional-cognitive off-loading

So far, I have looked at the ways in which rituals involve narratives, the senses, and the body in order to make sense of their power and importance, arguing that they stimulate the imagination and provide us with experiential forms of cognition that are distinct from and cannot be substituted by the propositional aspects of religion. In so doing, I have agreed with Ezzy (2014) that an account of ritual ought to have the experiential, emotional, sensory and somatic as its centre, while arguing that these things are not separate from cognition but distinctive, infungible aspects of it. Ezzy's account also includes a focus on the relational within ritual, and it is to the relational in the context of grief and ritual that I will now turn.

In grief theory, bereaved people are sometimes described as engaged in 'grief work' (Lindemann, 1944). This is generally understood in individualistic terms, but I suggest we might understand the very diverse processes people undergo following grief in more relational or collective ways. Consider Max Scheler's account of a couple's grief over the death of their child:

> Two parents stand beside the dead body of a beloved child. They feel in common the 'same' sorrow, the 'same' anguish. It is not as if A feels this sorrow and B feels it also, and moreover that they both know they are feeling it. No, it is a *feeling-in-common.* A's sorrow is in no way an 'external' matter for B here, as it is e.g. for their friend, C, who joins them and commiserates 'with them' or 'upon their sorrow'. On the contrary, they feel it together, in the sense that they feel and experience in common, not only the same value-situation, but also the same keenness of emotion in regard to it. The sorrow, as value content, and the grief, as characterizing the functional relation thereto, are here *one and identical* . (Scheler, 1959, 12f.)

According to Scheler, there is a sense in which an emotional state such as grief can be collective or shared which does not mean simply that it is the sum total of the parents' individual grief. Whether or not we want to subscribe to Scheler's stronger claim that these parents might feel precisely the same sorrow as one another, what is important in Scheler's account for our purposes is that the fact that the parents' grief is shared is an essential feature

of their grief: it is one of the things that defines the quality of their grief such that, if it were not shared, their grief would have a very different phenomenal quality. The sharedness of their grief is not an additional property of it but something absolutely fundamental to it.

Responding to the case Scheler describes, Joel Krueger argues that sharing grief may be possible for the parents precisely because they have shared memories and stories and had shared hopes about their child – they have a 'diachronic narrative intimacy' comprising 'an indefinite number of shared experiences, memories, and associations that define internal history unique to every family' (Krueger, 2015, 271). In addition to this diachronic dimension, there is also synchronic intimacy between them – they stand together, and, we might suppose, they will hold one another, weep together, and observe and respond to one another's bodily reactions (Krueger, 2015, 271). In this case, their responses are therefore bound up with one another – and even integrated – in both synchronic and diachronic ways (Krueger, 2015, 272). We might regard this as a kind of mutual (cognitive-emotional) 'off-loading' because, rather than experiencing isolation and undertaking the 'work' of grief alone, the parents are supported by one another, and their shared emotion intensifies their feelings of mutual understanding and connection.

The idea of shared grief enabled by synchronic and diachronic intimacy, and the way in which this may support people in the context of grief, is suggestive for our understanding of ritual. Rituals may help us share grief and even (if Scheler's stronger claim is correct) form collective kinds of grief, in which memories and stories about the person who has died can come together in a way that ensures that mourners do not undertake the emotional work of grief on their own. In other words, if grief can be shared partly as the result of synchronic and diachronic intimacy, then ritual may (by virtue of bringing about these things) be an instrument for the sharing of grief. While we might apply the idea of collective emotions to other kinds of ritual and other kinds of emotion, it is perhaps particularly important in the

context of grief, because alienation and isolation are often significant features of grief. In bereavement rituals, synchronic intimacy is often created through the sharing of memories, bodily postures, and the temporal structure of the ritual accompanied by sensory stimulation (for example, music) during which different emotional states are encouraged at various times. Because of the importance of diachronic intimacy for shared grief, shared grief and thus cognitive-emotional off-loading within or because of rituals is likely to be found especially within close-knit communities, whose shared experiences and memories and whose intimacy with one another makes such off-loading possible. If this is right, then the relational and collective nature of ritual can be thought to contribute significantly to ritual's importance and power, in this case because it alters the experience of grief.

Practical implications

What are the practical implications of this account of ritual? Grief therapy includes advice to people to create their own rituals, often in ways that resonate with emphases in continuing bonds theory. For example, one fairly typical self-help grief website advises people to create their own rituals, for example by lighting a candle at dinner time to represent sharing a meal with the deceased person, creating a special mix of music that reminds the bereaved person of them, visiting their burial site, or planting a tree in their honour (Helbert, 2011). Following some empirical studies in psychology, these therapeutic approaches tend to attribute the effectiveness of ritual to its capacity provide people with a sense of control. Furthermore, they suggest, an extremely broad range of ritual activities might be effective in accomplishing this goal, some even indicating that the kind of ritual undertaken is completely irrelevant, provided that a ritual is undertaken (Vitelli, 2014; see Norton and Gino, forthcoming).

My account of ritual does not negate all of this advice, but it does suggest some rather different emphases. In particular, it suggests that ritual is important and powerful for reasons

that are not only to do with regaining feelings of control. Rituals can also (for example) provide experiential understanding of the continuing relationship with the deceased that some formal religious doctrines seek to articulate. In addition, rituals can provide a means for creating shared grief, so that the quality of the grief becomes something different than the grief would be were the 'grief work' undertaken by an individual alone. Implicit in these points is that the purpose of grief work and grief therapy might not be primarily to do with lessening feelings of grief and 'getting over it', but, rather, with finding ways of integrating the death of the person into our lives. If my account of ritual is persuasive, then different rituals are not interchangeable and the form they take is important. Rituals that are diachronic and narratival, sensorily rich, bodily, and highly relational, are likely to be powerful and important in ways in which rituals that are not these things are not.

Conclusion

There are many things that could be said about ritual, and about ritual in the context of grief. In this chapter, I have drawn attention to the experiential, narratival, sensory, and somatic aspects of ritual. Because these aspects are distinctively cognitive, ritual can make a distinctive contribution to people's understanding of the world, including, in grief, their understanding of the changed and changing relationship with the person who has died. Furthermore, through the relational aspects of ritual, grief work need not be undertaken individually, and the experience of grief can become something different to what it would be were the person to experience it alone. This is significant for continuing bonds theory, supporting the continuing bonds intuition that ritual is important, and for therapeutic practice, suggesting that rituals that are narratival, diachronic, relational, bodily, and sensorily rich have a distinctive value and power.

Word count: 5,744

Acknowledgements: A large number of people read or heard versions of this chapter and commented helpfully on aspects of it. It is not possible to mention everyone here, but particular thanks go to Jenny Uzzell, Theo Wildcroft, Matthew Ratcliffe, Benedict Smith, Joel Krueger, Mark Wynn, Emma Tomalin, Graham Harvey, Mikel Burley, Nick Wiltsher, Dennis Klass and Edith Steffen.

Bibliography

Davies, Douglas. 2002. *Death, Rituals and Belief* (2nd ed.). New York: Continuum

Ezzy, Douglas. 2014. Reassembling religious symbols: the Pagan God Baphomet. *Religion,* DOI: 10.1080/0048721X.2014.949898

Fuchs, Thomas. Nd. Body memory and the unconscious. Available at https://www.klinikum.uni-heidelberg.de/fileadmin/zpm/psychatrie/fuchs/Body_memory_Unconsious.pdf . Accessed 21st December 2015

Gibson, John. 2003. Between Truth and Triviality. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43.3, 224 – 237

Helbert, Karla. 2011. Creating rituals to move through grief. Available at http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/creating-rituals-to-move-through-grief/. Accessed 31st March 2016

Jackson, Frank. 1982. Epiphenomenal Qualia. *Philosophical Quarterly.* 32, 127 - 136

Kapferer, Bruce. 2006. Sorcery and the beautiful: a discourse on the aesthetics of ritual. In Kapferer, Bruce and Hobart, Angela (eds), *Aesthetics in performance: formations of symbolic construction and experience.* Berghahn books.

Klass, Dennis, Silverman, Phyllis, and Nickman, Steven (eds.). 1996. *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief.* New York: Routledge

Krueger, Joel. 2015. The affective 'we': self-regulation and shared emotions. *The Phenomenology of Sociality: Discovering the 'we'.* Eds. Thomas Szanto and Dermot Moran. New York: London, Routledge

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1967. The effectiveness of symbols. In: *Structural Anthropology.* New York: Basic Books

Lindemann, E. 1944. Symptomology and management of acute grief. *American Journal of Psychiatry* **101**, 141–148.

Mwandayi, Canisius. 2011. *Death and After-Life Rituals in the Eyes of the Shona: Dialogue with Shona Customs in the Quest for Authentic Inculturation.* Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press

Norton, Michael, and Gino, Francesca. Forthcoming. Rituals alleviate grieving for loved ones, lovers and lotteries. *Journal of Experimental Psychology.* Available at https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/10683152/norton%20gino_rituals-and-grief.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed on 31st March 2016

Rosenblatt, Paul C. 1996. Grief that does not end. In *Continuing Bonds,* ed. Klass, Silverman and Nickman

Scheler, Max. 1954. *The Nature of Sympathy.* Trans. By P. Heath. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Schilbrack, Kevin. 2014. *Philosophy and the Study of Religions: A Manifesto.* Chichester, Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell

Silverman, Phyllis. nd. Continuing Bonds. *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying.* Available at http://www.deathreference.com/Ce-Da/Continuing-Bonds.html. Accessed on 21st January 2016

Steffen, Edith, and Coyle, Adrian. 2012. 'Sense of the presence' experiences in bereavement and their relationship to mental health: a critical examination of a continuing controversy. In Murray, Craig (ed.), *Mental Health and anomalous experience.* New York: Nova Science Publishers, 33 – 56

Vitelli, Romeo. 2014. Can rituals help us deal with grief? *Psychology Today.* Available at https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/media-spotlight/201403/can-rituals-help-us-deal-grief. Accessed 5th July 2016.