

The Waiting Room and the Understanding of Time

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The present study uses the methodology of grounded theory and discourse analysis of the case of Samanta, to approach talking with others about his deceased son, follow his example, keep memories and carry out actions designed to help him by understanding the continuity of links with him. Start from the personal spaces of the deceased loved one: their room that is intertwined with the grieving process that is influenced by family, culture and beliefs, the continuing bonds is expressed that makes Samanta feel proud and allows her to express herself of emotions and community. This study also highlights how the understanding of the different aspects related to the use of spaces and the understanding of time in autobiographical narrative recollection enriches the understanding of the process and gives meaning to the continuing bonds with the loved one.

Keywords: rituals, continuity, narrative, grieving

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenological study of the values of intimacy of the inner space, the house or the room of the deceased son is undoubtedly a privileged place as long as it is considered both in its unity and its complexity, which tries to integrate all its particular values into a fundamental value. Such a space will provide us with both dispersed images and a constructed body of images. In both cases, the imagination increases the values of reality. A kind of attraction of images is concentrated around these spaces (Bachelor, 2000: 27). In this sense, Merleau-Ponty (1994: 46) tells us that: "There cannot be an objective spirit: mental life withdraws into isolated consciousnesses, given over to introspection alone, instead of unfolding, as it apparently does, in the human space composed of those with whom I discuss or with whom I live, by the place of my work or that of my happiness. Joy and sadness, vivacity and dullness are data of introspection; and if we clothe landscapes or other men with them, it is because we have ascertained in ourselves the coincidence of these inner perceptions with external signs associated with them by the randomness of our organization. Perception, thus impoverished, becomes a pure operation of knowledge, a progressive recording of certain qualities and of their most habitual development, and the perceiving subject finds himself before the world as the sage before his experiences. If, on the contrary, we admit that all these "projections," all these "associations," all these "transfers," are founded on some intrinsic character of the object, the "human world" ceases to be a metaphor and becomes again what it in fact is, the medium and as it were the homeland of our thoughts."

Man's tendency to become more and more locked up in his own world and to give meaning to it, is further exacerbated by the omnipresence of the mass media, which shape the immediate environment in which today's life and thinking takes place. It is unquestionable the role that the artificial world of the media,

especially television and broadcast media, has played in the distancing of the natural world with the consequent growth of virtual worlds and of meanings of transcendence in which things, gadgets, scents, objects that replace the experience of the protagonists in the natural world shine.

As further indicated by Garcia et al (2021), we add that the continuity of ties with the loved one is conscious, dynamic and changing and is present in most grief processes, with components of different quantity and meaning regarding "inner" and "outer" ties that serve as comfort and help the individual and the community and, allow them not only to accept death and assume it, but even more, to order it, integrating it to their cultural system, by locating it everywhere (Field, Gao and Paderna, 2005; Garcia et al., 2016, 2020; Klass and Walter, 2001). Thus, the process of rebuilding life after loss is a real conversation between the pain of death and the ties that hold the bereaved together with the one they have lost. It is an internal, ongoing, relationship with the deceased by the bereaved (Field et al., 2013; Garcia, 2017; Hussein and Oyebo, 2009; Klass et al., 1996; Yu et al., 2016;) in which the bereaved may talk or dream about the deceased, keep their belongings or have a sense of continuous influence (Garcia, 2008, 2010; Garcia et al., 2016; Klass et al., 1996) in a world of supportive intimacy in which words arrive as a metaphor loaded with meanings that order what happens.

Time is one of the most important questions concerning human memory, what is time and what does it mean? For it can only be measured in relation to place, so it is more akin to inertia and events that makes it an intrinsic part of place and movement (O'Keane, 2021: 124). In essence, time, as expressed by Samanta, revolves around the fixation of memories, from the difficulty of defining one's own and other people's conscience and the process of mourning the loss of a son that has transformed her:

“I could not tell you if time has passed slowly or quickly, because now I see an immense abyss in time. Since my son died, the term time no longer has the meaning we all understand, but rather it is a process of personal transformation and it will be as long as that transformation lasts. If you attend to those personal changes, then time has passed very slowly and it has been a long time. Just to tell you that I only remember from afar that person I was until then, it is as if I had entered a chrysalis and after that time another different person came out. The previous person that I was died in all that very hard process”

Postmodern thought has broken the obsession with the unity of time and invited men and women to question themselves in the aftermath of death and after death, in which people dissolve in the language that serves their own purposes.

The sense of time is inseparable from events, but this is itself already a sense of time. Memory becomes more uncertain in its appreciation of time when it moves away from the relative certainty of the conscious present. The idea of an "event" as important as the death of a child as the basis of biographical memory can modify the ability to create the "time, place and person" format of episodic memory. We see how images are important and how outer space and place are connected and the expression of transformation of suffering into love becomes vital and complementary in the process:

“And about what this has to do with grief, I tell you that when I was really accepting what had happened, I was changing inside myself, evolving as a person, transforming pain and blockages for love, lots of love and gratitude to life for having given me the opportunity to have had an angel as a son, and when that happens, you understand that material things are not important, so making these changes will not change the fact that he will always be in my heart or in the hearts of others, he will remain in us no matter how his room or his things are. Even so, Manuel, the little one who is the one who has kept his room, has not wanted to change too much the structure of the room, still keeping the same distribution, the same photos and pictures as before although some are placed in different places.”

The poetic language that speaks of suffering has a happiness of its own, whatever the drama it uncovers. Where time behaves like a personal film, in which images follow one after the other to create the idea that

there is an advance from the last frame: events continue to occur forward because they have been recorded in this way. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty tells us that "either I do not reflect, I live in things and I consider space vaguely, as the medium of things, as their common attribute, or I reflect, I gather space at its source, I actually think of the relations that lie beneath this term, and I realize that these only live thanks to a subject that describes them and that carries them; I pass from spatialized space to spatializing space" (Merleau-Ponty, 1994: 258).

It is therefore the direction of the images that give meaning to time, to transformation and to the changes that take place gradually and necessarily:

“With the passage of time, and after having lived my transformation, I understand that these changes have to be made, so as not to remain anchored in a past of pain and suffering, and to let that son whom we have loved so much, be part of each of our days with joy and living our progress as people”

The oldest biographical memory loses its clarity characteristic of cinema when recording recent events that are more like stills from an enclave of the past, where only a vague impression of the era to which they belong remains. We are certain that episodic memory grows older as time goes by.

As Samanta evokes memories with the family, she leads us to the construction of a collective memory that allows us to "locate" the event in time through its juxtaposition with other events, that justifies the progressive changes and that speak of the management of death, pain, absence, the son's room, the objects, their deterioration and the connection with her child:

“At first, we didn't want to touch his room because it's a way of understanding that everything stays the same and he would be in it. He was super tidy and everything stayed the same for many years. It had been more than 2 years since I wanted to change his room [it's been 10 years] because I understood that he was still in us and in our lives regardless of how that room was, and to see how his clothes were ruined or put away smelling like they were in storage was to see something of his deteriorating and that hurt me more. Still, my children and husband didn't want to change anything and I honored this for them.”

Time seems to go in this direction, from the past to the present and into the future, but is this really how Samantha consciously experiences it? On more than one occasion parents who have lost children tell us of the feeling that they have experienced the present time as a memory for the rest of their lives, when they experienced the intense emotion of loss, of sadness, and that it makes them feel simultaneously in the present and in the future. The experience involves the present and the future because they travel forward in their biographical lives. Experience that some authors call "prescient memory" (a term used in computational models of artificial intelligence prediction) so that they have the awareness of memory formation, the feeling that they will remember this moment for the rest of their lives.

Long-term memories are mixed with the formation of the present memory that constructs a new autobiographical memory where past and present intermingle and in which those who experience it have the sensation of continuity towards the future, as if living a time lived in two directions: from the present to the past, and from the present to the future. In this sense, the events narrated by Samanta as a result of the pandemic and the fact that one of her sons had to be confined, after having contact with a companion with Covid 19, make the room and objects of her deceased son acquire a new meaning and make possible their transformation to be mediators of new meanings of change, continuity and transcendence:

“During the last year, my son Manuel, the youngest, had to quarantine for being in contact with a positive, although he did not have Covid, and decided to spend the quarantine in his brother Francisco Javier's room, I guess because there he had a table where he could study and see the street and the sea, or because he felt calmer there.

It has been very difficult for the little one to accept the loss of his brother, who was the most resistant to these changes.

When we all decided that this change in his room had to be made, what was most deteriorated was really thrown away, but the two brothers made sure that all their older brother's clothes and books that were useful to them would be preserved, and they kept them and used them with a pride I had never seen before.”

What is important is the attitude and meaning given to suffering -to what the bereaved are, do and feel. As suffering ceases to be suffering, as soon as meaning is found in it, just as sacrifice can be. This makes it more valuable to find meaning in the word, in life, to be willing even to suffer on the condition that this suffering has meaning. To discover the meaning of preserving and treasuring objects that belonged to the loved one is not to find pleasure or avoid pain, but to configure continuities in a world of discontinuities. As if in the closeness and in our dreams, the objects and spaces of the loved one would soothe the pain, as if such contact would save our life to make the pain disappear, the unbearable and horrible of the absence.

So it happens as Gaston Bachelard (2000: 68) refers when he states that "dreams sometimes descend so deeply into an indefinite past, into a past free of dates, that the precise memories of the natal home seem to detach themselves from us. These dreams surprise our reverie. We come to doubt that we have lived where we have lived. Our past is elsewhere and an unreality pervades the places and times. We seem to have remained in the limbos of being. And the poet and the dreamer find themselves writing pages whose meditation would benefit a metaphysician of being. A page of concrete metaphysics which, covering with dreams the memory of a native house, introduces us in the ill-defined, ill-placed places of the being where an astonishment of being overwhelms us as William Goyen refers in "*La maison d'haleine*" ("The house of breath"):

“To think that one can come into the world in a place that at first we would not even know how to name, that one sees for the first time and that, in this anonymous, unknown place, one can grow, circulate until one knows its name, pronounce it with love, call it home, sink roots in it, harbor our loves, to the point that, every time we talk about it, we do it as lovers do, nostalgic charms, and poems overflowing with desire.”

The soil where fate sowed the human plant was nothing. And on that background of nothingness, human values grow. On the contrary, if we go beyond memories to the depths of dreams, in that background of memory, it seems that nothingness caresses the being, penetrates the being, sweetly unties the bonds of being. We ask ourselves: what was, has been, have the facts had the value that memory lends them? The distant memory only remembers them, giving them a value, an aura of happiness. Erased value, the facts are no longer wanted. Is it that they have been? An unreality seeps into the reality of memories that are on the border of our personal history and of an undefined prehistory at the very point where the birthplace, after us, comes to be born in us. Because before us - Goyen makes us understand - it was quite anonymous. It was a place lost in the world. Thus, on the threshold of our space before the era of our time, there reigns a tremor of taking being and loss of being" (Gaston Bachelard, 2000:68).

CONCLUSIONS

Memory is more than a record of the past. It is also a template for the record of the imagined future, a place where unforgettable things are found- unforgettable for us and for those to whom we will bequeath our treasures, those of the deceased son. A place where present, past and future are condensed as memories of the immemorial. Where future and past reside in the circuit of memory. Where, conceptually, it is more coherent to displace what we understand as the present from any idea of time, and reassign it to the concept of consciousness when we analyze it from the register of events where the present is consciousness. Perhaps ironically, we see how the only place where time does not exist is in the time of consciousness. Meanwhile, the past and the future are more similar to what we consider time, but to the consciousness belongs the

present, so that human time can only be understood as a subjective experience of the individual, in which the individual gives meaning to the present by including in memory the past events and fantasies and strategies for the projects to come and, which will continue to connect Samanta with her son, allowing her to shape the direction of events, even those yet to come, where memory will keep the faces of yesteryear open beyond the old memory, in a space that is not the contextual medium within which things are arranged, but the medium thanks to which the arrangement of things is possible.

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