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Introduction

Grief over the death of a loved one is one of those fundamental human experiences which strongly impact on our experience and on the way we conceive of ourselves and others. A bereaved individual is suddenly confronted with the loss of someone who plays a fundamental role in his life, and has to extensively engage with such a disruption, trying to make sense of it. Already in light of the profound existential significance it has for those going through it, grief is surely a topic worthy of a detailed philosophical investigation.

The first things that jumps in the eye when one looks more closely at the phenomenon “grief” are its *complexity* and *sheer variety*, which are somehow prefigured by the fact that the term “grief” itself is notoriously polysemic.¹ Even if we restrict ourselves to an enquiry of grief as *reaction to the death of a loved one*, as I am going to do in the following, it is not only the case that there is a considerable diversity when it comes to its expressions, both on an individual and a more general level², but it is also clear that grief affects different layers of our life *at the same time*: for example, a bereaved individual³ not only goes through a *profound alteration of the own identity*, but also comes to experience the surrounding world, time, his body and others in a very different way. A somehow convincing philosophical account of grief looking for certain structural features of it should be able to show how different layers in grief may *belong together*, giving rise to a meaningful whole.

Two other important aspects to consider when it comes to grief are (1) a certain *normativity* related to its evaluation and expression, and (2) the *embeddedness of the griever in the surrounding social world*, which also comes to the foreground in the way we express grief and evaluate it. Normally, we do not limit ourselves to a detached neutral description of the way others grieve, but *evaluate* it by referring to a certain normative account of *how we should grieve*. Among other things, we implicitly or more explicitly cherish certain standards about how grief should be expressed, so that we disapprove of those who deviate from them, and hold that only those who had a certain relationship with the deceased have the right to be bereaved for an extended period of time and/or to take decisions in the name of the dead. By doing all that, we continuously interact with the social world surrounding us both on an “anonymous” level, since we follow to a large extent and/or confront ourselves with certain social standards and norms that form the tacit background of our way of life, and on the level of the concrete interactions with singular individuals. In every case, our

¹ Indeed, it is possible to say that we do grieve over a divorce or the end of a friendship, as we may say that we grieve over the death of a companion animal or another person. Having said that, it is not clear whether the different phenomena which can be addressed by using the term are really comparable on a deeper level.

² For instance, see Parkes, Laungani and Youngs eds. (1997) for an assessment of grief's cross-cultural diversity.

³ In the following, I am going to use the terms “griever” and “bereaved individual” interchangeably.

practical life, as the way we grieve can show in a particularly effective way, is imbued with normative assumptions and values that should be reconstructed and critically engaged with from a philosophical point of view.

With these different aspects in mind, I have chosen to address grief in this master's thesis as *continuation of the love one had for the deceased* in orientation to philosophical accounts of it (Higgins 2013; Landsberg 1968; McCracken 2005; Solomon 2004) and autobiographical reports written by griever (Lewis 1994; Nussbaum 2001; Riley 2012). In addition to that, I will also refer to the literature on so called “continuing bonds” (Klass, Silverman, Nickman 1996; Walter 1999) which underlines the fact that personal relationships with dead loved ones are retained and renegotiated in different ways during our entire lifetime. By looking at grief from this perspective, I hope to be able to address the aspects I mentioned before in a coherent way, showing how (1) grief can be depicted as a *unitary meaningful process* in which different elements are linked together as expressions of a “underlying” loving attitude toward a particular individual, and how (2) possible connections between grief's *moral, social and existential* dimension can be also taken into account by referring to a certain *normative* account of love. Let me expand on that, in order to clarify these preliminary considerations.

With reference to the first point, I hope to show that different features of the individual grief process – such as, for instance, thoughts concerning the beloved one, different memories of him, or emotions arising from the loss – can be accounted for *in their unity* by tracing such a process back to the loving interaction it presupposes and, in a certain way that I will address in more detail later, still *unfolds* in it. All the elements belonging to a certain grief process can be generally regarded as *still expressing* a loving attitude toward the dead; in a more specific way, it can be pointed out that they are, as love's expressions, part of a *meaningful pattern* unfolding along the lines of a distinctive kind of *affective rationality* that reflects the particular value the loved one has for the griever.⁴ In other words, the interplay between the elements belonging to a certain grief process is not casual, but rather displays a particular affective logic. In this context, the *habitual past loving interaction* between the bereaved person and the beloved, as *realisation* of their loving attitude toward each other, comes to shape *fundamental structures of their experience*, because some of their central habits, expectations and commitments crucially depend on the presence of the beloved for their intelligibility. On such a background, more “passive” aspects of grief, i.e. elements which *affect* the bereaved individual without her consent – such as pangs of grief, the sense of the dead's presence, or involuntary memories – can be also regarded as traces of such a past loving interaction which

⁴ For the sake of clarity, I will speak in the following about grief over a *singular* loss. However, it is also possible to grieve over the death of different individuals at once (Solomon 2004, p.84).

still profoundly shape the griever's experience in the present and express the strong affective import the dead loved one has for her. As I will show in more detail later, grief as continuation of love configures itself as a *long-term responsive process*, during which the griever not only has to practically revisit the structure of his habitual experience in light of the fact that someone he deeply cared about has died, but also to confirm or transform the overall value the dead individual and his relationship with him have for his way of life.

In addition to that – and now I am referring to the second point I mentioned –, discussing grief on the background of love also permits to address its *moral status*, since it can be argued that, as love's expression, it goes along with *special moral demands* which are grounded in a certain loving relation. By drawing on specific core general moral principles, it can be further investigated whether and under which conditions these special moral demands can be justified. This also permits, amongst other things, to investigate the sense of various everyday claims about *what we owe the dead*.

Addressing grief as love's expression may also help avoid too individualistic accounts of it, which tend to focus on the griever's relation with the deceased one, without taking into account the great extent to which our individual existence is embedded in a wider social world entailing both an “anonymous” social dimension and particular others about whom we care. It is indeed rare that we grieve in solitude, and even in such a case the way we grieve profoundly depends on previous social interactions. Taking as a starting point the tensions which can arise between general moral duties toward persons as such and special demands directed at particular individuals with whom we have loving relationships, I therefore aim to touch upon the complex interplay between individual and surrounding social world during the grief process.

A last point I want to investigate by referring to grief as continuation of love is its deep *existential significance* for the bereaved individual. Indeed, I think that the meaning of this experience can be illuminated by referring to the importance of the lost person as condition of possibility for one's experience. In other words, the *emotional depth* the loving relationship with someone acquires in our lives, which can be assessed by referring to the fundamental importance of the beloved for the *constitution* of the own world, sheds some light on the deep existential significance of grief, and helps describe the particular kind of *knowledge* about the own and others' lives a bereaved individual may acquire.

With reference to these different aspects, I have structured my thesis in four chapters.

In the first chapter, which I regard as general background for all other chapters, I address the nature of a loving relationship by providing a (normative) *dialogical account* of it, which, while it

states the *irreducibility* of loving partners to each other, also underlines the profound way in which their relationship shapes the world they commonly inhabit. In this context, I analyse (1) the character of the loving attitude toward someone, which goes along with a peculiar kind of *affective rationality*, and (2) the way in which the living interaction with the beloved one habitually shapes the lover's experience. In a second step, I then focus on (3) the *embeddedness of the loving relationships in a wider social world*. Finally, I refer to (4) *distinctive moral demands* arising from loving relationship and, by appealing to the normative concept of “personhood” which I take to be fundamental for dialogical love as such, identify general moral duties toward persons as constraining the extent of love's special demands.

In the second chapter, I connect grief to my previous account of love and show how it is possible to make sense of its different features by tracing them back to the enduring of (1) the loving attitude toward the deceased and of (2) a habitual world permeated by him. The focus lies therefore on the possibility of making grief intelligible *as an unitary responsive process* by showing how its different aspects can be regarded as *love's expression*. In this context, I critically engage at first with Peter Goldie's narrative account of grief as a process, arguing against his assumption that narratives act as those function which hold different elements of the same grief process together, and then try to illustrate what it could mean for love to continue in grief, as Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins have proposed. Similarly to the first chapter, I investigate in a second step the complex relation between *bereaved individual* and *surrounding social world* on the background of grief as love's expression. In this context, I point to possible conflicts between bereaved individuals and surrounding social world connected to the fact that someone who is grieving about a certain loss is not automatically recognised as such by others, and that grief's expression is subjected to particular expectations. In addition to that, I also draw attention to the fact that “*grieving communities*” between griever who care about each other may arise, and that the members of such “*grieving communities*” may come to experience *shared disturbances of life possibilities* connected to the loss.

The third chapter builds upon (1) the account of love's special moral demands given in the first chapter and (2) the features of grief described in the second chapter in order to address grief's *rationality* and *overall moral status*. In fact, even if one recognises that grief can be adequately described as love's expression, it can be still pointed out that such a reaction is *irrational*, as it is regarded, among other things, as something we do *for a dead one*, and/or that it is problematic from a general moral point of view, since it is not clear how we should evaluate possible special obligations to the dead. In this context, I firstly criticise Epicurean arguments against our caring

about what happens to us after death, in order to show how such concerns can be *rationally accounted for*, and then point out how grief's dedicatory character can be assessed. The aim is to show that, while at least some dedicatory actions carried out during grief can be rationally accounted for and even justified from a general point of view as attempts to fulfil particular core desires and interests of the dead, grief's different features acquire a distinctive expressive value for the griever as *realisations of the love one has and carries out for a particular individual*. In a second step, I touch on different moral issues concerning grief's demands, similarly to how I assessed possible conflicts between love's special demands and general moral obligations in the first chapter.

The last chapter is dedicated to an investigation of the *existential significance of grief*. By referring back to the fundamental importance the beloved person has for the bereaved one and the notion of emotional depth I introduced in the first chapter, I critically engage with Paul Ludwig Landsberg's insightful account of the distinctive kind of knowledge which may be achieved during the grief process, and then address possible implications of this knowledge for our individual way of life.

1. Loving relationships and particular moral demands

In this first chapter, I address the character of a *loving attitude* toward someone and of the *loving relationship unfolding between individuals* by appealing to a *dialogical account* of love: in my eyes, such an account is indeed well suited for highlighting the *responsive* dynamic between loving individuals who, while they are deeply engaged with each other, *cannot be regarded as part of a larger - “fusional” - unity in which their individuality disappears*. By focussing on these two aspects, I hope to be able to provide some ground for characterising more precisely *what it could mean for grief to be love's continuation*, an issue that I am going to address in the following chapter. Furthermore, I investigate the nature of *particular moral demands* arising from loving relationships and argue on the basis of my previous dialogical account of love that they should be constrained by general moral duties toward persons as such. This preliminary assessment of moral demands arising from loving relationships will act as background for my more detailed investigation of grief's moral status and rationality in chapter three.

The structure of the chapter reflects these preliminary remarks of mine. In a first step (1.1), I make some general remarks on the term “love”, underlining the fact that it always goes along with certain normative implications. In this context, I introduce the main characteristics of a *dialogical account of love* in opposition to different accounts, a differentiation that I will further analyse in the following subchapters. In light of that, I address love as *caring attitude toward another person* (1.2) and as *sharing interaction* (1.3). I then provide a brief excursus on parental love (1.4), in order to find out whether he strongly differs from love between adults. In the last sections of the chapter, I focus on the embeddedness of loving relationships in a wider social background (1.5) and on the status of special moral demands arising from them (1.6).

1.1 General remarks on “love”

Just like the term “grief”, the term “love” does not only refer to different phenomena, but also goes along with various normative implications. Among other things, we speak of different *loving relationships* (e.g. friendships, erotic love, parental love), *loving individuals* (e.g. friends, lovers, parents and their children), *love as individual or collective emotion, action*, or longer lasting *emotional attitude toward objects or individuals* (e.g. “We love that film!”; “I am in love with Peter”). In this context, it is not at all clear whether all these different usages have something in common; indeed, “love” could be only a family resemblance concept (Krebs 2014, p.8).

To further complicate matters, we do not use the term in a mere descriptive way, but rather convey with it a particular *normative evaluation* of the different elements we refer to, which may

express the particular social expectations we have as members of a particular society or culture: for instance, we may speak about two partners we know, who think they are in love with each other, by firstly reporting their self-understanding and then adding that *what they take to be love is not real love*, because the way in which their relation unfolds does not fit to our understanding of it. Our assessment reveals that we are drawing on certain *normative* standards – which may be implicit or explicit in various degrees, shared in different ways or highly idiosyncratic – which define what *should count* as love, and what not. These standards do not only constrain the *intelligibility* of a certain attitude or relationship as love for us, but also, if one has already identified a certain loving attitude or relationship, our evaluation of it as rational or irrational, adequate or inadequate, “healthy” or “unhealthy”, and so forth.

From a philosophical point of view, the fact that we draw on certain standards for assessing the intelligibility or adequateness of a certain attitude, behaviour or relationship in our everyday life does not imply that these standards are in themselves *warranted*, so that a further reflection on the reasons and rational arguments which may legitimate certain standards must take place. To put it in another way: a certain *implicit or explicit normative background* on which we draw in order to have an orientation in the world must be brought to consciousness and *critically engaged* with, in order to assess its adequacy. I regard the dialogical account of love which I propose in the following as an attempt to spell out reasons and principles in light of which we may critically assess the standards which shape our practical life.

In accordance with Helm (2013), I will in the following focus on *personal love*, also the love we may have for other human beings.⁵ Furthermore, I will only address possible loving attitudes and loving relationships from the perspective of the involved *adults*, since critically engaging with child love would require a careful analysis sensitive to its peculiarities I cannot offer here.

In this context, I think that an appropriate account of “love” has to take into account the distinctive *irreducibility* of the other to me in a loving relationship. A beloved one is *experienced* as a *co-subject* who actively and purposively contributes to a *shared world* in a similar way to me (see Krebs 2015, p.50). In accordance with that, we are willing to take care of her perspective on the relationship, to be attentive to her as a source of demands to which we have to be *responsive*. In my eyes, these two features of a loving relationship should not be considered as if one would presuppose the other, but rather as *mutually constraining* elements: I am attentive to the other person as irreducible individual because I am willing to care about him for his own sake, as well as

⁵ I do not want to exclude from the outset that we may love *animals*, but I prefer to not engage with that question, since this would require a separate investigation of the similarities and differences between animals and human beings I cannot provide here.

I take care about him for his own sake because of the particular way in which he, as the particular individual whom I love, appears to me.

How should we reasonably account for these features? So called “fusional or union accounts of love”, which characterise love as the willed creation of a “shared identity” in which the previous individual different identities *merge* and a concern for a *shared identity* over the individual ones is predominant (Singer 2010, p.16; Helm 2013), can be prone to a problematic absorption of the loving individual in a “fusional whole”, since they, by appealing to this *merging of identities*, consider *individuality* and *autonomy* as elements that hinder a certain loving relationship and have therefore to be somehow overcome (Krebs 2015, p. 50). By doing that, they give a problematic account of what it means to be in love with each other, since even the *feeling of being one* which can arise in a loving relationship at times reveals itself at a closer look to be the feeling of a perfect *coordination* between *two* beings responding to *each other* (Buber 1984b, pp.88-89; see also Singer 2010, pp.25-27). From a moral point of view, it is also problematic that a “fusional account of love” overlooks the distinctive *responsiveness* to each other's autonomy and alterity lovers have to develop in order to avoid the risk of reducing the other to the own interests and desires (see Singer 2010, p.23-25; Krebs 2015, p.50).

In opposition to that model, a *dialogical account of love* as proposed by Bennett W. Helm and others⁶ seems to me to address the irreducibility of the other to which I pointed before in an appropriate way, and will therefore act as guideline for further analyses. Indeed, such an account is characterised by its depiction of loving relationships as *sharing* relationships between individuals who, while they interact with each other, are never reducible to each other. Adequate love flourishes and develops itself in an intersubjective shared dimension in which individuals *respond* to each other, without denying the other's subjectivity or reducing it to the own (Krebs 2014, pp.7-8; Singer 2010, pp.25-27). The development of a certain loving relationship does not stand *in opposition to* the individuality of the loving partners, but rather manifests itself as a peculiar responsive interplay between them. In accordance with that, to love another person or care about her in an appropriate way is only possible if I am willing to respect her as a free individual with her own history, desires and beliefs, and also as a co-subject who has the same rights as me.

In the following, I analyse *loving attitudes* and *loving relationships* in accord with modern approaches to personal relationships, which underline possible similarities between friendship, parental and romantic love deviating from older accounts of love which distinguished between (1) *eros* – as selfish erotic love mainly driven by sexual desire –, (2) *agapé* – as brotherly love not

⁶ See e.g. Buber (1984b); Helm (2009); Krebs (2014), (2015); Marcel (1967).

dependent on the beloved one's *individual* value and therefore potentially directed toward everyone –, and (3) *philia* – as “a kind of affectionate regard or friendly feeling toward not just one's friends but also possibly toward family members, business partners, and one's country at large” (Helm 2013). Of course, I am not assuming that friendships, romantic relationships and parental love can be reduced to each other, but rather that there is a similar deep caring *attitude* toward a friend or a loved one which underlines these relationships, as well as a living interaction between lovers which can be described – at least partially – in similar terms. In this context, I do not address various other philosophical questions concerning love⁷, but primarily focus on the *loving caring attitude toward someone* (2.2) and the *sharing interaction* (2.3) which characterises love as relationship.

1.2 Love as caring attitude toward another person

Love should not be regarded as short-term, punctual emotion, but can be more adequately described as a *long-term attitude* which develops over time and profoundly shapes one's life. In this context, following Bennett Helm's account of love (2009), an individual attitude can be characterised as a lasting affective disposition toward a certain object or person which (a) *goes along with a particular evaluation of that person and object, about which we care under a particular description*, and (b) “*underlines*” *different emotions and actions*, giving them an *inner coherence* they would otherwise not display (Helm 2009, pp. 43-44). Indeed, if we label certain individual acts or emotions as *loving acts or emotions* – as in the case in which a man kisses his fiancée or his boyfriend, or as when a woman is concerned about the well-being of a friend, because she heard that he suffers from depression –, we do not usually regard those acts or emotions as self-sufficient elements which already have a meaning as considered by themselves, but rather as *expressions* of a deeper caring attitude toward a certain person which transcends them and to which they refer in order to be intelligible and coherent. For instance, if someone claimed that he loves a certain woman without showing a certain consistent and coherent pattern of desires, emotions, acts and thoughts centred on her which may be regarded as constituting a loving attitude, we would question – if it is not possible to appeal to extenuating circumstances – that he *really* loves her. To properly describe the rational interconnection between different elements of a certain loving attitude, it is useful to distinguish between (a) an *emotion's target* as “that at which an emotion is directed”, (b) its *formal object* as “the kind of evaluation of the target that is distinctive of the emotion type at issue”, and (c) the *emotion's focus* as “the background object having import to the subject, whose relation to the target makes intelligible the evaluation implicit in the background”

⁷ For instance, it is possible to address the differences between romantic love and friendship, the exact nature of the interest in a particular person as a potential friend or romantic partner (appraisal or bestowal of value), or the possible moral justification for loving a particular person instead of others. See Helm (2013) for an overview.

(2009, p.43). In the case of a loving attitude toward a certain person, the beloved as that person whom we deeply care about acts as (one) central background focus for my emotions, thoughts, desires and actions. To give a concrete example: suppose that a robber points a gun at my wife, and that I am understandably deeply disturbed by this situation. In this case, the target of my fear is the situation I am witnessing, its formal object the threat, while my wife as that person whom I deeply care about acts as background focus for my emotional reaction. *Because of* the fact that I deeply care about this person, my emotional response to the situation *makes sense*. Indeed, if I *hated this particular person*, or *were indifferent* to her well-being, my fear *centred on her* would not be understandable: I could be afraid of the fact that the robber may point his gun at me, after having pointed it at that woman, or that he could take away all the savings I accumulated in this bank by taking the woman as hostage, but I would not be really concerned about her well-being as such. The distinctive emotional import this person has to me as loved one is something enduring, so that it acts as condition of intelligibility for further emotions, desires, thoughts and actions of mine – I may, among other things, feel deeply relieved if the robber fails to shoot at her, desire that this should end soon, think about possibilities at my disposal to save my wife, sacrifice myself in order to save her, and so forth. Because of the import of this particular person to me, I am somehow “committed” to certain emotions, thoughts, desires and actions that *fit* to my particular emotional attachment to this person. This seems to be a requirement of *rationality*, since we expect human agents to display a certain coherence between their evaluating attitudes, thoughts, emotions and actions, which should reflect the amount to which their deeds “matter” to them (see Helm 2008, pp.18-19). Of course, this does not mean that an agent cannot be irrational or incoherent at times, but that it seems questionable to attribute a certain loving attitude to someone, if she fails to display a certain *enduring* pattern between her thoughts, emotions and actions which can be taken as *expressing* it in absence of extenuating circumstances.

This characteristic concern for a beloved person, which may be described as a peculiar lasting *attentiveness* toward the other which also includes a *preparedness to act* for her or him (Helm 2009, p.43), is addressed in various ways by expressions like “caring about another person”, “intimacy”, “closeness”, and so forth, which remain ambiguous in the absence of more detailed definitions. Two strong intuitions are attached to these different terms: in order to speak of love, (1) we have to care about the other person *for her own sake*, without primarily seeing the other and the relation with her as a mean toward another end, but rather as an *end in itself*; furthermore, (2) intimacy with another person requires a kind of identification with her or him (Helm 2013).

Helm tries to give an account of love's intimacy which differs from both (1) *union* and (2)

robust concern accounts of love. As I already pointed out before, the first describe love's intimacy as merging of two individual poles into a larger collective entity and is therefore unable to adequately characterise the irreducible singularity of those who are involved in it, so that caring about the other may be falsely depicted as appropriation of the other's interests (Helm 2009, pp.39-40). Instead, the latter tries to characterise love's intimacy *in analogy with nonintimate kinds of concern for another person* – by referring, for instance, to “noninstrumental desires to help and be with another” (2009, p.40) which would underline both the love for a particular person and other nonintimate concerns for others –, and therefore does not capture the difference between *love for a particular person* and those *nonintimate kinds of concern we may have for others we do not love* (2009, pp.40-41).

In opposition to these two accounts, Helm (2009, p.41) argues that the intimate concern for others we display in love should be described as an *intimate distinctive concern for the identity of the beloved* which is *analogous* to the intimate concern one has for one's own identity, *without being reducible to or derivable from the latter*. A distinctive concern for one's own identity and the motives which underlie my actions seems to be an essential trait of what it means to be a *person* (2009, p.46); in analogy to the self-centred concern one has for those core values and interests which structure the own identity⁸, one also distinctively cares about the *values* and *interests* which profoundly shape and structure the beloved one's identity, since one recognises *her status as a person, a responsive subject* which has the capacity to act in orientation to the own beliefs and desires (see 2009, p.50). If I care about the other's person identity in such a way, I recognise that the other person has the right to freely determine her own identity, core values and interests, without being obliged to do that; furthermore, I am willing to let that identity shape my own way of life in a profound way, so that certain core values and interests as held by the other person acquire a distinctive significance for me (2009, p.50). In the eyes of a friend or a lover, the personal stance of the beloved has a strong face value on its own and cannot be simply bypassed by referring to the own values and interests; the attitude of a friend or a partner is therefore a *responsive* one, which has to address the other as a person with equal rights. The responsiveness we have to display toward another person strongly differs from a possible loving attitude toward an object, since we do not normally recognise the latter as a being able to actively determine itself, whose perspective we have to take as strong face value, when it comes to decisions concerning it. In light of that, to constantly

⁸ It is important to underline that those values to which we as persons are normally committed are ordered in a hierarchical way. In this context, we may be more committed to certain core values as to other values that also shape our life (ibid., p.48). However, this does not mean that the personal hierarchy of values is always so clearly structured that it points to a capital value that overrules all the others, or that there cannot be conflicts between different core values to which we are committed in a similar way.

treat another person as a mere object at our free disposal would mean to *deny* her status as a responsive agent in a questionable way.⁹ Gabriel Marcel nicely expressed this point by drawing a distinction between “possessive” and “oblative” love (1967, p. 235): while the first is a problematic form of love in which the other is primarily addressed as an object in light of my own personal interests and desires, so that he is regarded as a *possession* of mine, the second one goes along with the responsiveness I already described and therefore avoids to reduce the other to an object.

In this context, an important difference between an union and a dialogical account of love is that the first holds that our loving concern for the other is a part of our concern for ourselves, while the latter underlines that such concern is *distinct* from our concern for ourselves and needs a constant awareness of the distinctive alterity of the other whom we care about. I do not primarily care about the other because he contributes to my own development and well-being, but rather because I care about his flourishing for his own sake (Helm 2009, p.49). Thanks to this awareness, I may be aware of the fact that there is no pre-given harmony between my identity and that of the person I love, so that *legitimate conflicts* may arise: the fact that our identities do not merge into a single unity is not a problem, but an essential precondition for the rightful development of a loving relationship (see Krebs 2015, p.50).

I think that it may be useful to illustrate the described concern through a concrete example: suppose that a friend of mine has a strong interest in football and therefore constantly struggles in order to become a good footballer. If I am really his friend and know how much he cares about football, I should be committed to let his evaluation have an import to me, so that I may *feel certain emotions* or *act* in accord with that evaluation, letting it shape my way of life similarly to my own core interests, *even if I do not share his enthusiasm at all*. Given that other-directed concern, I may be ready to donate him a ticket for a match of his favourite team, or be genuinely proud of him if he tells me that he played much better than he expected during a match on Sunday, only because of my distinctive commitment to those core values and interests which positively contribute to his well-being; even if it may be right that to contribute to his own well-being also positively impacts on my own well-being, since I care about him and am pleased because he looks satisfied, this consideration does not guide my actions. Distinctive high-order emotions like *shame* or *pride*, which presuppose the capacity to take the other's perspective in a *genuine* way – also not as mere *projection of the own values and interests* on the other –, play an important role here, since they are not exclusively self-directed, as in the case in which I feel ashamed because I failed to act in accord with my own core values, but may be also other-directed, as in the described case in which I am proud for my friend because he was able to realise one of his own ideals (Helm 2009, p.49).

⁹ For a general discussion of this issue, see Nussbaum (1995).

In light of what I have said until now, the difference between “mere” *caring about someone* and *loving her* can be maybe spelled out by pointing to the *depth* of our commitment¹⁰: it seems that a beloved one acts as a *fundamental, long-term condition of possibility* for my own life, since her well-being, which I care about in a responsive way, is also one of *my* core interests – if not my chief concern – and therefore deeply shapes my way of life. In a certain opposition to that, “mere” caring about someone may go along with a more “superficial”, brief-term commitment to him, as in the case in which I help an old woman descend the stairs, in order to avoid the possibility that she injures herself. To better illustrate this difference, one can imagine to be confronted with a fundamental choice which reflects one's own core interests and desires and will deeply impact on one's own future. In this context, it seems legitimate – and maybe even required – that we may feel compelled to assess the impact of such a decision on the well-being of those we love, while we are not expected to make the same with regard of those we simply care about, with the exception of those decisions which may have problematic consequences from a general moral point of view.

In addition to the aspects underlined by Helm, it is important to stress that one's loving attitude – at least when it comes to *romantic love* and *friendship* – is also commonly bound to the expectation to be treated in a similar way by the beloved person (Krebs 2015, pp.51-52). In a relationship which is taken to be *mutual*, one expects the other to show the same kind of attentiveness and sensibility to himself in the long run. This expectation is not bound to single actions or situations, as if one were constantly expecting the other to reciprocate a certain favour, and must also not be conflated with a simple rule prescribing an equal division of duties to which we refer in order to weigh out our actions (2015, pp.51-52), but is normally given as a practical, pre-reflective shared attitude. As in other cases of habitual interaction, it is common that the presence of such need for recognition is firstly brought into consciousness because of the beloved one's *incapacity* to reciprocate the attentiveness I have for him. In this context, a *lasting* inattentiveness to the other or unwillingness to take his core desires and interests into account often leads to a resentful dissolution of a friendship or romantic relationship.¹¹

In light of what I have said, a caring mutual relationship should go along with a mutual commitment to the other as an equal partner about whom one cares and with whom one is willing to *interact* in order to shape the own way of life, both with regard to those decisions that regard both partners and to the own identity. This dialogical interaction should include a distinctive kind of *respect* toward the other, “at least in the sense that I refuse to undermine the role she has as an

¹⁰ In talking about the depth of our emotional commitment to others, I am drawing on Matthew Ratcliff's discussion of the different depth different emotions may have in someone's life (2013, p.164).

¹¹ For an interesting discussion of the problematic dissolution of a friendship, see Blustein (2012, pp.240-242).

autonomous being in defining her identity and well-being”, along with *trusting* the other “in the sense that I take her values, and the emotions constitutive of them, as reasons for me to value and feel similarly for her sake” (Helm 2009, p.50). In light of that, deep conflicts concerning core values should be at least handled in such a way that one is ready to discuss them with the other and to seriously engage with his opinion and stance.

1.3 Love as sharing

Even when the deep caring attitude I described above seems to be very important for every loving relationship, it is clear that such concern for each other does not exhaust what we take to be a loving relationship between two or more individuals. Another central aspect to consider, which terms like “intimacy” or “closeness” seem to convey, is that love manifests itself as *sharing and shared lived practice*: we have common interests with a friend or a partner, spend time together by doing things together and define ourselves with reference to a shared history of interactions (see Krebs 2014, p.7). In other words, a given mutual caring attitude has to manifest itself *as a real interaction* in order to develop and last: I may imagine or wish to be the friend or the romantic partner of another person and already hold myself to have the right attitude for it, but, without a real interaction with him or her, a real friendship or romantic relationship cannot arise. In this context, Aristotle already noted that every friendship needs time and familiarity in order to develop (2009, VIII.3, 1156b25f.); he also pointed out that the essence of friendship is *living together*, because friends primarily enjoy the company of each other and therefore try to “profit” in every respect from the friend's presence in the interpersonal encounter (2009, IX.12, 1171b-1172a).

Without a lasting living interaction with another person characterised by a mutual deep concern, a friendship or romantic partnership often fades away, ends in a more clear-cut way or becomes another kind of relationship.¹² For instance, it is often the case that a loving relationship loses its *dynamic permeability*¹³: one or both involved individuals are no more able to focus on the other *in the present* and remain attached to past characteristics of the partner or of their interactions. In this case, one may be prone to think that *there was once a loving relationship* which failed to last any longer and became something else. On the other side, if the lived interaction with a friend or a romantic partner fades away or is interrupted without a clear mutual commitment to it¹⁴, not only

¹² Utterances like “we do not love each other anymore” convey the feeling that a previous loving relationship has become something else; however, they may also express some doubts about the alleged nature of a previous relationship.

¹³ For the concept of “dynamic permeability”, see Rorty (1986, p.402).

¹⁴ Such clear mutual commitments, which in my eyes are extremely rare, must not be necessarily verbal in nature, as in the case in which I express my intention to end a relationship to my friend and he agrees with my proposal, but can also manifest themselves in a more ambiguous way, as in the case in which I begin to spend less and less time with a person who does not protest against that and therefore adapts herself to the new situation.

the nature of the actual relationship may be compromised, but the other may also cast doubt upon its previous character, so that she may suspect that it was not a “real friendship”, but rather an *instrumental interaction* that was not primarily concerned with her and therefore considered her only as possible contributor to the other person's well-being (see Blustein 2012, p.242).

Love as intersubjective sharing and shared practice leads to the development of a range of *shared habits* and *expectations*, which may more or less profoundly shape our time and world experience. Referring to Husserl (e.g. 1966; 2012), we may point out that our perception of the surrounding world is not a matter of simply perceiving what is actually given to us at the moment, but incorporates *various possibilities* which may be *actualised* in the future. Importantly, this is not a chaotic arrangements of disparate elements, but unfolds as a *coordinated system*. In this context, Husserl speaks of a habitual “horizontal structure” of perception which predetermines until a certain degree what we actually perceive (2012, pp.45-46).¹⁵ For instance, when we perceive a thing, we do never perceive it *in its wholeness*, but always from a certain perspective, so that certain sides of it are actually given to us, while others are simply “presumpted” without being actually experienced in the present (1966, p.3). However, we do normally perceive a thing *as a whole*, and not only those aspects of it which are actually given to us – even if we can focus on them in a second time –, because the *sense* of what we perceive is predetermined by a certain habitual perceptual knowledge and is gradually *fulfilled* by the smooth unfolding of my perception (1966, pp.3-10).

On this general background, it has been argued that our interaction with *particular individuals* may profoundly shape the habitual way in which I experience my surroundings, so that certain perceptual possibilities I experience *now* as *actualisable in the future* refer back to my habitual interaction with a particular individual (Ratcliffe 2016, p.204; 2017, p.163; Fuchs 2018, pp.46-47). More generally, particular individuals can act as *conditions of possibility for (some of) our projects and activities*, which only make sense in light of our interaction with them (Ratcliffe 2016, p.204; 2017, p.163).

To give a somehow mundane example, I may habitually meet a friend of mine on a certain day of the week in order to go to the cinema together, as we are both enthusiastic cinephiles who enjoy to see new films at least once a week. In light of my habitual interaction with him which has come to shape my life in a profound way, I may actually perceive the surroundings and act in the world by also anticipating his possible responses and desires in a reliable way. In this context, Thomas Fuchs (2018, p.47) draws attention to what he calls a “*dyadic body memory*”, “which consists in the shared habitualities of interaction, created through mutual gaze, speech, touch, embracement, erotic or

¹⁵ Husserl's assumptions are much wider-ranging, since he claims that consciousness *as a whole* unfolds as a coordinated horizon (2012, 2. Meditation), but I will only refer here to some of his claims about perception.

sexual encounter.” This shared intercorporeality does not lead to a fusion between two different individuals, since the other retains his otherness even in the intimate personal encounter (2018, p.47)¹⁶, and continues to shape one's perceptual field “as felt attraction, tendencies toward approximation, or merely as background awareness of the other's atmospheric presence”, even when the loved one is not bodily present at the moment (2018, pp.46-47). In this context, I can for example perceive the pop-corns at the counter as *enticing* because I know that my friend really likes them, or be concerned with his ticket, since I know that he regularly loses it.

The presence and pervasiveness of such habits and expectations is often *consciously recognised as such* when the other is absent and our habitual expectations concerning her are disrupted, as in the famous situation described by Sartre in “Being and Nothingness” (2012, pp.59-62), in which Pierre's absence gradually begins to shape Sartre's whole perception of the café in which he is waiting for him *precisely because of his expectation that he will show up*; therefore, his absence is felt as such because it frustrates Sartre's specific expectations concerning him.

Given the habitual character of our loving interactions with others, it is often difficult to consciously grasp the role of a particular individual as condition of possibility for the *intelligibility* and *value* of certain practices and interests of us *during our living interaction with him*. Referring to the couple of cinephiles I mentioned above, it can be the case that one of them is painfully aware of the absence of the friend with whom he normally goes to the cinema and in the following does not really enjoy the film they planned to watch together, without recognising, however, that the main reason for this failure is the absence of the other person.¹⁷ Instead, he may falsely believe that he did not really enjoy the film only because of its low artistic value, or because it belongs to a genre he is not really interested in. In other words, he can fail to recognise that it is the fact that he *shares a peculiar situation and interest with another particular person* which makes it possible for the situation to have import to him.

With reference to the *depth* of the commitment to another person in a loving relationship which I touched upon in the previous section, it is clear that the beloved person and our loving relationship act as condition of possibility for *central* features of my way of life, since I do shape my identity and my world by (also) constantly referring to them. Referring back to the example of the two cinephiles to which I pointed before, it seems plausible to claim that I would experience the absence of a certain individual *differently* according to the depth of my commitment to him and the importance I give to our meeting in the cinema. For instance, if this meeting appears to be very

¹⁶ See also Erwin Straus' remarks on the nature of tactual encounter (1958, pp.160-161).

¹⁷ I would not say that the presence of the friend is the *only* condition of intelligibility for going to the cinema, since I may have a separate interest in cinema which is not dependent on his presence.

important because I am going to see my best friend and agreed to go to the cinema only because he is the one who accompanies me, I may experience a somehow profound disruption of my life's possibilities in the case he does not show up without having texted me before. The impact of this disruptive experience would be different from the case in which I am “only” waiting for an acquaintance before the cinema and he does not appear without noticing me. In the first case, it is plausible to argue that I would feel anxious because I fear that something has happened to my best friend, try to figure out what may be happened to him, call him repeatedly, search for him, and so forth. Because of its absence, I cannot really figure out to enjoy the film we should see together, maybe even to see the film without knowing what has happened to him. Even if he finally texts me saying that he caught a bad cold and therefore stays at home, so that I feel relieved and decide to go to the cinema and see the film alone, it can be the case that I come to realise that I do not really enjoy the film because my friend is not there, and because I am sad about his illness. In light of Helm's account of love, this pattern of emotions, thoughts, desires and actions expresses in a consistent way my loving commitment to him, and it would be a rational failure – in the absence of extenuating circumstances – to claim that I deeply care about him without showing a certain pattern of emotions, thoughts, desires and actions that is consistent with this assumption. Of course, one may question whether a certain individual reaction is *adequate to the circumstances* – maybe it was exaggerated to react in this way after a 5-minutes delay –, but the kind of rational failure which is at stake here is different in kind, since it concerns the internal *coherence* between an alleged emotional commitment to someone and the pattern of emotions, thoughts, desires and actions an individual displays. Instead, it is plausible to claim that I would not feel, think and act in the same way in the case I have to meet an acquaintance of mine who does not show up, since the person I should meet does not play the same constitutive role for my life and my world. Of course, I may feel the need to call or text him in order to find out what is going on, or feel disappointed because he is not there, but his absence would not affect me so profoundly that I feel the strong need to search for him. I may even be able to enjoy the film in his absence, so that I may temporarily forget that I was waiting for him.

1.4 Excursus: parental love

In my previous analyses, I did not distinguish between *loving relationships between adults* and *parental love*, and this could suggest that we may simply apply what I have said to our love for children. It is clear that the love we feel for children may have the same or even a more profound emotional depth as our concern for adults, so that they may also act as fundamental “entities” around which we structure our life. However, it is arguable that our loving relationships with

children have a *distinctive quality* that somehow sets them apart from loving relationships between adults (Helm 2009, p.52).¹⁸

For instance, Helm (2009, p.52) denies that the caring concern we may have for children can be regarded as love in the precise sense he highlights. While he (2009, p.46) takes a person to be “a creature with a capacity to care not merely about things or ends in the world but also about yourself and the motives for action that are truly your own”, and consequently may care about another person by recognising her own reflective perspective on her identity and her life (2009, p.50), he considers children to be *agents* – also living beings which can care about things, but lack the reflective capacity of taking into account the own identity and the role their caring about worldly elements plays for it (see 2009, p.45) – or mere *potential persons* (2009, p.51). Given the fact that he considers only loving relationships between adults to fit to his own account of love as caring about each other as persons, he then concludes that it would be more adequate to avoid to speak of love with regard to our caring about children (2009, p.51). We should rather acknowledge that the distinction between our love for another person and our caring about children is not gradual, but a difference *in kind* (2009, p.51).

A first critical point I want to underline with regard to Helm's account is that it is difficult to see how we may speak of a difference *in kind* between our caring about children and our love for other persons, if we recognise at the same time that children are *potential persons*. In orientation to this definition, the difference between children and adults should be rather conceived as *gradual*: indeed, we cannot conceive of a crucial point in human development at which children suddenly transform in full-fledged adults and abruptly begin to be able to care about their own identity and motives, but have to think about a progressive development of their rational capacities.¹⁹ In addition to that, adults may also have a changing identity over time – maybe normally in a lesser degree – and come to revisit their own core preferences and values. Since the difference between children and adults is gradual, it makes little sense to radically distinguish our caring about children from our love for other persons.

Having said that, Helm is right in underlining that our love for children has something distinctive to it, since we have to take into account the fact that they are *still developing to a great extent their rational capacities and their identity*. In accordance with their nature as *potential persons*, it would be misleading to treat them as if they were already adults who can already discern

¹⁸ In the same paragraph, Helm (2009, p.52) also underlines that the way we care about animals is distinctive, but I am not going to touch on this issue.

¹⁹ In this context, it could be pointed out that there adults who may never have developed the reflective capacities Helm considers to be constitutive for persons, or may have lost them because of an accident or an illness; should we therefore not consider their way of caring about us, or of our caring about them as love?

without too much help what really matters to them, as it would be equally false to reduce them to agents at our free disposal whose perspective is not relevant at all. To give a concrete example, we may be obliged at times to act in a paternalistic way toward them in order to safeguard their safety, as in the case in which we have to rudely forbid a small child to eat something she is greatly interested in, since we know that (a) it would be dangerous and painful for her to ingest it, and that (b) she is not aware of the danger. Taking her health as a central concern of her – something she may not be reflectively aware of –, we feel justified in acting in a coercively way. To merely dispose over the child without caring about her status as person *in statu nascendi* would be however mistaken; indeed, as potential persons, children have to be addressed by giving reasons for our behaviour, in order for them to develop their sensitivity to reasons. Because of that, we should try to explain to the child *why* we acted in this way, overriding her freedom, in order to acknowledge her perspective as *worthy of respect*, and to give her the possibility of widening her concerns and acquiring new insights. By doing that, we recognise their potential personal status, and try to further actualise it.²⁰

To sum up, while our loving relationship with children should incorporate a distinctive insight in their nature of potential persons who are still developing to a great extent their rational capacities and identity, it seems to be misleading to draw a radical distinction between the love we have for them and the love we may have for other adults, as Helm suggests.

1.5 Loving relationships and the surrounding social world

Up to this point, I discussed the character of our loving attitude and interaction with another individual in order to show how love unfolds with a certain coherence, displaying a consistent pattern of thoughts, desires, emotions and actions. In light of that, it is possible to claim that there is a kind of distinctive affective rationality that characterises the love we have for someone else, and that our experience is profoundly and habitually shaped by our loving relationships. In doing that, I focused on the relation between loving individuals, without engaging at length with the *wider social background* in which such a relation is embedded. However, I think that it is necessary to widen our perspective because there is a *complex interplay* between what goes on in a loving relationship and the surrounding social world that does not directly participate in such an intimate interaction. Indeed, loving – and, more generally, intimate – relationships cannot be regarded as mere private happenings unaffected by “external factors” in their development.

²⁰ Because of their status as potential persons, it can be also the case that our need of being reciprocated in our love by children is experienced in a different way than in a loving relationship with an adult. Indeed, we normally expect children to be only able to reciprocate our love *in a partial way*, since they may lack the capacity to reflect at length about what really matters to us.

In this context, a first claim from which I want to distance myself is that it is not possible to assess the character and the value of a certain loving relationship from a non-involved perspective.²¹ Such a claim would imply a radical asymmetry between (1) the internal perspective on the relation the involved individuals possess (first and second person perspective) and (2) the external perspective on it others may have (third person perspective), opening up a kind of private dimension radically detached from the public sphere. On this background, the attempt to assess the nature and the value of a certain relationship from a philosophical point of view would seem absurd or at least misguided.

This thesis resonates with widespread expectations concerning love, and rightly underlines that our *living experience* as lovers seems to be irreplaceable. In this context, we may have as lovers a kind of epistemic primacy about the subjective meaning we attach to our relationship, in the sense that no one except for those who participate in a certain relation can know *how it is – or was – like to be* in such a relation. However, this should not lead to overlooking the extent to which our private life and the way in which we assess our intimate relationships *are already shaped by intersubjective norms and standards*. Internal and external perspective on a loving relationship are deeply intertwined with each other, since members of a social and cultural community normally refer to *shared social standards* in order to lead and evaluate their way of life; therefore, even individuals involved in loving relationships implicitly or consciously refer to shared standards in order to shape and evaluate their relationships *from within*. Because of that, a common background of understanding for different people who share cultural and social standards is normally given. Of course, this assumption should not be interpreted as meaning that (1) it is possible to *reduce* the internal committed perspective of those who love each other to an external detached point of view, or that (2) there are not – and maybe should not be – tensions between our involved evaluation of a loving relationship and a more general assessment of that relation, but simply points to the fact that we – implicitly or explicitly, unconsciously or consciously – draw on intersubjective standards even to assess our more intimate relations. Consider, for instance, the criteria to which we orient ourselves in order to judge *whether the one we love is expressing her love in an adequate way*: we do not simply engage with the other person avoiding all possible presuppositions, or figure out mere private criteria assessing the adequacy or inadequacy of our relation, but normally tacitly draw on and (at times) critically engage with given intersubjective standards which already stand at our disposal, pre-shaping our way of life and prescribing which conducts are adequate and which not. If we really had mere private criteria for addressing questions like whether we are expressing our love

²¹ In the next two paragraphs, I draw on Avishai Margalit's discussion and critical remarks against such a claim (2002, pp.89-90).

in an adequate way, or whether it is morally legitimate to act in a certain way on the background of a certain loving relationship, we would experience an *incommensurability* between our internal assessment of our loving relationship and the way in which such a relationship is more generally regarded by others. In this context, there are shared social and cultural standards which prescribe (a) which *kinds* of personal relationships are legitimate, and (b) which *internal standards* a certain legitimate relationship must fulfil.²² In any case, it seems necessary for an objective assessment of the “goodness” or “badness” *within* a relation *from an external perspective* to refer to the internal perspective of those involved in it as a *stake value*, in order to be able to evaluate correctly the features and historical development of a particular relation.

We should also recognise that we do not normally live *in isolation* from the surrounding social world, so that the way in which we live and also engage in intimate relationships impacts on the lives of others, as theirs impacts on ours. In this context, even if I am pre-shaped by and draw on intersubjective norms and standards for assessing my way of life and intimate relationships such as love, there is no pre-determined harmony between individuals and surrounding social world. Indeed, I may also experience a *radical clash* between my aspirations, projects and commitments, and the social expectations concerning my person. Because I love someone, and because of the way in which I do it, I may be exposed to opposition from the side of my family and/or, more generally, from the side of society. If my conduct is taken to be immoral and/or illegal, I may even be confronted with sanctions and incarceration. For a dramatic contemporary example, think about the persecutions to which homosexuals are exposed in certain countries which do not recognise a consensual homosexual relation between two partners as a possible way of life. In such a situation, in which not the internal standards which may define an adequate homosexual relationship, but homosexual relationships as such are at stake, to engage in a homosexual relationship can even put at great risk the own life.²³

Putting aside these dramatic scenarios, a lot of much more mundane conflicts may arise in the social world in which different individuals and relationships intersect, even if a common background of understanding is given: for instance, the fact that we are extremely committed to a certain loving relationship can lead us to neglect other intimate relationships we have and possible demands arising from them. In more radical cases, demands we take to arise from a certain relationship may even contradict general moral duties which do not stem from intimate relationships, such as the case in which a Mafia boss kills someone in order to fulfill a promise he

²² In my eyes, this distinction mirrors Margalit's distinction between (a) goodness or badness *of a relationship* and (b) goodness or badness *within a relationship* (2002, p.85).

²³ See, for example, the following article on persecution of homosexuals in Iran published by the Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/17/iran-persecution-gay-community-revealed>) (last access 12.05.2018).

made to his father. Feeling to be justified by the love toward his father, he violates the duty of not killing another individual we normally take to be (at least) due to every person who is not endangering my life. How should we address these conflicts? Are there criteria on which we may draw in order to “settle” them?

After having underlined that (1) it is not granted that the involved and the external assessment of a certain loving relationship always overlap with each other, even if we normally draw on intersubjective standards to assess the character and the value of a certain relationship from an internal perspective, we should also point out that (2) the mere fact that loving relationships conform or not to shared standards in a certain culture or society is not informative for assessing their rational or moral value from a philosophical point of view, since (3) *given standards of expressivity, rationality or morality must also be tested in light of general principles which one may rationally account for*. To put it more clearly, the mere fact that a certain community agrees on certain standards and norms and draws on them in order to assess the life of its members does not in itself warrant the *rightfulness* of the chosen standards²⁴; what we additionally need in a philosophical setting, in order for a certain claim to be persuasive, are *arguments* and *principles* in light of which the former can be justified.

In the following, I am not able to critically engage at once with different standards which may be endorsed by a certain society. In a more circumscribed way, I focus on *moral issues* related to loving relationships, and sketch a possible strategy to assess shared moral standards and norms on which we normally draw to evaluate such bonds by referring to the normative concept of “personhood”, which I take to be compatible with the dialogical account of love I provided before. Even if I am not able to provide a *full defence* of my account – this would indeed require a more general and throughout assessment of *why* I chose to refer to this core principle instead of others I cannot provide in this thesis –, I hope at least to show in a plausible way why we have to come to certain conclusions, *if* we start from the concept of “personhood” as described in the following.

1.6 Moral issues concerning loving relationships

In light of the controversial moral status of loving relationships, it is necessary to assess them *from a general moral point of view*: in fact, it is not granted that having a certain loving attitude or participating in a certain loving relationship, while being internally coherent and maybe even rationally warranted, can be justified from a more general moral perspective.

²⁴ I take this fallacy (“a certain [expressive, rational, moral] standard is justified because it is endorsed by my community”) to be a variety of the so called “argumentum ad populum”, which holds the truth of a certain presupposition in light of the fact that “everyone else” or – more frequently – “most of the people” are of this opinion. For an assessment of the “argumentum ad populum” and an overview over other fallacies, see Hans Hansen's article on “Fallacies” in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/fallacies/#CorFal>).

Intimate relationships generally raise difficult moral issues, since it is not clear at all how we should judge them from a general moral point of view. Are they compatible with *general moral principles* or do they conflict with them? Should they be described in a similar way to other nonintimate relationships or in separation from them? Do they go along with *special normative demands and responsibilities*? For instance, the fact that intimate relationships seem to entail one's preference for particular individuals *to the detriment of others* is problematic from a general moral point of view, since it is not clear how it is possible to justify such asymmetry in moral terms (Scheffler 1997, p.192). In this context, it may be either argued that intimate relationships can be in the end harmonised with general moral principles, so that they reveal themselves, on a deeper look, to contribute to more general moral concerns, or one can underline the difficulty or even impossibility to harmonise the domain of general morality and that of intimate personal relationships. In the end, it is not granted that a unified moral outlook which integrates both domains may be given (1997, pp.207-208).

Before addressing the moral status of loving relationships, I want to make some remarks about leading principles of my following analyses. I principally refer to the normative concept of “*person*” as that category in light of which the moral status of loving relationships can be evaluated. As it is generally known, the term “person” in philosophy has not an univocal meaning and may be used in different contexts – for instance, one may speak about the “personal identity” of a certain individual as that “core” which endures over time and preserves the sense for this person and others of being the same. For myself, I refer back to Helm's conception of person, which has a distinct Kantian tone to it, and to Buber's rather diverging account of personhood, in order to highlight the possible tension between two different perspectives on loving relationships. By introducing and comparing with each other these divergent perspectives, I hope to reinforce my previous remarks on the intertwining between involved and non-involved assessment of a loving relationship, and show how the concept of “personhood” can act as general principle for evaluating special moral demands arising from such a relationship.

As I have already stated, Helm (2009, p.46) characterises a person as “a creature with a capacity to care not merely about things or ends in the world but also about yourself and the motives for action that are truly your own”. In other words, persons are *rational* beings which are able to *reflectively* take into account their own identity and their motives, and to distinctively *value* them. To that, he adds that to be a person means to be *autonomous*, in the sense that you have “the capacity to be responsible, both for these evaluations and therefore for your identity [...] and to exercise a form of control over your cares and values so as actually to acquire your identity” (2009,

p.46). In this context, Helm (2009, p.50) points out in a normative way that we *should* take the distinctive nature of persons into account by respecting their capacity for *free and rational self-determination*. In this context, it would be indeed incoherent to recognise the own personal nature without recognising at the same time the distinctive capacity of other persons to freely and rationally determine themselves, since other human beings are normally experienced by us as able to reflectively take into account their own deeds and motives, and to act in autonomous way in orientation to such a reflection.²⁵

At this point, we may wonder whether such an account does fully justice to the way in which we relate to a *beloved individual*. Is there a tension between my particular appraisal of the beloved person and the assessment of her as a person among others, with general capacities? For example, Martin Buber gives a different account of what it means to encounter a “person” which seems to better capture the character of our first-personal interaction with a loved one. Indeed, he stresses the *uniqueness* of the individual which may shine through during a particular kind of living interaction with her: *by encountering someone else as a person*, we experience her as an individual *irreducible to general categories*, revealing herself as such *in the living relationship with us* (Buber 1984b, p. 65; 1984a, p.274); the other is no more a subject about whom we can speak in general terms, but a concrete Other, a *Thou* to whom I respond, whose concreteness fully captures my attention for a while (e.g. Buber 1984b, p.26, p.36). In this context, he emphasizes the fact that encountering someone else as a person is not something we carry out in a deliberate way, but rather something – at least in its initial steps – by which we are *passively affected* (1984b, p.15), and that the personal encounter with someone else cannot stand too long and will therefore necessarily fade away at a certain time (e.g. 1984b, p.20, p.37); even in a loving relationship, we are not able to permanently encounter the beloved one as a person, even if that possibility is given in the background (1984b, p.21).

It cannot be denied that there is a certain tension between the account provided by Helm and Buber's position, since the first tries to give a definition of “person” by referring to the general faculty of *rational free self-determination* which is potentially shared by all human subjects, while Buber underlines the uniqueness of the addressed person showing up in the personal encounter, *which cannot be grasped in general terms at all* (e.g. 1984b, p.37). In my eyes, this tension somehow recalls the potential conflict I highlighted before between a general assessment of loving relationships and an internal assessment of them focusing on the special status the beloved one has

²⁵ Compare to that Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative which states the duty to treat persons – more precisely: the personhood in ourselves and in others – always as end in themselves, and not as mere means to something else (1974, BA66-67).

for me. However, I want to underline that (1) there is also a certain convergence between these two perspectives, since Buber also stresses that treating other persons as mere objects would mean failing to grasp their whole nature as beings which can *transcend objectivity* (Buber 1984a, p.38, p.49, p.67) and that (2) the Kantian reference to a general faculty of rational self-determination common to all human subjects does not necessarily preclude the possibility for me to grasp the other as an unique individual in the personal encounter.

In light of that, I draw in the following on Helm's account of persons as beings able to rationally and freely determine themselves, and his claim that we *should* treat them in accordance with their personal status as self-determining subjects, in order to address the general moral status of loving relationships. *Individual free self-determination* will therefore act as core principle guiding my further analyses. In a first step, I address loving relationships which are normally grounded on the *free mutual decision* to become and remain friends or romantic partners, leaving the love we may feel for our own relatives and parents aside. This is due to the fact that intimate relationships which are not primarily based on explicit mutual consent or some other voluntary act go along with specific concerns, such as how it is possible to argue for the existence of a certain normative obligation arising from our relationships with our parents, if we as daughters or sons did not agree to the coming into existence of this relation in the first place (see Scheffler 1997, pp.204-205).

Loving relationships as such, even if they are grounded on mutual consent, are not *inherently moral*, since they may still go along with a violation of basic rights of the individuals involved in the relationship or of those who do not participate into it (Krebs 2015, p.79): unfortunately, even when two individuals freely enter a loving relationship, it can be the case that one harms the other, or that they both harm others who do not participate in their relationship, *in the name of alleged love*. In the previous chapters, I subscribed to a particular *normative* account of love – a dialogical account of love – which in my eyes may at least avoid a possible scenario in which the basic moral rights of beloved ones are violated. In fact, it seems to me to presuppose a *basic overlapping* between general moral duties toward persons as such and special loving demands, in the sense that individuals who have a mutual loving relationship have at least to regard themselves as *co-subjects with equal rights* in order to develop a really dialogical relationship.²⁶ The *general moral principle* to treat every other human individual as an end in himself with the right to freely determine his existence and to be respected as such already acts as founding ground for every dialogical personal relationship, even when those who develop such relationship would not describe it in this way or do

²⁶ In this context, I agree with Margalit's normative assumption that there cannot be morally good intimate relations which violate basic moral demands (2002, p.85).

not need to consciously refer to the general norm in order to act.²⁷ This remark of mine is also consistent with my previous claims that (a) there is normally a significant overlapping between the external and our internal assessment of loving relationships²⁸, and that (b) recognising the general faculty of free rational self-determination constitutive for persons as such does not necessarily stand in opposition to their appraisal as particular subjects whose individuality is irreducible to general categories. On this account, it is possible, for instance, to regard a sadomasochistic relation in which one of the involved individuals is systematically humiliated as a *bad* intimate relation, since it goes along with a violation of the basic moral principles I described above (Margalit 2002, p.86).

A second point to underline is that a loving relation is regarded by both those who are involved in it and external individuals as a *source of particular supplementary responsibilities and demands* which specifically address those who are involved in that relationship: in this context, I may claim to have special responsibilities toward a friend of mine or my wife by simply pointing to the relationship we share; I therefore distinguish particular individuals to whom I have particular responsibilities from all other possible subjects to whom I “only” have general moral duties (Scheffler 1997, p.189, pp.195-196; Margalit 2002, p.85). In this context, we argue that (1) a certain loving relation *as such* may act as justification for our actions, so that we are justified in referring to it for grounding our actions, and that (2) deciding to be involved in that relation goes along with special responsibilities arising from that relation. Therefore, it seems that there can be a kind of *specific wrongness* which is attached to loving relationships and cannot be simply identified with general moral wrongness, even when the first must include the latter. For instance, as Avishai Margalit (2002, p.87) remarks, “[t]reating your children morally but in a way that is indistinguishable from the way you treat strangers is an example of a bad ethical relation.” Intimate relations – Margalit’s “ethical relations” – are taken to fulfil standards *sui generis* that are more demanding than general moral duties we should respect with regard to (at least) all human beings. With regard to the moral grounding of ethical relations, he also claims that even immoral people are capable to enter and sustain good ethical relations with each other (2002, p.86). This would imply that a good ethical relation is not compatible with *internal immorality*, but can still develop if the immoral behaviour of those involved in the relation is directed *toward external people*. Indeed, it is true that intimate personal relations can develop along these lines and therefore introduce a profound asymmetry between those who are involved in the relation and non-involved others, but such asymmetry cannot be justified from *a moral point of view*. Indeed, basic moral principles must

²⁷ However, this attitude does not only characterise dialogical relationships as such, but is rather typical for every *habitual moral practice* that expresses a certain “embodied” attitude toward the other which can be described in general moral terms as respect for personhood.

²⁸ See section 1.4.

have a *general validity*, in order to be regarded as such. In this context, to respect the human dignity of the person with whom one has a loving relationship without respecting the personal status of others who are not involved in it, would amount to a lack of *consistency* overthrowing the general validity of the principle.

In light of that, I think that the general moral principle of respecting the other as a subject with equal rights should not only apply to the individual with whom I have a loving relationship, but also – *as general principle* – to every other human individual as such; therefore, it should be regarded as a *negative constraint* for every special demand or responsibility which may arise from a particular loving relationship. In other words, it cannot be accepted that special responsibilities and demands arising from a loving relationship *overthrow* general obligations toward every other human being, even when they do not violate the personal status of the person with whom I have that relationship (Krebs 2015, p.79). For instance, to harm another innocent person because of alleged special responsibilities toward another individual one loves would always be morally wrong, since such an action would go along with a radical violation of the respect for personhood we should grant to every human being as such. To sum up, I may well refer to a particular loving relationship as *prima facie* ground for having certain special obligations and commitments, but I should always consider their compatibility with more general moral norms and therefore be aware of the fact that they may be overridden by the latter.

After these general remarks about the moral and ethical status of loving relationships, one may still ask *which special responsibilities and demands arise from them and how these are experienced by loving individuals*. I already underlined some relevant special responsibilities which go along with a deep caring attitude toward another person²⁹: in a dialogical loving relationship, one should be willing (a) to let the beloved freely develop the own identity with reference to core values and interests, and (b) to let these core values and interests impact on one's way of life in a similar way to one's core values and interests. In this context, one commits himself to feel certain emotions and act in accord with one's other core values and interests, because the other person is committed to them. If deep conflicts between the own core values and interests and those of the beloved arise, one should be at least ready to openly discuss the issue and confront the other person as subject about whom I care. This willingness to respond to the other does not necessarily mean that all interpersonal conflicts will or may be resolved, but, at least, distinguishes our attitude toward a cherished person from our attitude toward others we do not really care about.

My account of these special responsibilities and demands may wrongly suggest that loving

²⁹ See section 1.2.

individuals usually act and feel *in orientation to general norms*, as if those requirements were experienced in a detached way, similarly to duties. In opposition to that, loving individuals do not normally experience special responsibilities and demands as deriving from a certain relationship, but rather as *constitutive elements of it that are not inferred from it*. As Samuel Scheffler (1997, p.201) puts it:

The claim is not that, in having reason to value our relationship, I have reason to perform an act which, if performed, will generate responsibilities. The claim is rather that, to value our relationship *is*, in part, to see myself as having such responsibilities, so that if, here and now, I have reason to value our relationship, then what I have reason to do, here and now, is to see myself as having such responsibilities.

In this context, the loving individual may not be *reflexively aware* of the fact that she values a certain relationship in a certain way and therefore acts as a subject with special responsibilities and demands toward another person, but such evaluation primarily *manifests itself* in her actions, acquiring a particular *expressive value*.

After having addressed the moral status of loving relationships based on mutual consent, one could further ask how we should regard *those loving relationships to whose taking place we did not agree*, as our loving relationships with our parents, siblings and relatives. These relationships do normally have an important role in our life and our development, and should be taken into account as well. How should we assess these relationships from a moral point of view? Do they also go along with particular moral demands we should be attentive to?

In accordance with my dialogical account of love, I think it is not possible to regard these relationships as grounding *unconditional moral demands* which we should fulfil even when they clash with our core interests and values, since such assumption would violate the right of individual free self-determination we grant to persons as such. In other words, the mere *fact* that we are children, siblings or relatives of someone does not in itself provide a reason for fulfilling a specific demand arising from that relationship. In order for a specific demand bound to such relationships to be morally justified, it should rather unfold in accordance with core desires and interests of the targeted individual, and not override her free self-determination. In this context, the fact that a certain intimate relationship came into existence without our consent is not in itself problematic, since it can still be the case that those who were responsible for its taking place always respected the personal – or potentially personal – status of those who were unwillingly involved in it, and therefore always looked after their free self-determination and development.³⁰ To give a concrete example: if my mother appeals to her status as mother for pretending from me that I should dedicate

³⁰ I take this remark of mine to be coherent with Scheffler's assumption that special responsibilities toward others can arise from relations of trust and vulnerability (1997, p.202).

more time to her, and therefore for addressing a specific demand to me grounded in our relation, it is not her status as my mother that can justify her claims, but rather the *specific way* in which she related to me as my mother. If she more or less constantly loved me in the dialogical sense I proposed, so that she constantly cared about my free development and looked after me, she is justified on the ground of fairness to expect me to be more attentive to her – presupposing that overriding factual and moral reasons do not speak against her demand.

2. On love and grief

In the previous chapter, I addressed individual *loving attitudes* and *loving relationships* on the background of a dialogical account of love. Among other things, I pointed out that we are prone to attribute a loving attitude to someone if she displays a certain coherent pattern of thoughts, emotions, desires and actions that reflects the affective import the beloved has for her. In other words, a certain individual attitude toward someone is *intelligible* as love when a certain affective coherence is present. Furthermore, I addressed the habitual nature of a loving relationship which deeply shapes the experience of the involved individuals, and the moral status of special demands arising from loving relationships.

In this chapter, I propose to address *grief as a long-term process* entailing manifold aspects, as Peter Goldie and others have suggested.³¹ More specifically, I argue that assessing *grief as continuation of love* – in orientation to other authors like Kathleen Higgins and Robert Solomon³² – permits to think about it as an *unified process*. While Solomon and Higgins plausibly claim that it is necessary to look at grief on the background of the previous loving relationship between griever and lost person, and also provide very insightful observations about the moral character of grief, their characterisation of it as continuation of love remains somehow vague: in fact, they both seem to claim that grief is an integral part of love which unfolds on the background of the previous loving relationship (Higgins 2013: p.172; Solomon 2004, pp.87-88), but do not illustrate how exactly we should picture that out. I aim to show that their claim should be understood *in expressive terms*, since grief's various features can be regarded as *an unified whole still expressing a loving attitude toward the lost person*.

I take Goldie's narrative account of grief as starting point for my investigation (2.1), because he persuasively points out that grief should be regarded as a long-term process entailing different aspects, and also explicitly confronts himself with two problems – “the problem of the parts” and “the problem of the plenty” – that seem to seriously undermine every processual character of emotions. While I am sympathetic to different aspects of his account, I criticise his claim that a certain narrative acts as that unifying function which holds together different aspects of the same grief process.

As an alternative to that, I then address grief as continuation of love (2.2): I first recapitulate Solomon's and Higgins' remarks about grief as continuation of love, and then expand on them by referring back to my previous discussion of (1) the nature of a loving attitude and (2) the habitual

³¹ See Goldie (2011), (2012); Higgins (2013); Parkes and Prigerson (2010); Ratcliffe (2016), (2017); Solomon (2004).

³² See Solomon (2004); Higgins (2013).

character of a loving interaction (2.3). The aim is to show that different aspects of grief can be thought of as an unified whole by looking at them as love's expression. In this context, I draw attention to the enduring of a certain loving attitude toward a beloved individual as that subject who still acts as focus for different emotions, thoughts, desires and actions of the griever. In other words, I claim that grief may still display the kind of affective rationality we hold to be constitutive for a loving attitude, and can therefore be regarded as integral part of the latter. I then address the way in which the lived experience of the griever is profoundly affected by the death of a beloved person by referring back to my previous discussion of love's habits. To conclude this section, I then try to describe the *interplay* between the disruption of the habitual structure of the griever's experience that affects her “without her consent” and her possible more “active” reactions to such a disruption, in order to make clear that to continue to love someone who has died is also a matter of personal freedom. On this background, grief can be described as a *responsive process* in which the loving attitude toward the lost person is put to the proof, since the griever has to decide whether he wants to confirm or transform the value he attached to the previous loving relationship and the dead loved one. In this context, I also underline that this *long-term recognition of the loss* is primarily *practical* in kind, and therefore calls for an *active transformation of habits*.

Similarly to what I did when I turned to the social nature of love³³, I broaden in a second step my previous focus on the relation between griever and beloved dead one by addressing the interaction between bereaved individuals and the surrounding social world (2.4). In my eyes, this perspectival shift is important for giving a more comprehensive account of grief which does not insulate the bereaved individual from the social and cultural world in which she is embedded, and for drawing attention to the fact that the way we express our grief is not uncontroversial. In this context, I first address possible conflicts between griever and surrounding social world that concern grief's *expressivity*: indeed, we may fail to recognise that someone is grieving at all, or recognise that someone is grieving, but disapprove of the way in which such a grief is expressed. Furthermore, even in the case that we recognise that someone has the right to grieve, we expect him to express it in accordance with certain intersubjective standards. Taking into account a more positive aspect of the relation between griever and social world, I then investigate the role of more intimate relationships in shaping grief, asking whether it is possible for different individuals to “*grieve together*” and what could be meant by this expression.

2.1 Grief as a process: Goldie's account

Different authors agree on the fact that grief should not be regarded as a state, but rather as a

³³ See section 1.5.

long-term *process* (Goldie 2011; 2012; Higgins 2011; Parkes and Prigerson 2010; Ratcliffe 2016; 2017; Solomon 2004), but in the following I am going to focus on Goldie's account. In every case, addressing grief as a process seems to be compatible with first-person experiences reported in autobiographical accounts of grief, which underline the long duration and complex development of grief. For instance, C. S. Lewis (1994, pp.59-60) offers the following penetrant remark on his own grief over the death of his wife:

I thought I could describe a *state*; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process. It needs not a map but a history, and if I don't stop writing that history at some quite arbitrary point, there's no reason why I should ever stop. There is something new to be chronicled every day. Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape. As I've already noted, not every bend does. Sometimes the surprise is the opposite one; you are presented with exactly the same sort of country you thought you had left behind miles ago. That is when you wonder whether the valley isn't a circular trench. But it isn't. There are partial recurrences, but the sequence doesn't repeat.

In light of this complex temporal unfolding, it would be misplaced to identify grief with particular short-term emotions, perceptions, thoughts, desires and memories, even if all these different elements may be part of a grief process (Goldie 2012, p.56). Indeed, if someone claimed, for example, that his grief were over after having shed some tears at a friend's funeral, we would doubt that he is faithfully reporting on his experience, or – in the worst scenario – doubt that he is grieving at all.

To think about grief as a *process* also permits to account for possible *interruptions* of it, as in the hypothetical case described by Goldie in which a bereaved individual is hit by a car and lies unconsciously for two weeks (2012, p.63). In such a case, we were not willing to say that the individual grief process is over only because of this accident – at least if the bereaved person has not suffered a profound amnesia, so that he does not remember the loss, or is no more able to grasp the significance of it for him. Instead, we would argue that grief may resume as soon as consciousness is restored (2012, p.63). As Goldie (2012, p.61) remarks, it therefore looks as if the processual character of grief had a certain ontological and epistemological priority over its components. On this background, he (2011, pp.125-126, my emphasis) characterises the grief process in this way:

Grief is a process, and is experienced as a process. It is a kind of process [...] I will call a *pattern* [...]. The pattern has certain features. *It includes characteristic thoughts, judgments, feelings, imaginings, actions, expressive actions, habitual actions, and much else besides, unfolding over time, but none of*

which is essential at any particular time. It involves emotional dispositions as well as particular experiences, *and there will be characteristic interactions between these.* Describable as grief, or as a grieving, it unfolds over time, and is *narratable* in ways that I will shortly put forward. The pattern is understandable as grief *because it follows a characteristic shape*, although it will be individual and particular to the person, and will no doubt be significantly shaped by cultural as well as biological influences.

The claim is that grief is a distinctive kind of process – a pattern, as he says – which is intelligible as such because of a characteristic shape it displays. Furthermore, Goldie points out that the different elements which belong to the grief process are related to each other in a distinctive way, so that they may be regarded as *components of an unified whole*. As he himself underlines with reference to Jesse Prinz (2011, p. 123), a major difficulty lies in accounting for the *unity* of such a process entailing different elements. Indeed, Prinz (2004, p.18) draws attention to two problems for every “component theory” of emotions: (1) the “problem of the parts” and (2) the “problem of plenty”. The first concerns the identification of those components which are really essential to recognise a certain process as an instantiation of a certain kind, while the latter addresses the function which can guarantee that the given components hang together as a whole (2004, p.18).

With regard to the first problem, Goldie excludes that there are *essential* aspects which can constitute grief, suggesting that *none* of the possible aspects of grief is a necessary condition for it (2011, p. 126). In order to address the “problem of plenty”, he proposes to look at *narratives* as those functions which can unify different elements of the grief process and let them therefore hang together. In this context, he claims that a narrative can be understood in a very basic sense as something that “can be simply thought through, without there being any public act of narration” (2011, p.128), which should therefore only be *potentially narratable and communicable*.

Goldie does not deny that it is also possible to give a causal account of grief, in order to explain the causal continuity between its different elements, but points out that a *narrative account* is preferable for different reasons (2011, p.127):

- (1) it is *idiographic* – i.e. concerned with the individual;
- (2) it cannot only convey a single state or event, but also *general events*;
- (3) it gives a certain *coherence* to its different elements;
- (4) it is *interest-relative*;
- (5) it can integrate causal relations;
- (6) it can exploit *multiple perspectives*.

Two of these six points seem to be particularly important for Goldie. The fact that a narrative

account can exploit multiple perspectives is surely very relevant, since he states that the griever comes to experience an “ironic gap” between her past involved perspective on what she did at the time and her present “external” assessment of the same event or situation shaped by the loss, which can be only adequately captured by a narrative account able to switch between an internal and an external perspective on an event or situation (2011, pp.128-129). In this context, he draws an analogy between the griever's experience and the free indirect style which characterises modernist novels (2011, p.129). Furthermore, he underlines the importance of general events as those elements which “form a significant part of our memories” (2011, p.133). In fact, often we do not recall a single event, but “a kind of event or event type which recurs as part of a wider pattern”, as expressed by the sentence ‘For a long time I would go to bed early’ (2011, p.132). In light of the extent to which our individual memory consists of general events, a narrative account of grief able to grasp their nature is therefore preferable to a causal account of it.

To sum up, Goldie's account of grief plausibly points out that grief is more adequately depicted as a process entailing different elements which display an internal coherence, although none of them is essential for identifying a given grief process as such. In this context, he explicitly addresses possible difficulties arising from such a processual account and proposes to look at narratives as those functions which can hold together grief's different aspects.

While I fully agree with Goldie's assumption that grief should be regarded as a process entailing different aspects, and therefore cannot be identified with a single mental state or emotion, I doubt that narratives can play the unifying role in grief he ascribes to them. Indeed, while it is surely true that they may be very important for the development of grief, Goldie's proposal is faced with some difficulties. For instance, it has been persuasively argued that such a narrative account has difficulties in explaining how certain events which found place *before* the development of a certain narrative can be regarded as integral parts of a grief process (Ratcliffe 2017, p.158). This seems to be problematic in light of the fact that we normally hold these elements to be part of the grief process. In addition to that, there is the worry that a narrative account is too accommodating, since bereavement narratives are intersubjectively shared, but do not seem to constitute instances of shared grief in the strong sense of the term (2017, p.158). To point to the fact that two individuals co-constitute a single narrative does not seem to be sufficient to say that there is “a single token experience that they share” (2017, p.158). More importantly, *narrative coherence is not a necessary feature of grief*, since at least complicated grief seems to lack it (2017, p. 159). Indeed, the experience of grief “may even compromise the *capacity* to give experience a coherent narrative shape” (2017, p.159). A good depiction of the loss of such a capacity is provided by Denise Riley

(2012, pp.56-57) in a passage of her account of her grief over the death of her son, where she remarks that she is stuck in a sort of *a-temporality* which cannot be conveyed and made sense of in narrative terms. As Ratcliffe (2017, p.160) remarks, Riley seems to lack at this point “the sense of meaningful temporal transition” which acts as necessary presupposition for the possibility of narrate something. While Ratcliffe's earlier critical points could be regarded as minor worries, I think that this last point is more weightful and shows that *a narrative shape is not an essential feature of grief*. In light of that, an alternative account of grief's unity is needed.

Goldie himself (2012, p.67) points to an alternative to his account when he refers to Kathleen Higgins' and Robert Solomon's claim that grief should be addressed as *continuation of love*, since it is an enduring loving relationship with the deceased which sustains the grief process; in the following, I am going to investigate this perspective.

2.2 Grief as continuation of love

Both Kathleen Higgins (2013, p.159) and Robert Solomon (2004, p.81, p.90) claim that grief can be only adequately addressed when it is analysed as *continuation of the loving relationship* between bereaved person and dead one. How should we understand this claim? At least two interpretations, which should not be conflated with each other, are possible:

(1) *a certain loving relationship acts as necessary precondition for experiencing grief*, so that there would be no grief in the absence of the former, and/or it would be at least inappropriate for someone to claim to grieve over the death of another person without having had a loving relationship with her (Solomon 2004, p.89);

(2) *grief does not simply arise on the background of a loving relationship, but is in a certain sense an integral part of it*. In this context, Solomon argues that grief amounts to “the strong residue of a [loving] relationship” (2004, p.88) in which the bereaved person is suspended between “the interrupted and presumably reciprocal relationship [with the deceased person] and the ongoing and unreciprocated relationship represented by the memory of the loved one (or the loved one as remembered)” (2004, p.87); Higgins (2013, p.173) also draws attention to the fact that love continues in grief since the griever's sense of his own self continues to develop in orientation to dead loved ones, who “remain active characters in our psyches.”

While the first claim could be interpreted as if grief were causally brought about by the earlier previous loving relationship between griever and dead one, *without implying that the former still belongs to the latter*, the second assumption is more radical, since it suggests that *grief should be regarded as an integral part of the loving relationship* between griever and loved one which still unfolds after the latter's death. In orientation to Goldie's search for a function that could hold

together different aspects of the same grief process, I am going to focus in the following on the second interpretation, which seems to suggest that love acts as such unifying factor.

In my eyes, to state that love continues in grief in the more radical sense highlighted by the second interpretation does not amount to much, if one is not able to illustrate in more detail *how exactly* love may find expression in grief. Referring back to Goldie's processual account, we should therefore ask ourselves *how love can ensure the interconnectedness between the different elements grief may entail*. Solomon touches upon this question when he remarks, for instance, that grief, as a complex emotion which is both about ourselves and about beloved others, displays a similar structure as love (2004, p.88), and that “the obligations of grief are the obligations of love” (2004, p.90). However, he does not clarify enough what it means for grief to be “about” oneself and the beloved other, since he does not draw a clear distinction between the target and the focus of an emotion, and does not sufficiently illustrate how we should think of the interconnectedness between the different elements that may belong to the same grief process. In order to clarify these two points, I therefore suggest to refer to my earlier discussion of the character of a loving attitude and a loving relationship.

2.3 Grief as love's expression

In section 1.2, I pointed out that a certain loving attitude normally displays a peculiar *affective rationality* which expresses the deep concern one has for the beloved person. In this context, one expects a loving individual – as a requirement of rationality – to act, think, remember, desire and feel in accord with the import the beloved one has for her. If she claims to love someone else, it is therefore rationally required for her to think, feel and behave in accordance with the import the loved one has for her; by failing to do that in the absence of extenuating circumstances, she either shows that she *doesn't really love* the other person, or is held by others to act in an utterly irrational way. In this context, Solomon's remark that grief displays a similar internal structure as love can be clarified by pointing out that the griever's *loving attitude* toward the dead loved one may act as that function which unifies different aspects of grief. In other words, the *interdependence* and *internal coherence* of grief's different elements can be explained by referring to the still given loving attitude of the griever toward the lost person.

We may illustrate this point through an example. Imagine a grieving widow who regretfully remembers the joy she felt in the last days before her husband's unexpected death, not knowing that they would have been the last ones, cherishes her husband's clothes and personal objects as reminders of him, is sad about the fact that someone damaged her husband's grave and angered by those who performed such an act, and so forth. These different memories, emotions and actions of

her are normally regarded as expressions of her grief, and reflect the strong import her husband has for her. In other words, they are taken to *cohere on the background of her loving attitude toward her husband* and to *express* it: if she did not love him, we would not expect her to be extremely regretful about the last days she shared with him, to cherish his clothes, to be sad about his grave having been damaged, and so on, because she *were not motivated* to act, think and feel in this coherent way. Such a pattern is therefore only *intelligible* as a coherent whole if we suppose that the widow's loving attitude toward the deceased one still “underlies” her grief; to use Helm's terminology, we have to assume that the beloved one still acts here as *common background focus* for grief's different elements, and grants their rational and affective interconnectedness. Here, Helm's distinction between the *target* and the *focus* of an emotion permits to critically address Solomon's claim that grief is both *about* oneself and the dead loved one. As the former example of the widow illustrates, different mental states belonging to the same grief process can have *different targets*, but they are connected together by their common reference to the *same background focus* – the dead loved one. The widow may be sad about the fact that her husband's grave, and angry about those who damaged it, but her overall reaction is only explicable if it is traced back to the dead loved one as having a strong emotional import to her. On such a background, it can be definitely the case that my self or the dead loved one act as momentary targets for different mental states in grief, but it is the beloved dead one as common background focus who acts as underlying function in it and explains why grief is developing in such a way. To give a concrete example, it is often the case that I reflect upon my identity (“Who am I?” “What I am going to do after that?”) in grief, but the reason that leads me to such a reflection is the fundamental role the loved dead one plays in my life. In other words, the fact that I am profoundly reflecting about my identity can be explained by referring back to the fundamental role the other played for my self-assessment, which is due to the fact that I am (still) deeply attached to her. In light of that, Solomon's characterisation of grief as being both about the self and the beloved fails to adequately capture the role of the latter as underlying focus in grief.

At this point, it is important to underline that grief is not entirely a matter of willing, conscious efforts performed in the absence of a pre-given background, since it also constantly points to a past history shared by the griever and the dead one which *affects* the bereaved individual in the present. Therefore, we also have to take a look at those aspects of grief which affect the griever “without her consent” by referring back to the *habitual character* of loving relationships.

As I already claimed in section 1.3, loving relationships deeply shape our experience, because a lot of shared habits and/or habits focused on beloved ones develop during our interaction with them.

The beloved one does not only act as an object in my world, but partially shapes the way in which I *pre-reflectively* experience my surrounding world: certain possibilities, commitments or projects of mine are *salient* or even only *intelligible* because of these particular others. For this reason, the death of a loved one may strongly affect *the habitual world* which we normally draw upon in an implicit, familiar way (Ratcliffe 2016, p.204). Depending on the amount to which our life is entangled with that of the dead person, we may experience a more or less widespread *collapse of significant possibilities* shaping our world and time experience (2016, p.204.). As the beloved dead one acts as (one) condition of possibility of one's habitual world, we may experience her absence as both *local* and *all-enveloping* (2016, p.204).³⁴

C. S. Lewis (1996, p.47) offers the following insightful remark about the constant frustration of “localised” engrained habits related to his deceased wife:

I think I am beginning to understand why grief feels like suspense. It comes from the frustration of so many impulses that had become habitual. Thought after thought, feeling after feeling, action after action, had H. for their object. Now their target is gone. I keep on through habit fitting an arrow to the string, then I remember and have to lay the bow down. So many roads lead thought to H. I set out on one of them. But now there's an impassable frontierpost across it. So many roads once; now so many *culs de sac*.

In this context, different objects and places that were usually linked to the dead person can instantiate “broken” actions that now seem bereft of their original meaning.

Lewis (1996, p.35) also makes clear that the absence of his wife cannot be reduced to singular experiences of absence, since it seems to underlie his experience as a whole:

It's not true that I'm always thinking of H. Work and conversation make that impossible. But the times when I'm not are perhaps my worst. For then, though I have forgotten the reason, *there is spread over everything a vague sense of wrongness, of something amiss*. Like in those dreams where nothing terrible occurs – nothing that would sound even remarkable if you told it at breakfast-time – but the atmosphere, the taste, of the whole thing is deadly.

Of course, the extent to which the own habitual world is shattered by a certain loss depends on many different factors such as the character of a certain relation, its duration, the death circumstances, and so on (Ratcliffe 2016, pp.203-204). For instance, it may be possible for a griever to preserve a certain range of possibilities whose intelligibility is not strongly affected by the

³⁴ At this point, I want to underline that griever also often report *to sense the presence of the deceased* in various – perception-like and not – ways. See Rhees (1971) for an important empirical report of such a sensing among Welsh widowers and widows, and Bennett and Bennett (2000) for a more recent survey.

presence of the lost person, as in the case in which my work routine is somehow insulated from the rest of my life (2016, p.206). Even if I consider her terminology to be overly cognitive, Martha Nussbaum (2001, p.81) nicely touches on this point by comparing the impact of the death of her mother on her life to that on her sister's:

In every area of my life in which she [her mother] has played a part, I find myself expecting her to appear – and I then must work to cut short and to rearrange these expectations. [...] This feature explains why the process of mourning took a different form for me than it did for my sister, for whom my mother was a regular part of each day. Although we valued and loved her equally, we did not have equal structures of expectation built up around her; and this difference, a cognitive difference, accounted for the difference in the rate at which grief began to fade. The grief thoughts remain; their relationship to other thoughts changes.

By focussing on this habitual layer generated by the previous loving interaction with the dead one which still profoundly affects the griever, we may shed some light upon Solomon's talking about grief as a strong residue of a previous loving relationship: love is still unfolding in grief because habits and expectations constitutively bound to the dead loved one are still at work. On such a background, the griever experience the enduring of fundamental structures of her experience centred on the beloved and, *at the same time*, the impossibility of their fulfilment. As unfulfilled, however, they do point to their lacking condition of possibility – the missing person – and reveal the extent to which they only had a significance and a value *because of* her presence, and are therefore *expressions* of a still given profound emotional attachment to her. To give a concrete example, a passionate fisherman can discover with surprise after his father's death that he was not really interested in fishing, but rather only cherished such an activity because he could share it with his father. This puzzling discovery sheds light to the fact that fishing was an act performed out of love for him. Even at the level of habitual experience, we may therefore discover how the dead loved one acted as *background common focus* for different of our activities, projects and expectations, providing the reason for *why* we engaged in such practices.

Taking into account these habitual and more “passive” aspects of grief is helpful for refining what I previously said about the way in which a loving attitude finds expression in grief. Indeed, we should conceive of grief as a *responsive process* in which there is – under normal circumstances – a certain interplay between more “passive” and more “active” aspects. As I already suggested, the disruption of the habitual world we experience in grief “without our consent” confronts ourselves in all clarity with the fundamental role the beloved played for some of our most important projects, expectations and activities. In such a disruption, the lost person reveals herself as background focus

“underlying” different fundamental elements of my life, giving them a certain coherent shape. As grievors, we come at first to experience this shattering in an involuntary way, but *we normally have the capacity to respond to it in a free way* (Attig 2004b, pp.343-345).³⁵ Such responsive process cannot be accounted for in mere propositional or cognitive terms, but must be rather characterised as a gradual, multi-layered and painful *practical* engagement with the loss, which goes along with a profound transformation of our experience and habits (Attig 2004b, p.350). For this reason, as Ratcliffe (2016, p.205) rightly points out, the recognition of a certain loss is not something that precedes or comes after grief, but it is rather the case that *grief is partly constitutive of this recognition*.

Given the fact that (1) a griever is normally free to engage in different ways with the disruption of her habitual world due to the loss, and that (2) such disruption forcefully expresses the affective import the loved one had for the griever, it is clear that (3) to continue to love someone after his death is partially a *matter of freedom* for which the bereaved individual can be held responsible. In other words, even if a griever cannot avoid to experience a profound disruption of those habits, expectations and projects which constitutively depended on the beloved one's presence for their intelligibility, he is normally free to choose on the long run whether he wants to *reconfirm* or *revisit* the dead one's overall value for the own way of life which finds expression in such habits, expectations and commitments. This could entail, among other things, the effort to preserve the memory of the lost person or to realise some of her desires and wishes, the will to grant her *post mortem* the same importance she had during her lifetime³⁶ or, on the contrary, the desire to get rid of past attachments in order to revisit one's own most fundamental priorities.

On such a background, the discussion about an alleged “end” of a grief process reveals itself to be at least partially *normative* in kind, since it does not simply describe a natural outcome which cannot be influenced by the griever, but rather appeals to his freedom to respond in different ways to the disruption of life possibilities he experiences. Even if it would be false to conceive of “grief closure” as a single, clear-cut event (Blustein 2012, p.292; Ratcliffe 2017, pp.170-171), it is true that the individual grief process may find some “closure” when the griever is able to practically revisit fundamental life possibilities related to the dead, so that he “comes to term” with the loss and find new possibilities to interact with the lost person *as dead* (Ratcliffe 2017, p.171; see also Fuchs 2018, pp.57-59). However, it is partially up to us to decide whether and how we want to confirm, transform or step back from our loving attachments to the dead *by doing that*. In this context, we

³⁵ In more complicated cases, a bereaved person may lose, on the contrary, the capacity to respond in a free way to the experiential disruption she experiences.

³⁶ Consider, for instance, the radicality of a widower's choice *to not remarry anymore*, which clearly expresses his will to grant his dead wife the same affective importance for his life she had during her lifetime.

can distinguish (a) the recognition of the *reality of the loss* from (b) its *normative evaluation*: I can come to term with the fact that someone I love has died, so that I am able to practically revisit my habits, expectations and commitments in light of this insight, *without revisiting the overall fundamental value the dead loved one has in my life*. “Moving on” and “letting go” of the dead are therefore no “natural” outcomes of grief, but a *choice* that expresses a certain attitude toward them, and for which the bereaved individual can be held responsible. In light of that, it can be said that, while love finds expression in grief, it may also *extend beyond* the long-term re-adjustment of the own life possibilities which may be taken to signalise a certain “closure” of the grief process.

To sum up this section, I tried to show how the love for the deceased can be taken as unifying function in grief, since the deceased loved one may act as background focus for different elements of the grief process. I made clear that this role of the beloved as background focus also shows up at the level of the passively experienced disruption of the griever's habitual world, given that in such a shattering the role of the dead as (past) condition of possibility of the own projects, commitments and expectations comes to the foreground. Finally, I pointed out that the continuation of love in grief is partly a matter of will, since grief has to be regarded as a responsive process in which the bereaved individual normally has the freedom to confirm or revisit the dead's past import to him which forcefully affects him at the level of his habitual experience.

2.4 Grief's expression and the social world

Up to this point, I focused on *the relation between bereaved individual and deceased loved one* in order to illustrate how an individual grief process can be regarded as expressing a still given loving attitude toward a lost person. However, as I already pointed out with regard to love³⁷, it would be misplaced to think about the individual grief reaction as if it were insulated from the surrounding social world. The claim that grief normally goes along with a withdrawal from society (McCracken 2005, p.146; Solomon 2004, p.96) is therefore not only vague, since these authors do not really specify what they mean with the term “society”, but also misleading in many cases. Referring to the level of the more “anonymous” social world, we can first point out that we draw on a certain shared social and cultural background in order to express, interpret and engage with our grief. Furthermore, the way in which the surrounding social world *reacts* to our individual grief reaction also strongly impacts on its development. As Ratcliffe (2016. p. 208) puts it:

[...] whether others share in one's grief, understand it, fail to understand it, listen, pretend to listen, offer what is perceived as genuine support, retain an emotional distance, or withdraw altogether [...] contributes to the way in which the social world appears [to the bereaved individual].

³⁷ See section 1.5.

In light of that, one could ask whether the alleged withdrawal from the social world which Solomon and McCracken underline has to be seen as a “natural” tendency spontaneously arising from the grief process itself, or rather as at least partial *result* of the social stigmatisation of certain behaviours. In this context, a good example could be the widespread social expectation that a griever should “move on” after a given amount of time, in orientation to alleged more compelling imperatives (e.g. Higgins 2013, p.165; Fuchs 2018, p.13), which can conflict with the fact that the griever still experiences a profound disruption of her habitual experience due to the loss, and therefore enhance her sense of estrangement from others.

Besides these general remarks about the relation between bereaved individual and surrounding social world, other more specific issues arise when we consider grief as love's expression. A first thing to consider is the fact that having been in a loving relationship with someone is not always sufficient for *being recognised as griever*. This can be understood in two different ways: there may be (1) *an inability to recognise a certain individual pattern as grief's expression*, and/or (b) a refusal to acknowledge *someone's right to grieve*.³⁸ With reference to (1), we may fail to understand that someone is grieving because the way she expresses it radically clashes with our expectations. In this context, Attig (2004a, p.200) draws attention to the possible failure to recognise that subjects like young children, mentally disabled or elderly people have the capacity to grieve, which I would trace back to the fact that the way these subjects grieve may substantially differ from our expectations and is therefore difficult to recognise as such.³⁹ This could even lead to (falsely) infer from this atypical expression that someone did not/does not love the dead at all. On this background, it can be difficult to draw a clear-cut distinction between *what we take to be rational in light of the import the beloved one has for a loving individual* and *what we take to be a legitimate expression of such a love*. Besides, it is possible to correctly identify someone's behaviour as expressing grief on the background of a certain loving relationship, without being willing to grant a certain individual the right to grieve. This can be the case when it comes to extra-marital or other non-acknowledged relationships which are taken to be not enough close for fostering love, or to losses which are not acknowledged as significant, such as the death of companion animals, prisoners or enemies (Attig 2004a, p.199).

Even if we recognise that someone is grieving, and acknowledge that he is entitled to do it because we *positively evaluate* the loving relationship he had with the deceased, we expect such an individual to express his loving attitude in accordance with given expressive standards. In other

³⁸ Normally, both possibilities are addressed as forms of so called “disenfranchised grief” (see Attig 2004, pp.199-200, referring to Doka 1989).

³⁹ I take this to be compatible with Kathleen Higgins' remark about the tendency to *pathologize* the fact that those who were close enough to the deceased do not express grief in the expected way (2013, p. 165).

words, we do not only care about which attitude a bereaved individual has or the consequences of it, but also about *how* it is carried out (see Blustein 2012, pp.267-268). For instance, the anthropologist Jason C. Throop (2010, p.778) remarks that, on the island of Yap (Federated States of Indonesia), it is considered inappropriate for men to weep during the funeral of cherished ones, while women are expected to perform ritual laments. In this context, it is not the case that it is considered inappropriate for men to be sad about a certain loss, but rather that they express their sadness by weeping, since they are expected to avoid tears by drawing on different strategies such as speaking with each other and talking jokes (2010, p.778). These normative expectations can be traced back to “Yapese ideals of masculinity and the associated virtues of emotional quietude and mental opacity that are entailed in them” (2010, p.778). Those who are recognised as having loved and valued the deceased are therefore expected to express their affective evaluation in a particular (gendered) way.

In order to assess in a more adequate way how the social world impacts on the way we grieve, it is also necessary to look more carefully at the way grief is shaped by our interaction with *significant others*. Indeed, it seems to me that at least intimate relationships with individuals we care about often profoundly shape the way we grieve.

First, we do not normally grieve *in solitude*, but rather interact with others who were intimate with the lost person in order, for example, to carry out her last wishes and organise the burial. A certain “grieving community” bound together by the reference to a common loss can arise, if those who care about the deceased regard each other as *entitled* – to different degrees – to take certain decisions, express their emotions in a certain way and act together in orientation to a common loss. Possible examples include family members or friends belonging to the same group who “grieve together” and develop different shared ways to confront a loss. As I already suggested, the fact that someone loved the deceased and is therefore strongly affected by the loss may not be sufficient for being regarded as member of a certain “grieving community”, since it may be the case that subjects who care about the deceased are not *recognised* by others as entitled to participate in it. In this context, it may be claimed that possible members of a certain “grieving community” have not only (a) to deeply care about the deceased one, but also (b) to care about each other – or at least to acknowledge the role of another in the deceased loved one's life –, in order to develop such a bond.

Referring back to the habitual character of loving interactions, one could further speculate about the possibility for different subjects of experiencing *shared disturbances* of the own habitual world and identities. Maybe, under certain conditions, it can be possible for a certain collective to experience the absence of a dead loved one in a shared way⁴⁰, in the sense that (a) shared

⁴⁰ See the classical – and controversial – description of an episode of “shared” grief provided by Max Scheler, who describes the reaction of a couple in front of the dead body of their child (2009, pp.12-13).

possibilities, commitments and projects lose their intelligibility because of the loss and (b) are collectively experienced as unintelligible at a given moment.

Consider the hypothetical case of a group of friends living in different cities, who have stayed in touch and normally meet once a year after Christmas in order to spend some time together. It is probably not the case that this meeting is regarded as a core interest by them, but it is cherished on the background of a more general loving attitude toward each other: since they deeply care about each other, they also care about the meeting as that occasion in which they are able to meet. If they are able to organise themselves, they usually borrow a certain house in small village on the mountains, in order to have some peace and take a break from their usual lives. They light the stove, go sledding, cook, talk, go for a walk, listen to music, play some board games and watch films, celebrate Silvester together and have fun. Such a distinctive set of possibilities and activities gets its meaning from the shared interaction between different individuals; by and large, to spend time together and enjoy the presence of the others is the overarching goal; *mutual caring* acts as general background for their interaction. If the meeting is always arranged in the same place, even the way the friends experience the surroundings may acquire a shared, habitual character, so that they may be experienced as imbued with possibilities primarily bound to these meetings. In this context, already the absence of someone may affect the intelligibility of these possibilities and activities for all – or at least some of – the others, so that it there may be a widespread feeling that it makes less or even no sense to play a certain game, see a certain film, go for a walk without that particular person or those particular people. For instance, someone may point out that it makes little sense to go for a walk without Luke, who is the one who knows the surroundings in detail and always has stories to tell about them. In light of that, the *death of a friend* may even more profoundly affect the character of these shared meetings: the remaining others might experience a partial or total collapse of previously given possibilities – or at least a significant transformation of their shared meaning – which may acquire a definitive character. The group may have a shared sense of the impossibility to enjoy the time spent together as before, certain activities may be put aside because they too painfully point to the lost person, even the meetings as such can be interrupted. In such a scenario, it is plausible to argue that the group may experience – under certain conditions – this collapse as *something shared*, and not only as something that impacts on the life of a single individual: it is not a loss for me, or for someone else, but a loss *for us*.

Of course, this hypothesis, which I will not further address, is still rather vague, since it should be spelled out in a much more carefully way *how* and *under which conditions* we may experience a loss as shared by referring to the growing literature on collective intentionality and shared emotions,

but it seems to be at least intuitively persuasive to distinguish such a scenario from the case in which different individuals who do not deeply care about and do not habitually interact with each other grieve *over the same loss*. A plausible example for that is provided by Tony Walter (2001, p.81): after the death of her husband, a widow is confronted with his mother from whom the deceased had been estranged for a long time. Their interaction reveals that they have radical different and even conflicting memories of the deceased, since the mother only remembers him as he was many years ago. In this case, it is plausible to claim that the two bereaved women would have difficulties in experiencing something like shared grief, since they did not interact with each other in the past, and did not share experiences with the deceased *at the same time*.

To sum up, the social world in which the bereaved individual is embedded seems to shape the way we grieve more profoundly than authors like Solomon and McCracken would admit. It is not only the case that we refer to and critically engage with intersubjective standards concerning how we should express our grief, but the manifold social relations in which we are entangled and our concrete interactions with others have enormous consequences when it comes to recognise that someone is grieving. Furthermore, the possibility of instances of “shared grief”, both on the level of shared disturbances of life possibilities and of actions carried out for the deceased in a collective way, should be also highlighted, in order to convey a more realistic and less individualistic account of grief.

3. Are there moral obligations to deceased loved ones?

In the previous chapter, I tried to defend the claim that grief as a process can be more adequately assessed as continuation of the love one has for a dead individual. In this context, I pointed to the endurance of a certain loving attitude toward the lost person as that function which may hold together different aspects of the grief process. In this context, the individual grief process configures itself as a *long-term responsive process* during which bereaved individuals are necessarily confronted with the fundamental affective import the beloved one had in their life – something that shows up at the level of some of their most fundamental habits, expectations and commitments –, and have to confirm or transform such import in light of the loss. Under normal circumstances, the bereaved individual has the freedom to respond to this disruption in a variety of ways, and can therefore be held responsible for what he carries out. I also underlined that there is a complex interaction between the griever and the surrounding social world in which she is embedded. A bereaved individual draws on and critically engages with intersubjective standards in order to express and evaluate her grief, and the different relations in which she is entangled strongly impact on the way her grief is perceived and acknowledged. Furthermore, a bereaved individual does not normally grieve in solitude, but normally belongs to a “grieving community” bounded together by a common loss that may come to experience shared disturbances of life possibilities related to the beloved dead one(s), and act for the deceased in a collective way.

Until this point, I deliberately avoided to discuss the *moral dimension* of grief as continuation of love, which I am going to concentrate upon in this chapter. It is important to address this dimension, since the majority of the bereaved individuals take themselves to grieve *for the deceased*, to do something *for their sake*. In this context, I am going to ask *whether we have specific moral obligations toward deceased loved ones, and how these could be justified*. By doing that, I draw on my earlier discussion about love's specific demands and general moral obligations (1.6) and my depiction of grief as love's expression (chapter 2), applying my forming results to a more specific field – obligations *to the dead* arising from loving relationships with them. I will also address issues concerning the *overall rationality* of grief, given that it has been often argued that it is irrational to care about what happens to us after our death and, conversely, about what happens to others after their death. Since this claim may undermine every attempt to discuss what we may do *for the sake of the dead* from a moral point of view, I am going to engage at length with this topic as well.

The first section (3.1) introduces two Epicurean arguments against our caring about what happens to us after our death and, conversely, about our caring about what happens to *others* after

their death. The following section (3.2) consists of a critical engagement with these claims. I firstly criticise the identification of goodness and badness with subjective states of pleasure and unpleasure by pointing out that (a) some of our desires and interests can only be fulfilled when we achieve something in the world, and that (b) we normally hold such “transcendent” desires and interests to be fundamental for our well-being. On this background, I also argue against the view that a dead subject cannot be benefited or wronged after his death by showing that the fulfilment of world-directed desires and interests does not primarily depend on their *being experienceable* by those who have them. In a second step, I point to moral issues arising from this fact on the background of my previous endorsement of individual free self-determination as a core moral principle, sketching out possible ways of dealing with them (3.3), and engage in a more detailed way with possible reasons which could justify our interest for what happens to us and others *post mortem* (3.4).

Section 3.5 engages at length with individual grief, asking about the *meaning* of its expressions. Even if I point out that a lot of actions performed in grief can be rationally accounted for and be justified in general moral terms as attempts to fulfil some world-directed core desires and interests of the deceased, I eventually argue that such a perspective does not capture the distinctive *expressive value* grief has for the bereaved individual. In light of that, I reconstruct grief's meaning as *love's expression* and as *a response to the special moral demands arising from the loving relationship with the dead*.

Section 3.6 deals anew with possible tensions between individual and social perspectives on grief. I address epistemic issues concerning the truthfulness and intersubjective assessment of our memories of deceased loved ones (3.6.1), possible conflicts arising between the griever's and the dead loved one's perspective (3.6.2), and tensions between special moral demands arising from different loving relationships (3.6.3). In the last section (3.6.4), I ask whether society should have an obligation to care about the individual self-fulfilment of its members, including those who are already dead, and which consequences this may have with regard to individual grief.

3.1 Epicurean challenges to our relation to the dead

It is generally accepted that we have general and particular moral obligations toward *the living*, even if we can argue about what exactly these obligations amount to. On the contrary, to suggest that we may have moral obligations *to the dead* seems to be more controversial nowadays, and it is common to hear people who vigorously deny this assumption. Do we really *owe* something to them? And is *rational* at all to care about them, or even to ask this question?

A first thing to consider is that, in contemporary Western societies, we do normally assume that

we cannot relate to the dead *in the same way as if they were alive*.⁴¹ For example, if we witnessed a widow going every day to the cemetery and letting some food on the grave of her husband, claiming that she does that because her husband needs to eat, we would regard her behaviour as extremely puzzling, because we think that her husband, *as dead*, does not need to eat anymore.⁴² In other words, we would regard the widow's behaviour as problematic because we generally think that death⁴³ (at least) extinguishes certain needs for the subject, such as eating or drinking (see Mulgan 1999, p.62). To be more precise, we consider death to be a *fundamental break*, which leads to a “state” that can be interpreted in two different ways: we normally regard the dead (1) *as not-existing* anymore, or (2) *as mere passive “subjects”* which can be affected by our actions, but cannot actively affect us (1999, p.54).⁴⁴ On such accounts, death amounts to an *annihilation* of individual subjectivity or to a *radical ontological transformation* of the subject. These two different – and conflicting – assumptions constitute the background on which we normally draw to assess the *rationality* and *adequatedness* of our possible relations with the dead.⁴⁵

When it comes to our relationships with the dead, there are not only ontological claims at stake, but also *moral questions* concerning our way of life. In our everyday life, we normally assign a moral importance to our relationships with (at least) deceased loved ones, and often think that there are some obligations to them. For instance, most of the people are willing to bury a dead individual in accordance with his last wishes, or to donate his organs only if he consented to that, and we generally hold ourselves to be justified to act in this way *because* we are respecting the dead's will. In addition to that, we may feel compelled, on the background of a loving relationship with someone, to preserve her memory in a certain way, refer to her perspective as important orientation for our life even after her death, and so forth. Is there a possibility to make sense of these claims and to justify them from a moral point of view?

It is often the case that certain moral claims about the dead are rejected on the ground of ontological considerations and further normative assumptions concerning the constituents of a good life. For example, Epicurus (1926, p.85) radically criticised our fear of death by pointing out that

⁴¹ Even if this assumption may seem self-evident, it is important to underline that there are different cultures and societies in which the dead are regarded as still *active subjects* which can affect and interact with the living (Mulgan 1999, p.55).

⁴² At this point, I want to underline that such an action may have a significance *on the background of a ritual setting* and further assumptions, so that it could be argued that it makes (some) sense for the widow to bring a cake to her husband's grave on All Souls' Day as a ritualised way to commemorate him.

⁴³ Here, I am referring to death as *event* in opposition to the dying process and the “state” of being dead (see Scarre 2007, p.5; Wittwer 2007, p.12).

⁴⁴ For the view that the dead are non-existing subjects, see Epicurus (1926, p.85); for the claim that the dead are mere passive “subjects” exposed to the actions of the living, see Sartre (2012, pp.934-936).

⁴⁵ In this context, religious beliefs in an afterlife as they are normally endorsed in contemporary Western societies do not necessarily contradict these core assumptions, because they normally go along with the recognition that our relation to the dead has been fundamentally transformed by their death (see Mulgan 1999, p.53).

what happens after our death cannot affect us in any way, since we – *as dead* – are not experiencing subjects anymore:

Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil consist in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation. [...] So death, the most terrifying of ills, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist, death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist. It does not then concern either the living or the dead, since for the former it is not, and the latter are no more.

If one looks closely at the text, it seems that Epicurus' argument entails two different assumptions: (1) what cannot be experienced as pleasant or unpleasant by a subject, is *neither good nor harmful* for him (hedonistic claim); (2) in order for something to be pleasant or unpleasant – and therefore good or harmful – for someone, there must be an *experiencing subject* in the first place (experiential claim) (Scarre 2007, p.87). On such an account, it is irrational to care about what allegedly “happens” to us after our death and, consequently, about what “happens” to others *post mortem*, since (a) there will be no *post mortem* subject who can undergo such an experience, and (b) what cannot be experienced by a subject as pleasant or unpleasant *after her death* is neither good nor bad for him. For these reasons, to claim that we do something *for the sake of the dead*, or that what we do affects them, would be entirely misleading, since those who are dead are no subjects anymore and cannot be affected by anything.

If Epicurus is right, every moral claim concerning the dead can be radically questioned by pointing out that it is *irrational* to think that we owe something to the dead, or that we may affect them in some way. It would probably still be possible to give other reasons for doing something that relates to the dead – it may be for instance useful to (fictively) believe to have moral obligations toward the deceased out of concern for general morality (Partridge 1981, pp.258-259), or it could be pointed out that we do something “for the dead” out of concern for the living who care about them (Wittwer 2007, pp.81-82) – but certain practices could not be rationally accounted for as something we primarily perform for the sake of the dead anymore.

There are different strategies to criticise these Epicurean claims, and I am not going to extensively engage with all of them.⁴⁶ In the following, I want to elaborate on arguments proposed by Robert Solomon and Joel Feinberg, in order to make it plausible that (a) what is good or harmful for a person is not necessarily identical with what is pleasant or unpleasant for him, and that (b) it is not necessary for a subject to undergo a certain experience, in order for us to recognise that he has been benefited or harmed. I take this critique of the two Epicurean assumptions to be a necessary step for showing that *it may be rational* to care about what happens to us after our dead

⁴⁶ For an overview, see Fischer 1993, pp.16-27.

and, conversely, about *what happens to others after their death*. On the other side, I will also underline that this can be problematic from a moral point of view, and that such a perspective, while it can be useful to point out that actions performed out of grief can be rationally accounted for, does not capture their primary meaning for the bereaved individual.

3.2 On the objective fulfilment of subjective desires and interests

In order to critically assess the Epicurean claims I reported above, it may be useful to look more carefully at the nature of different *kinds* of desires and interests a living person may have.⁴⁷

The first thing to underline is that, putting aside the possibility that the dead may survive their death as experiencing subjects, only *living subjects* can be expected to have desires and interests (Solomon 1976, p.190); in this context, one should investigate (a) whether the *fulfilment* of these desires and interests crucially depends on the existence of an experiencing subject, and (b) whether such fulfilment can be identified with their being experienced as pleasant by the subject having them.

It is surely plausible to claim that the fulfilment of some of our desires and interests primarily depends on the feelings and beliefs we actually have (Solomon 1976, p.191): for example, if I desire to be happy in the next two hours, I will satisfy this desire if I am able to feel happiness for the next two hours. Even if it is true that it may not entirely depend on me whether I will be happy in the next two hours⁴⁸, a merely subjective feeling of happiness in the next two hours will fulfil the felt desire. In this case, there is no difference between (a) *subjective feelings of satisfaction* and (b) *(objective) satisfaction as such* (Solomon 1976, p.191).

However, most of our desires and interests are more complex than that and crucially depend on the *real world* for their fulfilment, since they aim at particular objects or realisations in the world. Such complexity is already given in the case of multifaceted desires which do not only aim at a certain subjective feeling, but also at a particular object in the world, as in the case in which I do not only desire to quench my thirst, but more specifically desire to quench my thirst *by drinking beer*. In this context, the *objective satisfaction* of my desire crucially depends on whether drinking beer was only *a possible mean* to quench my thirst, or on whether drinking beer was the real end I wanted to achieve (1976, p.191). In the first case, the satisfaction of my desire can be identified with having the subjective feeling that my thirst has been quenched, regardless of what I actually drank in order to satisfy it; in the second case, I do not satisfy my specific desire to drink beer, if I drink milk

⁴⁷ I do not use the terms “desire” and “interest” interchangeably, since I consider the first to be *short-term* and the latter *long-term*. Nevertheless, I think that my account of different kinds of desires also similarly applies to different kinds of interests. “Core interests” are those interests which the subject (and others) takes to be *constitutive* for her or his own identity.

⁴⁸ Indeed, to feel happy in such a vague way may depend on conditions I cannot determine in their entirety.

instead of beer, even if it possible that my desire for beer may be *extinguished* by that action (1976, p.190). An intentional desire directed toward a real object needs an objective *realisation* in the world (e.g. an action performed by the subject who harbours the desire) in order to be fulfilled; furthermore, even if is not necessary that others act in order for it to be achieved, it also implicitly presupposes the potential presence of others as co-subjects, since an achievement in the world can only be considered as such, *if it is possible for others to experience it*.⁴⁹

The fulfilment of personal *interests*, which can be described as *long-term longing attitudes* that more profoundly shape our way of life, is also structured in a similar way: if I am interested in feeling overall happy, I will satisfy such interest, if I am able to feel overall happy; if I am committed to become a great writer, so that such achievement figures as a core interest of mine, the satisfaction of this core interest not only depends on my actions (e.g. write a book or different books, find a literary agent) and the actions of others (e.g. my parents motivate and support me, a friend of mine rescues my books from a fire), but also – *crucially* – on the *social acknowledgement* of my attempts. In this context, to merely believe to be a great writer, to have the subjective feeling to be one, or even to have written a certain amount of books, does not necessarily mean that one will be really able to become a great writer and/or to be socially acknowledged as such. For this reason, the objective realisation of this personal interest of mine primarily depends on the intersubjective recognition of its achievement, both in the sense that (a) *I have to realise something in the world that can be intersubjectively experienced and validated*, and that (b) *there must be an intersubjective recognition of the meaning I attached to my actions, in order for them to be regarded as such*. Therefore, the objective fulfilment of personal desires and interests directed toward the world necessarily goes along with (at least possible) intersubjective validation.

In this context, the fact that there may be a *tension* between the social perspective on my actions and my own self-interpretation of them is generally overlooked, because I do normally interpret my own actions *in accord with shared social standards* which I apply *even in the absence of other subjects*. However, with regard to desires and interests whose satisfaction depends on a realisation in the world, there may be a fundamental difference between (1) the *subjective feeling* that my desire or interest has been satisfied, and (2) *its objective fulfilment*: it may not only be the case that (a) I mistakenly think to have achieved something in the world, so that I feel satisfied without having really achieved my goal, or that (b) the meaning I attach to my worldly achievement is not socially recognised, but also that (c) I fail to *feel satisfied* even when I realise the goal I set myself (Feinberg 1993, pp.177-178). Especially (a) and (c) clearly show how the subjective feeling of

⁴⁹ See Solomon's distinction between the belief that one's desire has been satisfied and its objective satisfaction (1976, p.191).

fulfilment and objective fulfilment can diverge from each other, even if one lets the question of the social recognition of the performed actions aside: presupposing that the subject in the (a) scenario really aims to realise a certain goal, he would not feel satisfied anymore, if he found out that he did not really realise what he wanted to achieve; instead, he would probably feel regret for failing to realise the goal he set himself, and embarrassment or shame for having falsely believed to have realised his goal.⁵⁰ Furthermore, in the (c) scenario, he would not claim that he did not achieve a certain goal *because he fails to feel satisfied for such an achievement*, since it is the feeling of satisfaction that is bound to the objective realisation of a certain goal, and not the opposite.

To complicate matters, it is possible to further characterise our desires and interests by drawing a distinction between (a) *personal* and (b) *transcendent* desires and interests (Solomon 1976, p.193). Indeed, we do not only have interests and desires that address ourselves, but also objects in the world and other subjects *without reference to us*. In this context, the satisfaction of personal desires “depends upon my being alive”, while the fulfilment of transcendent desires is independent from my being alive (1976, p.193). To give two concrete examples: if I desire to become a better athlete, this (personal) desire can only be satisfied if I am still alive and able to improve my athletic condition, while my desire “that my sons should be wealthy and honorable, and my wish that my bust should stand in the public square” (1976, p.193) do not necessarily presuppose for their satisfaction that I should be alive and experience their fulfilment. Furthermore, I may have personal desires and interests which crucially depend on the presence of others for their fulfilment, as when I desire to do something with a particular person, or transcendent desires and interests that may not require my existence for being satisfied, but still refer to me as that particular subject for whom something is carried out, as in the case in which I have the strong interest to be fondly remembered by those who care about me. In this context, the *temporal dimension* must be also considered, since it is possible for a living subject to desire or be interested in something that can only take place *after his death*.

In every case, the fulfilment conditions of personal desires and interests which aim to realise something in the world make it clear that the individual is already strongly dependent on the social world in which he is embedded *during his lifetime*, since both the achievement of something in the world and the objective recognition of the meaning of what has been achieved do not stand at his free disposal, but are primarily dependent on others; a partial *alienation* of the still *living* subject from himself – in the sense that the individual may not always be able to realise what he aims at and

⁵⁰ If the subject felt satisfied even after acknowledging that he did not really achieve a goal he set himself, he would be justified to think that he deceived himself about the real nature of his desires, so that he mistakenly believed to aim at a certain goal, while in reality he was longing for something else.

to attach to such realisation a meaning which is also socially recognised as such – shows itself in the possible divergence between my individual assessment of what I have achieved in the world and the intersubjective interpretation of the same achievement. In this context, the individual's objectification which goes along with death only *radicalises* a tendency which is already constitutive for the living subject who strives to *realise* himself in the world.

How does all this relate, however, to the Epicurean assumptions I introduced in the previous section? The fact that the objective fulfilment of those desires or interests of mine which aim to realise something in the world crucially depends on others, and cannot be identified with a subjective feeling of satisfaction, shows at least that there may be a difference between what we hold to be good or bad for us and what we take to be pleasant or unpleasant for us. For this reason, it seems that the first Epicurean claim does not adequately capture the *factual* fulfilment conditions of some of our desires and interests. In light of that, we should draw a distinction between (a) *subjective satisfaction* and (b) *self-fulfilment*, since the latter may be bound to the objective achievement of something in the world.⁵¹ It is also the case that an individual normally takes at least some transcendent desires and interests of him to be *constitutive for his well-being*, and would therefore consider his existence to be more or less fulfilled in light of their realisation. In this context, a subject who strives to achieve something in the world would consider himself to be more or less self-fulfilled because of his achievement *as such*, and not because this achievement primarily contributes to his subjective feeling of pleasure. In such a case, possible subjective feelings of satisfaction would be only regarded as adequate – both by the individual himself and the surrounding society – if they stem out from the objective realisation of what he was aiming at. Of course, one could still criticise in a somehow Stoic move the fact that we do bound our happiness to objective realisations in the world whose fulfilment we do not fully control⁵², but it seems to be at least *instrumentally rational* to care about the fact that the fulfilment of some of our most important desires and interests does not primarily depend on us.

Having said that, one could question the Epicurean identification of goodness and badness with subjective states of pleasure or displeasure and be still committed to the second – and more fundamental – Epicurean assumption that there must be an experiencing subject in the first place, in order for us to be able to talk about benefits or harms for this subject. Indeed, it can be argued that a subject must be able *to experience* even the objective realisation of her world-directed desires and interests, in order for her to be *benefited* or *harmed* by such an event or action (Feinberg 1993,

⁵¹ See also Scarre's discussion of the Aristotelian distinction between *praxis* and *poiesis* (2007, p.119).

⁵² See section 3.4 for a more detailed discussion of this issue.

p.171; Fischer 1993, p.16).⁵³ In this context, a certain achievement in the world would only count as possible contribution to the individual well-being, if the involved subject were *actually aware* or *could be possibly aware* of such event or action (see Fischer 1993, p.16, p.20). Therefore, the claim is not only that (a) the subject must be alive in order to have desires or interests, but also that (b) she should be able *to witness the realisation* in the world of what she aims to achieve, in order for such satisfaction to be relevant for her self-fulfilment.

My discussion of Robert Solomon's distinction between *personal* and *transcendent* desires already suggested that the fulfilment of transcendent desires or interests is not dependent on their being experienceable by the subject who holds them, but I want to elaborate on what I previously said, in order to clarify the issue at stake. The assumption that we have to be (potentially) able to witness even the objective realisation of our transcendent desires and interests, in order for them to be relevant for our self-fulfilment, is misleading, since it overlooks that the objective fulfilment of such interests, which may primarily address other people and extend beyond the own lifetime, crucially depends on intersubjective recognition, in order to be regarded as such *even by the experiencing subject*; in this context, the personal awareness of such realisation is a possible *epiphenomenon* arising from this objective realisation, *without acting as a necessary condition for it*.⁵⁴ To give a concrete example: a researcher in the field of genetics may think to have had a fulfilled life if he was able to contribute in a substantial way to his scientific field. His actions would be considered as important contributions to scientific research, if they would fulfil different criteria pertinent to it and be therefore recognised as such (at least) by the scientific community. In such a case, the fact that he may *experience* such a recognition during his lifetime is not at all relevant for the objective satisfaction of that transcendent interest. Indeed, such an interest would be equally fulfilled even when the scientific community acknowledged the importance of the research carried out by the scientist *only after his death*. Generally speaking, the *meaningfulness* of certain achievements can only be judged with reference to intersubjective shared standards which are not primarily dependent on the individual.

We may also refer to three slightly different cases proposed by Joel Feinberg (1984, pp.181-182) to make this point clearer: in the first case (A), a woman devotes several years of her life to the fulfilment of a certain ambitious goal, establishing a vast network and different institutions. In light

⁵³ From now on, I hold that a subject is benefited when one of his desires or interests is fulfilled, and harmed, when one of them is thwarted. In this context, one has to distinguish “harms” and “benefits”, which can be still attributed to the deceased, from “suffering” or “pleasure”, which can only be attributed – at least with reference to our actual Western beliefs – to living subjects (see Pitcher 1984, p.187). *Relevant benefits and harms* for my discussion are those related to *the most important desires and interests* of a certain subject. In this context, one may claim that something is a *misfortune* for someone “when it is contrary to one or more of his most important desires and interests” (1984, p.184).

⁵⁴ At this point, I am elaborating on remarks provided by John Martin Fischer (1993, p.21).

of these efforts, we are justified in regarding such a goal as a core interest of her. One day before her death, all what she has achieved suddenly collapses. However, she dies contented, since her friends decide to hide the truth from her. The second case (B) is similar to (A), but what she has achieved only gradually collapses after her death and totally discredits the woman's life. In the last case (C), the collapse of what she established during her life is not due to unfortunate events, but to a group of malevolent conspirators who made solemn promises to her before her death and then betrayed her. The three cases clearly show that the fact that the woman is harmed, which goes along with a violation of one of her core (transcendent) interests, *namely that the enterprise in which she invested so much time would last and flourish in her absence*, has nothing to do with the woman's awareness of such violation, since it is (1) the *real happening* of something in the world and (2) the *meaning* attached to it by the intersubjective world in which the subject was embedded that are relevant for the fulfilment or the frustration of her core transcendent interest. In this context, the fact that – in (B) and (C) – the frustration of a certain interest finds place after her death, so that it is not possible at all for her to find out such event, is not constitutively different from the first case (A) in which her core desire is already harmed before her death and her friends do not tell her the truth in order to let her die contented.

Of course, reality is much more complex than philosophical thought experiments and hypothetical cases: it is indeed rare that a particular subject has a so clear hierarchy of values and interests that it is possible to identify a pre-eminent core value or interest to which all other personal values and interests are subordinated; normally, one has a constantly developing personal identity and different core values and interests that may even conflict with each other.⁵⁵ In this context, one may hold personal and transcendent interests *of different kinds* – as in the case in which I generally aim to be overall happy, to act as a doctor in a way that is attractive to me and to contribute to the fight against malaria – to be *all* constitutive for his own well-being. However, this complexity does not cancel the fact that these different kinds of interests have different fulfilment conditions.

To sum up, it seems that the second Epicurean assumption does not fit to the nature of transcendent desires and interests as described by Solomon: such interests and desires can indeed be realised even in the absence of the involved subject. On this background, if it is possible to claim that, if the individual self-fulfilment is bound to the realisation of certain core transcendent interests whose objective fulfilment does not depend on their being experienceable by the involved subject, it is also possible to claim that such a subject can be positively or negatively affected by events and actions carried out by others *after her death*.

⁵⁵ On possible conflicts between different personal values, see Helm (2009, p.48).

As I already pointed out, it is possible to *identify* and assess something as a realisation or frustration of someone's core transcendent interest – and therefore as positively or negatively affecting the individual's well-being – *without the presence of this person*. Still, the possibility of identifying and assessing something presupposes the presence of (at least) another subject able to perform such actions. In light of that, it can be argued that the fulfilment of a certain individual transcendent interest does not necessarily depend on the awareness or presence of the subject having it, but rather (1) *normally finds place independently of the awareness of the involved subject*, and (2) can be identified as such when (at least) a subject (a) experiences such realisation and (b) still has an *epistemic access to the shared social standards to which* the interest refers for its fulfilment. It is important to distinguish these different aspects, which address *ontological* (point 1) and *epistemological* (point 2) issues, since it is possible for a certain transcendent interest, which is defined with regard to certain shared social standards, to be realised, even when there is no subject that is able to witness its actual realisation. To be more precise, one should add that it is also possible for a certain subject to witness the realisation of a certain transcendent interest or desire, *without identifying it as such*.

A concrete example provided by Geoffrey Scarre (2006, pp.193-194; 2007, p.143) can be helpful for illustrating these differences. Suppose that an ancient man, Theseus, had the core transcendent desire “that his body should be undisturbed after it has been properly buried according to the customary rites of his society” (2006, p.193). Perhaps he held that a possible violation of his grave “would prevent his spirit finding rest” (2006, p.193), and would have found such disturbance in light of his religious beliefs and commitments highly disturbing (2006, p.194). Some centuries after his death, some archaeologists “exhume his skeleton and remove it, along with his grave goods, to a laboratory for detailed examination” (2006, p.193). By doing that, the archaeologists *objectively thwart* Theseus' transcendent desire, and also negatively affect his well-being, since he bound it, amongst other things, to the satisfaction of that desire. They also *experience* the objective frustration of Theseus' desire, since they are the subjects who carry it out actively. However, it is not granted that they may recognise the *meaning* Theseus would have attached to their action, since this possibility is only given if they still have epistemic access to the shared social standards to which Theseus referred for the formulation of his interests. To be more concrete, this possibility may be only given if there are, for instance, reliable historical sources that address Theseus' social world and may be interpreted by the archaeologists. If the archaeologists can recover the shared social and cultural standards to which Theseus referred in order to define his transcendent desire, it is at least possible for them to recognise that their action objectively thwarted that desire and negatively affected Theseus' well-being (2007, p.143). In this case, even when they may claim to have

overriding reasons to dig up the tomb, and/or be unwilling to regard Theseus' religious beliefs as rational or relevant, they would still be able to identify Theseus' transcendent desire and identify their action as its objective violation.⁵⁶

How should we, however, deal with the claim that one's life and well-being can be *retrospectively affected* by events and actions taking place *after* our death? Is it a dubious and metaphysically puzzling assumption? Indeed, this claim is sometimes interpreted as if it implied a kind of *backward causation* which would alter the *intrinsic nature* of past events, something that seems absurd to us (see Pitcher 1984, p.186; Scarre 2007, p.94). This rather uncharitable interpretation does not address the core issue at stake, since those who claim that the past can be retroactively affected by present events only point out that the *meaning* of the past can be retrospectively altered by posthumous events and actions (Blustein 2012, p.67; Scarre 2007, p.94). In this context, as Scarre (2007, p.94) persuasively illustrates, *retrospective signification* is a general phenomenon that normally shapes our lives:

Whether Peter is now studying successfully or unsuccessfully for his logic examination depends on whether the script he produces at the end of his course will satisfy his examiners. Similarly, Paul's years of training to run at the Olympic Games turn out to have been vain when he is paralysed in a road accident on his way to the stadium.

With regard to the dead, other issues at stake concern (a) the way the subject affected by certain events or actions may be characterised, and (b) the nature of the harm and benefit which is attributed to him with regard to the fulfilment or thwarting of his posterity-directed desires and interests. In this context, it is possible to argue that it is *the ante-mortem subject* who was *already* harmed or benefited by the event or action which finds place after his death, in the sense that such event or action “makes it true that during the time before the person's death, he was harmed – harmed in that the unfortunate event was going to happen” (Pitcher 1984, p.187). However, to attribute a certain harm or benefit to the time before the death does not fit to our intuition that the dead is (also) harmed *after his death* (Scarre 2007, p.97). In light of that, Scarre (2007, pp.105-110) proposes to consider *all posthumous changes* as *Cambridge changes*, also purely *relational* changes which do not alter the intrinsic properties of a subject or a state of affair, but “happen to things in consequence of real [intrinsic] changes in other things” (2007, p.105). In other words, Cambridge changes seem to supervene on real changes and can be attributed to subjects or things because of the relation they have to those things and objects which undergo real changes. To give a concrete

⁵⁶ At this point, I underline that the fact that Theseus' well-being has been negatively affected does not necessarily imply that it was *morally wrong* to exhume his skeleton. Indeed, there may be different interests and stakeholders one has to weigh against each other in order to assess the moral status of this action. However, this does not mean that (a) it is always possible to find a compromise between different interests and stakeholders, or that (b) archaeologists are always justified in believing to have overriding reasons for digging up a tomb.

example, a married woman becomes a widow because of the death of her husband; while her husband undergoes a real change – he dies –, she “only” undergoes a relational (Cambridge) change because of the relationship she had with the deceased (2007, p.106).

By referring to this category, it is possible to make sense of the intuition that a certain event or action affects a dead individual *post mortem*, since a Cambridge change does not require the subject to whom it is ascribed to undergo a real change, but only that such a subject stands in a certain relation to what really happens. Scarre (2007, p.109-110) also points out that it is not contradictory to claim at the same time that something is bad or good for someone *tout court* (timelessly) and in *a certain period*, since these two apparently contradictory assumptions refer to two different but compatible perspectives: while the first claim assesses the (*universally given*) *moral value* of a certain event or action, so that it points out that something is bad or good for a certain subject *from every possible perspective and at every possible time*, the second refers to the temporal duration during which a certain subject was affected by the harm or benefit at stake.

Referring to the condition of fulfilment of transcendent desires and interests I described above, one could reframe my discussion by stating that the fulfilment or thwarting of a certain transcendent desires or interests of a deceased prompts out a Cambridge change which can be ascribed to him. For instance, if I rescue the book to which a dead friend dedicated his entire life from the flames and publish it, so that I objectively fulfil his desire to have it published, my dead friend undergoes a Cambridge change, since he can be now regarded as the writer of that published book. In this context, it seems to me that relevant Cambridge changes in the context of an overall evaluation of the life of a deceased loved one are those which supervene on the fulfilment or the thwarting of transcendent core desires and interests of him.

3.3 Moral issues concerning transcendent desires and interests

Up to this point, I tried to make clear that (1) the fulfilment of transcendent desires and interests cannot be identified with subjective feelings of satisfaction which may accompany them, and that (2) it does not primarily depend on its being experienceable by the subject who holds such desires and interests. However, *the fact* that such a satisfaction unfolds in this way does not say anything about its *moral status*. Maybe it can be argued that this state of affair conflicts with general moral principles, and should therefore be criticised and modified in light of them.

With regard to the category of “person” and the core principle of free individual self-determination I introduced in section 1.6, it is clear that a state of affair which can profoundly impact on the individual well-being *independently of the contribution of the affected subject* may be morally problematic, because it can conflict with the self-assessment of the individual and

therefore violate the right of free self-determination we grant to persons as such. It is true that such a tension is not frequently given, since we usually evaluate and lead our lives in harmony with intersubjective standards we – at least implicitly – agree with. However, it can still show up in those cases in which the self-assessment of the individual and given intersubjective standards radically clash with each other.

In light of this possible tension, one could mistakenly infer from the fact that the fulfilment of transcendent desires and interests does not primarily depend on the presence and awareness of the subject holding them, that *we are justified in not taking into account their (freely chosen) preferences*. However, the fact that the *realisation* of certain individual desires and interests is not primarily dependent on the individual is not a reason for overriding her perspective altogether; on the contrary, if we remain faithful to the concept of “person”, we should undertake all what is possible to respect the choices every individual makes with regard to the own life.

More importantly, it can be argued that intersubjective standards on which we draw to factually assess the meaning and value of world happenings – to which the fulfilment of transcendent desires and interests belong – should be open to critical discussion and revision from the side of the involved individuals, in order for them to be compatible with the principle of individual free self-determination. In a Kantian tone, it could be argued that *only those general norms which are compatible with the respect of the personal status of every individual can be regarded as morally justified*.

3.4 Why should we care at all about what happens to us (and others) after our death?

Apart from the moral issues arising from the possible tension between subjective and intersubjective assessment of personal actions I touched upon above, one could ask *why what can happen to us and others after our death should matter to us at all*.⁵⁷ In this context, we may ask why a human being should care about transcendent desires and interests, and particularly those extending beyond the own existence, even if we are willing to recognise that it is not self-contradictory for us to have them, since their fulfilment does not depend on our existence or awareness in the first place. Instead of focusing on the achievement of something in the world, we should maybe concentrate ourselves on what we may achieve during our lifetime without being dependent from others. Indeed, to recognise that the satisfaction of our transcendent desires and interests *primarily depends on others* could lead us to prioritise those aspects of our life we can better control.

I cannot really address this issue in its entirety here, since this would require to make broader

⁵⁷ Admittedly, this is part of the more wide-ranging question about *why we should care about what happens to us and others in general*, but I will not address this more general concern in the following.

normative claims concerning the constituents of a good life that exceed what I am trying to show in this thesis. Nevertheless, one can at least draw attention to the fact that (most of) human beings as such seem to be very much concerned with *being remembered in their individuality* (Margalit 2002, pp.91-92) and with the achievement of a certain *objective meaningfulness*, in light of which *their actions* and, more generally, *their lives* can be embedded in shared social standards (Scarre 2007, pp.124-125). In this context, one does not typically aims at a recognition of the meaning of the own life carried out *from a cosmic point of view*, but, in a more modest way, tries to achieve a certain degree of recognition in the social and cultural world in which one lives, or at least in the small circle of those individuals who care about him (Scarre 2007, pp.125-127; Margalit 2002, pp.91-92).⁵⁸ In other words, a certain *interpersonal recognition of the meaningfulness of what one has achieved* seem to be a core interest of many different individuals. This does not provide strong reasons for the rightfulness of such a core interest, but is at least a widespread desire one should reckon with. To that, I want to add two remarks:

1. If we recognise that the objective fulfilment of our transcendent desires and interests primarily depends on others, as the meaning attached to our life, it seems to be at least *instrumentally rational* for the individual to care about the way in which her life and her deeds will be assessed by others. Crucially, the intersubjective deliberation over the meaning of our lives does not end with our death, but extends beyond it and even radicalises itself after it: while I may contribute, as living subject, to the intersubjective assessment of my life and deeds, as a dead individual I have no part in such a deliberation anymore.⁵⁹ Therefore, we should already take into account our posthumous “alienated” condition and act according to this insight. To give a concrete example, if we have the core desire of donating part of our holdings to a charitable institution after our death, we should undertake all what is in our power – knowing that the realisation of this posthumous desire will necessarily depend on others – in order to promote its fulfilment. This could entail, among other things, the necessity of informing (at least) the own relatives of this wish in such a way that its central importance is understood, of forewarning the bank in which my holdings are deposited that I have this intention, and so forth. Recognising that the intersubjective deliberation about the meaning of our live will continue after our death can also be important in the case in which we *fear* what may affect us in our absence: in this context, we may for instance choose to let our Facebook account be deleted altogether after our death, or at least appoint

⁵⁸ However, it must be pointed out that only the fewest people are able to achieve a widespread social recognition of their achievements, in the sense that they are collectively remembered *as individuals* because of what they have achieved (Margalit 2002, pp.92-93), and that there may be no compelling general moral reasons for retaining a collective individual memory of them.

⁵⁹ Confront Sartre's remarks about the dead as beings totally exposed to the living (2012, pp.933-934).

someone we trust as the keeper of our profile.⁶⁰

2. In orientation to what I said about *free self-determination*, it could be at least argued that the preferences of every individual should not be easily dismissed in the absence of overriding moral reasons. Therefore, the fact that someone cares about what may happen to him and others after his death, and therefore harbours certain transcendent desires and interests extending beyond his life, should be respected as such and only critically assessed in light of possible moral consequences. For instance, it would be usually wrong to thwart an individual's core transcendent desire of being buried in accordance with his wishes, since such an action would violate the right of self-determination we grant to persons as such. If a certain individual or a certain grieving community did not respect the dead's wishes in the absence of overriding factual or moral reasons⁶¹ – as in the case in which someone refuses to recognise the will of the deceased only because he does not share his religious convictions –, we were therefore justified in speaking of a *moral failure*.

3.5 Grief's expressivity and special demands

In the previous chapters, I pointed out that individual transcendent desires and interests do not depend on the existence or awareness of the subject having them for their fulfilment, so that it is not irrational for the subject to have them, showed how this fact could be assessed from a moral point of view on the background of my appeal to personhood as a core moral principle, and also proposed some reasons that could justify the fact that we care about what happens to us and others *post mortem*. In this section, I turn my attention to grief over the death of a loved one in order to discuss how it could be related to my previous analyses. Can grief be analysed along the lines of what I have said? Or does it somehow transcend this perspective?

On the background of my previous discussion, it is at least arguable that *some* dedicatory actions performed by bereaved loving individuals can be *rationaly* accounted for as attempts to fulfil core transcendent desires and interests of the deceased which are taken to be constitutive for their self-fulfilment. Consider the case in which a dying atheist expresses the wish of being cremated, and those who love him endeavour to fulfil his desire; or the case in which someone else clearly states that she will not donate her organs, and her family makes an effort to realise this last wish. The satisfaction of both wishes can be surely seen as a rational enterprise, since it is possible

⁶⁰ Such prudential actions can be still rightfully criticised, as in the case in which I delete private informations which could reveal that I murdered someone out of concern for my posthumous reputation and for what may happen to my family if such informations were disclosed.

⁶¹ Of course, it can be the case that the actual factual conditions (e.g. a war or an epidemic) do not permit to bury the dead in accordance with his wishes. In this context, one could still argue that the dead should be buried in accordance with his wishes as soon as the factual conditions permit it. There can be also overriding moral reasons for not fulfilling certain core transcendent desire concerning one's burial, as in the case in which a certain dictator decides to be buried in a certain way and the republican state which was established after his death does not accomplish his wish, since it holds that such realisation would honour a criminal regime and be disrespectful to the victims of the regime.

to fulfil them in the absence of the subjects who express them. Furthermore, it is possible to claim that the fulfilment of these wishes is morally justified – in the absence of overriding moral reasons –, since it unfolds in accordance with the right of individual free self-determination we grant to every person as such.

These dedicatory actions are not necessarily performed by a single individual, but can be also carried out *collectively*, as in the case in which the members of a certain “grieving community” act together in order to honour a dead loved one. For instance, a father may borrow a certain ruined old house in a cherished place by spending the savings of his life. Consequently, he spends a lot of time and energy in order to renovate it. His actions clearly show that he is deeply concerned with completing the renovation, and he has repeatedly expressed his wish to witness such accomplishment to his wife, sons and daughters. He also repeatedly expresses the wish to see his sons and daughters living in the borrowed house someday. This suggests that he understands his enterprise to be constitutive for his own self-fulfilment, and that his attempt is at least in part a *dedicatory one*, since he carries it out for his sons and daughters too. Unfortunately, he dies before he is able to complete the renovation. In such a scenario, it is clear that the personal wish of the dead to witness the day in which the renovation is finally accomplished cannot be fulfilled anymore. However, it is possible for his family to carry through the renovation *in his honour* as that achievement in the world to which his personal desire was bound. It is also possible for his sons and daughters to fulfil a core transcendent desire of the deceased, if they decide to move into the house after its renovation.

At first glance, this seems to fit to the *dedicatory* character of grief which is taken by both griever and non-involved others as a fundamental aspect of it: indeed, grief is commonly seen as something which is “due” to dead loved ones, as an overall attempt to honour them (Solomon 2004, p.92). For that reason, different aspects of the grief process acquire a particular significance as something done *for the dead loved one* (McCracken 2005, p.141-142; Solomon 2004, p.92). Even *the grief process as a whole* can be therefore seen as an overall dedication to the beloved (McCracken 2005, p.147; Solomon 2004, p.92). However, the fact that some grief expressions can be justified from a rational point of view, and can even be identified as something that I do for a particular person, does not adequately capture what is *distinctive* about these actions performed *out of grief over the death of a particular individual*, the *particular meaning* a dedicatory action has for the bereaved individual. This is shown by the fact that the actions I reported before could be justified in the same terms even if they were performed by individuals who were not involved in a loving relationship with the deceased. If a stranger were willing to let my corpse be cremated, or an

unknown medical commission realised my wish that my organs should be not donated, the fact that these subjects were not intimate with me would not affect the overall rationality and moral value of their acts. For this reason, it seems that the dedicatory character of grief for the bereaved individual is not exhausted by such a perspective.

Furthermore, there are different aspects of grief which cannot be adequately characterised as attempts to fulfil transcendent desires and interests of the deceased. Consider the case of a widower suffering from pangs of grief which affect him without his consent. First, the fact that the griever is more or less “passively” *affected* by grief pangs must be taken into account; in light of that, it is maybe not entirely adequate to regard this experience as an *action* for which the subject is entirely responsible. Second, it is difficult to see how the particular fact that the widower suffers from grief pangs can be accounted for in terms of transcendent desires and interests of the deceased: we do not surely think that his deceased wife had the core wish that those who care about her should suffer from pangs of grief. A even more radical example would be the attempt of a grieving mother to do something *in honour of her deceased infant*, which surely cannot be regarded as an attempt to fulfil of some of the infant's core transcendent desires and interest, since the baby does not have yet a full-developed identity and reflective stance toward the own desires and interests. Should we regard these cases as irrational, or meaningless?

I think that seeing grief as continuation of the love one has for the deceased loved one can disclose a perspective from which these happenings acquire an *expressive* meaning, and the dedicatory quality of the grief for the bereaved individual is more adequately depicted. In this context, it makes sense to refer back to grief's dynamical interplay between (1) the experienced disruption of one's habitual world due to the loss, and (2) possible more “active” responses to this disruption.⁶² On one hand, grief expresses in all those aspects that affect the bereaved individual without its explicit consent – grief pangs, involuntary memories, sensing the presence of the dead one in a sensory or non-sensory way, dreaming of him, and so forth – the perdurance of a past loving interaction in the present and the value the individual attached to it and to the loved one. Referring back to the widower's example, the fact that he suffers from pangs of grief is a manifest sign of his attachment to his dead wife; his sadness and his pain are justified on the background of his loving attitude toward her and of the loving habitual interaction with her, during which she acquired a central importance in his life. On the other hand, grievers who are not confronted with traumatic deaths, or do not suffer from certain pathologies, are also normally free to practically engage with and respond to the loss and the profound disruption of the habitual world in different ways (see Attig 2004b, p.343, p.346), and this “grief work” is also taken to express the particular

⁶² See section 2.3 for further details.

value the lost person and our relationship has for me. To give a mundane example, someone who experiences the presence of a loved one by coming in his study – an experience which arises independently of her will, related to the fact that the lost person habitually worked there and that the habitual configuration of the objects in the room acts as a strong reminder of his presence – can choose to stay away from the room in order to avoid such an experience and unpleasant memories, to come in frequently in order to be reminded of him, to radically transform it in order to “move on”, and so forth. All these different possibilities are ways of dealing with the loss and those aspects of grief which do not stand at our free disposal, *and also have an expressive meaning on the background of our interaction with and evaluation of the deceased one*. There is a fine line between “passivity” and “activity” here, since the ways in which we deal with the loss are not necessarily the result of a conscious deliberation, and they may become themselves habits with which we will be more passively confronted in the future, but we can at least draw a distinction between (1) aspects of grief which are experienced by the griever as *passively affecting* her, and (2) ways of dealing with the former which are experienced as being more “actively” carried out by the bereaved subject, and are performed in order to attribute a meaning to the loss and her grieving experience.

Focusing on the expressive value of these different aspects of grief permits to assess in a more adequate way the *dedicatory quality* it has for the bereaved individual: by grieving, both on the level of the disruption of the own habitual world and of the more active response to this disruption, a grieving individual holds true to the irreducible *significance* of a *particular person* and a *particular relationship for her*, which she tries to secure against the destructive force of death (Solomon 2004, p.92; Blustein 2012, pp.269-273). In this context, even what a grieving mother carries out in order to honour her dead infant is an attempt to secure and express the particular – and irreducible – significance of the lost existence for her. In grief, even those actions which can be rationally accounted for as attempts to fulfil transcendent desires and interests of the deceased acquire a different meaning as *love's expressions*. We are expected – and normally feel the obligation, if we really love someone – to care about those core desires and interests a dead loved one took to be fundamental for his own self-fulfilment. If the deceased loved one had core transcendent desires and interests, the attempts to fulfil them carried out by the bereaved individual configures itself as a dedication to this particular individual *as the one I love* and as a *confirmation of the value I attached to our relationship*, since I am willing to respond to a *special moral demand* arising from our loving relationship: it is a specific demand targeting me as loving one who cares about the beloved in his irreducible singularity. In this context, the personal desire to escape oblivion and the yearning for an afterlife, in the sense that one desires to be remembered and honoured by those who love him, can be also regarded as a *normative demand*, since this

expectation accounts to “an evaluation of the intensity and quality of our thick [intimate] relations now, while we are still around” (Margalit 2002, p.93). Avishai Margalit (2002, p.94) further remarks: “The horror of falling into utter oblivion is not necessary the fear of what will happen to us after death but of what it says about our relationships now. It is the fear of not amounting to much in our present relations with others.”

In relation my previous discussion of retrospective signification, the unwillingness of those who care about me to remember me after my death could even shed a negative light on the previous relationship and therefore *retrospectively affect its meaning*. If a widower did not appear at all sad at the funeral of his wife, did not experience a particular disruption of the own habitual world, were not at all concerned with the fulfilment of possible core transcendent desires and interests of the lost person, his behaviour – in the absence of extenuating circumstances – would not only give rise to the justified suspicion that he does not love her anymore, but also suggest that he did not really love her *already before her death*.

To sum up, it is arguable that grief has a distinctive expressive quality for the bereaved individual, since it displays the love one has for the lost person, both on the level of the lived disruption of the own habitual world and of the more active individual response to it. Because of that, even those dedicatory actions which can be rationally accounted for as attempts to fulfil transcendent desires and interests acquire a different meaning if they are performed out of grief: in fact, they amount to a response to the special moral demand of caring about the beloved one's core interests and desires which arises from the loving relationship, and confirm by being realised the particular value one attaches – and attached – to the lost person and the on-going relationship with her.

3.6 Epistemic and moral issues

In the following, I am going to touch upon some epistemic and moral issues that are related to grief over the death of loved ones and the realisation of special moral demands arising from it. Similarly to what I have done in section 1.5 and 2.3, the following analyses aim at investigating the way in which grief is embedded in a wider social sphere, where tensions between the individual griever's perspective, other grievers and non-involved others can show up.

3.6.1 On our memory of dead loved ones

It is already debatable *when a living individual* may acquire certain interests⁶³, or which interests should be regarded as central for his self-fulfilment.⁶⁴ It is not always the case that an

⁶³ For two similar discussions concerning this issue, see Feinberg (1993, p.186) and Pitcher (1984, p.187).

⁶⁴ Usually, the dead person formulated or at least clearly expressed her core interests, but it can be also the case that certain core interests of the deceased remain unnoticed or hidden.

individual has a clear hierarchy of interests and desires, and even if she has it, she may be *not aware* of its exact configuration. In addition to that, it is often the case that she revisits her core preferences during her lifetime. Nevertheless, it is still possible for those who care about her to interact with her, get to know her and assess in a more or less adequate way what really matters to her by referring to her living perspective. Death as such poses additional problems, since it undercuts the living interaction between individuals. A dead person cannot express herself anymore or revisit her past preferences; therefore, the reconstruction of her life and of her possible core transcendent desires and interests strongly depends on the *memory of the still living* and *material reminders* that may embody or recall the dead's preferences.

Certain objects can have a fundamental importance for assessing the overall trajectory of a past existence, since they may preserve or at least sustain certain possibilities *to have access to the lives of the deceased* which would otherwise vanish. Clothes, books, photos, texts, videos, Facebook profiles, websites act as traces of past lives and are therefore often cherished as treasured objects.⁶⁵ For instance, a testament or a diary can be of the greatest importance for identifying transcendent core desires and interests of the deceased; in this context, if someone destroys certain material traces of past existences, certain possibilities to relate to the dead may disappear. It is difficult to say how strongly our memories of the deceased depend on external objects and reminders, since individual differences seem to be considerable. To give a concrete example, there may be old people affected by a strong memory loss who are heavily dependent on certain reminders for sustaining their memory of deceased loved ones, while others may retain and sustain it without relying on external objects. In every case, the importance of reminders for sustaining the individual memory of the deceased suggests that we should carefully consider their role in the griever's life before we get rid of them.

At the same time, the dependence of our memory on material objects can be problematic, since it may contribute to that objectification of the deceased which a loving relationship tries to avoid. C. S. Lewis (1996, pp.20-21) already opposed the griever's tendency to reduce the dead loved one to certain pleasant memories or reminders, since such an action would not do justice to the personal and irreducible character of the other's existence. In this context, he (1996, p.21, p.55) criticised rituals of remembrance like visiting the grave, which he regarded as a kind of “mummification” of the dead which would negate the genuine character of the lost person. I think that Lewis' account is too radical, since relying on rituals and reminders for our relation to the deceased *does not necessarily go along* with a questionable reduction of them to objects at our disposal (Blustein

⁶⁵ On the status of objects related to cherished deceased ones, see e.g. Gibson 2010. Of course, I am not suggesting that *all* treasured objects are somehow related to dead loved ones.

2012, pp.290-291), but this does not mean that the risk of overseeing the difference between the lost person and her material traces is not given. For instance, the development of certain contemporary technologies like the so called Interactive Personality Constructs (IPC) bears the risk of levelling off the radical ontological transformation a living existence undergoes because of death, since the virtual avatar carefully modelled on the traits of dead may falsely evoke the impression of retaining a *dialogical living relationship* with them *post mortem* (Buben 2015, p.19). In such a scenario, we run indeed the risk of *replacing* the dead through technology because we may become insensitive to the difference between the interaction with a living person and that with a virtual avatar of her (Buben 2015, pp.20-21).

Furthermore, our memories of the deceased do not only depend on objects, but are also critically assessed *by interacting with others who were intimate with the deceased*. In this context, certain problematic aspects of too individualistic accounts of the recollection and assessment of the life of the deceased provided by McCracken and Solomon should be criticised. Both authors point out that grievors have the strong tendency to withdraw from the surrounding society and to engage in sustained individual reflection (McCracken 2005, p.145; Solomon 2004, p.96). They also claim that this individual reflection normally aims to recover salient features of the dead one's life *considered as a whole* (McCracken 2005, pp.144-145; Solomon 2004, p.91)⁶⁶; in this context, it can be argued that such reflection may act as necessary presupposition in order to find out core transcendent desires and interests of the deceased which have yet to be fulfilled (Solomon 2004, pp.91-92).

In accordance with my critical remarks about a too individualistic account of the individual grief process⁶⁷, I want to underline that the cited reflection upon a lost life as a whole may also be carried out *in an intersubjective way* by different individuals who grieve over the same loss and regard each other as entitled to participate in such deliberation. Even if it is conceivable that grieving individuals engage in a prolonged solitary reflection about the life of loved dead ones, they do normally *rely on specific others* for assessing their claims. This means that we as grievors are willing to let (at least) those who had a certain *intimacy* with the deceased have an import to our decisions concerning their desires and wishes. This intersubjective validation has both an *epistemic* and a *moral* dimension. We rely on certain individuals to assess the epistemic value of our memories, since the *truthfulness* of certain individual claims and memories can only be assessed by referring to others who shared a certain experience with me or had a significant relationship with the deceased.⁶⁸ Furthermore, we normally assign a certain *specific normative value* to the opinion of

⁶⁶ Against McCracken, Solomon (2004, p.91) remarks that this holistic reflection does not address the whole life of the deceased, but rather the whole life of the deceased *as it was known to me*.

⁶⁷ See section 2.4.

⁶⁸ At this point, I am elaborating on Blustein's remarks about the truthfulness and accuracy of individual memory (2012,

those who were intimate with the deceased (and are also intimate with us), since we grant them the right to impact on the *deliberation* and *realisation* of decisions regarding the dead person. It seems to me that we rely on those who were intimate with the deceased in such a way because we take them to have a *kind of knowledge of the deceased* others do not share: we recognise that they were *acquainted* with them, and that, for this reason, their memories have a distinctive vivid sensory quality and directedness which radically distinguish them from propositional memory about someone or something we can also acquire without directly interacting with a person or an object (Blustein 2012, p.248). In light of that, we are willing to rely on these specific others for assessing the *specific individual character* of a person, which could be only grasped by interacting with her as she was alive (see 2012, p.248).

Having said that, it should be noticed that there can be a strong tension between the epistemic and the normative dimension of this intersubjective deliberation, since we are not always willing to let others who shared certain experiences and had an intimate relationship with deceased loved ones weigh out the truthfulness of our memories and/or the adequacy of our decisions concerning them; in this context, it seems that the nature of the *relationship between grievers* acquires a central importance. For instance, in the case of *disenfranchised relations*, certain individuals who were intimate with the deceased, and could therefore have the right of assessing the truthfulness and adequateness of claims concerning him, may be deliberately excluded from every decision process. In this context, the fact that a certain grieving community agrees on possible decisions concerning the loved dead one does not automatically guarantee that the best decisions have been taken, since such an agreement may be based on the *previous exclusion* of relevant subjects from the deliberation.

It must be also pointed out that the priority given to those who were acquainted with the deceased in this special context cannot be regarded as a *monopoly* over the objective assessment of the entire life of the deceased, since it is not guaranteed that the life of the deceased as it was known to a certain loving person or loving community is always truthful and reflects what can be said about it from a more detached point of view. In other words: a certain primacy concerning the living experience shared with the loved dead one should not be confused with a *general epistemic* and *moral* monopoly over his life. In fact, if a certain “grieving community” regards itself as the only instance which can deliberate upon the life of a certain deceased person, it runs the risk of falling prey to an *epistemic bias* toward those who were intimate with the deceased which could lead to an unjustified *exclusion* of a certain life from *public deliberation*.

p.68).

In opposition to such attitude, to continue to treat someone as a person after his death should include the will to hold him *responsible* for what he did during his life by referring to intersubjective epistemic and moral standards (Scarre 2007, pp.138-139). In this context, the ancient principle of “de mortuis nihil nisi bonum” – “say nothing but good things about the dead” – cannot be regarded as genuine moral *universal* principle (2007, pp.137-139): one should at least allow well-founded accusations concerning dead loved ones to be formulated, even if they radically diverge from the picture of them a certain grieving community possesses, since the *general moral status* of an individual life cannot be only weighed out by a small private community. To sum up, even when it is arguable that there are good reasons for giving a certain epistemic and normative priority to those who were intimate with the deceased when it comes to the assessment of his life in its singularity, this priority cannot be regarded as an exclusive right to evaluate such a life, both from an epistemic and a (general) moral perspective.

A final remark: the fact that I focused on conflicts arising between griever who are part of a certain “grieving community” and certain “external” individuals that are excluded from possible decisions concerning the deceased should not suggest that there cannot be internal conflicts between members of the same “grieving community”. For instance, there can be radically diverging memories of the deceased, which make it difficult to reach an agreement concerning the salient features of her life, or conflicts concerning the way the deceased should be honoured (e.g. Walter 1999, p.81). Both in the case of “internal” disagreements between members of the same grieving community and in that of more general disagreement between a certain grieving community and well-founded claims arising from the surrounding social world, it is arguable that there may be a need for *mediating institutions* in which possible conflicts can be settled.

3.6.2 “Internal” moral constraints concerning loving relationships with the dead

Even if it is possible to exclude that specific demands arising from a loving relationship violate basic moral norms, it can still be asked whether those involved in a certain relation *should be automatically expected* to carry them. For example, it is possible to claim that there is an *unconditional* moral obligation to remember dead loved ones grounded in the loving relationship we had with them, which should be carried out even if the surviving person does not agree to such realisation (Blustein 2012, pp.276-277). In light of the dialogical account of love I proposed, such a thesis seems to be problematic, since to hold certain specific moral obligations grounded in a certain relationship to be unconditional could violate the right of individual free self-determination which I take to be fundamental for every (morally justified) close personal relation. Therefore, I think that to pretend from a certain person to act in a certain way in order to fulfil a certain alleged specific

obligation without having regards for her individual preferences would be at least controversial. On the other side, however, a loving person is also willing to let core desires and interests of the beloved have a similar import to her as the own core desires and interests. Therefore, it seems that there may be a potential radical tension between self-directed core desires and interests and other-directed concerns. In order to elaborate further on this point in the context of grief, it may be useful to make some distinctions with regard to different kinds of transcendent desires.

If core transcendent desires or interests are primarily *self-directed*, also mainly concern the deceased as such without radically impacting on the life of others, one should fulfil it in accordance with the dead's wishes: assuming the individual right of self-determination as face value, there may be no overriding reasons which speak against the fulfilment of such desires. A good example for that is the core transcendent desire of be buried in a certain way in accordance with the own convictions, which, as it has *the own dead body* as object, we can expect to be fulfilled by (at least) those who care about us, unless there are overriding – factual or moral – reasons which speak against it. As I stated before, the fulfilment of this desire assumes a different meaning for the person who is acting out of grief, since her actions unfold on the background of the loving relationship with the lost person. In this context, if a certain individual whom we take to love the dead does not respect his wishes in the absence of overriding factual or moral reasons, we are not only justified in speaking of a general moral failure – as disrespect for the personal status of the individual – but also of a *specific failure* to display this professed love.

However, the situation is far more complex in the case that some of the core transcendent desires of the deceased have *the life of others as object* and may therefore interfere with *their* individual self-determination. For instance, suppose that a highly respected doctor has the core transcendent desire that his son should study medicine, in order to be able to acquire his medical practice. After his death, his son instead decides to become a musician, since he finds out, after a careful reflection, that this choice reflects what he really wants to pursue in his life. The son's choice *objectively thwarts* a core transcendent desire of his deceased father and therefore *negatively affects* his well-being, but we would not consider his behaviour to be morally wrong in light of *the right of individual free self-determination*. If *deep* conflicts between other-directed core interests of the deceased and the core interests of the addressed others arise, we should normally give priority to the right of the targeted person to freely determine her existence, as we acknowledge the right of the deceased to freely determine those aspects of his existence which do not deeply impact on the life of others. We can also point out that, when we choose to not fulfil a certain core transcendent desire of the deceased that targets our existence and contradicts our core interests and values, a caring

attitude toward the lost person can still manifest itself in other ways: for instance, we may reflect a long time upon this conflict, before we take our decision (see Helm 2009, p.50). The love we feel for this person in spite of this radical disagreement can also manifest itself as *regret*, so that we feel regretful because we are painfully aware of the impossibility to realise a core desire or interest of someone we care about.

To sum up, the fulfilment of core transcendent desires and interests of the deceased that have other lives as target cannot be seen as unconditional on the background of a dialogical account of love, since such desires and interests are only legitimated if they do not clash with the individual right of self-determination. In this context, the *fairness* of our posterity-directed desires could be tested by applying Janna Thompson's "reciprocity test": "We can regard our posterity-directed desires as morally legitimate demand on future people [...] if and only if we would be prepared to accept similar obligations in respect to the desires, deeds, projects and goals of our predecessors" (1999, p.503). Even if it is not granted that such a test would eliminate all possible conflicts between those who have certain posterity-directed desires and those who are addressed by them, it could at least provide some orientation for critically reflecting upon the legitimacy of certain moral demands we make.

3.6.3 Conflicts between different loving relationships

In light of the fact that individuals are normally involved in different close personal relationships during their lives, it is possible for specific moral demands arising from those different relationships to *conflict* with each other, even when basic moral norms are not at all violated. For instance, it may be the case that what we think to owe to the dead stands in contrast with what we should do for the *living* individuals we care about. My attempts to fulfil a core transcendent desire of a dead loved one or, more generally, my grieving as such could lead me to neglect those particular responsibilities I should fulfil as father, husband, brother or friend of someone else. In addition to that, one can figure out cases in which demands arising from a certain loving relationship with a dead loved one contradict other demands arising from a similar relationship with another dead individual whom we care about. Expanding on a previous example of mine⁶⁹, one could figure out the conflict between my dead friend's core desire that I should become a musician and my dead father's core desire that I should instead study medicine and become a doctor.

It is very difficult to say how we should deal with such conflicts in *general terms*, apart from stating that a fair evaluation of conflicting demands should be willing to take different perspectives into accounts. In orientation to the distinction between primarily self-directed and other-directed

⁶⁹ See the previous section.

desires and interests I introduced in the previous chapter, it is arguable that the basic right of free individual self-determination should act as moral constrain for every particular moral demand; in this context, the perspective of the *addressed* subject(s) should not be overridden by other points of view. Referring to the conflicts between the friend's and the father's core desires I mentioned above, one should therefore recognise that it is the perspective of the addressed living individual which has the priority: the friend and son, even when he is willing to consider carefully both demands as an individual that cares about both dead ones, has the right to freely determine the own way of life in accordance with the own core desires and interests. In this context, he is even morally justified in taking a decision which may thwart *both* desires.

3.6.4 Grief's demands and society

In the previous chapter, I mainly focused on the epistemic and moral conflicts arising at the level of intimate relations. However, grief's expressions are *happenings in the world* which may also impact on the life of those who were not intimate with the dead and are, as such, subjected to a more general intersubjective deliberation. It is therefore important to look at the relation between grief's demands and the surrounding society.

It can be claimed that (a) *individual free self-determination* and certain *basic human rights* underlie as *core values* our Western public social institutions, and that (b) these institutions – at least ideally – aim to *prevent* those events and actions that could violate these principles. This scenario, however, does not provide a sufficient justification for claiming that a state should *actively carry out* what is required for the *self-fulfilment* of its members, which normally goes way beyond the preservation of basic human rights. I can expect a state to actively prevent or sanction violations of the individual freedom and basic human rights on its territory, and to sustain their realisation, but I cannot expect it to actively contribute to the individual self-fulfilment of every single citizen. On such a background, there can be for instance strong moral reasons for a certain society – *from a consequentialist perspective* –, to remember and honour victims of *institutional wrongdoings* both as groups under a generic description and/or as particular individuals, since such actions may contribute to the prevention of future wrongdoing by *punishing* the perpetrators of past injustices and/or by making *genuine forgiveness* possible (Blustein 2012, pp.262-264). In opposition to that, remembering an individual who was not harmed in such a way, and caring about his self-fulfilment seem to be a matter of those who care about him, since such actions can be primarily justified as special demands arising from their loving interaction with him.

In light of that, I think that it arguable that a society to which a certain dead one belonged should be expected to only *indirectly* sustain – out of respect for the individual self-determination of

both the deceased one and the caring living – the overall expression of grief and the fulfilment of the deceased one's core transcendent desires and interests. In other words, a certain society can be expected to promote the possibility to freely pursue the own self-fulfilment – in the absence of overriding moral reasons – both to its deceased members and those who grieve over their death, since this seems to be a legitimate request in light of the core principle of individual free self-determination, without actively carrying it out. This can entail, among other things, the duty to create an adequate institutional setting for such pursuits.

In addition to that, it may be still ground for some *positive social obligations* toward the deceased from the side of the state which must be carried out *in the absence of subjects who care about him*: for example, if there are no relatives or friends who can take care of a deceased person, or if they lack the means to carry out the dead's wishes, the society to which she belonged can be expected to take responsibility for some minimal honouring actions like a burial in accordance with the dead's wishes⁷⁰, since a proper burial can be regarded as a *basic* individual right which must be respected *independently of the kind of relation to the deceased we have*.⁷¹ To give a concrete example, the third Geneva Convention (1949, art. 120) states that there is a general duty to respect and bury dead enemies in accord with their religious beliefs:

The detaining authorities shall ensure that prisoners of war who have died in captivity are honourably buried, if possible according to the rites of the religion to which they belonged, and that their graves are respected, suitably maintained and marked so as to be found at any time. Wherever possible, deceased prisoners of war who depended on the same Power shall be interred in the same place.

Deceased prisoners of war shall be buried in individual graves unless unavoidable circumstances require the use of collective graves. Bodies may be cremated only for imperative reasons of hygiene, on account of the religion of the deceased or in accordance with his express wish to this effect. In case of cremation, the fact shall be stated and the reasons given in the death certificate of the deceased.⁷²

In accordance with I have said before, however, the perspective from which these general moral duties can be performed strongly differs from a possible appraisal of their meaning from the side of a bereaved individual.

⁷⁰ For already available dispositions along these lines, see http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200032/deaths_funerals_and_cemeteries/5582/funeral_advice/5 (funeral advice provided by the Manchester City Council, accessed 12.05.2018), and <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/death-and-wills/what-to-do-after-a-death/> (accessed 12.05.2018).

⁷¹ Such a basic right can be morally justified by providing an account of the *special status* the own body has for a person. See Esser (2008, especially pp.129-130) for an interesting attempt to address this special status in order to provide a moral justification for respecting the dead body.

⁷² See also https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_cha_chapter35_rule115 (accessed 12.05.2018) for an overview over the obligations to dead remains stated by the different Geneva Conventions.

4. On the existential significance of grief

In the previous chapter, I addressed issues concerning the rationality and moral permissibility of grief. In a first step, I tried to show how our caring about the dead can be justified both from a rational and general moral point of view: indeed, I made clear that there are core desires and interests of the dead which do not depend for their fulfilment on their being experienced by the subjects who have them, and that such fulfilment can be justified in general moral terms by referring to the principle of free self-determination we grant every person as such. Beside that, I pointed out that grief's expressions, which cannot be always regarded as attempt to fulfil core desires and interests of a dead loved one, have a distinctive expressive character for the griever as confirmation or transformation of the particular value the dead one and the relationship with her had for him. In a further step, I also investigated some moral and epistemic issues connected to the interaction between griever and social world.

In this final chapter, I would like to address in more detail the *existential significance* of grief: I am particularly interested in analysing the distinctive character of our *second-person experience of the death of a loved one* and the possible impact of such an experience on the griever's way of life. In this context, I will elaborate on what I previously said about the *existential depth* the loving relationship with another person acquires in one's life⁷³ in order to spell out in more detail why grief over the death of a loved one can be a fundamental experience for those who undergo it. As it is commonly known, *death* and *mortality* were always crucial themes in the history of philosophy, and a lot of different thinkers underlined the necessity of a profound reflection upon these themes for the sake of leading a better life.⁷⁴ Generally speaking, however, the reflection upon the nature and significance of the *own* death was prioritised over a critical engagement with our *second-person experience of someone else's death* (Baggini 2013; Wittwer 2008, p.98). In opposition to this tendency, as Georg Scherer rightly observes (1979, pp.69-70), it is arguable that there are different possibilities to become aware of the own mortality and to confront death in an “authentic” way, without addressing it as a general event which does not really impact on me as a particular individual. Considering this plurality, it may be misguided to give one of these possibilities a priority over others (1979, p.69). On such a background, an investigation of the existential significance of grief seems to be well-justified.

In accordance with that, I first investigate whether grief over the death of a loved one can be seen as an experience leading to a more “authentic” understanding of the meaning of death (4.1).

⁷³ See section 1.2 and 1.3.

⁷⁴ See Scarre (2007), Scherer (1979) and Wittwer (2009) for good overviews of the philosophical discussion about death.

Critically engaging with Paul Ludwig Landsberg's phenomenological analysis of our second-person experience of death, I will claim that grief over the death of a loved one goes along with a distinctive experience of the collapse of the dead one's world, and discuss possible individual reactions to this experience (4.2). Furthermore, I will also ask whether grief can lead to a moral and political engagement that transcends what is owed to dead loved ones (4.3).

4.1 Grief's knowledge and love's existential depth

As I already underlined, grief over the death of a loved one goes along with a profound disruption of one's habitual world and the need to re-conceive it and one's self. Indeed, the *practical acknowledgement* of the loss of a loved one – in opposition to the mere theoretical belief that someone has died – is often a long and painful process that implies the profound transformation of one's habitual world and way of life in light of an absence which still permeates the own existence. In light of that, it could be asked whether death and mortality acquire *a new and distinctive significance* for a bereaved individual.

Paul Ludwig Landsberg, a student of Max Scheler who analysed the phenomenology of our second-person experience of death at length in his text “The Experience of Death”⁷⁵, claimed in this context that our second-person experience of the death of a loved one provides us with a *distinctive insight into the necessity of death*: in his eyes, indeed, one gradually recognises, by being confronted with the death and the absence of a loved one, the dead loved one as someone *irreducible to general categories*: it is an irreducible particular person whom I miss, someone who cannot be replaced in any way. The grieving individual also experiences such death as profoundly affecting *the own life* because of the fundamental importance the other person had in our loving relationship; in a certain sense that we still have to specify, the death of the other is also *my (partial) death*. In light of that, grief may convey a new recognition of the fact that *everyone has to die* which must be distinguished from the general knowledge that “one must die”, something that everyone claims to know even without having grieved over the loss of someone. In the following, I try to reconstruct Landsberg's claims in some details, in order to critically engage with them in a second step.

First, grasping the necessity of death of everyone as a singular, irreducible being must be distinguished from the kind of insight into the nature of death we may gain *by witnessing the death of someone* (Landsberg 1968, 200). If we experience the dying process and then the moment in which a living body suddenly becomes a corpse, we may become aware of the *coincidence* between

⁷⁵ Landsberg 1968.

the *organic cessation of life* and the disappearance of *a person* (1968, p.200).⁷⁶ At the moment of this sudden transition, we experience in the clearest way the *extinction* of a particular life, so that we become phenomenologically acquainted with what it means for an individual to die; a living body with which we could empathise and sympathise is not given anymore (see 1968, p.199). Landsberg (1968, p.199) characterises the moment in which a living individual becomes a dead body in this way:

It is precisely at this moment, when the living being abandons us, that we shall experience the mysterious absence of the person as spirit. For a moment we have a feeling of relief. The suffering of our bodily sympathy is over – but immediately we are carried away into the strange world of death fulfilled. The vital pity we felt is thus suspended in a void and suddenly gives way to the profound awareness that this being, in all the uniqueness of a person, is no longer there, and can no more return into this body. He will never speak to us again, he will never live again in community with us as he used to do. Never again.

In this context, we are confronted with a *present absence* – the corpse as a *trace* of a past existence – that disturbs us in its ambiguity and clearly shows the irrevocable character of death (1968, p.200). This experience conveys a practical knowledge which is already different from the mere theoretical knowledge that “everyone must die”, since it is fulfilled with a particular experienced content⁷⁷, or from the intuitive insight into the fact that my individual existence points to a “final limit of individual evolution” (natural death) which spontaneously arises by growing old (1968, p.195).⁷⁸ However, such witnessing alone does not still account to an insight into the *necessity* of death (1968, p.200).

In light of what I have said, grasping the necessity of death in Landberg's sense cannot be identified with the abstract knowledge that everyone has to die, or with the naturally arising intuition that there is a final limit of individual evolution, or with the witnessing of the death of someone which shows in all clarity the coincidence between organic cessation of life and the disappearance of a person; rather, it is a peculiar insight which permits me to understand “that I am face to face, at every moment of my life, now and always, with the immediate possibility of death” (1968, p.196). In his eyes, this insight can only be provided if the person who witnesses the death of someone else “constituted a “we” with the dying man” (1968, p.201), had a *personal relationship* with him. Actually, it is the previous personal relationship with the dead which permits me to grasp the *irreducible singularity of the other* and the meaning of his death as annihilation of that singularity in such a way that this irreducible existence has an import to me, is able to profoundly

⁷⁶ See Heidegger (2006, p.238) for a similar description of the witnessing of the death of another person.

⁷⁷ I think that such mere theoretical belief that everyone has to die has strong similarities with the “inauthentic” way to cope with death described by Heidegger with reference to “das Man” (2006, §51).

⁷⁸ At this point, Landsberg is referring to Max Scheler.

affect my existence. It is not clear whether this personal relationship should be necessarily identified with a full-fledged loving relationship, since Landsberg claims that “an act of personal love”, also a single situation in which someone was able to grasp the other in his individuality, suffices to grasp the nature of the other's death as annihilation of that particular person (1968, p.202).⁷⁹ However, he recognises that the *intensity* of our experience of death of the other may vary depending on the nature of our relationship with the dead (1968, p.203). He also adds that it is not necessary to have witnessed the death of a loved one “in order to distinguish in perfect clarity the essence of this experience” (1968, p.203), as the reaction of relatives of soldiers killed in war who did not witness their death shows: “They felt it when they received the fatal letter confronting them, as with the accomplished fact, with the spiritual presence of the death of a loved one” (1968, p.203).

To sum up, Landsberg claims that (1) we may grasp the coincidence between the organic cessation of a particular life and the disappearance of a person by witnessing her dying process until the moment of death or by being confronted with her corpse on the background of a previous acquaintance with the now dead person. In this context, (2) a singular act of personal love in which I gained a real insight into the irreducible singularity of another person may permit me to grasp the nature of death as *annihilation of that particular person* – and not as general event which affects everyone in the same way. However, (3) witnessing the death of another one is not a necessary condition for grasping his individuality and the peculiar nature of his death, since it is both possible (a) to grasp the irreducible meaning of another one's death without directly experiencing it, and (b) to witness another one's death without really grasping his individuality; what really counts is the *previous nature* of our interpersonal relationship.⁸⁰ Because of the personal relationship I had with the deceased, in which I and the lost person formed a – more or less strong – shared unity, one gains (4) an insight into the *necessity* of death which is not of *logical*, but of *symbolical* nature (1968, p.201). As Landsberg (1968, p.201) puts it: “The other [the dead loved one] represents in reality all the others. He is Everyman, and this Everyman dies each time in the death of the man we know, who dies his own death.” In other words, the experiencing subject acquires an insight into the (somehow paradoxical) nature of death as *general annihilation of irreducible singular existences*. On the background of my previous relationship with the deceased, (5) this insight into the necessity of death is able to affect my existence, so that I grasp the absent presence of death as that annihilation which may find place at every moment of my life.

⁷⁹ Landsberg's account of this act of personal love has strong similarities with Buber's account of the personal encounter in which I recognise the other as irreducible individual subject (see Buber 1984a, pp.274-275). In this context, it may be even possible to have an insight into the irreducible singularity of another previously unknown person by looking at her dead body (Landsberg 1968, p.202).

⁸⁰ This second point is not explicitly stated by Landsberg, but I think that it follows from his other theses.

Referring to Landsberg's theses, one may ask how his account refers to grief more generally and whether all his claims should be subscribed. Landsberg seems to suggest that the death of another *immediately* acquires, on the background of a personal relationship, the character of annihilation of a particular person which provides me with an insight into the necessity of death. In this context, the *kind* of personal relationship we had with the deceased does not affect the kind of insight into the necessity of death we may gain. To spell it out in clearer way: the claim seems to be that experiencing the death of a dear friend or of a person whose singularity I was able to grasp once thanks to an act of personal love would provide me with the same kind of insight into the meaning of their death and its necessity.

While it seems convincing to argue that the death of another person may appear as the annihilation of a particular existence even on the background of a single insight into the singularity of that existence, and that it is possible for us, as a consequence of that experience, to comprehend the irreducible character of *every other death*, it is not at all clear (1) what should it mean to grasp this irreducible character of every loss, and (2) how this awareness would develop. With regard to the first point, I may experience the death of another one as an event *sui generis* that cannot be reduced to general platitudes like “everyone has to die”, without being really aware of the variety of aspects such an individual existence embraced and embraces; in this context, the possibility to *grasp* more profoundly the “magnitude” of a loss is relative to the degree of *intimacy* which was constitutive for our previous relationship. It is surely true that it is possible for me to have a certain practical knowledge – expressing itself, for instance, in certain memories – which point to a particular person in her unmediated presence only because I was acquainted with her in the first place, but the extent and range of these memories depends upon the degree of intimacy of our past relationship. To illustrate this point further: if I experienced the death of a shop keeper I was acquainted with since I was a child, but to whom I did not have so intimate a relation, I would be surely able to grasp the irreducible meaning of his death, but my possibilities to grasp what his singular existence embraced would be much more limited than those which a dear friend of him, his wife or his sons and daughters may have.⁸¹ I may remember his voice, his gestures, the habitual character of our interactions in his shop, but his friends or his relatives may remember more profound features of his existence such as his core values and interests, or salient events of his life. This is due to the fact that those who were intimate with the deceased shared a lot of experiences

⁸¹ This does not mean that it is not possible for me to have had insights into her existence which others who were more intimate with her did not experience, but that normally individuals who were intimate with someone have a wider and richer picture of what that life embraced. Furthermore, I do not want to suggest that it is possible for an individual or for more individuals to have an all-enveloping perspective over the life of a deceased. As Solomon rightly underlines (2004, p. 91), every remembered life is selective and cannot be regarded as embodying the lost living existence in its entirety.

with him and therefore have a more profound and wider-ranging practical acquaintance with his existence. Because of that shared history, they may have much more multifaceted *memories* of the deceased which, as Blustein puts it, have “a direct and specific sensuous quality, unmediated by any process of inference and irreducible to knowledge of truths” (2012, p.248), as someone who only knew him as a shop keeper. This practical sensuous knowledge of a certain individual which arises from the interactive and shared character of our past relationship is radically different from mere factual knowledge about the deceased; this difference clearly leaps to the eye if we reflect upon the fact that, while it is possible to deepen our factual knowledge about a person *even after her death*, it is not possible to increase our practical acquaintance with her; on the contrary, it is often the case that we have to make efforts to preserve our sense of her unmediated sensuous presence which tends to fade over time.⁸² Because of the irreducibility of this practical knowledge, only those who were acquainted with the deceased might assess the truthfulness of certain claims concerning how, for instance, the deceased “looked like”.

If the *extent* of the insight into an individual existence were the only difference between a loving relationship with a deceased one and every other personal relationship with him which at least included a singular act of personal love, we should agree with Landsberg's claim that the experiences of death arising from both kinds of relationship only differ *in degree* – and not *in kind*. In this context, one should probably only underline more than Landsberg that grasping the features of an individual existence is usually a *long-term* process during which *we are confronted with an absent presence* that still permeates our world: the loss affects us, so that we must confront broken possibilities and other elements in our habitual world referring or pointing back to it, and try to make sense of the present absence of a loved one.⁸³ During this process, we do not only assess the salient features of a certain life, but also address its *significance* for us (Solomon 2004, p.91). Our reaction to localised and non-localised experiences of absence and presence of the deceased may provide a *fulfilment* and/or a *correction* of our perspective on the life of the other person, since they may confirm or question the significance we attached to her and reveal new aspects of our relationship which we failed to notice. To give some concrete examples: uncollected, spontaneously

⁸² At this point, one might argue that certain modern technologies – e.g. videos or photos – might convey the sensuous presence of the deceased in a direct way even to someone who did not know the dead personally (see Buben 2015, p.18, p.20). Personally, I think that (a) these technologies might only preserve *fragments* of a certain lost existence which are not comparable to directly experiencing the presence of another person, and that (b) only people who were acquainted with the deceased might have a sense of these fragments pointing to a now lost existence *in a truthful way*, since they may experience the phenomenologically given *coincidence* between the presence of the deceased retained in their sensuous memories and videos and photos depicting them. In addition to that, only those who were acquainted with the deceased might have (c) a sense of the lost presence of the deceased as *transcending* what it is retained in their memories and possible reminders of them.

⁸³ To be honest, Landsberg also refers to the long-term recognition of the loss of a loved one as he focuses on Augustine's description of the own grief over the death of a dear friend of him (1968, chapter VI), but it seems to me that he is not primarily addressing the structure and features of this process.

arising memories of a dead loved one may shed light on aspects of our relationship I had forgotten, so as the now salient absence of the deceased may draw my attention *for the first time* to the fact that I enjoyed a certain activity only because I did it with that particular person. On the negative side, my *failure* to feel sad about the absence of a certain person in my life may question the special significance I attributed to her before.

However, I would argue against Landsberg that the difference between the second-person experience of death arising from a loving relationship with someone and that deriving from a practical acquaintance with her which at least included a grasp of her irreducible singularity is a *qualitative* one. In my eyes, this is due to the fact that someone acts as condition of possibility for certain *constitutive* features of my life *only in a loving relationship*, since, for example, I let core values and interests of the beloved have a similar import to me as my own core values and interests. In light of that, I may feel sorry for the death of someone I was practically acquainted with and recognise the irreducibility of that loss to a general pattern or event, but the impact of that loss on my own life and habitual world would not be so profound as the impact of the loss of a loved one on it. Somehow tragically, it can be the case that I wrongly evaluated the overall role a particular person plays in my life, so that I may retrospectively understand that someone upon whom I did not bestow too much importance during his life was much more important for me than I thought; in this case, someone I considered to be only an acquaintance of mine may reveal himself to have been someone I have loved without recognising it. However, the fact that I may be mistaken about the overall value of another existence for me does not cancel the radical difference between the impact of the loss an acquaintance and that of a loved one on my life.

In light of this difference, I wonder whether only the death of a loved one may lead us to experiencing an absence which is “spread over everything”, as C. S. Lewis (1996, p.35) puts it. In addition to that, it is arguable that relating to someone as dead in the sense highlighted by Ratcliffe (2016, p.211, referring to Riley 2012), so that one has a second-person *shattering* experience of “the loss of intelligibility of that person's [the loved one's] world” (2016, p. 211), is only possible on the background of a loving relationship in which the constitutive features of the other person also act as fundamental aspects of my own world and way of life. Even when it is possible for us to be (at least partially) aware of the loss of intelligibility of an acquaintance's world caused by the death of that person⁸⁴, such collapse can only *deeply affect* us if we care about the dead person. On the background of a loving relationship, only the collapse of the world of the beloved accounts to a

⁸⁴ For instance, I can understand that a certain set of possibilities for this person is not given anymore (theoretical level), or – more profoundly – grasp that certain possibilities were inextricably bound to a certain person, but this does not mean that this understanding would necessarily strongly affect me.

partial collapse of my own world and identity, since both of us *shared a world* on a deep level: a lot of *my* most important projects and commitments, as well as habitual features of my world, are inextricably bound to the beloved one and are dependent on his presence for their intelligibility, since they are performed *for* or *with* her. In other words, only the death of a loved one radically affects the griever because of the *existential depth* the loving relationship with her has acquired in his life.

To sum up, I would correct Landberg's account of the second-person experience of someone else's death by underlining that there is a crucial difference between (1) experiencing the death of a person whose singularity we have once grasped in an act of personal love and (2) coming to term with the loss of a person who fundamentally shapes our way of life and acts as condition of possibility for some of our deepest habits, expectations and commitments. In light of that, the partial collapse of the own world and identity he highlights – which permits us to personally experience the disappearance of another person's world, and to *grasp* the meaning of death as annihilation of singular irreplaceable existences that also concerns my existence – is only possible because of the fundamental role the beloved plays in the griever's life, and would not be given in the case in which we experience the death of someone we do not deeply care about.

4.2 Grief's impact on the individual way of life

Having said that, one could ask which kind of impact grief over the death of a loved one can have on the individual way life. First, it can be pointed out that, during the grief process, we are confronted with the *irreducibility* of a lost existence and the *irrevocable* character of that loss *for us* (Attig 2004b, p.344); in this context, we may become aware of the fragility and uniqueness of *our* existence as being deeply entangled with another one, so that we grasp that every existence is constantly threatened by death as that absent presence to which we are defenceless exposed in the end. Furthermore, grief shows us how deeply our individual life is dependent for its intelligibility on others whom we care about: we become *aware* of the essentially *social* nature of our self by confronting the loss in its multifaceted aspects which deeply affect both our habitual world and our identity (Attig 2004b, p. 348; Solomon 2004, p. 76). By the same token, we grasp the *vulnerability* of our identity and of many of our projects and commitments which are constitutively dependent on the presence of particular beloved individuals for their *meaning* and their *fulfilment* (2004, p.76, pp.81-82; Ratcliffe 2016, pp.205-206). In addition to that, a bereaved individual may begin to understand – by confronting the radical loss of agency of a deceased loved one – that the *social meaning* attached to and the *objective fulfilment* of some of his core interests and desires is also dependent on the presence and actions of *indifferent others* who do not really care about her.

It is not granted that the strong dependence of the identity and our world on particular individuals whom we care about and – beyond that – on others in general which is disclosed during the grief process⁸⁵ would be welcomed by the subject who becomes aware of it: in this context, it is arguable that a bereaved individual may react in a “negative” way to this finding by choosing to reduce to a minimum his personal involvement with others and to commit himself only to those desires and interests whose fulfilment does not depend on their presence. For instance, he may withdraw from most social interactions and focus on the pleasure deriving from the performance of activities whose development and fulfilment only depend on his presence. Even if we are *confronted* with a loss, *how we choose to react to it (normally) stands at our (free) disposal* (Attig 2004b, pp.343-345)⁸⁶; on the background of such individual freedom, there are disparate possible ways to react to a loss which may be valued in totally different ways in orientation to different intersubjective standards: to give an idea of this variety, it is possible to decide to lead a more altruistic life because of the loss, so as one may choose to withdraw from society in order to become a hermit, to commit suicide in order to join the deceased in the afterlife (Fisch 2006), or to cut an enemy's head in order to cope with the loss (Rosaldo 1989). In every case, it can be at least pointed out that the enriched awareness of the profound social embeddedness of our life which grief may provide can also draw attention to the various ways in which others may continue to care about me after my death – by, for instance, *taking over* my core projects and commitments; in this way, possibilities for a loving relation to be preserved despite the personal death can be focused upon.⁸⁷ Summing up, the strong dependence of our selves on particular individuals whom we care about and on the social world in general which can be disclosed through grief seems both to *constrain* and to *enlarge* our individual life and identity, and in light of this ambiguity – and of different personal values – it is possible to make sense of this dependence in different ways.

By turning our attention away from possible “egoistic” insights, I think that grief can also help us to recognise the unique value and fragility of every other person *whom we care about*⁸⁸; it is

⁸⁵ At this point, I underline that I am not claiming that grief is the *only* experience which permits us to grasp the dependence of our identity and our world on salient and non-salient others. In analogy to the variety of possible experiences of death, it is arguable that there are different ways to gain an insight into the profound social embeddedness of our lives.

⁸⁶ This claim should not be understood as if it were possible for an individual *to do* everything she wants, but it should rather make clear that it is possible for an individual to refuse to *endorse the meaning* a certain society/group attaches to a certain action or event and even to *act* in accord with social expectations – even in the case that she cannot picture out *concrete alternatives* to prescribed standards. Of course, these choices may have consequences for the subject which she cannot freely dispose of, but it is still possible for her to freely choose to expose herself to such a threat.

⁸⁷ I underline here that I am still arguing *on a descriptive level*, so that what I have claimed applies *independently of a certain moral assessment of ideals and commitments*. If a certain crime boss has the core transcendent desire that his criminal empire should be improved after his death, and his son fulfils such desire, a certain commitment has been successfully taken over and has therefore survived the death of the boss. That said, there may be a lot of convincing *moral reasons* for arguing that this project *should not* take place.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, Denise Riley's remarks on the fact that she has to carefully assess the causes of her son's death for

therefore possible that my reflection on and further development of a relation to a deceased loved one lead me to a more general consideration of the nature and importance of others whom I care about. In this context, grief may lead me to consider more deeply their role in my life: negative or positive aspects of my relationship with them can be focused upon anew, in order to assess in a more faithful way (a) to which extent my decisions and projects depend on their presence, and (b) if my decisions and actions *really reflect* my alleged evaluation of these particular individuals. By grieving over the impact of the death of a dear friend of mine on my life, I can realise that I was in love with her and therefore do not really love my actual partner; on the other hand, I can grasp that my actual way of life does not really reflect the fact that I deeply care about a certain person, and that I should revisit it in order to be more faithful to this appraisal. An enhanced awareness of the role others play in my life and of my personal attitude toward them can be therefore helpful for *re-shaping* my way of life in a more “authentic” way.

Furthermore, I think that the own grief has the potential to transform the way we approach *the grief of others*: indeed, the peculiar insights into the uniqueness of our loving relationship may permit us to grasp the unique character of a certain loss *for another bereaved person*. In this context, someone who has already experienced grief may be much more sensible *for what it could mean to experience the death of a loved one, without pretending to know how it feels like for this particular person to have lost another individual*. In other words, grasping the unique character of a certain loving relationship and of a particular individual may go along with a refusal to *project* the features of the own love and grief experience onto another one (L'Engle 1996, XII; Riley 2012, p.43). Paradoxically, it seems that this refusal may open up possibilities of real empathic understanding which are not possible if one claims to know – to refer to a widespread platitude – “what another bereaved individual is going through” because one already grieved over an alleged “similar” loss. True empathy can develop only on the background of an *openness to the other* which avoids both to make a general, homogeneous event out of singular experiences irreducible to each other, and to argue that it is impossible to describe what the other person is experiencing, implicitly presupposing that every attempt to reach out to her is doomed to fail because of the difficulties inherent to linguistic articulation (Riley 2012, pp.10-11, p. 43, pp.52-53). Under these conditions, it may be possible to engage in a real *dialogue* with another bereaved individual, which may help her to convey her emotions, thoughts and memories in a freer way by interacting with someone who withdraws from hasty and superficial judgements and remarks.⁸⁹

the sake of her other children (2012, p.31).

⁸⁹ Of course, it is not *necessarily* the case that having experienced grief leads to a more empathetic understanding along these lines. On the possible dangers for understanding arising from alleged “homologous experiences”, see Throop (2010, pp. 771-773).

4.3 Moral and political engagement out of grief?

In addition to what I have said until now, it is possible to ask whether bereaved individuals may carry out actions whose significance goes beyond the realm of loving relationships *on the background of their personal experience as grievers*. Is it possible for grief to perform dedicatory actions which challenge the given moral and political standards? And can such dedicatory actions also have a *general moral value*?

I am not sure that grief has the power to change our *general* attitude to others in such a way that we grasp the personal status and the irreducible singular nature of every individual existence, independently of the kind of relation to this person we have or had, and *act* in accordance with that changed attitude. Perhaps, it can be argued that a consequent reflection on the presence of others as experienced in a dialogical living interaction and in grief may prompt out such an insight and therefore change our general attitude toward other individuals. But it is also possible, as I already underlined referring to loving relationships more generally⁹⁰, that grief goes along with a *failure* to recognise the uniqueness of other individual lives and, therefore, with an inability to address them similarly to those individuals whom we care about, or even that a bereaved individual is aware of the uniqueness of every life and still refuses to *acknowledge* the normative significance of such finding. Because of that, it is not possible to assume a general overlapping between actions carried out for the deceased and actions performed in orientation to general moral rights.

Despite this, I think that it is possible that the tension between grief's obligations and social and political expectations leads to actions which also aim to improve basic moral rights due to *all*. For instance, grieving over losses which are traced back to *social and political wrongs* – as in the case of state violence – or *disenfranchised* on an institutional level may prompt out dedicatory actions which aim at (a) drawing attention to the committed wrongs, (b) letting the public sphere understand the wrongness of the committed events, and (c) changing those norms and practices which make it possible to violate basic moral rights without being persecuted. Two recent concrete examples may illustrate these different aspects⁹¹: an Italian woman, Ilaria Cucchi, is still trying – along with her family – to shed some light on the death of her brother, Stefano Cucchi, who was in custody at the time of his death. In this context, prison police officers are suspected to have brutally assaulted him, contributing to his death in a decisive way.⁹² The different actions performed by his family in order to obtain justice have a clear dedicatory quality, since they are done *for Stefano, in*

⁹⁰ See section 1.6.

⁹¹ In the following, I concentrate on Italian cases only because of my deeper acquaintance with wrongs concerning my own country.

⁹² For two reports about Stefano Cucchi in English-language newspapers, see <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/an-agonising-death-in-custody-that-shames-italy-9839430.html>, and <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/nov/18/italy-death-in-custody-justice> (accessed 11.05.2018).

his name, and can be surely regarded as belonging to their grief process, but at the same time *transcend* the singular case by demanding justice in light of a *radical violation* of human dignity as that core value that should be granted to all human individuals as such. The actions and claims of the family of Stefano Cucchi disclose a space in which general and specific moral demands merge, since it can be claimed that the public recognition of the past wrongs committed against the dead – by, for instance, spelling out the truth about state's responsibilities and condemning those who are directly responsible for Stefano Cucchi's death –, would also be the best way to honour him and the efforts of those who cared about him.

Another example for dedicatory attempts having acquired eminent moral and political significance are the (legal and political) actions carried out by relatives and friends of Giulio Regeni, a young Italian researcher who was tortured and murdered in Egypt.⁹³ There is the widespread belief that this was a case of state violence perpetrated by elements of the Egyptian state, and relatives and friends of the researcher – with the support of a widespread community of engaged citizens all over the world – are trying in all possible ways to discover the truth about his death and get justice. Even in this case, we can see that dedicatory actions carried out for a particular person may acquire a general political and moral significance, since they aim at revealing and drawing public attention to a basic violation of human dignity which might have affected someone else and should therefore concern all.

These are surely radical cases in which a certain state or institution is held responsible for the death of a loved one, but grief can have a general moral and political significance even in much more “harmless” situations. For instance, it is possible as grievers to draw public attention to the disenfranchisement of a certain loss or of a certain grief reaction, in order to start a public debate on the rightness of prescribed mourning standards, or on the conditions under which a discussion about past lives should be carried out in light of the strong dependence of their meaning on intersubjective deliberation.⁹⁴ “Negative” emotions such as anger and guilt may be expressed in such a way that a political debate which transcends the singular individual or the singular relationship takes place; but it can be also the case that sharing memories and thoughts about dead loved ones in a public setting – *in the absence of negative emotions or committed wrongs* – both expresses our continuing caring attitude toward them *and* helps others figure out important values and decisions for their own lives. In every case, the political and moral significance of grief seems to be wide-ranging and worthy of further considerations.

⁹³ On Giulio Regeni, see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/04/egypt-murder-giulio-regeni>, and <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/25/giulio-regeni-death-italy-egypt-libya-cambridge-student> (last access 11.05.2018).

⁹⁴ For some issues concerning posthumous speaking about the dead, see Scarre 2012.

5. Conclusion

In this master's thesis, I tried to show how addressing at grief as continuation of the love one has for the deceased person may permit to look at its processual development, as well as at its social embeddedness, moral status and existential significance in a unitary way.

Starting from a normative dialogical account of love, which conceives of the loving relationship as responsive interplay between individuals whose singularity cannot be subsumed within a larger unity, I pointed out that a loving attitude toward someone displays a distinctive kind of affective rationality: different elements which can be regarded as love's expressions cohere with each other in light of the particular affective import the beloved has for the lover. Because of the fact that I deeply care about the beloved, so that he acts as background focus for different thoughts, desires, emotions and actions of mine, such different elements can be regarded as an unified pattern developing in a rational way. To be more specific, I pointed out that caring about someone's else as a person should go along with the willingness to care about core desires and interests she holds to be constitutive for her own identity and self-fulfilment, similarly to how I care about those core desires and interests I take to be constitutive for my own identity and self-fulfilment. In this context, to address someone else as a person should go along with a recognition of the irreducibility of her own perspective to mine, and the readiness to engage in a responsive way with the other. I also highlighted how an ongoing loving relationship leads to the development of fundamental habits for which the beloved acts as condition of intelligibility. In a second step, I underlined that it would be misguided to conceive of loving relationships as separated from the surrounding social world, since lovers normally draw and/or critically engage with intersubjective standards even when it comes to the internal assessment of their relation, and argued for the existence of special moral demands arising from loving relationships, whose legitimacy, however, depends on their being compatible with general moral duties toward persons as such.

Turning my attention to grief, I then asked how a certain grief process entailing different elements can be conceived as an unified whole. In this context, I criticised Goldie's claim that narratives act as those functions which hold together different elements of the same grief process, and expanded on Kathleen Higgins' and Robert Solomon's assumption that grief should be regarded as continuation of love by referring back to my earlier analyses of the character of loving attitudes and relationships. On this background, I claimed that grief should be regarded as a long-term responsive process whose elements may be held together by an enduring loving attitude toward the dead loved one: indeed, the griever normally has the freedom to confirm or revisit on the long run the overall value of the beloved person and of the relationship with her for his life by practically engaging with

the profound disruption of those habits, commitments and projects which depended for their intelligibility on the presence of the beloved. Grief can therefore be regarded as an expression of love which does not only amount to a long and painful recognition of the fact that someone has died, but also to an overall assessment of the value of the lost person for one's life. Similarly to what I said with regard to love more generally, I also addressed in this context some issues concerning grief's expression in a wider social world, and pointed to possibilities of "shared grief".

The last part of the thesis addressed the moral status and existential significance of grief as love's expression. I argued against Epicurus that it can be rational to care about what happens to us – and, conversely, to others – after our death, since the fulfilment of some of our core desires and interests is not dependent on their being experienceable by us. On this background, I draw attention to the fact that some of grief's expressions can be rationally accounted for as attempts to fulfil such core desires and interests of the deceased, and that they may be also justified from a general moral point of view by pointing to the normative status of persons as having the right of free self-determination. However, I also underlined that such attempt to justify grief in terms of overall rationality and morality does not justice to it in its entirety and fails to adequately address the particular dedicatory value grief's expression has for the bereaved individual. In accordance with my previous remarks about grief as continuation of love, I therefore proposed to assess this particular value as an expressive one: grief may therefore unfold as a dedicatory enterprise, during which the griever decides to remain faithful to the overall value of the past loving attachment with a particular dead individual for his life. After that, I focused on epistemic and moral issues arising from the interaction between the griever in her dedication to the beloved and the surrounding social world.

Finally, I attempted to shed some light on the existential significance of grief for those experiencing it by critically engaging with Paul Ludwig Landsberg's detailed phenomenological investigation of our second-person experience of the death of a loved one. In this context, I pointed out that experiencing the collapse of one's world as partial collapse of the own world and identity during grief, so that one is able to grasp the meaning of death as annihilation of particular irreplaceable existences which also affects one's own life, is only possible on the background of the existential depth the relationship with the beloved individual had in my life, and investigated different ways in which such an experience can impact on one's own way of life.

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7. Appendix

Abstract

In this master's thesis, I propose to investigate grief as continuation of love, in order to look at its processual development, social embeddedness, moral status and existential significance in a unitary way.

The first chapter provides the background for the following chapters by sketching out a (normative) dialogical account of love which conceives of a loving relationship as a responsive interplay between individuals whose subjectivity cannot be subsumed within a greater unity. In this context, I point out that a loving attitude toward someone is characterised by a distinctive kind of affective rationality, which holds together different elements in a pattern coherent with the affective import the beloved has for the lover, and that the enduring loving interaction with someone leads to the development of fundamental habits for which the beloved person acts as condition of possibility. In a second step, I then address the embeddedness of lovers in a wider social world, and argue for the existence of specific moral demands arising from loving relationships whose legitimacy, however, is dependent on their being compatible with general moral obligations toward persons as such.

The second chapter critically engages with Goldie's processual and narrative account of grief, arguing that narratives cannot be regarded as functions holding together the different elements grief may entail. Extending on Kathleen Higgins' and Robert Solomon's claim that grief should be addressed as continuation of love, and referring back to the analysis of loving attitudes and the habitual character of a loving relationship provided in the first chapter, I depict grief instead as a long-term responsive process expressing love, in the sense that an enduring loving attitude toward the dead loved one may act as that function which grants the interconnectedness between grief's different elements. The griever is necessarily confronted with the affective import a particular individual and the relationship with her had for him, since he experiences the disruption of those fundamental habits, commitments and projects that were dependent on the dead for their intelligibility, and normally has the freedom to confirm or revisit the affective significance of the beloved for his life by practically engaging with such a disruption. In this context, I also refer to some issues concerning grief as love's expression in a wider social world, and to possibilities of "shared grief".

The third chapter addresses the moral dimension of grief, asking whether we owe something to dead loved ones, and how such demands may be justified from a moral point of view. In a first step, I argue against Epicurus that it may be rational to care about what happens to us – and, conversely, to others – after our death, since the fulfilment of some of our core desires and interests does not

depend on their being experienceable by us. This rebuttal is necessary, since the Epicurean perspective would hold every discussion about actions for the sake of the dead as irrational, and therefore undermine from the beginning every attempt to look at them from a moral point of view. After that, I point out that, while some of grief's expressions may be rationally accounted for and be morally justified from a general moral point of view, such a perspective fails to adequately address their distinctive character for the griever. Only by referring to them as dedication to the beloved in his singularity, and as expressions of an-ongoing love for him, their character can be adequately appreciated. Having said that, I then address epistemic and moral issues arising from the interaction of the griever with the surrounding social world.

Finally, I address the existential significance of grief by critically engaging with Landberg's detailed phenomenology of our second-person experience of the death of a loved one. I argue that it is only possible to experience the death of another individual as partial destruction of my world and my identity because of the existential depth the relationship with the dead loved one had in my life, and investigate the possible impact of such an experience on the individual way of life.

Abstract (German)

In dieser Masterarbeit schlage ich vor, Trauer als Fortsetzung von Liebe zu behandeln, um ihre prozesshafte Entwicklung und Einbettung in eine soziale Welt sowie ihren moralischen Status und ihre existentielle Bedeutung in einer einheitlichen Weise zu analysieren.

Das erste Kapitel, das als Grundgerüst für meine weiteren Analysen aufgefasst werden kann, legt eine dialogische Liebesauffassung vor, nach der Liebe als responsives Zusammenspiel zwischen Individuen, deren Singularität nicht in einer höheren Einheit aufgehoben werden kann, aufzufassen ist. In einem ersten Schritt zeige ich auf, dass eine liebende Einstellung gegenüber einer Person sich durch eine bestimmte affektive Rationalität kennzeichnet, welche verschiedene Elemente in einen kohärenten Zusammenhang bringt, der die zentrale Bedeutung des/der Geliebten für den Liebenden/die Liebende widerspiegelt. Überdies weise ich darauf hin, dass die andauernde Interaktion mit dem/der Geliebten zur Entwicklung von fundamentalen Habiten führt, für die der/die Geliebte als Bedingung der Möglichkeit dient. In einem zweiten Schritt setze ich mich mit dem Faktum auseinander, dass Liebende in eine über sie hinausgehende soziale Welt eingebettet sind, und argumentiere dafür, dass es spezielle moralische Verpflichtungen gibt, die sich aus Liebesbeziehungen ergeben. Zugleich weise ich jedoch darauf hin, dass diese nur als legitim angesehen werden können, wenn sie mit allgemeinen moralischen Pflichten gegenüber Personen vereinbar sind.

Im zweiten Kapitel setze ich mich zunächst mit Peter Goldies prozessueller und narrativer Auffassung von Trauer auseinander, indem ich seine These kritisiere, ein bestimmtes Narrativ könne die Funktion erfüllen, verschiedene Elemente desselben Trauerprozesses zusammenzuhalten. Im Unterschied dazu knüpfe ich an Kathleen Higgins und Robert Solomons Bestimmung von Trauer als Fortsetzung von Liebe an und präzisiere deren Annahme, indem ich auf meine frühere Analyse des Charakters von LiebesEinstellungen und -beziehungen zurückgreife. Vor diesem Hintergrund stelle ich Trauer als langfristigen responsiven Prozess dar, der in dem Sinne als Liebesausdruck begriffen werden kann, dass eine fortdauernde LiebesEinstellung den Zusammenhang zwischen den verschiedenen Trauerelementen sicherstellen kann. Der/die Trauernde sieht sich notwendigerweise mit einem Zusammenbruch von habituellen Praktiken, Erwartungen und Projekten konfrontiert, deren Intelligibilität von der Präsenz des/der Verstorbenen abhing. Wenn auch dieser Zusammenbruch den zentralen Wert des/der Verstorbenen für die Lebensführung des/der Trauernden in der Vergangenheit unmissverständlich bezeugt, ist dieser/diese unter normalen Umständen frei, solche zentrale Bedeutung des/der Verstorbenen für sein/ihr Leben langfristig zu bestätigen oder zu revidieren, indem er/sie sich auf lange Dauer mit

dem Verlust praktisch auseinandersetzt. In diesem Kontext behandle ich auch gewisse Schwierigkeiten, die mit dem Trauerausdruck in einer bestimmten sozialen Welt verbunden sind. Zudem weise ich auf Möglichkeiten geteilter Trauer hin.

Das dritte Kapitel befasst sich mit dem moralischen Status von Trauer. Es wird die Frage gestellt, ob es mögliche Verpflichtungen gegenüber geliebten verstorbenen Menschen gibt, und wie diese von einem moralischen Standpunkt aus gerechtfertigt werden können. Zunächst verteidige ich entgegen Epikurus die These, es könne rational sein, sich um das zu kümmern, was uns – und konsequenterweise anderen – nach unserem Tod widerfährt, da es gewisse Grundwünsche und -interessen gibt, deren Erfüllung nicht davon abhängt, dass man sie persönlich erlebt. Diese kritische Auseinandersetzung ist nötig, weil eine epikureische Perspektive jede Diskussion über mögliche Handlungen, welche für eine/einen Toten durchgeführt werden, für irrational halten und konsequenterweise jeden Versuch, solche Handlungen moralphilosophisch zu analysieren, von Anfang an unterminieren würde. Nach dieser kritischen Diskussion mache ich darauf aufmerksam, dass, wenn auch einige Trauerausdrücke in dem oben dargestellten Sinne als rational aufgefasst und aus einem allgemeinen moralischen Standpunkt gerechtfertigt werden können, die besondere Bedeutung solcher Trauerausdrücke für die trauernde Person aus einer solchen allgemeinen Perspektive nicht adäquat begriffen werden kann. Man kann dieser Bedeutung nur dann auf die Spur kommen, wenn man Trauerausdrücke als Widmungen für den Geliebten/die Geliebte in seiner/ihrer Besonderheit und als Ausdruck der weiter bestehenden Liebe zu ihm/ihr begreift.

Abschließend wende ich mich der existentiellen Bedeutung von Trauer zu, indem ich mich kritisch mit Paul Ludwig Landsbergs phänomenologischer Analyse der Erfahrung des Todes eines/einer Geliebten befasse. In diesem Zusammenhang argumentiere ich für die These, nur die tiefgreifende Bedeutung des/der Verstorbenen und der Beziehung zu ihm/ihr in meinem Leben mache es möglich, den Tod eines Anderen als partiellen Zusammenbruch der eigenen Welt und Identität zu erfassen, und analysiere mögliche Auswirkungen dieser Erfahrung auf die individuelle Lebensführung.