



Touchstones Project

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Remembrance



Introduction to the Theme

What comes to your mind unbidden? What involuntary, autobiographical memories emerge because of cues encountered in everyday life that evoke recollections of the past without conscious effort? Cues that are triggered by sensory experiences such as sights, sounds, and smells; cues that you may notice, or not? And what do you make of involuntary memory, this seemingly random mosaic that the mind pieces together?

Memory is a central theme of the seven-volume novel, *Remembrance of Things Past*, written by the French author, Marcel Proust that was published between 1913 and 1927. This English title

was chosen by the Scottish translator, Charles Kenneth Scott Moncrieff. It comes from Shakespeare's Sonnet 30: "When to the sessions of sweet silent thought / I summon up remembrance of things past..." (The literal translation of the French title, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, is usually rendered as *In Search of Lost Time*. That Scott Moncrieff took such literary license may have been the familiarity enjoyed by Shakespeare's phrase in Great Britain.)

Our memories also play an important role in our daydreaming, which is also called mind-wandering, as well as in our nighttime dreaming. Both involve an altered consciousness. In daydreaming, the mind may wander in response to a boring task, reading challenging material, meditating, and much more. Holly Korbey writes, "Daydreaming is the place, researchers say, where the mind can imagine a future for itself, make an internal home for 'realizing our deepest desires and strivings,' and figure out who we really are and what we want.

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Wisdom Story

The Memory Table

Seven-year-old Steven dragged his backpack down the unfamiliar pathway to his new house. School was over for the day, but Steven was not looking forward to going home. ...

Steven felt lonely and sad. Everywhere he had been all week was new. He did not recognize faces at his new school. The new house did not greet him the same way as the old house. ...

Standing in the front hallway, Steven looked up and saw his mom coming forward to give him a home hug. Home hugs at the door were his mom's specialty. Steven felt the familiar warmth and love as his mom hugged him. He smiled up at her and forgot his sadness as he said, "I sure hope that's peanut butter cookies I smell."

"That is a super nose you have there, young man" his mother answered. ...

In the kitchen, Steven stopped and stared. Everything was put away and by the window was their very own kitchen table. This rough, pine table had been in his kitchen as long as he could remember. ... Around the table were four chairs with thick legs and padded seat covers with chickens on them.

Steven walked to the table and saw the red permanent marker spot from when he was two years old and started to draw without paper. At the end of the table, there stood a napkin holder he made in crafts at day camp and the funny chicken salt and pepper shakers from his grandmother's house. In front of the salt and pepper shakers was the stained-glass chalice he made at his old church.

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Remembrance & Regeneration

Regeneration is not just a process focused on the present in terms of what must be renewed, healed, or made whole. It also involves the past and the future. Sometimes there are unpleasant things in your past that are a source of sorrow, anxiety, anger, and more. In this sense, regeneration done best, slowly addresses past hurts received or given, grief, personal faults, and all that "remains unresolved in your heart" that you bring into the present through remembrance. And the process may be as simple as a whispered "sorry" or "I forgive you" that only you hear. As we do this, our remembrance takes on a different character, lighter and more hopeful, so that we can imagine a better future.

A Theme-Based Ministry Project

This project is supported by subscriptions from Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Regeneration

Old Memories

(Continued from page 1) **The Memory Table**



Right in the middle of the table was a hollow spot from the marble slab his mom used for cutting out Christmas cookies. Next to the hollow was a huge plate of his favorite peanut butter cookies. Steven smiled as he sat down.

His mom came over to the table with two glasses of cold milk and sat down with him at ...her usual spot.

"I know you've been sad, Steven. You are missing all the old things and exhausted by all the new things. How are you feeling now?" asked his mom.

Steven munched a cookie for a moment and answered, "I was sad until I saw the table."

"What did the table do to make you feel better?" asked his mom.

"I started thinking about all the things that happen at this table. We have Thanksgiving here with lots of relatives and that can happen the same, here, too." Steven stated. "And the grace we say at this table will be the same, even if it's in a new place."

Steven's mom smiled. "What else will continue in this new house?"

"I can do my homework here and remember all the other times I sat here and learned things." Steven added.

"Steven, this table is the place where memories meet new experiences for our family. Our home is the place where we eat together, grow together and learn together. Even if the building where we meet is new, the good things that happen in our family home don't change."

...He had many old memories to bring along with him as he went into new places. And each new place would provide new experiences that would become memories....

Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home/session16/60171.shtml>

Love Spread Thin

The Blue House

Kao Kalia Yang

In a plot of grass, behind a bar on Payne, right off Maryland Avenue on the east side of St. Paul there was once a blue house that I loved.

I remember the house the way it was: a blue two-story built sometime in the late 1890s. A farm house with a damp, earthen basement full of broken concrete on the floor, its walls sagging....

...The last room of the house, at its back, was a small kitchen with a round dining table that was only big enough for the adults, so we children usually sat in the living room, plates of food on our knees, before the blinking black and white television. The kitchen smelled of the things we ate: rice, boiled pork bones, fried eggs, instant noodles from Thailand and China, and pickled mustard greens.

...One day, three years ago, a big truck came and the house came down, bit by bit, until all that remained was the dark hole of the basement where my cousins, my older sister, and I, once upon a time, beneath a single swinging bulb, played hopscotch across concrete and dirt. Then, the hole was filled. Suddenly, green grass was growing in the place where the blue house once stood.

Now, it is gone, and all we have left is an old aunt and uncle, cousins who work near and far, and the memories that we individually carry of that place where we had all been poor together, in love with each other, unaware that a house could disappear, that our lives would take us far from each other, and that love spread far too thin across time and space grows faint like dreams, lives on like ghosts.

Source: <https://onbeing.org/blog/kao-kalia-yang-the-blue-house-that-i-loved/>



Its Own Language

An Ethic of Remembrance

Elie Wiesel (1928-2016), born in Transylvania, was swept up by the Nazis along with his extended family in May 1944. He was imprisoned in the Auschwitz, Monowitz, and Buchenwald concentration camps before liberation in April 1945. Except for two older sisters, his entire family was killed. Wiesel, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, spent his life insisting on the importance of remembering the Holocaust.

Yom ha-Shoah, i.e., Holocaust Remembrance Day, is held on the 27th day of the lunar month of *Nisan* (April or May). First observed in 1951, it was made law in Israel in 1959. Remembrance evolved slowly: 1979 in the US, 1996 in Germany, 2005 by the UN, and 2007 in Canada.

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in 1993. Wiesel spoke at its 8-day annual Remembrance several times. The following is from 2003.

"All the rivers run to the sea, days come and go, generations vanish, others are born, remembrance ceremonies follow one another—and hatred is still alive, and some of us, the remnant of the remnant, wonder with the poet Paul Celan: who will bear witness for the witness, who will remember what some of us tried to relate about a time of fear and darkness when so many, too many victims felt abandoned, forgotten, unworthy of compassion and solidarity? Who will answer questions whose answers the dead took with them? Who will feel qualified enough and strong enough, faithful enough to confront their fiery legacy? What was and remains clear to some of us, here and elsewhere, is the knowledge that if we forget them, we too shall be forgotten."

"But is remembrance enough? What does one do with the memory of agony and suffering? Memory has its own language, its own texture, its own secret melody, its own archeology and its own limitations: it too can be wounded, stolen and shamed; but it is up to us to rescue it and save it from becoming cheap, banal, and sterile."

"To remember means to lend an ethical dimension to all endeavors and aspirations."

Source: Touchstones



Readings from the Common Bowl

Day 1:

"Remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were." Marcel Proust



Day 2: "It's said, after all, that people reach middle age the day they realize they're never going to read *Remembrance of Things Past*." Alison Bechdel

Day 3: "Memories warm you up from the inside. But they also tear you apart." Haruki Murakami

Day 4: "One lives in the hope of becoming a memory." Antonio Porchia

Day 5: "We all have our time machines, don't we. Those that take us back are memories...And those that carry us forward, are dreams." H.G. Wells

Day 6: "Without memory, there is no culture. Without memory, there would be no civilization, no society, no future." Elie Wiesel

Day 7: "What you remember saves you." W. S. Merwin

Day 8: "It happens to everyone as they grow up. You find out who you are and what you want, and then you realize that people you've known forever don't see things the way you do. So, you keep the wonderful memories, but find yourself moving on." Nicholas Sparks

Day 9: "I have to live if I want to be remembered." Suzanne Young

Day 10: "It is easy to love people in memory; the hard thing is to love them when they are there in front of you." John Updike

Day 11: "You remember only what you want to remember. You know only what your heart allows you to know." Amy Tan

Day 12: "Lost love is still love. It takes a different form, that's all. You can't see their smile or bring them food or tousle their hair or move them around a dance floor. But when those senses weaken another heightens. Memory. Memory becomes your partner. You nurture it. You hold it. You dance with it." Mitch Albom

Day 13: "Remembrance restores

possibility to the past, making what happened incomplete and completing what never was. Remembrance is neither what happened nor what did not happen but, rather, ...their becoming possible once again." Giorgio Agamben

Day 14: "Do not let the memories of your past limit the potential of your future." Roy T. Bennett

Day 15: "In our endeavors to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves upon the very verge of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember." Edgar Allan Poe

Day 16: "I am made of memories." Madeline Miller

Day 17: "Recovery unfolds in three stages. The central task of the first stage is the establishment of safety. The central task of the second stage is remembrance and mourning. The central focus of the third stage is reconnection with ordinary life." Judith Lewis Herman

Day 18: "Every act of perception, is to some degree an act of creation, and every act of memory is to some degree an act of imagination." Oliver Sacks

Day 19: "There is no death in remembrance. ...Remember me, and a part of me will always be with you." Kathleen Kent

Day 20: "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die." Thomas Campbell

Day 21: "Human beings do terrible things to each other and the tragic thing about it all is the way the remembrance of past hurt can rob us of our future and become the narrative of our lives." Richard Holloway

Day 22: "God gave us memory so that we might have roses in December." J.M. Barrie

Day 23: "From passion comes confusion of mind, then loss of remembrance, then forgetting of duty." Bhagavad Gita

Day 24: "I've given my life to the principle and the ideal of memory, and remembrance." Elie Wiesel

Day 25: "Remembrance of things past, I do that all the time." Bob Dylan

Day 26: "Your memory is a monster; you forget—it doesn't. It simply files things

away. It keeps things for you, or hides things from you—and summons them to your recall with will of its own. You think you have a memory; but it has you!" John Irving

Day 27: "Remembrance of the past may give rise to dangerous insights, and the established society seems to be apprehensive of the subversive contents of memory." Herbert Marcuse

Day 28: "Memory is a snare, pure and simple; it alters, it subtly rearranges the past to fit the present." Mario Vargas Llosa

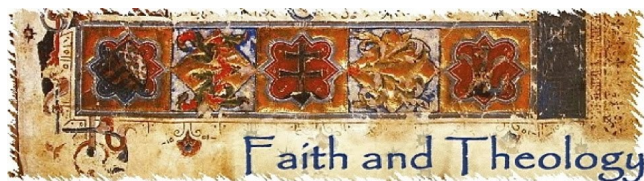
Day 29: "Richness, in the final measure, is not weighed in gold coins, but in the number of people you have touched, the tears of those who mourn your passing, and the fond remembrances of those who continue to celebrate your life." R.A. Salvatore

Day 30: "Memories were fine but you couldn't touch them, smell them, or hold them. They were never exactly as the moment was, and they faded with time." Cecelia Ahern

Day 31: "...You remember the last time you remembered the event, and without realizing it, change the story at every subsequent remembrance." Nassim Nicholas Taleb



"Home is where one starts from. As we grow older / The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated / Of dead and living. Not the intense moment / Isolated, with no before and after, / But a lifetime burning in every moment / And not the lifetime of one man only / But of old stones that cannot be deciphered. / There is a time for the evening under starlight, / A time for the evening under lamplight / (The evening with the photograph album). / Love is most nearly itself / When here and now cease to matter. / Old men ought to be explorers / Here or there does not matter / We must be still and still moving / Into another intensity / For a further union, a deeper communion / Through the dark cold and the empty desolation, / The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters / Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning." T.S. Eliot



Faith and Theology

A Theology of Remembrance

A liberal theology of remembrance seeks to mediate the past in the context of the present in order to influence the future in life-affirming ways. Not only does it remember and challenge failings, it also lifts up guiding principles and abiding commitments, as well as instances of courage, sacrifice, compassion, and other acts that can serve as exemplars going forward.

UU theologian, James Luther Adams wrote in 1993, “the first sign of a civilization is a discriminating remembrance of things past, a community of memory.” Adams continued, “The memory of a community, or of a person, is an extremely important aspect of its spiritual life. It is only through a disciplined memory of the past that one can judge properly ...the present and play one’s own part rightly.” He then noted, we often forget what most needs remembering.

Elsewhere, Adams wrote, “Richard Cabot used to define an idiot as a person without a sense of the past. ...In the church we accept this truth: By their fruits shall you know them. But we also accept the truth: By their roots shall you know them.” Roots point to the importance of the past and fruit to the importance of the future. Remembrance is the tree trunk that connects the two.

George Santayana wrote, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Yet the more pernicious problem involves those who deny elements of the past, who deny facts and truth, who lie and peddle fake news, who spread pseudoscientific claims, and who are motivated to commit hate crimes based on false information. This phenomenon knows no borders. We have examples of Holocaust deniers, climate deniers, the anti-vaccine movement, Residential School denialists in Canada, and more. And denialism goes hand-in-hand with conspiracy theories: that the US Government had advance knowledge of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the moon landing was fake, the US Government

attacks, the 2020 American presidential election was stolen, people of color are trying to replace whites, etc. Unfortunately, some of

these conspiracies and more are also embraced by Canadians. (See <https://abacusdata.ca/conspiracy-theories-canada/>.) As these virulent assaults on the truth infect more people, democracy and freedom are weakened.

A theology of remembrance is concerned with “a free and responsible search for truth and meaning.” It asks hard and uncomfortable questions, and holds history up to ongoing scrutiny.

The Canadian Unitarian Council has been working on Aboriginal issues since 1964 through a variety of resolutions and actions, including presenting an *Expression of Truth and Reconciliation* to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, that worked to inform Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools. Notably, a *Day for Truth and Reconciliation* was first observed on September 30, 2013, which was the day generations of Indigenous children were taken from their homes and forced into the schools. It is also known as *Orange Shirt Day* to recall the experience of Phyllis Jack Webstad in 1973, whose personal clothing—including a new orange shirt—was taken on her first day of residential schooling, and never returned. This day was made a national holiday in 2021.

The UUA launched its decades-long work involving anti-racism at the GA in Calgary, Alberta in 1992. This has involved confronting a painful institutional history of racism and white supremacy, and the ongoing, daunting work of transforming hearts and minds to become allies with movements like Black Lives Matter and Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism. The current focus includes adopting an 8th principle that calls us to dismantle racism, other oppressions, and systemic barriers in order to promote full inclusion and build Beloved Community. (Canadian Unitarians adopted an 8th principle in 2021. GA votes on an 8th principle Article II amendment will happen in 2023 and 2024.)

A theology of remembrance remembers, evaluates, worships, celebrates, advocates, protests, marches, imagines, per-

sists, seeks truth, demands justice, speaks truth to power, and works for the common good. In seeking to winnow the truth from the chaff of history, it uses the past to educate in the present in order to create a better future.

At times, the intersection of remembrance and the call for a better future is done not by theologians or ministers, but by political leaders calling for national faithfulness to essential values.

In America, this was exemplified, by Lincoln’s *Gettysburg Address*. Echoing the words of Unitarian minister Theodore Parker, he concluded, “we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that *government of the people, by the people, for the people*, shall not perish from the earth.”

Franklin Roosevelt’s 1941 *State of the Union Address* presented reasons for continued military aid to Great Britain. What endured of the address, however, were the four freedoms he enumerated at the end: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Due to Eleanor Roosevelt, these four freedoms informed the UN’s 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

In Canada, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s speech on September 8, 1980 called for *patriation*, i.e., taking control of Canada’s constitution from England and ending Canada’s status as an English colony. Patriation had been pursued without success since 1927. His speech launched an intense, 18-month struggle that dominated the agendas of every level of government in Canada, but it resulted in *The Constitution Act of 1982*, which included the groundbreaking *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

The work of national remembrance is important. It is not just observing days like *Canada Day* (July 1st) and *Independence Day* (July 4th) or *Remembrance Day* (November 11th in Canada) or *Memorial Day* (at the end of May in the US), but what we remember and lift-up in the context of sometimes competing values. Consider the *1619 Project*, which called into question when America was actually founded and by whom. The power of

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Making Memories

Nora Newcombe, a Professor of Psychology, explains that long-term memory is either explicit, (aka Autobiographical Memory) requiring conscious recall and usually related to a time and place; or implicit, memories that involve more of an unconscious, emotional recollection. Chase Scheinbaum writes, “Your kids’ memories of the pancakes you made for them on Saturdays? Explicit. The warm, fuzzy feelings whenever they pass an IHOP? Implicit.”

Research has concluded that children begin forming explicit childhood memories at about the age of two, but implicit memories dominate until the age of 6 or 7. The scarcity of explicit memories before then is called “childhood amnesia.”

Family stories are important in creating autobiographical memory, especially stories about the child. According to Newcombe, while these are referred to as false memories if the child was too young to experience them, they are still true memories because they happened.

Carole Peterson, a University Research Professor in Canada stresses the importance of talking to children about experiences from their lives writing, “Kids’ memories are more coherent when there’s a context of who, what, where, when, why, and how.”

Conversations about the past support the development of autobiographical memory. It is believed that children learn to tell personal stories about the past through adult-guided conversations that may focus more on the adult providing more narrative through comments to enrich the story or by eliciting narrative through repetitive questions to help the child expand the story.

Neurologist, Judy Willis stresses the importance of reading to enhance memory. She writes, “During their childhood, my daughters wanted to hear the same book, *Goodnight Moon*, over and over: Even after dozens of readings, they continued to excitedly predict what would be on the next page and to take great pleasure in being right.” She explains, “As stories from childhood are linked to positive emotional experiences,

they provide an insight into the patterning system by which memories are stored. Our brains seek and store memories based on patterns (repeated relationships between ideas). This system facilitates our interpreting the world—and all the new information we find throughout each day—based on prior experiences. The four-step structure of narrative—beginning (Once upon a time...), problem, resolution, and ending (...and they all lived happily ever after)—forms a mental map onto which new information can be laid.”

Source: Touchstones

Family Activity:

Family Storytelling

Telling family stories is a wonderful activity. Share a story about when you were a child, or a story your parents or grandparents told about their childhood. Encourage your children to ask questions about the story. Then invite each child to tell a story about something they experienced. Ask questions to encourage them to expand the story and add pieces to it if it is a shared experience. Another way to elicit stories is by sharing a photo of some experience on an outing or from a vacation.

Family Activity:

Make Believe Stories

Make believe is an activity children engage in when they play. Encourage and development this ability by jointly making up stories with your children. This is especially engaging in a round-robin format where each person in turn adds the next piece to the evolving story. When a child adds something, consider asking questions to elicit more details. Gillian McDunn offers some helpful suggestions at <https://www.parents.com/kids/sleep/bedtime-stories/i-m-a-mom-and-a-children-s-book-author-here-s-how-to-tell-a-really-good-story/>. You can find bedtime story prompts online like those at <https://www.readbrihtly.com/bedtime-story-prompts-for-parents/>



(Continued from page 4) Faith & Theology

remembrance was evidenced by the backlash that followed the publication of this counter-narrative. Further, in the context of July 4th, should the focus be on American exceptionalism or a thoughtful critique of how America has both succeeded and fallen short in embodying its ideal of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?” The Ladies Anti-Slavery Society of Rochester, NY invited Frederick Douglass to give a July 4th speech in 1852. Douglass opted, instead, to speak on July 5th. In the speech Douglass said, “What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.” What critique is appropriate now given systemic racism, the myth of replacement theory by white supremacists, or the “civics excellence” initiative for K-12 public schools by the governor of Florida that seeks to downplay America’s role in slavery? How should July 4th be remembered given the growing assault to undermine democracy?

Douglass wrote in 1857, “If there is no struggle there is no progress. ... Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. ... The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.” Remembrance often involves struggle as the following three examples illustrate.

The effort to establish a national holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr, began 4 days after his assassination on April 4, 1968 when Michigan Representative John Conyers spoke on the floor of Congress. Fifteen years later in 1983, MLK Day became a national observance. It took another 17 years to be recognized by all states, a total of 32 years. But what of the counter-remembrance? Alabama and Mississippi celebrate a joint “King-Lee” Day to remember Robert E. Lee. Lee’s birthday is also a holiday in Florida, and a *Confederate Memorial Day* is recognized in Ala-

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And Memory Makes Kings and Queens of Us

(Continued from page 1) **Introduction**

This is critical to ensuring a happy and secure adulthood."

We tend to daydream quite a lot, although children and adolescents daydream the most, and the elderly the least. One study found adults daydreaming almost 50% of the time. Sometimes, the focus is pleasant, while at other times the focus involves "unpleasant" thoughts. While excessive daydreaming can be a problem, daydreaming is usually beneficial. It can help reduce stress, improve our mood, enhance creativity and productivity, increase cognitive flexibility, and contribute to addressing/resolving a conflict.

Kalina Christoff, Kieran C. R. Fox and their research team note that in both daydreaming and nighttime dreaming, "content is largely audiovisual and emotional, follows loose narratives tinged with fantasy, is strongly related to current concerns, draws on long-term memory, and simulates social interactions."

Dr. Donna Rose Addis writes, "Memory is not just for remembering. It ...is critical for our sense of who we are—in the past, present and the future. Memory does not only hold important knowledge about our lives and our personal attributes and traits; through mental time travel, episodic memory can also directly transport us into past, to the person that lived through our previous experiences, and into the future, to the person we are yet to become."

While the structure of memory is complex, remembrance has to do with autobiographical memory. We are directly shaped by experience, but we are re-shaped again and again by remembrance of autobiographical memories. It is as if our being is composed of pliable clay and each memory recalled exerts some pressure here and there, pushing and pulling a part of our clay as our shape slowly evolves. Tellingly, William Faulkner wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

Ironically, memories are also pliable. As Donna Bridge writes, "A memory is not simply an image produced by time traveling back to the original event—it can be an image that is somewhat distorted because of the prior times

you remembered it." She adds, "Memories aren't static. If you remember something in the context of a new environment and time, or if you are even in a different mood, your memories might integrate the new information." Remembrance is not a pure, unsullied process. Instead, remembrance can inject revisions into the memory, and this persists until that memory is next recalled and, perhaps, "over-written" with another revised version. This is not intentional deception, but an organic interaction of our present with our past. Even when an experience first becomes a memory, it is somewhat impressionistic rather than exact.

Children begin forming explicit childhood memories around the age of two years old, although the majority are still implicit memories until they're about seven. (Explicit memory involves conscious remembering of prior episodes, like the first day of kindergarten, while implicit memory involves influences of prior episodes on current behavior without intentional retrieval, like riding a bicycle.)

Kevin Hull writes, "Memory plays an important part of identity formation and creating a positive sense of self. As a child develops and has experiences, there is a part of the brain that creates a story from these experiences and over time ...a sense of self ...develops. Autobiographical memory, he notes, is quite important because it "helps us guide future behavior, form and maintain a social network, create a continuous sense of self and cope with negative emotions and experiences."

According to Robyn Fivush, "Stories are central to our world. We form our families, our communities, and our nations through stories. It is through stories of our everyday experiences that each of us constructs an autobiographical self, a narrative identity, that confers a sense of coherence and meaning to our individual lives." Importantly, a child's identity is also formed by the stories that a family shares about itself, as well as the stories

told to the child about the child.

Remembrance within families is crucial to a family's identity and health. The same is true of communities, especially religious communities where remembrance is conveyed through story (and history), symbol, and ritual as part of the ongoing formation of religious identity. Ritually, a personal story and a communal story intersect in a memorial service. Within Unitarian Universalism, memorial services are characterized, not by a sermon extolling faith, but by a eulogy that celebrates the life of a person and shares poignant stories of that person's life. The



word, eulogy, comes from the mid-15th century Latin, *eulogium* and Greek, *eulogia* meaning praise and good or fine language. In addition to a eulogy, our memorial ser-

vices often include opportunities for many voices to share memories of the person.

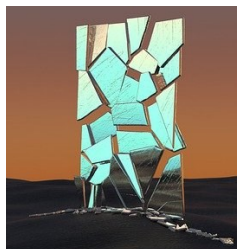
In some Unitarian Universalist congregations, *All Souls Day*, which occurs on November 2nd, is observed through a *Remembrance Service* that encourages remembrance of loved ones, both family members and friends, who have died. As May Sarton wrote in her poem, *All Souls*, "Did someone say that there would be an end, / An end, Oh, an end, to love and mourning? / ...what has been once so interwoven / Cannot be raveled, nor the gift ungiven. / Now the dead move through all of us still glowing, / Mother and child, lover and lover mated, / Are wound and bound together and enflowing. / What has been plaited cannot be unplaited — / Only the strands grow richer with each loss / And memory makes kings and queens of us. / Dark into light, light into darkness, spin. / When all the birds have flown to some real haven, / We who find shelter in the warmth within, / Listen, and feel new-cherished, new-forgiven, / As the lost human voices speak through us and blend / Our complex love, our mourning without end." Death is many things, including all a person's memories that end when they die. Yet, for the living, grief is not about forgetting, but remembering.

Fragments

That Pile of Broken Mirrors

Maria Popova

It is ...disorienting enough to accept that our attention only absorbs a fraction of the events and phenomena unfolding within and around us at any given moment.



Now consider that our memory only retains a fraction of what we have attended to in moments past. In the act of recollection, we take these fragments of fragments and try to reconstruct from them a totality of a remembered reality, playing out in the theater of the mind—a stage on which, ...Antonio Damasio has observed ...we often “use our minds not to discover facts, but to hide them.”

We do this on the personal level—out of such selective memory and by such exquisite exclusion, we compose the narrative that is the psychological pillar of our identity. We do it on the cultural level—what we call history is a collective selective memory that excludes far more of the past’s realities than it includes. Borges captured this ...when he observed that “we are our memory ...that pile of broken mirrors.” ...

...Akira Kurosawa (1910–1998) created ...the slippery memory-mediated nature of truth in his 1950 film *Rashomon*, ...about the murder of a samurai and its four witnesses, who each recount a radically different reality, ...thus undermining our ...trust in truth.

The *Rashomon* effect ...casts ...doubt over our basic grasp of reality—we only exist, after all, as eyewitnesses of our own lives.

See the TED-ED animation, *How do you know what’s true?* with narration by Sheila Marie Orfano at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xg5y6Ao7VE4> Equally compelling is the TED-ED animated short with narration by South African biomedical scientist Catharine Young. See *How memories form and how we lose them* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOgAbKJGrTA>

Source: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2021/06/29/rashomon-effect-memory/>

Embodied Memory

El Dia de los Muertos

Flora Keshgegian

The *Day of the Dead* is a longer festival, lasting at least two to three days, and sometimes longer, and its origins pre-date the Roman Catholic Christian presence in Mexico.

...The *Day of the Dead* is based on the premise that ...a type of connection with the departed is possible that may not be available at other times. The dead are understood to be truly present. Family members do not gather at the altars simply to remember the dead, but to welcome them and provide for them and be with them. ...The dead are understood to partake of the offerings provided for them, and these ‘provisions’ ease their way through death. Such partaking is not literal, but consists of extracting the essence of the foods and gifts.

...Decorations for the *Day of the Dead*

feature images of skeletons. ... One of the candies produced especially for the festival is in



the shape of skulls made out of sugar [called *calaveras*]. These skeletal figures are ...playful and even comical. The candy skulls are smiling. The skeletons are engaged in activities, including joyful ones, that are part of living.

...These images suggest that the dead are not simply dead and gone but are very much engaged with life. There is, however, no denial of death here. The figures are clearly skeletons. Nor is death ignored. Rather, it is given a particular type of intensified attention as images of life and death are so vividly presented, occupying the same space and time and even the same body! The skeletal images playing instruments and performing tasks seem to suggest a fluidity not only of time and space, but also of what it means to be embodied and living.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/18147>

It Takes Struggle

(Continued from page 5) Faith & Theology

bama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas.

The first gay rights organization was founded in the US in 1924. The movement began to grow in the 1960s. It was “set on fire” in June 1969 by the *Stonewall riots* that lasted for 5 days following a police raid on the *Stonewall Inn*, a gay bar in Greenwich Village in Manhattan. Pride parades were held the next year in June and every year since. Legislation for same-sex marriage in Canada was passed in 2005 following its legalization in Ontario in 2003. In 2015, the US Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage. In the ongoing struggle for LGBTQ+ rights, our remembrance and action is essential.

The international indigenous movement began to take shape in the 1970s. Attendees at the *UN International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas* in 1977 sought to replace *Columbus Day* with *Indigenous Peoples’ Day*. The 2012 GA in Phoenix, based on efforts since 1970, condemned the *Doctrine of Discovery* justified by *Papal Bulls* since the 1400s, which applied to both the US and Canada, and which is a justification for *Columbus Day*. This leads to how *Thanksgiving Day* in Canada (October) and in America (November) is understood. While the typical remembrance of both reflects national exceptionalism, there are many on-line resources to consider decolonizing Thanksgiving. Some Indigenous People in Canada call it “*Your Welcome*” Day, while some Native Americans have replaced Thanksgiving with a *Day of Mourning*.

A theology of remembrance must also reflect on whose memory is being considered. As the circle becomes more diverse and inclusive, theology becomes both more challenging and more important. In the wheel of the year, consider widening the circle through consideration of *Heritage and Identity Recognition Days and Months*. Make room at the Welcome Table for one more person, concern, understanding, and more.

Source: Touchstones

Small Group Discussion Guide

Theme for Discussion Remembrance

Preparation prior to Gathering: (Read this issue of the journal and *Living the Questions* in the next column.)

Business: Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

Opening Words: "Intellectually, she recognized the summer could've lasted only so many days, but, in remembrance, it seemed to last epochs, from the creation of the Milky Way to its expiration. Not because the time was dull but rather it was ...fun and so life-affirming, it could've been a magical potion concocted to revive the dead. Even in her advanced age, she could see that time, so clearly delineated in ... mental snapshots, frozen in bliss, which neither age nor time could mar their perfection." Ray Smith

Chalice Lighting: (James Vila Blake) adapted (In unison) *Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.*

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Read the Wisdom Story: Take turns reading aloud parts of the wisdom story on page one.

Readings from the Common Bowl: Group members read selections from *Readings from the Common Bowl* (page 3). Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

Sitting In Silence: Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

Reading: "'Wisdom springs from life experience well digested,' Erik Erikson once noted. All too often we are so

busy that we don't take time to savor our experiences and let them simmer in our consciousness. At least once a decade, we should stop and take a look back at what has happened to us. Or as Jean-Paul Sartre put it: 'There is a magic in recollection, a magic that one feels at every age.... In remembering we seem to attain that impossible synthesis... that life yearns for.'"

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Living the Questions: Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving on.

1. What are your earliest childhood memories? How accurate do you think they are? Why? How useful?
2. What role did family stories play in your life? Do you retell these? Why or why not?
3. How might you have been formed by your autobiographical memories?
4. Have you encountered situations when your memory of an event varied with the memory of someone else? Why might this happen?
5. Do you remember smells and sounds? Do smells or sounds trigger memories for you?
6. Have you ever walked into a room and forgotten why you went there? Were you able to remember the reason? How?
7. Have you learned important things about history that you did not learn in school? How has this impacted you?
8. Do some long-ago memories "pop" into your mind mysteriously? Can you share an example?
9. Why is remembrance important? Personally? As a community? As a society?
10. What are some things as a society that we should never forget?

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person who claimed time.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice: (Elizabeth Selle Jones) (In unison) *We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*

Closing Words: Rev. Philip R. Giles (In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*

Becoming a Leaf

Remembering the Connection

Thích Nhất Hạnh

Seven years after the death of my mother, I woke up suddenly one night, went outside, and saw the moon shining brightly. At two or three o'clock in the morning, the moon is always expressing something deep, calm, and tender, like the love of a mother for her child. I felt bathed in her love, and I realized that my mother is still alive and will always be alive. A few hours earlier, I had seen my mother very clearly in a dream. She was young and beautiful, talking to me, and I talked to her. ...Our mothers and fathers continue in us. Our liberation is their liberation. Whatever we do for our transformation is also for their transformation, and for our children and their children.

When I picked up the autumn leaf and looked at it. I could smile, because I saw the leaf calling back through a multitude of her bodies.... Then I looked at myself, and saw myself as a leaf, calling back countless bodies of mine to be with me at that moment. We can do that by dissolving the idea that we are only here and now. We are simultaneously everywhere, in all times.

When you touch the soil here, you touch the soil there also. When you touch the present moment, you touch the past and the future. When you touch time, you touch space. When you touch space, you touch time. When you touch the lemon tree in early spring, you touch the lemons that will be there in three or four months. You can do that because the lemons are already there.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/14059>



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