

Talking about grief (attempt at column 13, shortest to date)

It is good to speak about grief. Speaking may be the best way to process grief. That is precisely why it is important that next of kin come together when saying goodbye to a loved one. To speak together, reminisce, supplement each other's stories, comfort each other, laugh and cry. It is evidence of a disturbed relationship with the deceased and perhaps even with humanity as such, when the family expressly states that:

[1] they do not care about rituals, [2] as far as they are concerned the body of the deceased does not need to be repatriated, [3] they have no need at all to attend a funeral [in a distant land] - in the midst of strangers, all entangled in their own grief, in which they had no part, and [4] they prefer to dwell on the death of the deceased themselves, among themselves, on their own terms.

Yet that is what everybody was able to read in a newspaper recently, written by Karin Spaink, well-known columnist and sister of the well-known harpsichord builder and musician Martin Spaink, who died abroad. It was not fiction, but the personal processing of her grief at the actual death of her brother. It was already the second column she wrote about his death. A third column followed this week in which she tries to justify her previous columns to people who told her that such things do not belong in a newspaper.

While rituals are important, it may be understandable that people can think very differently about them. In addition, there are, of course, many factors that can be decisive in the choice of where to say goodbye to the deceased. But the last two points boil down to the fact that the family does not want to meet friends and loved ones of the deceased. They do not want to talk to them, they just want to think about his death, among each other. In fact, they do not want to accept who the deceased really was. At the same time, this reluctance, including all the associated misunderstanding, is extensively communicated in a newspaper with anonymous people who have neither known the family nor the deceased.

It is difficult to see the three columns as anything other than a psychological twirl of the writer, who misuses her readership as a therapeutic sounding board. It should be noted that this sounding board is infinitely worse than a real therapist. After all, a real psychologist will not only support her, but also try to guide her. True, so did the people who criticized her. But they will not continue, let alone complete the therapy. Ultimately, they will leave her alone

in her truth, precisely because they have neither known the family nor the deceased.