



This is one of the drawings made by Maria Helena Villas Bôas Concione. Trees galore... a variety of delightful trees especially drawn for our colleagues from the Gerontology Department at São Paulo Catholic University (PUC-SP).

Infinitude in Religion: When One Life Is Not Enough

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ABSTRACT: *Death can be interpreted as a social and historical product. In the context of spirituality death is constructed as a transcendence of life and becomes a passage to the other side, while establishing a continuity of life in the world unseen. Books self-described as Spiritists and/or Spiritualists published in Portuguese within Brazil's prevailing religious pluralism tell the epopee of spirits, whose spiritual evolution requires numerous reincarnations aimed at ongoing changes toward its improvement.*

In this process, death is nothing but a passage in the Life of a spirit who gradually progresses through stages to erase its finitude from an "embodied" to a "disembodied" spirit.

Keywords: *Finitude; Religiosity; Life-Death; Old Age.*

Introduction¹

The issue of death and human finitude has always been an unassimilable, unsettling question even to the extent that when one needs to say the word death or thinks of it, it is often through the death of others. The awareness of death, knowing that our existence on Earth is ephemeral, is perhaps the element that allows one to experience the sense of emptiness produced by this fatality of life. According to Rodrigues (1983, p. 21), "the void of death is felt first as an interactional void," since we express and experience our existence through the world of social relations. There are many classifications for death (natural death, death by murder, peaceful death, violent death, etc.) and different rites of passing according to each group culture. A movement is thus established in the presence of this reality that changes in time and space. Death in this sense becomes a social and historical product. Over time, religious consciousness has sought to provide a set of projections and explanations aimed at guiding human behavior in the face of the unknown – the afterlife.

Far from being a neutral or transparent process, the 'mention of death' becomes almost impossible. It lies within the realm of the forbidden, of the improbable to the individual itself, who believes to be always infinite in the world - 'non-dieable' or non-susceptible to death. Death as a taboo of an object, a ritual of sorts, inexorable to the living being. Acknowledging one's finitude is playing with such interdiction that intersect, become stronger or balanced weaving a complex web or source of senses that does not cease to act and move directions (Lodovici, 2008), according to the register within which finitude is constituted.

In fact, grappling with finitude is cause of much anguish for human beings, anguish in the face of the unknown to which they must inexorably yield as a form punishment or expiation of the original sin (Chauí, 2001, p. 302).

¹ This is the English version of the similar article published before: Resende, Lodovici, & Concone (2012).

Therefore, anguish arising from the transience of earthly life has led individuals to a direction that serves as a soothing balm to them: "to the belief in immortality and acceptance of the supernatural, the sacred, the divine" (Spider & Martins, 2000, p. 331).

Indeed, the symbolic world on which culture is based, be it the culture of a society or of any community, can include in its scope – and usually does – the choice of religiosity to explain or suppress black holes. Religion is sought through a dynamic reorganization of human beings and their surroundings caught in a situation that can make them a victim of the chaotic world.

Therefore, seeking the religious environment represents the attribution of meaning to the demands imposed by everyday life – including death which is made peaceful – while finding ways to soothe the feeling of anguish once it arises. Overcoming the suffering underlying human finitude is, therefore, a driving force for those seeking religion. Its discursive effects atone and reconcile man with life and death. Acceptance of the enunciation of death is less that which simply conveys a system of religious affiliation than that for which one wishes to gain power to explain death. Anyone can use that power, although some are commercially inclined to abuse that power.

Issues such as Finitude/Infinitude are often hidden rather than talked about. Without a shadow of a doubt just the thought of death immediately and almost invariably brings great anxiety to anyone. Furthermore, it has to be taken into account that in the Brazilian culture people do not make any preparation for death. We simply push it away and keep it locked up. However, it knocks in our lives every now and then. When it is the death of someone not emotionally close to us, it does not trouble us too much, but when an elderly dies it is undeniable that the presence of death begins to creep in on us. As one gets older, death becomes an issue that requires prompt elaboration.

In Brazil, the prevailing religious pluralism found in the country offers multiple routes to individuals providing them with a meaningful conception of reality and of their worldview, thus relieving them from suffering and pain in the face of the imponderable and death. The meaning of death must be acknowledged so that the meaning of Life is acknowledged. And while one thinks of the right attitudes towards Life, one should also think of "building a variety of attitudes towards death" (Concone, 1983, p. 36).

The Brazilian religious pluralism became even more plural throughout the twentieth century, when we moved from the Catholic hegemony to an altogether different picture: the 2010 census in Brazil showed a decline of over 20% in the percentage of Catholics and an increase in followers of other religions.² In recent decades, Spiritualism³, and Evangelical religions witnessed a steady numerical growth (Medina, 1998). If taken in a generic sense or within the spirituality domain, Spiritualism is the third most popular religion in Brazil according to data provided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). Although still modest in numbers when compared to Evangelicals and Catholics, Spiritualism is a little explored area by academics according to Social Sciences researchers (Stoll, 2003; Milani Filho, 2009; Betarello, 2010).

One might point out that literate and popular Catholicism was introduced to Brazil through the hands of Portuguese colonizers, while the popular expression has traditionally incorporated new elements here. Protestant Christianity (numerically insignificant among us) was initially brought to Brazil by the Germans and other Europeans. The matrices of the so-called Afro-Brazilian religions came from the hands of the slaves brought in from Africa. Kardecist Spiritism arrived in Brazil in the second half of the nineteenth century and experienced a different trajectory from that of Afro-Brazilian religions like Umbanda, which appears in this study through one of the Spiritist authors analyzed.

As Lewgoy (2001) notes, Spiritism in Brazil is still a literate and rational religion, “(...) adopted by the elite of Brazil’s pre-republican period.” The dissemination of Kardecism in Brazil occurred in a virtually opposite manner to the entry of African religions, which arrived with the slaves through cultures from the African continent considered to be “primitive”. Kardecism was brought in by free men, scholars and intellectuals straight from the European continent, more precisely from France.

² It is not our aim to provide an in-depth overview of religions in Brazil. However, some words seem to be useful to introduce readers to this field.

³ Spiritism and Kardecism are used in this article as synonyms. The term Spiritism is used to designate the doctrine originally proposed by Allan Kardec in mid-19th century. Designations such as White Table Spiritism or High Spiritism are sometimes used to describe the original doctrine of Allan Kardec. Terms such as Umbanda Spiritism or Lower Spiritism are sometimes used to describe the religion created in Brazil in the 1920s. The term Spiritism is capitalized in this study as it is an institutional name.

Based on the belief of the survival of the soul and the existence of communication between the living and the dead through mediumship, the Spiritist doctrine first arrived in Brazil around the second half of the nineteenth century (Raphael, 2008). The effect of those ideas on our culture and the strengthening of commercial and cultural ties between France and Brazil led to the proliferation of Spiritist séances, such as table turning or using a glass of water to summon spirits, in many places across Brazil like the Rio soirees (Medina, 1998). As a religion, Spiritism has attracted an increasing number of Brazilians from all faiths (Raphael, 2008).

The basic tenet of Kardecism is the belief in spirits and in the communicability between the worlds of the living and the dead (the visible and the invisible or the world of spirits and men). This doctrine presents itself as a science and also as a philosophy and religion. As a science, its goal is to study the profile or some aspects of human beings characterized as "embodied" and "disembodied". As a philosophical and religious system, Kardecism seeks to understand the processes of construction of the identity leading to the examination of the notions of reincarnation, karma, evolution, mediumship, and probation, which are central to the Spiritist cosmology.

Suffering, including the pain of physical loss, may be accepted with a sense of serenity in Kardecism and is relieved through religion. This is ratified by Berger (1985), who states that in important moments of life the sacred order appears as a reordering of chaos through the assignment of meanings. Therefore, religion plays a facilitating role for people who are in critical situations to understand the unexplained facts of life and admit what, without religion, would be inconceivable.

Suffering in Spiritism is largely explained by the principle of reincarnation and karma. In Spiritism, the facts are established as coming from the simple law of cause and consequence or action and reaction. It seeks to explain, for example, the process of disease as a response to the misguided behavior of individuals whether or not under the influence "disembodied" spirits. The structure of everyday life, its relationships, its suffering, the question of death and finitude are thus explained from the perspective of reincarnation, which appeases human beings as it postulates the infinitude of spiritual life.

Death is merely a transition to other dimensions, and this kind of message is transmitted by various Spiritists⁴ in media texts. Messages such as:

Death is not the end. Separation is transient. Let him or her who passed away to move on and allow yourself to live in peace. Death is only a change of state. After dying, we go on to live in another dimension⁵ (Gasparetto).

Renowned Brazilian authors corroborate the prevailing spiritual premise that views death in a non-finite sense or as a continuity of life, also expressing the unsaid in the verse, i.e., what lies outside what is said. Therefore, we will allow ourselves to rephrase a perspicacious saying, *mutatis mutandis*, by our late writer Guimarães Rosa⁶: "Of Kardecists' assumptions many seem to avail themselves of what was not proper to be done".

In this regard, our poetry fits into a few verses written impetuously (*à tire-larigot*) in the slipping of the senses by one of our greatest poets of today, Mario Quintana (1906-1994):

How beautiful, Eternity, deceased friends / to the slow tortures of Expression!...⁷

Birds of the Night! Wings of Horror! Fly away! / May the light, as trembling and sad as a woe, / The light of the dead never goes out, ever!⁸

Therefore, numerous examples from Brazilian literature are consistent with Spiritists' premises, their belief in the pre-existence of the soul and the vague intuition that it derives from another world to which it aspires as an instrument of progress and spiritual evolution.

Death is no longer an end in itself and one life is just not enough. Therefore, the survival of the soul after the body and its departure from the spiritual world to be subsequently reincarnated are expressed and explained by establishing a continuum with its return after death to that very world of spirits.

⁴ Many people in Brazil say they are Spiritualists and not Spiritists, thus avoiding any implied endorsement to a particular doctrine. Religious choice has not overcome discrimination and consequent stigmatization that have historically targeted Spiritism across the country as per Pinheiro (2004).

⁵ Quote taken on March 20, 2012, from <http://www.imotion.com.br/frases/?p=12110>.

⁶ This reference is quoted from the Foreword to the book *Tutameia* by João Guimarães Rosa: "Of books many seem to avail themselves of what was not proper to be done" and especially from Orlandi, E.P. (1983, p. 124).

⁷ Quintana, M. (2006). Quote from the poem "Quando eu morrer e no frescor de lua". In: *Quintana de Bolso: Rua dos Cataventos & Outros Poemas*, p.23. Porto Alegre (RS): L&PM.

⁸ Quintana, M. (2008). Quote from the poem "Da vez primeira em que me assassinaram". In: Carvalho, Tania Franco. *Mario Quintana: Poesia Completa*, p.101. Rio de Janeiro (RJ): Nova Aguilar.

The physical body is seen as "a garment" that human beings try on during their earthly life to achieve their future condition of evolved spirits, given that we live as immortal spirits (Xavier, 1944).

Through the extermination of death, Spiritists and Spiritualists – as is the case of Umbanda followers – build a peculiar temporal and spatial expression pattern to allow the continuity of life on another plane – the world of the dead.

Spiritist and Spiritualist Literature: Where Death Does Not Exist

Our study centered around two pre-texts: the nature of the topic being proposed and the scope of the analysis of narratives. In short, if we recapture the spiritual perspective we can make considerations about the different meanings of death and how this issue is dealt with in some Spiritist and Spiritualist narratives.

We refer to novels constructed with a certain degree of verisimilitude that often have dual authorship: that of an "embodied" spirit who is the author of the narrative offering concrete ways for the story to go public through a process called psychography, and that of a "disembodied" spirit, the real narrator who is situated in a privileged position and is responsible for narrating the story and bringing meaning to life-death suffering. Such pedagogy has great impact on readers, but we believe that the greatest appeal of these stories is the fact that they present the continuity of life after death. The task we set ourselves in this research project was to perform reading and discourse analysis of some of these books, while combining two study perspectives: the anthropological and linguistic approach as a means to discern the worldview and the ethos from beliefs such as Spiritism and Umbanda, as well as the place where issues of life and death lie and their meaning effects on people. Death is no longer an end in itself and one life is just not enough (Lodovici, & Concone, 2011). Therefore, the survival of the soul after the body and its departure from the spiritual world to be subsequently reincarnated are expressed and explained by establishing a continuum with its return after death to that very world of spirits.

One notes that, in Spiritism, communication with spirits is very present and the narratives generated around it range from simple episodes and messages from deceased relatives to the most complex stories.

The authors (spirits) relate quite plainly what life is like in the world of the "disembodied" (the afterworld) and the whole dynamics of spirits' life in their intervention in the material or corporeal world. In this kind of narrative contents take on an aura of "factuality" (Geertz, 1989), "religious factuality" which becomes the narrator of spiritual phenomena. About this, the American anthropologist spelled out the following comment:

(...) religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." (Geertz, 1989, pp. 104-105)

Few Spiritist narratives in the context of psychography deal with the history and performance of Umbanda. The psychographed novels written by Robson Pinheiro (1998; 2004; 2006) are an exception. In the words of the author, his writings were meant for Umbanda and the work of Afro-Brazilian spirits (*pretos-velhos*, *exus* and *caboclos*) to be viewed with less prejudice and discrimination by followers of Spiritism.

It is the author's wish to contribute to breaking taboos among Spiritists about the roles that some Umbanda entities play on the domain of both the "embodied" and "disembodied" spirits. The very terms "embodied" and "disembodied" represent the continuity of the spirit, human immortality revealing itself at one or another instance.

While the facts in Robson Pinheiro's narratives (1998; 2004; 2006) take place in the realm of the "disembodied" (the After-Life or spiritual space, whereas the narrators are "disembodied" spirits who describe "the world on the other side"), in Zíbia Gasparetto (1998, 2008), the stories – actually dramas – take place in the world of the "embodied" (the here and now and the material spatiality). As they address each of the spaces as "here" and "there" or "beyond" (Gasparetto); and "world from this side" (the earth's crust) and the "world from the other side" (the astral world) (Pinheiro), a counterpoint between the closest and the farthest space is established, thus signaling the place from where the authors talk about.

It is evident that some authors talk about doctrinal meaning and rebuilding religious life, namely, seeking its foundations in Kardecist tradition and in the revolutionary charisma of its faithful followers (such as Chico Xavier).

Others talk about "having word of truth in itself", allowing themselves to be imbued by this popular prophecy which, under the action of spirits, allows the original Spiritism to renew itself or do differently in each time or place. In short, the signs are certainly not stable nor constant, nor absolute. They are relative and movable depending on the place from where the narrator speaks and the narrated events are told.

From the perspective of "Geography of Religion", as postulated by Godoy (2009) and used in this study to analyze the Spiritist novels, the issue of spatiality through narratives is discussed. To Godoy, narrative spatiality comprises the relationship between the spiritual and the earthly plane. One can at once say that the spaces inhabited by spirits or the "disembodied" in Pinheiro (1998; 2004; 2006) are quite numerous and different: there are various spaces inhabited by different groups of spirits and the more evolved can travel between them in a solidary manner. In these astral spaces, there are points of reception of newly "disembodied" spirits in need of help. These spirits are welcomed in "hospitals" (or "rescue chambers") by evolved spirits who make it their mission to help them.

Pinheiro (2004) also talks about a space – a kind of “limbo” [our quote] – made up of dense energies situated between the higher spheres and more subtle energies and the world of the "embodied". This desolate place, which is outlined in dark colors, is a sort of "astral mud" in which the suffering spirits are immersed. This place also features an "oasis" of help where the higher and selfless spirits roam. The bleak astral space, as described by Pinheiro, is akin to the psychography of Xavier's letters (1944) where he describes the landscape of the "umbral region", as can be seen in his book *Nosso Lar* ("Our Home):

I was convinced that I would not belong to the number of the embodied in the world and, nonetheless, my lungs were taking long breaths. [...]. My hair bristling, my heart pounding, this enormous terrifying fear sweeping over me, I would scream like crazy many a times [...]; but when the unforgiving silence no longer absorbed my stentorian voice, moving laments louder than mine would respond to my cries. Sometimes sinister laughter tore through the quietness of the place. Some unknown companion was, in my view, prisoner of my own madness. Diabolical shapes, whitish faces, animalistic expressions would emerge from time to time aggravating my dread and fear.

The landscape, if not totally dark, seemed bathed in this greyish light as though shrouded in thick fog that the bright sun rays would warm up from afar (Xavier, 1944, p. 17).

The Spiritist doctrine tends to spread through narratives such as that shared by Pinheiro (1998; 2004; 2006) and the like coming from the astral world and viewed as real in the public fancy. But in our view this happens by sharing a single and identical set of discourses [the ones systematized by Kardec] and of individuals [followers of Kardecism] whereby its reciprocal relation of belonging is defined. Apparently, the only condition required is the recognition of the same assumptions and axioms, and the acceptance of a certain rule or law that is more or less flexible – that of reincarnation and communication with the dead in accordance with validated discourses.

The Spiritist versions, such as described by Gasparetto (1998, 2008) through fictional narratives created in the earthly world, are addressed as optimistic messages to those who seem to have no voice or representation in the world for their suffering in the face of pain and death. But would the author listen to those voices of the deceased thus validating her discourses? Is it then possible to talk about a different status for death in Spiritism and in the spiritual field? How to measure the effects of meaning of a Spiritist or Spiritualist discourse on death for human beings? These questions seem to be sufficiently answered in the narratives mentioned so far.

Therefore, in Pinheiro (2004, p 25) there is an array of perspectives on death, offered through the spirit of Angelo Lucio, in which he advises on the petty differences taken to the after-death realm:

God in His infinite goodness established death as a great universal leveler. Rich or poor, powerful or humble, they are equal in death. But you who are filled with prejudice and discontent to the point of persisting with religious differences even after death ... why not welcome the spirits of the *cablocos* and *pretos-velhos*? Are they not children of the same God?

The explicability offered by Spiritism to show all its strength to people experiencing misfortunes (death, loss, illness, pain, etc.) combined with descriptions of the Umbanda and Spiritist traditions are viewed as the sum total of actions to the benefit of both "embodied" and "disembodied" individuals.

When Spiritist novels are analyzed, Geertz' argument is accepted in that we are conducting "third hand" interpretations to say the least; in fact, in Robson Pinheiro's (1998; 2004; 2006) texts quoted in this study, one can think of "fourth hand" interpretations. The first interpretation is that of a "disembodied" spirit (Sérvulo) who narrates the facts "as they occurred" to a second spirit (Angelo Inácio), who will then make the second interpretation and narrate new facts as experienced by him. Finally, this second "disembodied" spirit in its capacity as a mentor will pass on the information and reflections to the medium (Robson Pinheiro) who will then psychograph them. As Geertz said (1989), this is our fourth hand interpretation seeking densification through an expanding repertoire drawn from each of the previous interpretations.

When one compares the vast Kardecist literature with the scarce Umbanda (Umbanda-friendly Spiritualist) literature, it can be said that Pinheiro is indeed a pioneer in Umbanda studies. The Spiritist literature with regard to number of publications and sales has made millions of books available to readers with a wide range of authors represented by their mediums. Psychographed books are the flagship of the Spiritist literature with numerous works dictated by "disembodied" spirits. Such books have achieved significant sales, i.e., more than 25 million books were sold by Chico Xavier, more than 7.5 million by Divaldo Franco and over 5 million by Zibia Gasparetto (Stoll, 2005). On the other hand, books that deal with Umbanda as the central theme are not as numerous. This kind of venture, according to Pinheiro, is like walking on thin ice as it is faced with a huge prejudice from Spiritist followers who treat Umbanda as "lower form of Spiritism". Yet even with this stigma, Pinheiro's book, *Tambores de Angola* ("Angola Drums") (1998), reached impressive figures with over 130,000 copies sold by April 2009. The book pioneered a new approach to Umbanda as a Spiritualist novel and three books psychographed by the author motivated our research for this study: *Legião: um olhar sobre o reino das sombras* ("Legion: A Look at the Kingdom of Shadows") (2006); *Aruanda* (2004); and *Tambores de Angola* (1998).

Pinheiro, as well as all authors whose narratives are quoted in this study, allows us to find base reiterations that are common to Spiritist and Spiritualist books, whether in their approach to death, old age, suffering or illness, where there is always an effort to find explanations for such events, or at least – as Geertz might say – they do not lose their 'explicability'. Therefore, suffering and disease are attributed to the responsibility of the sufferers and reinstated in their biography which, as mentioned here, *does not end in one lifetime*.

In the three Pinheiro's novels analyzed in this study, his approach tends to establish that Umbanda activities and the role of male and female priests are important, differing, however, from Kardecist activities. These differences stand out as a key point, activities performed on distinct energy levels, while the "denser" levels are intended for Umbanda Spiritualists and the "subtler" levels for Kardecist Spiritists who work together for the spiritual welfare of their "brothers."

On the issue of death and relationships of those who remain with those who depart to another dimension – the non-earthly dimension – the Brazilian Spiritist Gasparetto seems to be attuned to Pinheiro's perspective, as per the following excerpt from her books:

Life needs to be renewed. Death is the change that triggers the renewal. When one parts from this world, many things change in the structure of those who stay and, as a natural law, it is always a good thing... we have no power over life or death. It is inevitable... death is not the end. The separation is transient. Let it move on then and allow yourself to live in peace. Death is only a change of state. After it, we begin to live in another dimension.

Gasparetto also clarifies what it is like to live in the earthly dimension and what movement is necessary to go beyond it:

(...) Your physical body is just condensed energy for a limited period of time, which is ever-changing. When that time is up, it will return to its previous state. Its elements will form new bodies, according to the laws of life, while you will still keep your astral body in its natural path of evolution...

From the perspective of Pinheiro's novels, Umbanda has come to fulfill a role. The role of rescuing those who need to be helped and purified, so as to speak, to ensure their spiritual evolution through knowledgeable spirits, enlightened entities who, thanks to their charitable detachment and their boundless love, albeit rational and realistic, are willing to give up their "perispiritual" forms to assume the forms of the *preto-velho* and *cabloco* spirits. In this sense, the emergence of Umbanda is explained within the Spiritualist rationale.

In the novels we analyzed, aspects of disorders presented in the characters' lives are explained by the reincarnation paradigm as a basic principle, followed by the spirits' lives within a geographic space from "Beyond". It shows death as a passage to spiritual life, which is eternal, while life on Earth is presented as one precariously finite moment of redemption of erroneous attitudes from previous lives. From this perspective, reincarnations are learning opportunities to develop the spirit or, in other words, the many lives are seen as possibilities for the evolutionary process of human beings. A disease is nothing more than situations created by the relationship of the spirit world in the "Beyond" realm with "embodied" individuals who become imbalanced through awareness of their mistakes or by action of vengeful spirits.

In Robson Pinheiro's psychographed books that we researched, the focus is always on the action of spirits on the "embodied" or on attitudes such as pride, vanity and selfishness that undermine the emotional and physical health of human beings.

Our brother is someone who is deeply committed to the laws of life. He opened his mental field and he forged an alliance with the destructive forces of black sorcerers. Such evil spirits caused the collapse of the nervous system of our brother, who, unable to resist the mental irradiation of wizards from darkness, fell into a coma after clinical manifestations of difficult solution to the medicine of men. Today he is detached from his body and has been lying in a hospital bed for many days (Pinheiro, 2004, p. 181).

The activities performed to study death, promote the recovery of health and the healing process are in fact not denied in the author's novels. They are described as the sum total of the efforts of spirits working on the astral plane – the space from Beyond – together with the activities developed by physicians on the earthly plane:

We left the hospital entrusting the boy, who was already feeling better, to the spiritual staff in charge of that environment. There were many cases that deserved special attention, but that we would leave up to the members of other spiritual teams helping at the hospital... (Pinheiro, 2004, p. 215).

Therefore, religion and religiosity can offer, and often do, a way of grasping reality that seeks to provide relief to suffering, pain and death. From this perspective, explaining the facts of life within the boundaries where traditional science cannot yet explain can be found in alternative response systems of a magic or religious nature.

Final considerations

Death as a social and historical event prompts many interpretations and has many nuances. In the religious context, death is ritualized and re-signified, while Spiritists and Spiritualists build another world to live given that the immortal spirit is a reality of life for them. From this perspective, humans are just passing through Earth given that the bigger reality is the world of spirits. There is no idea of annihilation. To them, the dead communicate and may come to the world of the living through apparitions and mediums in an intense co-existence between the visible and the invisible.

The explicability offered by Spiritism is guided by the law of action/reaction and cause/effect, placing on the individual the responsibility for their problems, including their illnesses. Thus causality is introduced in the production of human events. In this scenario, the healers on the astral plane along with the physicians on the earthly plane follow a consistent joint action approach (Giglio-Jacquemot, 2006). A medical practice where science, technology and the world of life intersects (Souza, 2006).

Therefore, the change that takes place is a process of resignification capable of giving meaning to suffering or anguish in the face of death, while integrating it into a human biography that is not measured by a lifetime. The Spiritist literature points to the possibility of many lives, or multiple reincarnations, which makes the concept of life not only finite but also mutable. In this regard, Zíbia Gasparetto says:

Life is an eternal now and we will continue to be what we have made of ourselves wherever we live. Facing our difficulties here and now and doing our best is the key to building our peace⁹.

Paraphrasing Geertz (1989, p.120), we can say that to a "foreigner" or "visitor", a religious manifestation may have an aesthetic or research value. To the believer, on the other hand, a religious manifestation is the materialization, interpretation, and realization not only as a model of what they believe, but as a model of their belief.

Moral and aesthetic (*ethos*) aspects and cognitive aspects (worldview) of this form of spirituality appear clearly in the selected novels: infinitude, the communicability between both worlds, and the moral saga of the evolution of the spirit are fundamental elements. From these elements, everything can ultimately be explained, including challenging events such as death, which may be cause for suffering and distress if lacking a plausible explanation.

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Received on August 1st, 2012

Accepted on August 10, 2012

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