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Uma só língua, uma só bandeira, um só pastor: Spiritism and Esperanto in Brazil

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1. Introduction

Humankind has perennially attempted to recover—or construct—a utopian language, shared by all, which would unify us into a single family, thereby diminishing political and religious strife. Long before the time of Jesus, the prophet Zephaniah anticipated a messenger who would bring us a pure language so that we could better serve God (3: 9). Various religious groups, such as the Bahá'í Faith, the Ōmoto-kyō religion in Japan and Wŏn Buddhism in Korea, believe in the need for a universal language, or support the adoption of an international auxiliary language. In this study I explore the beliefs of a group in Brazil, the Spiritists (Kardecists), who with great faith have embraced Esperanto as the solution to this language problem. Although it is not the central tenet of their religion, the connection between Brazilian Spiritism and Esperanto provides a textbook case of symbiosis, in which the language serves as more than a proselytization tool. I intend to present the most important texts on this topic from the vast corpus of Spiritist literature, and will propose some interpretations as to how this relationship might have developed.

1.1. Principal Characteristics of Spiritism

Before examining the texts, I think it necessary to provide some background on Kardecism, since it has received relatively little scholarly attention—unlike its Afro-Brazilian relatives, the *candomblé* and *umbanda* movements.[1] I am employing Hess's definition of Brazilian Spiritism as the movement identified with the writings of Allan

[1] *Umbanda* spiritism is a synthesis of Afro-Brazilian religions and Kardecism which first appeared in the 1920s. Although many sects exist within *umbanda,* it is primarily a religion of the less educated, urban lower classes in which white magic is ever present. *Umbanda* recognizes not only the saints of the Catholic Church but also *orixás* (Yoruba deities), and accepts the spirits of *pretos velhos* ('old blacks'), *caboclos* (Amerindian spirits) and *exús* (trickster Yoruba spirits). The religion has no organized movement as a whole, so practice varies widely from center to center. Most Spiritist intellectuals draw a sharp distinction between their own movement and philosophy and those of *umbanda* and *candomblé* (Hess 1994: 15). In fact, the Kardecists openly attacked *umbanda* as "an inferior African fetichistic cult" until their great spirit guide Emmanuel, through medium F. C. Xavier, told them in 1953 that "The work of Umbanda, when oriented towards charity, is also laudable" (qtd. in McGregor 1966: 210–211). For more information, see Hess (1994: 17, table 1); Hess (1991b: 14–15); Bastide (1967); McGregor (1966: 160–220); and Oliver (1998).

Kardec (1987: 15). Allan Kardec is the pseudonym of Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail (1804–1869), who was born a Catholic in Lyon, France, but educated in Protestant Switzerland under the famous pedagogue Pestalozzi. After completing training as a teacher, Rivail returned to France, where he taught French, mathematics and sciences at various schools.

Around the years 1854–55 the "talking table" fad swept through the salons of Europe, and Rivail—who had previously studied phenomena such as hypnotism, sleepwalking and clairvoyance—began investigating the occurrences, although most participants were interested in these "spiritual phenomena" only for frivolous reasons. At the outset, Kardec was skeptical. He did not envision creating the foundation of a spiritist religion but simply wanted to verify whether the phenomena were authentic. Being neither a mystic nor a medium himself but a man of science, Rivail turned the parlor games into serious study sessions; for more than a year, he posed questions to the spirits, gathering data from multiple sources and checking answers collected through one medium with those from another (McGregor 1966: 108).

The result of his work was *Le livre des esprits* (1857), which by the time of its twenty-second and definitive edition, collated 1,019 answers to questions Kardec directed to the spirits. Kardec systematically organized the answers which he received from many different spirits. He concluded that the spirits are not gods, nor are they infallible; rather, "as souls of men, the spirits did not have complete wisdom or science, that their knowledge was limited to their degree of advancement and that their opinions had the value of personal opinions only" (qtd. in McGregor 1966: 109). Kardec hypothesized that there are various classes of spirits which are unequal in power, intelligence, wisdom or morality (1983: introd., sect. 6, x–xi).

Thereafter followed the other four works which make up the *codificação* ('codification,' as the Brazilian Spiritists call it): his "scientific" texts, *Le livre des médiums* (1861) and *La Genèse, les miracles et les predictions* (1868); and his "moral-religious" texts, *L'Évangile selon le spiritisme* (1864) and *Le ciel et l'enfer* (1865) (Hess 1987: 30n4).

Kardecism today is a religion, science and philosophy. Kardec himself did not consider spiritism a religion but rather a philosophy rooted in science that has a Christian moral basis (Hess 1991b: 16; 1994: 79). He viewed spiritism as the product of the Spirits' teachings, as something continuously evolving, not as the immutable fruit of his personal revelation. Kardec advocated reason and open-mindedness, and his system encourages the empirical validation of its claims.

Kardecism was introduced into Brazil in the mid-nineteenth century (for further information, see Hess 1987; Machado 1983; and McGregor 1966: 86–102). After establishing itself, it took on a religious character and in fact possesses the elements of a religion: a founder; an organized church with unified ritual (Bastide 1967: 6–7); and a unified philosophy (based on the *codificação*). As Spiritism is a complex system, it is impossible to present an in-depth analysis of its beliefs here. However, I will briefly summarize some of its basic tenets. Spiritists believe in the existence of the "perispirit," a semimaterial body which unites the spirit to the physical body. They believe that communication with discarnate human spirits is possible via spirit mediums. Through the mechanism of reincarnation, we intellectually and morally progress towards perfection—this progression is governed by the law of karma. Spiritists also accept the phenomenon of healing through spiritual energies (hence we have practices such as the *passe* ['pass, laying-on of hands'], *desobsessão* and *médiuns receitistas* ['homeopathic mediums']).[2] As Christian charity is considered the supreme virtue, the Kardecists perform many charitable activities: they operate hospitals and dental clinics for the poor, food pantries, orphanages, nursing homes, vocational schools and shelters for the homeless. These services are typically provided free of charge. The Spiritists' fundamental credo is "Fora da caridade não há salvação" ('Without charity there is no salvation'). Although Bastide notes that such Spiritist institutions are in part a means of proselytism, he believes that primarily "Elles [i.e., ces institutions] sont la preuve que le spiritisme est une foi vivante, tournée vers l'amour du prochain" (1967: 7). Great emphasis is placed on moral and spiritual improvement through study of the codification, as well as Francisco Cândido "Chico" Xavier's writings (McGregor 1966: 213).

Spiritism has faced the hostility both of Brazil's mushrooming Protestant sector and of the Catholic Church. In part this is because Kardecism rejects some basic Christian tenets, such as the trinitarian concept of God, the divinity of Christ (although Jesus is regarded as the spiritual leader of Earth and the guide and model for all humanity), the divine nature of miracles, the physical reality of heaven and hell (Kardec believed they are simply psychological states created by the mind), and the existence of angels and demons (Hess 1991b: 17). One of the religion's most vocal critics is Franciscan theologian Boaventura Kloppenburg, who spearheaded an antispiritist campaign in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He argues that Spiritism is "necromancy and magic" practiced by uneducated people who "are not qualified to distinguish the truth from error" (1967: 771; for further criticism, see Itioka 1988: 101–140 and Santiago 1986).

Unlike the practitioners of *umbanda*, who tend to be working-class mulattoes or blacks, Bastide reported that adherents of Spiritism are predominantly white, conservative urbanites who are middle-class (1967: 8–9). Hess contends that although this statement is largely true, it cannot be reduced to a simple formula because there is tremendous variation in ethnic and class membership among Spiritist centers (1987: 16). He points out the long history of internal splits within the Brazilian movement over the issue of Spiritism-as-religion versus Spiritism-as-science (1987: 16; 1991b: 18–19; 191–199). Those with college educations (such as physicians, lawyers, engineers) tend to be more interested in the scientific side of Spiritism—e.g., psychical research—and chiefly study *The Spirits' Book* and *The Mediums' Book*. The nonintellectuals, who comprise the vast majority of the movement, focus more upon the day-to-day charitable activities of the Spiritist centers; they emphasize *The Gospel according to Spiritism* and the evangelical works by the spirits Emmanuel and André Luiz, such as *Há dois mil anos*, *Paulo e Estêvão* and *Nosso lar* (Hess 1994: 12).

[2]For additional information, see Kardec (1983: introd., sect. 6, ix–xiv); Cavalcanti (1990); Hess (1991b: 15–16); Negrão (1987: 260). *Receitista* mediumship is primarily a phenomenon of the first decades of the twentieth century (Hess 1987: 19). One of the anonymous readers who evaluated this article points out that now all Spiritist centers which belong to the state-level federations do this type of homeopathic prescription only if there is a legally licensed physician nearby.

Accurate data on the number of Kardecists in Brazil is difficult to find, and its validity is subject to question. The *Statistical Abstract of Latin America,* using figures from the 1990 census, reports the total population of Brazil as 150,368,000; of that number, 4.8 percent—7,217,664—are classified as "Spiritist" (Wilkie 1999: 335). (However, this category includes practitioners of *candomblé*). The most recent volume of the *Anuário estatístico do Brasil* which I have been able to consult gives a figure of 1,538,230—based on a sample of 1980 census data (1989: 72). Maust cites two sources: W. Robert McAlister, a Pentecostal bishop, estimates the figure at 30 million but says the true number is likely to be much higher; C. Wesley King, director of the Free Methodist Seminary of São Paulo, estimates that up to half of the Brazilian population is connected in some way to Spiritism (1985: 48). (Note that these two informants include all non-Christian groups in their counts: Kardecism, *umbanda* and *candomblé*).

These statistics exhibit such wild variability for several reasons. Many Spiritists also declare themselves to be Catholics, especially for social purposes such as christenings, marriages and funerals (Negrão 1987: 261). Indeed, Ludwig remarks that historically *umbanda* has not been recognized by the census as a separate religious denomination, and therefore *umbandistas* are officially listed as Roman Catholic (1985: 38). It is not unusual for people identifying themselves as Catholic to participate occasionally in Spiritist sessions, especially if they are seeking help for a sick relative or desire other sorts of consolation. Spiritists may choose to remain uncounted because they wish to avoid backlash from Christian evangelicals or even from fellow Esperantists. As one member of the "Spirito" list observed, Esperantists are always welcome in Spiritist circles, but the converse is not always true; some intolerant Esperantists ridicule Spiritists for their beliefs.[3]

To avoid conveying the misimpression that Spiritists are persecuted because of their religion, it bears stating that all but a small percentage of Brazilians have a tolerant attitude towards these movements. Brazilians have been able to easily reconcile the contradiction between rationality and Spiritism; for example, Jorge Amado belonged to both the Communist Party and a *candomblé* temple. Carpenter observes that an essential element of Brazil is its "pluralistic religious culture characterized by porous boundaries between distinct traditions, by a tolerance of diversity, and by a predisposition towards experimentation and innovation" (1999: 243–244). Sociologist Pedro Ribeiro de Oliveira has documented the widespread incidence of multiple religious affiliation among the Brazilian population. He presents the improbable but true example of Dona Maria, a respondent he met while conducting census work in the interior of São Paulo state. When questioned about her religious life, Maria recounted how she was born a Catholic but converted to Pentecostalism after becoming a widow. Beset by persistent splitting headaches, she sought relief through Spiritist healing sessions, although she said that if she were completely cured, God willing, she would return to Catholicism (1977: 557–558).

[3] "Spirito" is an Esperanto mailing list devoted to discussion of Spiritist principles as formulated by Allan Kardec, the diffusion of Spiritism outside Brazil and related topics. For information on how to subscribe, consult `http://groups.yahoo.com/group/spirito`.

Anyone who investigates Spiritism in Brazil quickly learns the importance played by the book in spreading their message and serving as a guide to the faithful (Camargo 1961: 121–123). There is a huge corpus of Spiritist literature, much of which is in the form of "psychographed" texts written by spirits via spirit mediums. As Hess observes, there is a wide variety of genres represented: scientific, political and historical texts; novels; poetry as well as devotional literature (1991a: 219). Often, this literature consists of the stories of spirits whose variety of experiences through successive incarnations can serve as an example, warning or encouragement to the reader. Such literature tends to be overlooked by scholars because it falls between the cracks of literary studies, which brand the texts as too "popular," while anthropology and folklore consider that they are too "middle-class" and "elite" (Hess 1991a: 220). In the next two sections of this article, we will delve into this corpus to examine several Spiritist texts relating to universal language.

2. Spiritism and Universal Language

The Esperanto movement in Brazil—one of the world's largest—receives much of its support from Spiritist groups, which actively promote the learning and use of the *internacia lingvo*. The germ of this project was a tangential observation by anthropologist David Hess that the Kardecists believe their doctrine holds universal appeal, but are aware of Portuguese's marginalized status among European languages; therefore, they regard Esperanto as an excellent vehicle for conveying their Spiritist-Christian message (1991b: 189). I am indebted to him for sparking my initial curiosity, but my research indicates that this statement is only partially correct.

The actual situation within the Spiritist community is more fluid, and I propose that there is not a single reason but a variety of interrelated ones: partly doctrinal, partly from evidence in spirit communications as well as from the efforts of pioneering Spiritist-Esperantists such as Ismael Gomes Braga, Francisco Valdomiro Lorenz and Porto Carreiro Neto. The Spiritists believe that their doctrine and Esperanto complement each other, and that both play a role in the divine plan for Earth's progressive transformation.

A reasonable point of departure is to see what relational basis exists in the *codificação*. In *Le livre des esprits*, we learn that one day Spiritism will become the world's common creed, and that it will mark a new era in human history:

> Certainement, il [i.e., le spiritisme] deviendra une croyance vulgaire, et il marquera une nouvelle ère dans l'histoire de l'humanité, parce qu'il est dans la nature et que le temps est venu où il doit prendre rang parmi les connaissances humaines ... (Kardec 1983: bk. 3, ch. 8, question no. 798, 356).[4]

In the foreword to this same work, Kardec cites the words of the higher spirits, who gave him the mission of writing the book:

> "Occupe-toi avec zèle et persévérance du travail que tu as entrepris avec notre concours, car ce travail est le nôtre. Nous y avons posé les bases du nouvel édifice qui

[4] "It [Spiritism] will certainly become the general belief, and will mark a new era in the history of the human race, because it belongs to the natural order of things, and because the time has come for it to be ranked among the branches of human knowledge ... " (Kardec 1976: 309)

> s'élève et doit un jour réunir tous les hommes dans un même sentiment d'amour et de charité . . . " (1983: xxxiii).[5]

In *La Genèse*, chapter 17 is entitled "Predictions of the Gospel"; item numbers 31 and 32 recall the text of John 10: 16, which states: "And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, one shepherd" (1999: 1222). The spirits' responses interpret the biblical text to mean that not only will there be religious unity but linguistic unity as well:

> Cependant, l'unité se fera en religion comme elle tend à se faire socialement, politiquement, commercialement, par l'abaissement des barrières qui séparent les peuples, par l'assimilation des mœurs, des usages, du langage; les peuples du monde entier fraternisent déjà, comme ceux des provinces d'un même empire; on pressent cette unité, on la désire. (Kardec 1980: 215)

Another piece of evidence which is often cited in Spiritist writings is a communication from the spirit Éraste, "De l'origine du langage," which was published in the November 1862 issue of *La revue spirite*. According to this highly evolved messenger, language is a gift from God. It has evolved progressively throughout the three great periods in human history: the barbarous phase; the Hebraic or pagan phase (when slavery was sanctioned by Jehovah, who also demanded sacrificial victims); and the Christian phase. Thus one can gauge how civilized a people is by how rich its language is (352). In the fourth great period of history, the "grande période spirite," there will be one common language:

> Ce que je peux ajouter, c'est que l'humanité marche à une langue unique, conséquence forcée d'une communauté d'idées en morale, en politique, et surtout en religion. Telle sera l'œuvre de la philosophie nouvelle, le Spiritisme, que nous vous enseignons aujourd'hui. (Éraste 1862: 352)

2.1. Spiritism, Esperanto and the *Interna Ideo*

Although Esperanto is not specifically mentioned in the texts above, Spiritists believe that their religion cannot spread on a worldwide scale without Esperanto's collaboration. According to Kardec, spirits continually progress toward perfection, and virtues which make such evolution possible include love for one another, altruism, acquiring knowledge, mutual respect, community, friendship and tolerance. Therefore we should not be surprised that Spiritists acknowledge the common ground between their ecumenism and the *interna ideo*. Esperanto and the Spiritist value system dovetail because of their attempts to promote peace as well as greater harmony in earthly relations.

Just as Zamenhof addressed himself to idealists, people who were capable of taking the long view rather than a short-term, selfish perspective, campaigners such as Ismael Gomes Braga did likewise. In one of his numerous articles promoting Esperanto, Braga wrote that although only God knows when the language's final victory will occur, it has partially triumphed because the most studious and forward-

[5] "Be zealous and persevering in the work you have undertaken in conjunction with us, for this work is ours. In the book you are to write, we shall lay the foundations of the new edifice which is destined to unite all men in a common sentiment of love and charity . . . " (Kardec 1976: xlviii)

thinking people have already learned the language of their own free will, unlike the masses who do only what they are required (1947b: 182).[6]

Although Spiritists realize that in and of itself Esperanto is a neutral force—like the press or radio—which can be used for good or ill, they still value the unitarian goal of its inner idea: "In and of itself Esperanto does not have religion, but it is as if it carried with it the germ of all religions and of all movements which work for the understanding of people of all races" (Bianchini 1997: 3).[7] Ismael Gomes Braga, affectionately known as the "Brazilian Zamenhof," was an accountant and autodidact who mastered six languages and learned Esperanto by correspondence as a teenager. He was one of the first to emphasize the similarity between Zamenhof's noble ideal and that of Spiritism. In 1937 he convinced Guillon Ribeiro, then-president of the Federação Espírita Brasileira (FEB), to found within the organization a Department of Esperanto and to appoint him as its director—a post in which he served until his death in 1969 (Wantuil 1971: 19). Braga initiated a two-pronged campaign, using the concept of *linhas paralelas* ('parallel lines'), to teach Esperanto to Spiritists, as well as to teach Spiritism to Esperantists. The didactic materials, such as F. V. Lorenz's *Esperanto sem mestre* (1938), were neutral in religious and political realms. His idea was that by promoting Esperanto among Brazilian Spiritists, they could use it in service of the doctrine; via Esperanto translations of important Spiritist works, Esperantists could study Spiritist doctrine and become familiar with its teachings.[8] One of Braga's most influential articles presents the need for this parallelism:

> It is necessary for Spiritism and Esperanto to be imparted along parallel lines so that these two movements, when united, might further the great transformation of the world which they are destined to accomplish. Spiritism alone cannot work on a worldwide scale, as is necessary; it suffers from linguistic limitations, it is divided into weak national and regional movements. Likewise, Esperanto alone cannot transform human mentality because it lacks a higher philosophy of life. Only by the union of the two, with Esperanto serving as a channel for Spiritist ideas, will the great objective be reached. (1947a: 210)

In later years, Braga received several spirit communications that his task—as well as that of many others—was to work for the triumph of the triangle "EEE"; that is, the triple ideals of "Evangelho, Espiritismo, Esperanto" (Wantuil 1971: 21). Even today this symbol is popular in Spiritist organizations and summarizes FEB's agenda. The

[6] A recent anthology of Braga's articles, compiled by Celso Pinheiro, has been published under the title *O esperanto na visão espírita* (1998).

[7] All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. Due to space limitations as well as the assumption that this journal's readership is unfamiliar with Portuguese, I have translated all Portuguese-language material into English. If anyone wishes to read the originals, I will gladly furnish them on request.

[8] Braga's campaign was successful. FEB's *relatório* (annual report) for fiscal year 1945-46 noted that the organization received many letters from Esperantists abroad, praising Porto Carreiro Neto's Esperanto translation of *The Spirits' Book*. These people, who would not ordinarily have picked up a book on Spiritism in their native language, find that their unfavorable stereotypes of Spiritism are false. They are impressed with the translation's impeccable style, and as they read the work carefully, they discover that Spiritism is in fact a cultured and serious movement (1948: 198).

organization's logo, which appears on all its commercial publications, recalls this triple ideal by emphasizing the lowercase letter "e" with boldface type.[9]

A recent development is the International Spiritist Council's historic decision to adopt Esperanto as one of its official working languages. This Council (Conselho Espírita Internacional in Portuguese, or CEI), founded in November 1992, is an organization resulting from the unification, on a worldwide scale, of representative Spiritist associations from approximately sixteen countries. At a meeting in Montevideo, the CEI also created an "Esperanta Fako" to promote the study of the language within the Spiritist movement, with the stated goal of using Esperanto as the primary language of the upcoming World Spiritist Congress in 2004 (Aragón 2000: 3). (This will mark the bicentennial of Kardec's birth)

3. Spirit Communications Favorable to Esperanto

3.1. Emmanuel's "Missão do Esperanto" (Esperanto's Mission)

The Kardecists have evidence from spirit communications, received by well respected mediums, that praise Esperanto and prophesy the *internacia lingvo*'s importance in the afterworld. Although there is a limited number of such texts, they are accorded great prestige. The most highly regarded is the tract "Missão do Esperanto" ('Esperanto's Mission'), which was dictated to the famous medium Francisco Cândido Xavier[10] by the spirit guide Emmanuel in January 1940. While visiting family members in Minas Gerais, Ismael Gomes Braga had the opportunity to travel to the city of Pedro Leopoldo and attend a session of the Grupo Espírita "Luiz Gonzaga," to which Chico Xavier belongs. Aware of Braga's efforts to promote Esperanto, Emmanuel chose this occasion to transmit the following communication. Although not reproduced in its entirety, I quote it at some length due to its importance among the Spritist-Esperantists:[11]

> . . . Jesus declared that he did not come to our planet to destroy the Law, just as Spiritism in its form of Comforter did not arise to eliminate existing religions. The Master came to fulfill the principles of the Law just as this comforting doctrine comes to restore Truth and return hope to our hearts at this terrible time for the world, when all its moral values are fundamentally in danger, assaulted by the doctrines of violence which intoxicate the brain of present-day civilization, as a bitter poison destroying the energy of an aged body.
>
> Likewise Esperanto did not come, friends, to destroy the languages used in the world for the interchange of ideas. Its mission is higher: unity and fraternity with the goal of universal unity. Its principle is concordance and its apostles are equally comrades of all who have sacrificed themselves for the divine ideal of human solidarity, whether in these or in other circumstances.

[9] Personal communication, Affonso Borges Gallego Soares, May 1996.

[10] For more information on "Chico" Xavier, see McGregor's *Jesus of the Spirits* (1966: 120–136) and the article by Barbosa, "Chico Xavier e cultura" (1994). He is of humble background from Minas Gerais state, with minimal formal education. Although his psychographed books have sold millions of copies in Brazil, he has always refused to accept any money from his books or his work as a medium.

[11] Ismael Gomes Braga translated this message into Esperanto and it is published as part of Lorenz's anthology *Voĉoj de poetoj el la spirita mondo* (1944: 19–21).

> The auxiliary language is one of the most forceful calls to brotherhood which is still being heard on our planet, impoverished of spiritual values, in the current moment of isolationism, autocracy, collective egoism and of falsified nationalism . . .
>
> Indeed, at this time Esperanto is a force which acts for unity and harmony, because it facilitates the exchange of universal values, in a universal form. A dream? Only a propaganda of words? A new movement to create economic profit? These suppositions might be uttered by inattentive spirits; but, only by inattentive ones who await a general adherence in order to later express their preference. However, those who search for the light of sincerity to examine all matters will know to find in the Esperanto movement that revealing clarity, which in sacred efforts, from now on will clarify the world's ideas, emphasizing the nobility of its principles guided by that brotherhood which springs from the divine thought of Jesus for all works of human evolution.
>
> Yes, Esperanto is a lesson in brotherhood. Let us learn it in order to explore, on Earth, the thought of those who suffer and toil in other fields. I say literally "Let *us* learn it," because we are also your comrades, who have acquired the universal expression of thought, and we desire that same spiritual good for you, so that in this fashion we might organize on Earth the most effective movements for unification.
>
> God is worshipped by men in numerous languages, which the sects and religions use, all of them tending towards the marvellous plan of essential unity. Let us copy that wise effort of divine nature and march towards the synthesis of expression, despite the diversity of the procedures by which thoughts are expressed . . . (Xavier 198?: 2–3)

This text draws some interesting parallels: Esperanto's intent is not to destroy existing national languages, just as Spiritism did not arise to eliminate existing religions. As Esperanto's *interna ideo* looks beyond the linguistic diversity which separates people, and instead focuses on our common humanity, Emmanuel likewise notes that Earth's numerous religions all share an underlying unity. The message in effect sanctioned the pro-Esperanto work already done within the Spiritist movement by affirming the language's higher mission, recommending its study, and stating that those who spread it contribute to the world's moral and spiritual evolution.

3.2. Castelo Branco's *Memórias de um suicida* (Memoirs of a Suicide)

Another reference to the brilliant future awaiting Esperanto is found in the novel *Memórias de um suicida*, dictated by the spirit Camilo Castelo Branco to the medium Yvonne A. Pereira.[12] Castelo Branco (1825–1890), certainly one of the greatest Portuguese prose writers of the nineteenth century, says that it is not a literary work but rather fulfills the sacred duty of warning against suicide, by telling the truth about the "abyss" (Pereira 1958: 46). Castelo Branco did indeed commit suicide, due to his ill health and impending blindness, as well as despondency over his son Jorge's insanity.

Camilo's spirit languishes for some time in the "Valley of the Suicides," a Dantesque environment with no sunlight, oppressive air, and not even a moment's serenity to remember God. This punishment is carried out in the "hell" of his conscience,

[12] Pereira chose to call the narrator Camilo Cândido Botelho, despite Castelo Branco's desire to reveal his true identity (1958: 8). The title page of this work's Spanish translation (1973) attributes its authorship to the spirit of Castelo Branco. An Esperanto translation (*Memorigaĵoj de sinmortiginto*) by Affonso Borges Gallego Soares was published in 1998 by the Spirita Eldona Societo F.V. Lorenz.

because God's mercy would never condemn anyone to a physical Hell for all eternity (Pereira 1958: 26; 227). After being transported to the "Colônia Correcional Maria de Nazaret," he is hospitalized there for three years and receives magnetic treatments from physicians to restore harmony and balance to his perispirit, as well as anti-suicide lectures and teachings on the soul's immortality. The narrator and the other suicides learn that they will be reaping the consequences of their rash action for one century or even longer.

During the next stage of Camilo's spiritual progression, he moves on to the Pavilhão Indiano (also known as the Mansão das Rosas) where he decides to participate in an "initiation course" (Pereira 1958: 188ff). In part three of *Memórias de um suicida*, the narrator continues his studies and apprenticeship in the magnificent, luminous metropolis called "Esperança" ('Hope'). Among the courses offered there are Christian Morality, Universal Science, and a new language destined to bridge the gap between people on Earth and the spirits:

> ... And even a new language, which would not be simply one more language to be used on Earth as an ennoblement of the wealthy, as a frivolous ornament for whoever might have sufficient monetary resources to buy the privilege of learning it. No! The language whose sign surprised us there, would be the definitive *language* which in the future would bring the relations between men and the Spirits closer together, by facilitating understanding, removing the barriers of incomprehension which exist between humans and contributing to the fraternization devised by Jesus of Nazareth:
>
> *Uma só língua, uma só bandeira, um só pastor!*
> 'Only one language, one banner, one shepherd!'
>
> That language, whose absence among the Brazilian mediums had made it impossible for me to dictate works of the scope I desired, thereby making the task of my rehabilitation more laborious, possessed a name attuned to the sweet relief which cleared our minds. Its name, like that of our village, was *Esperança* ('Hope'), and over there, next to the others, was the majestic building where it was taught, accompanied by the fraternal recommendations for which it was conceived! Thus it would benefit us to learn it, so that when we reincarnated—carrying it imprinted on the innermost part of our souls—we would not have difficulties exercising it on Earth. (Pereira 1958: pt. 3, ch. 1, 415–416)

Although Castelo Branco's spirit remained in Cidade Esperança for ten years, he had not yet learned Esperanto, so one of his final acts before reincarnating again is to enroll in a course at the Embaixada Esperantista. The embassy is situated in a higher sphere of the astral world:

> I was still lacking the fraternal language of the future, that priceless token of Humanity, which will tend to envelop it in the broad unification of races and peoples fraternized for the conquest of the same ideal: progress, harmony, civilization illuminated by Love! The study of Esperanto was optional, as were the other studies and duties we would have to embrace, but the initiates in particular recommended that we study it, attaching great importance to it, inasmuch as that language, whose symbolic name is the same as our University City, that is Esperança—Esperanto—will resolve problems even in the afterlife, enabling elevated Spirits to communicate efficiently and brilliantly, by means of literary and scientific works which the earthly world will tend to receive from the Invisible in the near future—using mediumistic instruments who will also have prepared themselves with that faculty, so that they can attend to the imperatives of the mission which—in Christ's name and for the love of Truth and of mankind's redemption—they must carry out.

> Now it extraordinarily befitted my interests in general and my spiritual interests in particular, that while on the invisible plane, I acquire that new knowledge, i.e., the language "Esperanto." Upon reincarnating, carrying it imprinted on the luminous fibers of my perispiritual brain, at the opportune moment the intuition of relearning it would come to me, when I came into contact with Earthly teachers. In addition, I was informed that I would be a medium in my next existence and I pledged to work, once reincarnated, to disseminate celestial truths to Humanity, despite the specter of blindness which I must suffer as a consequence of my past. I meditated profoundly on the convenience which would come from a universal language between men and the Spirits, and whose convenience I myself, as a future medium, would use in favor of the cause of Brotherhood—Christ's same cause—once my intellect possessed such a treasure! (Pereira 1958: pt. 3, ch. 7, 546–547)

Curiously enough, the earthly neutrality of the Esperanto movement is preserved in the afterworld; unlike the other schools in Burgo da Esperança, the directors of the Esperanto course are neutral with regard to philosophical and religious beliefs. They are innovators and idealists striving for improved social, commercial and cultural relations, who are assisted by illustrious figures from the past such as Victor Hugo (Pereira 1958: 549–550).

3.3. F. V. Lorenz's *O esperanto como revelação* (Esperanto as a Revelation)

Francisco Valdomiro Lorenz (1872–1957) is another founding figure in the Brazilian Esperanto movement.[13] Although of humble origin, he was a remarkable polyglot who was acquainted with 104 languages at the time of his death; he had a working knowledge of 80—including Sanskrit, ancient Egyptian, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic. He wrote on a variety of topics: spiritism, linguistics, astrology, fortune telling and homeopathy. After emigrating from Czechoslovakia to Brazil in 1891, he eventually settled in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul state, where he worked as a schoolteacher and farmer. He had learned Esperanto in its infancy in 1887, and maintained a correspondence with Zamenhof. A medium himself, Lorenz received an anthology of spirit-poetry entitled *Voĉoj de poetoj el la spirita mondo* (1944). This volume—which cannot be discussed here in detail due to space limitations—contains Esperanto-related poems by writers of various nationalities: Czech author Stanislav Schulhof (1864–1919), Brazilian poet João da Cruz e Souza (1862–1898), and even Dr. Zamenhof himself.

Two years after his death, the spirit of Lorenz dictated a series of ten messages to Chico Xavier; these were published with the title *O esperanto como revelação* (Xavier 1994: 130–159). In this work, Lorenz systematically outlines the language problem in the spirit world and affirms some earlier claims by Gomes Braga. In the lower spheres, closest to Earth, the Spirits also experience the curse of Babel. They only understand those who speak to them in a language they know, and remain clustered with members of their own linguistic group. (This is in contrast to the more evolved spirits inhabiting the higher spheres, who do not need a particular language to communicate among themselves; they convey their thoughts directly via telepathy. Thus two perfectly attuned spirits can communicate mind-to-mind, and

[13]For more information on Lorenz, see Wantuil (1969: 337–339) and the contribution by Pinheiro (1994: 80–115).

the language will always be that of the receiver).[14] According to Lorenz, spirit experts in linguistics unsuccessfully tried to create an international language, until "a great missionary of light, devoted to mutual understanding" took up the problem (Xavier 1994: 144). This spirit, whom we know by the name Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof, toiled for fifty years in the spirit world to create Esperanto, with the help of higher spirits and divine inspiration (Xavier 1994: 146).

Zamenhof faced numerous difficulties on Earth; he worked in isolation as an amateur linguist, lived in poverty, possessed no great library or famous teachers, and his idea was ridiculed as sheer folly. Yet he persevered, and the Esperanto movement continues slow but steady growth despite previous attempts to eradicate it. In the Spiritists' opinion, this is proof of the language's higher origin—especially when one considers the fate of the innumerable auxiliary languages which barely went beyond the drawing board. Zamenhof was born at precisely the right time and place where he could fulfill his mission. One might speculate whether the end of the nineteenth century was in fact the most opportune time for an IAL to take root, when people were comparatively well educated, longed to broaden their cultural horizons but were still idealistic and naïve. Two World Wars have shattered that idealism; we are perhaps too cynical for a newly created language project to meet with any success.

Lorenz notes that although Esperanto is not a religious discipline, it is a "fascinante chave de percepção" ('fascinating key to perception') which accomplishes the charitable task of facilitating understanding and building a better world (Xavier 1994: 152). The *internacia lingvo* prepares us for our journey into the wider world:

> Any trip, beyond the boundaries of our fatherland, in which we develop ourselves, requires preparation.
>
> It is useless to prepare a passport for an illiterate to attend courses at the University of Paris, just as it is unpleasant to place someone in the wonderful scenery of the Swiss winter without a shred of wool.
>
> To learn Esperanto, teach it, practice it and disseminate it are contributions to the edification of a United World. (Xavier 1994: 152)

3.4. Zamenhof's Divine Mission

Further evidence of the elevated status accorded to Dr. Zamenhof is found in Yvonne Pereira's *Devassando o invisível* ('Penetrating the Invisible'), a book in which she discusses some of the phenomena she has experienced as a medium. She recalls that one of the "better dressed" and most beautiful spirits she observed was Zamenhof, clad in his characteristic wool suit. He was surrounded by a halo formed of concentric waves, which was a sign of his "elevated intellectual work"; his perispirit was highlighted by a jet of brilliant green light, also in concentric form (1963: 53). Two poems in Lorenz's anthology *Voĉoj* center around the historic date July 14 (New Style date, July 26), and draw an unusual parallel between the fall of the Bastille in

[14]See, for instance, Cristiano Agarido's article "Babel no mundo dos espíritos." (Agarido is one of the numerous pseudonyms used by Ismael Gomes Braga). This phenomenon is also confirmed in André Luiz's novel *Nosso lar*, psychographed by F. C. Xavier (1986: ch. 24 "A Soul Stirring Appeal", 85; ch. 37 "The Minister's Lecture", 138–140), as well as Zamenhof's poems "Vizio de l'estonteco" (Lorenz 1944: 67) and "Leciono de frateco" (Lorenz 1944: 69).

1789 and the publication of the first Esperanto textbook in 1887. “Du gloraj datoj,” by the spirit-poet identified only as “K.,” tells how just as that date in French history signalled the birth of liberty, almost a century later in Eastern Europe it was also a red-letter date:

> duan daton la Mond-Historio
> skribis per idealisma mano
> tre modesta de spirit-titano,
> alportante al la mond’ donacon,
> tre kapablan enkonduki pacon
> en internaciaj vivrilatoj. (1944: 60)

Stanislav Schulhof’s poem entitled “14.ª de julio” complements the poem by K. and clarifies that the “gift” referred to above is the *Unua libro*, Zamenhof’s forty-page booklet introducing the fundamentals of his new language (Lorenz 1944: 96).

In *Mediuma poemaro*, a second anthology of spirit-poetry psychographed by Luís da Costa Porto Carreiro Neto,[15] we find a poem by the spirit Agar entitled “Du datoj” (1972: 112). The poet makes an analogy between Jesus’s humble birth in Bethlehem and that of Zamenhof, “a heavenly messenger,” born on December 15, 1859 (Old Style, December 3). We should remember these beautiful dates, because both messengers preach love—one through the Gospel, the other through Esperanto:[16]

> Alproksimiĝas la kristana dato:
> Infan’ Jesuo nun en Bet-Leĥem;
> Sen trumpetado, kiel simpla frato
> De ĉiuj homoj, kiel Dia Sem’.
>
> Baldaŭ revenos ankaŭ dat’ alia:
> Venis grandulo por misi’ sur Tero
> De kunfratiĝ’ en mondo senkonscia,
> Li, Zamenhof, ĉiela kuriero.
>
> Ne forgesiĝu tiuj datoj belaj,
> Al ili sonu nia fajra kanto;
> Predikas Amon fontoj du ĉielaj:
> Evangelio kaj nun Esperanto.

[15] Porto Carreiro Neto (1895–1964) was a professor of chemistry at the Escola Nacional de Engenharia and the Escola Nacional de Química for many years. He is famous for his brilliant translations of literature and doctrinal works of Spiritism, as well as for his lexicography work (the *Dicionário português-esperanto*, 1936). He was elected to the Akademio de Esperanto. Porto Carreiro Neto possessed a working knowledge of seven languages and was also an international chess champion. For additional information, see Wantuil (1969: 553–558) and the introduction to *Mediuma poemaro* (Carreiro Neto 1972: 13–20).

[16] Spiritist-Esperantists are not the only group to elevate Zamenhof. In the Nov. 1998 issue of *Esperanto*, a one-paragraph item in its “Fake” section noted the following statement by Ryuei Samura. Mr. Samura, editor of *La japana budhano*, believes that Zamenhof is the embodiment of *Avalokiteshvara*, the bodhisattva of compassion. He achieved this high degree of holiness by his *homaranismo*, and could be called “Komunlingva Universale Savanta Avalokiteŝvaro” (202).

4. Conclusion

Many Esperantists are aware that Spiritism and Esperanto in Brazil are intertwined but are uncertain exactly how the two are linked. This introductory article has documented the symbiotic relationship between Brazilian Spiritism and Esperanto, in which the language serves a broader function than diffusing the group's message to the outside world. Spiritism is a philosophical-religious system which believes in the adoption of Esperanto as an international auxiliary language; it works toward this goal by actively promoting and teaching the language to its members. We have examined textual evidence from Spritist writings in an attempt to determine the reasons for this belief. In addition to statements from Kardec's codification, we have seen that a handful of spirit communications, received through reliable mediums, prophesy a bright future for the *lingvo internacia*. Emmanuel's "Missão do esperanto," Castelo Branco's *Memórias de um suicida* and Lorenz's *O esperanto como revelação* confirm the language's higher origin and its role in the divine plan for the world's transformation. As the creator of Esperanto, Dr. Zamenhof is viewed as a great Missionary sent to Earth by God, to hasten mankind's progress. Spiritist-Esperantists such as Ismael Gomes Braga, F. V. Lorenz and Porto Carreiro Neto labored tirelessly to spread this belief among their coreligionists, and emphasized the overlapping, complementary goals of Esperanto's *interna ideo* and Spiritism's aspirations for universal community. Given our partial state of knowledge in this area, I hope that this article may provide the basis for further field studies, such as: What was the net effect of these spirit communications on the growth of the Esperanto movement in Brazil? How many Brazilian Esperantists are also Spiritists? Conversely, to what degree are non-Esperantist Spiritists familiar with these writings? How effective are the Esperanto courses offered at Spiritist centers? What are the motivations and attitudes among their students?[17]

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