The Cult of the Dead and Leisure: Escaping Loneliness

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Abstract

In a society which welcomes expressive individualism, it is no surprise that religious expression bears the imprint of individual life stories. This is what we will discover from a case study examining the imaginary world of Kinkas, an elderly Brazilian in love with a soul from the next world. To what extent can symbolic relations with transcendence help to provide coping strategies for loneliness? And to what extent can leisure survive the cult of the dead?

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1. Kinkas, a "man of the souls"

I first heard of Kinkas through Denise, his niece from Rio de Janeiro. I was fascinated by the story she told me. Her elderly uncle, Kinkas, is a descendant of Portuguese immigrants who have been settled in Rio de Janeiro since 1910, when his father and uncle arrived to set up in the grocery trade. In the womb, Kinkas had the company of a twin brother, but their mother died from complications ensuing from labour, and his brother survived only a few days. His father remarried, a year and half later, and his new wife was to be Kinkas' adoptive mother. Close to 80 years old, Kinkas lives alone, in a single storey house in Niterói, typifying a life of loneliness sublimated by cultivating the memory of the dead. It is this remembrance that fills his life, clinging to the belief that the dead can make sense of his life. So Kinkas has been a regular visitor to cemeteries ever since the death of the mother who raised him. He now regards himself as a "man of souls". He is familiar with all of Rio de Janeiro's cemeteries, and has friends in all of them – from *Nova Iguaću* to *Baixada Fluminense*, *Maricá* to *Maruí*, not forgetting the most beautiful of them all, the *Cacuia* cemetery on the island of Governador.

When not with his souls, he has the company of more than a dozen cats and his faithful mongrels: *Júnior, Zé Pretinho, Cocota*

(the old lady of the pack), *Natacha* and *Garotinha*. And he never forgets the stray cats and dogs in the cemeteries. In their own way, these are also the cats and dogs of the dead, the faithful companions of souls. Kinkas rewards them with generous helpings of food. He avers that at the São Francisco Xavier cemetery alone, in Caju, there must be upwards of 500 cats. And on one trip he counted 55 dogs!

In the cemeteries he visits the graves of relations, friends, old colleagues from work, and public figures from the arts and politics. At home, he keeps books with all their names. Next to each name he records their date of birth and, if dead, a red cross which, he explains, indicates that they have left this life "for a better world". In the same books, Kinkas records his visits to the cemeteries, and keeps programmes for future visits. This way he can keep track of the frequency of his visits, and be sure, despite his failing memory, that he is keeping up with his self-appointed task.

On approaching a cemetery he always asks the souls' permission to enter "their home", and on leaving he thanks them for their hospitality. In amongst his souls, Kinkas chats away, swaps ideas. In his opinion, the souls like to have company, although sometimes they prefer to be let alone to rest. Like ourselves, the souls have good days and bad days. One day, his departed grandmother gave him a piece of her mind: "Kinkas, anyone would think you lived here!" Sometimes his frequent visits, and especially his nocturnal visits, can raise the guards' suspicions. Once, at the Maruí cemetery, a guard came close to manhandling him, taking him for a madman or a mugger. Kinkas felt he had been treated unjustly, but chose not to make a fuss. When his visit was over, he ignored the guard, and instead took his leave of the dogs, lying sleepily in the sun. Taking each one's paw, he addressed them with the civility he failed to find in the bad-tempered guard.

Proud of his origins, Kinkas is a frequent visitor to two Portuguese cemeteries in Cajú:

that of the *Ordem Terceira* and that of the *Irmandade de São Francisco da Penitência*. At the second of these, he has his fiancée, his "beloved" Etelvina Ferreira Simões, more affectionately called *Telvina*. He never met her "live", but he has no doubt that she was every bit as beautiful as she appears in her photograph, drop-dead gorgeous. In his interview with his niece, Denise, he averred: "Everything about Etelvina was lovely. Always from the waist up, because she's there, just the top half, see?" The fact that the picture of his *Telvina* is only a half-figure photograph doesn't stop him imagining the rest of her. Of course, Kinkas is acquainted with *Telvina's* family. They're all there in photographs. Even her departed husband, who long outlived her. Her closest family (in spirit) are all laid to rest around her (in flesh). All nice people. They never get in the way of the courting couple, gossip or interfere. They know when to be discreet and to leave the lovers alone. Kinkas converses passionately with Telvina, whispers endearments, cleans her "little face" and, when the time comes for a kiss, he persuades her departed husband to turn the other way.

There are codes of civility concerning visits to the dead, requiring particular clothing, prayers and offerings. There are special visiting days, such as All Souls'. There is also the possibility of having mass said for departed souls. But Kinkas doesn't hold with the commercialisation of salvation. Instead, he opts to meet the dead "live", to converse calmly with them. Why don't the other visitors speak to the dead people they have come to visit? Out of anger, stupidity or good manners? When they run away from Kinkas, taking him for a madman, we might ask: who is really mad here, Kinkas or those who run away in embarrassment? Kinkas doesn't mind, he likes to have the place to himself. Kinkas is left alone with his *Telvina*, and no-one – not even the dead – will disturb them. Whether or not they ever marry in a future reincarnation, there is no doubt that Kinkas' love for Etelvina is sincere and deeply felt. They have been courting for twenty years, living proof of the Portuguese proverb that "nothing is stronger than love

and death". On her birthday, and on the anniversary of her death, Kinkas spends the whole day, from dawn till dusk, in the cemetery. He never forgets the dates, engraved on her tombstone: born on 9 August 1888, died 17 February 1923. So Etelvina lived to be only thirty-five, leaving this world before Kinkas was even born.

In the photograph of Telvina, Kinkas sees her "in flesh and blood" – which is why he finds her so enchanting – and he hardly minds that the earth is consuming her. The photograph establishes not only a symbolic link with the observer. It also establishes an almost material and physical link with the person represented. So we can see that Kinkas gives himself up to his loved one through *fetishisation* and *idolisation*.

Normally, when we look at photos of dead people, past memories are reactivated, we recover past experiences, long assimilated, which the photos help us to recall. This is what appears to happen when Kinkas looks at photos of friends and relations. But something else is going on when he looks at the photograph of his *Telvina*: he launches into an imaginary world of desire, projection and possibility. This is what is known in psychoanalysis as *introjection*: imaginary incorporation into the self of a loved one. Contrary to what Barthes suggests, when he supposes that every photograph of a dead person contains the return of the dead (Barthes, 1998:24-32), the photograph of Etelvina provokes in Kinkas' imagination the presence of a living love, even though dead. Kinkas loves the body that the image represents, he loves the being that she allows him to imagine. When Kinkas kisses her, it is not the reality of her disappearance through death that matters. What matters is a magical conquest. A transfigured loved one, the object of an exclusive love that nothing and no-one can take away.

So, in sociological terms, why does Kinkas spend so much time seeking out the dead? According to Ariès (1975), cemetery visits are religious acts. It is true that signs of religious belief abound in cemeteries: crucifixes, saints, angels, altars and reliquaries. Cemeteries are amongst the most sacred sites in cities, despite now being under secular management. But whilst the cult of the dead was once a clearly public affair, it is today more of a private concern. This might explain why Kinkas individualises the cult, but it fails to explain why he has done so in this particular way.

When dealing with death in social anthropology, Cabral (1984: 356) cites a challenging hypothesis from Block and Parry (1982): "where there is no need to create a transcendental authority, the dead can be left in peace". This might lead us to ask: so why doesn't Kinkas leave the dead in peace? Is it a quest for "transcendental authority" that takes him to the cemeteries? Or is it simply the need to keep the memory of the departed alive? Or nothing more than a search for connection?

Authority – "transcendental or otherwise" – is based on some kind of dominance or obedience. But what is its legitimacy based on? Weber (1979) looked deeply into this question, discussing varying reasons for submission to authority. This submission may be induced by a set of interests or rational considerations of advantages and drawbacks (this is the *rational action* model, not so much rationally driven by values as using means to achieve given ends). Authority can also derive from custom or ingrained behaviour (the *traditional action* model). Or it can follow from affect, and personal inclination (*affective action* model). Religious authority is of the traditional type, according to Weber's scheme. Based on belief in divine, magic or spiritual power, religious authority is hallowed by tradition and by faithfulness.

The fact that Weber considered *affective action* as residual in relation to the first two categories is something that sociologists can question. It is residual because rational and traditional actions prevail in societies in thrall

to the power of reason, bureaucracy or tradition. The working hypothesis I would like to suggest is that in social fabrics with social loose ends, there may be a search for social reconnection through the social action model which Weber classified as *affective*. Alongside this hypothesis, we may consider that loneliness, dragging those who experience it down into the remotest depths of interiority – precisely the domain claimed for spirituality – may cry out for the presence of connections whose lack corresponds to the absence that is felt as loneliness.

Traditional authority rests on a persuasive legitimacy to which ritual lends strength. In the case of religious manifestations, it is ritual that generates the conviction that religious conceptions are true and that religious teachings are correct. The reproduction of ritual amplifies the consecration of religion through a multiplicity of ceremonial forms which range from reciting creeds to consulting oracles. But can ritual only survive under the yoke of traditional authority? What can we say about the strength of ritual which evades the dominance of traditional authority? What happens when the power of ritual is commandeered by the attempt to reinstate affect in an affective vacuum, as happens in certain forms of coping with loneliness? From a formal point of view, I am not convinced that the trappings of these various types of ritual are very different from each other. In both cases, the world as experienced and the world as imagined merge through the mediation of symbolic forms. The difference is that in the traditional form – the cradle of classic religious manifestations – we find a confluence of symbolic forms in an *ethos* whose celebrations are public in character.

2. The celebration of death and leisure

Let us look at how death is celebrated. There are societies where the dead are remembered, visited, called on and sanctified. In other societies, they are apparently forgotten. In this case, the celebration of death (Huntington and Mecalf, 1979) loses vitality, as a public act. But might it not persist as a private rite?

Let us leave the question in the air, whilst we recall what DaMatta (1991) had to say about the question of death, and in particular his proposal of a fundamental distinction between societies more concerned with death and societies more concerned with the dead. In modern societies, which are highly individualistic, death appears to be a fundamental concern: "once dispatched to their place", the dead person tends to be forgotten by his family and friends. Condolences and mourning are no more than ritualistic forms of recognising a break with a person, and nothing more. At the outside, the mourning period lasts a week up to the mass celebrated on the "7ᵗʰ day" after the death. The Brazilian anthropologist suggests that there is a close correlation between the "individualistic society" and death, in clear contrast to the predilection for the dead in what are called "relational societies" (tribal and traditional societies). In the latter, DaMatta (1979:150) argues, "individual or individualizing states are always classified as borderline or dangerous". What is more, "it could even be claimed that this borderline quality corresponds to loneliness and individualization in relational systems" (*Ibid.*). In individualistic societies, the relationship with the dead is seen as pathological, in DaMatta's words, "forgetting the dead is positive, remembering the dead is to take on a sort of pathological sociability" (DaMatta,1979: 146).

If we accept DaMatta's argument that Brazilian society is more "relational" than "individualistic", or, as this proposal's corollary, that it attaches more importance to the dead than to death, then the puzzle of Kinkas is solved. By prolonging the memory of the dead, he would be giving them a living form of reality. Kinkas fits the "relational" model to perfection.

There are clearly arguments in favour of the claim that the dead still occupy a special

position in Brazilian society, and also in other societies with a strong Catholic influence, such as Portugal. For example: the prayers and masses for the souls of the departed, the favours asked of these souls, and also the belief that the "souls in purgatory" move amongst us in the suffering of unfulfilled promises which they hope will be made good by the living – all this has a meaning: relational society survives the death of those who continue to belong to it, even after their death.

And in Brazil, attempts have been made to introduce festivities into the city of the dead. In recent years in Natal, the *Morada da Paz* cemetery has hosted artists' exhibitions, concerts and crafts workshops for children. In an interesting article on this subject, Milena Freire describes her rich ethnographic pickings:

> "Picnickers settled down between the graves, some of them drinking beer, showing how unworried they were by the setting. The relationship between mourners and the dead goes beyond the prayers: visitors sent messages heavenwards in hydrogen balloons, in an allusion to their relatives' new dwelling place" (Freire, 2004: 410).

This celebratory festooning of the city of dead takes place on a special day – *All Souls'*. But the lively social scene that accompanies it cannot be detached from other social events. In the first place, we should stress that this festive dimension has resulted from the commercialisation of death. The *Morada da Paz* cemetery belongs to the *Grupo da Vila*, a corporate group which also controls another cemetery (*Parque da Passagem*), five funeral homes, five funeral parlours, as well as a Family Welfare scheme and two Medical Clinics. The group has run an aggressive marketing campaign for the purchase of cemetery plots, using jokey slogans: "no complaints yet received", "the satisfied investor's resting place", "sure to come in handy one day" (Freire, 2004: 404).

But in any case, the cultural offerings provided for the frequenters of the *Morada da Paz* cemetery – the living frequenters, of course – transform the funereal location into a setting for social conviviality:

> "The mourners at *Morada* have constructed affective ties which help to relieve the social anguish of isolation […]. It is relatively common for them to swap telephone numbers and stay in touch" (Freire, 2004: 412).

If the assumption of "isolation" is valid, then we cannot exclude the hypothesis that the living seek in the city of the dead the affective relations they lack in the city of the living. In other words, the relational dimension persists, but in different scenarios. The dead are a pretext for new sociabilities and affect between people who have in common the loss of a family member or friend, who has left a gap which has not been satisfactorily filled. The relational dimension is not always the correlative of the absence of isolation, it can emerge as the effect of isolation, which also invades the city of the dead (where behavioural decorum is the norm), controlling gestures, postures, looks, speech. The visits themselves have set times.

The break with this normality is exceptional. The *Morada da Paz* cemetery is an exception, although it may point to a propensity for a relational society. And Kinkas' behaviour is also exceptional, which is why he is such a puzzle to other people who see him as a madman, a medium or a soul from another world. If Kinkas' relationship with his dead people is seen as pathological, this may point to difficulties in accepting strange relational forms. The same is true when certain spontaneous mass movements are regarded as pathological. For instance, in the case of the so-called "urban tribes", the gatherings which lend them support are not always welcomed by wider society, giving rise to their pejorative connotations (Pais and Blass, 2004). The actual emergence of the "tribes" is relational, contrasting with the individualism of those who condemn them.

In the city of the dead, the *relational* has given way to the *individual*. A striking feature

15

of many bourgeois cemeteries is the right to individualisation, often accentuated by marks of social distinction. This can be seen in the way the well-off have taken possession of the best located plots. The penniless are buried in depersonalised trenches in the cemetery suburbs, normally close to the walls. Individualisation can also be seen in the display of the name, date of birth, date of death, photographs, and private tastes in funerary art or architecture.

In addition, the fear that the "souls of the other world" come down into this world to importune the living, places limits on the "relational" premise. Any intimacy here should be interpreted as long distance relations between those on this side (the living) and those on the other (the dead). The possibility of the dead returning to the world of the living is viewed with apprehension. The fact that Kinkas asks the dead for permission to enter their cemeteries is a strong sign that the two worlds are separate. Indeed, cemeteries are located in contained spaces, *demarcated* by walls. The imposing entrance gates at certain cemeteries are a further clear mark of territorial demarcation. It is true that the city of the dead reproduces features of the city of the living. There are gardens, lawns, trees, roads, miniature replicas of cathedrals. But the worlds are separated. The world of the living starts where the world of the dead ends, and *vice versa*. The cemetery walls are physical frontiers which separate the two worlds. The gate denotes an *inside* and an *outside*. "Visits" to the cemetery bear witness to this transit between one world and another.

But for Kinkas, the cemetery is clearly the object of imaginary constructions which go beyond the motives of other visitors. When he is with his *Telvina*, Kinkas revels in a world of affect and fantasy. Schutz has taught us that fantasy worlds are constituted within finite scopes of meaning, placing certain dimensions of normal, or "everyday" life between brackets (Schutz and Luckmann, 2001). When Kinkas enters his fantasy world, he alienates himself, in a way, from the world outside his fantasy. The factual inconsistencies (how can a man fall in love with a woman who died before he was born?) don't matter. In a fantasy world, you can fantasise *whatever you like*. But as Schutz has warned us, you can't fantasise *however you like*. It is behind this *how* that a hermeneutics of – *ever you like* should be constructed.

The factual inconsistencies can be understood (if we continue to take Schutz's arguments into account) if we accept that the time perspective of fantasy worlds is different from the time perspective of the world of normal, everyday life. Fantasy beings dispense with a stable location in time. Fictionally, Kinkas can use all the distinctive characteristics of objective time however he likes. He can fantasise the course of events. He can bring the past into the present of his amorous fantasies. He can fictionally modify the bodily death of Etelvina into bodily life. He can raise the dead. In short, Kinkas can colour in the gaps in his existence with the most unimaginable content. And this content is lent a sense of reality. If he likes, he can fantasise his imagined realities as facts. In this scenario, the celebration of the dead takes on the marks of an individual type of affect, even when clothed in the rites characteristic of traditional religiosity. There is no paradox here. The world of religious things is partially imaginary and therefore lends itself easily to the free inventions of the spirit. In other words, religiosity is based not only on doctrinal modes of expression but also on imaginary modes (Whitehouse, 2000).

3. The understanding of fantasies

Looking behind *what* fantasies *are like* in order to understand *why* they come to exist, I would suggest that his visits to the cemetery are, for Kinkas, an affective experience which summons up *transcendence* – both in terms of a *spatial* ordering of the world, taken as an extension (the world of the dead, as opposed to the world of the living), and in terms of an ordering of *time*,

taken as duration. In this case, the time is transcended when Kinkas dips into his fantasy world. The experience of the death of family members and friends as a definitive "departure" from the world of life places limits on the intersubjectivity which characterises this world. The "departure" of loved ones drains the "world of life" of this intersubjectivity, which gives it life, in other words, the world of life fades away as the networks of intersubjectivity also fade. Unable to replace them, Kinkas seeks to keep them alive in the "world of the dead". In other words, he transforms the "world of the dead" into a world within "potential reach" to use one of Schutz's favoured concepts (Schutz and Luckmann, 2001: 41-108). The "world within actual reach" has essentially the temporal character of the present. The "world within potential reach" has a much more complex temporal structure.

Kinkas' problem is one of *how*: how can he recover the networks of intersubjectivity which included beings in his world (the living) who now belong to another world (that of the dead)? For Schutz, the world within "recoverable reach" is based on the past, on what was previously within "actual reach" but no longer is. The change takes place between a "before" and "now", the point of intersection of a system of coordinates that transformed a "here" into "there". What is Kinkas' challenge? How to transform the "there" – where the dead lay – into "here", resulting in the resumption of a lost network of intersubjectivity. The precondition for this to be feasible is for the current "there" to be transformed into a new "here", albeit imaginary. The world which was within Kinkas' reach in the past can now be brought into being, in the transcendence which occurs through transmuting the "there" into "here". But the "there" (the world of the dead) only becomes "here" when it permits intersubjectivities: real when possible, imagined if this is the only possibility. Intersubjectivity is a pre-given that characterises the world of the living, in the same way that, as Schutz would say, the natural attitude

of everyday life is characterised by the "pre-given" character of our neighbours. This is what supports the thesis of the reciprocity of perspectives.

Kinkas transports his fantasy world into the field of common experience. The world of common things, as experienced by common feeling, is for Schutz (1964) the eminent reality. But this reality lives side by side with multiple realities: the world of ideal relations, the supernatural worlds such as Heaven and Hell in Christianity, the worlds of individual opinion, the worlds of madness or eccentricity. In discussing the "stratifications of the world of life", Schutz is quite clear: the world of life covers more than "everyday" reality. We often leave behind the natural everyday attitude and give ourselves up to fictional and fantasy worlds. Everyday-ness can transcend itself through these worlds which carry a strong symbolic charge.

The death of Kinkas' mother, and that of other members of his family and friends have left a yawning gap in his everyday world. "I still weep for her […], for them. […] I'm the man of souls. Didn't you know? I only get on with souls." According to Schutz, the main characteristic of the world of everyday life is that it consists of intersubjectivities. With these deaths, Kinkas lost a reality of intersubjectivities. Loneliness is often the effect of the loss of this world of shared experience in the same way, but in a different sense, as schizophrenia or autism. When Kinkas asks the departed for permission to enter their world he is entering a reality which is "real" in his own fashion, a reality whose structure of meanings is "finite", as Schutz says, when referring to the "structures of the world of life" (Schutz, 2001: 42). For example, a child's play world is real whenever it is not disturbed by other worlds of reality. The girl who plays with her doll plays in (her) fictional reality the role of mother who rocks her daughter to sleep. In the same way, Etelvina exists within the scope of the meaning of Kinkas' sentimental fantasy. Etelvina's image is the reflection of a subjectivity created by the movement of

Kinkas' gaze. Kinkas turns his gaze on the photograph of Telvina creating an image of the image of his gaze. In speaking to Telvina the language also takes part in producing this image. Kinkas' gazing contemplation of Telvina's portrait reveals three worlds: the outside world which attracts the gaze directed at it, the world of interiority of the person who, by simply looking, recreates this world, and, finally, the world recreated in the tie-up between the two. This other world is that of the imagination – real because it is meaningful, although it only takes on an existence beyond the reality that supports it (that of the outside world). A finite scope of meanings (or significance) consists of experiences of meanings (or significance) compatible with each other. For Schutz, the finite nature of a "province of meaning" – the world of everyday life, the world of dreams, the world of science or the world of religious experience[1] – lies in the unity of its private experience, in its style of knowing. Within the "finite scope of meaning" which constitutes Kinkas' "world of souls", his amorous passion for Telvina makes perfect sense. Outside this world, i.e. within the "finite scope" of ordinary everyday life, Kinkas' passion is fictional, odd, incongruous. This is why Schutz proposes that, when examining the structures of the world of life, we pay attention to the "finite provinces of meaning". Schutz tells us that there is no possibility of reducing one finite province of meaning to another, with the aid of any conversion formula.

Having said this, we may rephrase the question: if, in fact, and in line with Durkheim, funerary rituals promote social integration, what might be the meaning of Kinkas' constant trips to the cemeteries? Wanting to make a connection? To reconnect? But how, if these rituals have lost the status of collective acts? Here we have to

bear in mind the vagaries of historical time. Societies aggregate, but they also segregate, in the first place, the dead from the living. Discovering the meaning of the celebration of death will also depend on observing the conditions for survival of the rite on the basis of the social integration or non-integration of its celebrants. This research strategy starts out from a methodological position which consists of analysing a reality through those others that, through opposition, give it singularity: as the world of the dead begins where the world of the living ends, and *vice versa*, there are dimensions of the world of the living which are easier to understand the more we look at the world of the dead.

In Kinkas' case, it is important to know when he started to visit cemeteries regularly. According to the information collected, two important landmarks preceded his continuous cemetery visits: retirement and the death of his second mother. Indeed, his courtship with Telvina started when his visits became more frequent. How can we explain this coincidence, if we bear in mind that coincidences are not always the result of chance?

We may be faced here with a phenomenon which psychoanalysis calls *depressive phantom* (Anziene, 1983). *Depressive phantom* refers to a psychic situation which results from separation from the first object of love: the mother. This phantom may reappear on the death of another loved one – family or friend. We know that Kinkas' whole life has been one of loss. He lost his mother at birth, and then straight away his twin brother. His father's second wife became a second mother to him. Her death brought back this "depressive phantom". He then saw his father lose his entire fortune which had made him a successful immigrant.

The death of his second mother left other people in her place – his other loved ones, family, friends, colleagues. The defining feature of the psychic attitude of someone with *depressive phantom* is an inability to accept an irreparable loss. The other loved ones are

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[1] The writings of one of Schutz's main sources of inspiration are elucidative here. I refer to William James and his book: *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* I consulted the Spanish version: *Las Variedades de la Experiência Religiosa*, Barcelona, Ediciones Península, 1999.

sought to serve as substitutes. But the situation naturally deteriorates when the substitutes also die, one after the other. The *phantoms* multiply, and grow into a giant phantom. How can we escape them? Depression may be evaded by fixing on a perennial loved one. Telvina is well suited to this role. She is immune to the ravages of time, death will not carry her away to another world, as she already belongs to it – the world of eternity to which mortals belong. The photograph on the tomb bears witness to this eternity.

Kinkas' visits to the cemeteries are a way of combating loneliness. The dead are the affective nourishment of his life. And they never let him down. The same is true of the animals around him – it is no accident that many of them have human names. The link to the other world also revives journeys he made in his job. Kinkas was a long distance lorry driver. He often drove through other lands. And now he visits the cemeteries in the cities he visited as a lorry driver. There is one, in Belo Horizonte, that he visits quite often. The girlfriends he had were also girlfriends in other places, girls he got to know here and there, in his travels with his most faithful companion, his truck. He never married, never had children.

What does the "other world" mean to Kinkas? In his book, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Clifford Geertz (1978) tells us of a religious miracle of which we know little. This miracle happens in the context of a dual movement: religion adjusts human actions to an imagined cosmic order, at the same time as it projects images of this cosmic order on the plane of human experience. For Kinkas, this cosmic order is an "other world" to which he claims to be close. Telvina is a good path for this two-way traffic: from human actions to cosmic order and from the latter to human experience.

In discussing religious experience, Geertz argues that a golfing enthusiast might say he is "religious" about his sport. Not because he ritualistically plays the game every weekend.

He needs to see the golf course as a symbol of transcendental realities[2]. In the same way, if Kinkas is devoutly attached to his Etelvina, it is not only because he is in love with her, or because he ritualistically prostrates himself by her grave. If Kinkas is "religious" about his Telvina, it is because he sees her as a symbol of a transcendental reality. Kinkas has not just lost his head over Telvina. As a transcendental symbol, she fills his head. A symbol of what? Of an order reinstated after being unbalanced by successive losses – of family members, friends, his job. Etelvina is a "guarantee fund" for a cosmic order which allows Kinkas to cope with the ruptures he has suffered. The same can be said of affective equivalents such as his dogs: *Júnior, Zé Pretinho, Cocota, Natacha* or *Garotinha*. These are symbolic recourses which allow Kinkas to reinstate a balance in his affective life, to create ties in the fabric of disjunction in which his loneliness is woven. Now we can understand that this "religious miracle" resides in an intriguing question which didn't go unnoticed by Geertz: "How is it that the religious man moves from a troubled perception of experienced disorder to a more or less settled conviction of fundamental order"?[3] The embarrassment of such a question is the corollary of recognising its broad scope, as Geertz himself admitted:

> "Of all the problems surrounding attempts to conduct anthropological analysis of religion this is the one that has perhaps been most troublesome and therefore the most often avoided, usually by relegating it to psychology, that raffish outcast discipline to which social anthropologists are forever consigning phenomena they are unable to deal with within the framework of a denatured Durkheimianism. But the problem will not go away, it is not "merely" psychological (nothing social is), and no anthropological theory of religion which fails to attack it is worthy of the name" (Geertz, 1978: 125)

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[2] *Id. Ibid.*, p. 113.
[3] *Id. Ibid.*, p. 125.

19

As suggested above, in the anthropological analysis of religion the question has been approached through prior acceptance of a "transcendental authority" with the power to transform everyday experiences – the field of action of belief. In tribal religions, authority appears to reside in the persuasive power of traditional images, whilst in mystical religions, it seems to reside in the power of experiences marked by sharpened sensibilities. In charismatic religions, on the other hand, authority may be based on hypnotic attraction by an extraordinary personality. What I propose is that disorder be seen as a condition of the possibility of order, and *vice versa*. A death which causes disorder may generate order. How? Through the power of ritual which makes the belief sacred and also through an *overspill effect*, whereby order from the universe of belief spills over into that of everyday experience. Religious ritual survives beyond the limits of religious practice. This is the only way to understand what Kinkas reproduces in words – in a sociological interview – the visits he makes to the cemeteries. It is clear that when he tells us he kisses the photograph of Telvina he finds himself transported to a transcendental world which is not the ordinary world – and hence our difficulty in accepting this. And when the grandmother expresses her impatience at his constant visits ("Kinkas, anyone would think you lived here!"), we can smile at the unreality or nonsensical aspects of the scene, when viewed from the finite scope of everyday reality. But it is wholly meaningful in the "finite province of meaning" which constitutes the "world of souls", as seen by Kinkas.

Kinkas' visits to this "world of souls" rekindle the relationship with the "other world" through the dead. The other world can be accessed through the dead, in the same way as the spirit of the dead can be accessed, according to believers, through divine intermediation. The *cult of souls*, the living's devotion to the souls of the dead, expresses a three-way pattern of communication between the living, the dead and a transcendental being, based on mutual relations of reciprocity. We should also note that the other world can be contacted through those who lie under the ground – in Portuguese, under the *terra*, which also means land and, significantly, homeland. This return to the *terra* is a key idea in the mental world of many Portuguese immigrants. It is no coincidence that Kinkas concentrates on the Portuguese cemeteries in the city of Rio de Janeiro. It was in one of these that he found his Telvina. By visiting the Portuguese cemeteries, Kinkas renews his connection with an identity. Why the return to the *terra*? Conversing with the "souls" gives him the wisdom of life: "everything ends in dust" – he says, resigned.

4. Conclusion

In his loneliness, Kinkas feels the lack of solidarity with the suffering which is normal in someone who has experienced a loss. Expressions of condolence are increasingly rare, as the public exposure of suffering, through the formalities of mourning, is gradually reduced. Social discretion requires suffering to be masked, and encourages the individuation of pain. This effect of concealing feelings helps certain sociological positions to argue that the "dead" have been devalued to the detriment of "death". This is not to say that there are ritualisations which configure social forms of coping with death: laying out the dead, wakes, burials, masses for the souls of the departed. But these rituals correspond to discreet forms of dealing with death. Feelings of loss are experienced more intimately, in solitude. Public suffering is implicitly condemned – which explains why at wakes and burials the ethic of discretion forces people to wear dark glasses to protect bags under the eyes and furtive tears from public observation. The sentiment of loss has fled from the social to the intimate domain and, in some cases, from the latter to loneliness. The public expression of subjective pain may have to be disguised. In this case, the symbolic mourning of a loss may be experienced as a solitary process.

Consider Kinkas' existential loneliness (he lives alone in a detached house), his frequent cemetery visits and the dogs and cats that live around him which may signify an attempt to rekindle lost social relations. In other words, loneliness is not only a corollary of relational absences. Relational threads are also called on to fill the emptiness of loneliness. Remembering the dead brings us to a concept of relationship woven from memories. And this remembrance, of those who have passed to the world of the dead, may also help us to overcome the debilitated social relations of the world of the living. So we may perhaps conclude that if, in reality, the relational networks between the world of the dead and of the living do not disappear when the dead depart from the world of living, it is also possible to accept that the weakening of relations between the living may prompt a compensatory search for relations with the inhabitants of the other world, that of the dead or, for instance, of animals – it is no coincidence that these animals are called pets, or *companion animals*. In both cases, generating the relations amounts to a process of social regeneration – sometimes a form of coping with loneliness. And this is where we may observe the emergence of new forms of leisure which, as we have seen, clearly survive the cult of the dead, helping to relieve feelings of loneliness and isolation.

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