Onhemonkandire and Endura: Eternal Life for Guaranis and Cathars

The search for Iwi Maraê, the Earth without Evil, reflects the spiritual journey of the individual on the way back to his original condition.

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Religion is the field of knowledge that dares the most to answer the question about what comes after death. There are almost as many answers to this question as there are religious denominations, some of which may be considered almost hegemonic due to the large number of followers they possess. This is not the case
with the concepts of *Onhemonkandire*, from the Guarani indians of South America, and the *Endura*, from the Cathars of southern medieval France, which are respectively the resurrection of the human being, and the death of the illusion of the ego. And although these two concepts have developed within peoples of very different times and geographic regions, they share essential traits.

There is a widespread belief among the Guarani called *onhemonkandire*, which, from a western perspective, can be understood as eternal life achieved while still in an earthly life. It is a process which includes the *Apecatu Ava-porã*, or Sacred Way of Man, and *Araguijé kandire*, which is equivalent to the resurrection of Christians, but with the important caveat that such a resurrection would not take place after physical death – it could be realized during life.

The idea of resurrection while being alive may seem paradoxical, but it has been shared by many Christians of different denominations throughout history. The Cathar community, for example, also known as the Albigensian community, flourished in southern France in the twelfth century, and was founded on principles of an inner Christianity. They spoke of a process they called the endura, through which one would come to the death of the "I" and to the rebirth/resurrection of a new being. With the completion and consummation of the endura, a connection was established between the Christian’s new being and the spirit of God, a connection that would give him the path of perfection. No wonder Catharism was branded as heresy by the official Church, because the Cathars professed a faith in the possibility of an intimate and direct connection with Christ, which significantly diminished the need for a church as mediator between God and his creature. The non-recognition of the hierarchy established by Catholic theology, and the apparent acceptance of a hierarchy of its own, which ranged from the *Sympathizers* to the *Perfects*, became intolerable to the constituted power of that time, which had its foundations precisely in those theological principles.

Associated with *onhemonkandire*, in the Guarani mysteries, is the belief in the existence of the Land without Evil, *Iwi Maraê*. In the not too distant past, this belief was responsible for the migration of these indians to different regions of the South American continent. Presumably, for the migrants, the geographical region where they thought they could find Iwi Maraê could be anywhere other than their own current land. In a sense, this is a notion correlated to that of the Promised Land of the Jews.
In view of this, it is natural that many Guaranis also believed that the immortality attained in the physical body would also be the immortality of the physical body; just as many Christians believe that, as saved ones, their current bodies will be preserved when immortality is granted after Judgment Day.

However, it is well known that the resurrection and the idea of an eternal life was not understood uniformly, even within Christianity. In consonance with certain Gnostic movements of the early Christian era, the Cathars regarded the accounts of the life of Jesus as symbols of an inner process to be realized by every candidate for eternal life. Therefore, according to Brazilian researcher Joene Saraiva, the *Perfects* (Cathar initiates) taught that "the consecrated host was not the body of Christ the; that the body of the dead ones would not rise; that baptism and marriage did not bring salvation, and that they did believe in a new heaven and a new earth."

It is also known, thanks mainly to the work of Kaká Werá in disseminating the Guarani wisdom, that the teachings about the onhemonkandire also have a symbolic character. The search for *Iwi Maraê*, the Land without Evil, reflects the spiritual journey of the individual on the way back to his original condition. This journey would involve the abandonment of *arandu*, the corporeal form, as the end of the spiritual process. Therefore, resurrection is for them just as it was for the Cathars, an inner reality concerning the awakening of the new consciousness, or the consciousness of a new being, which could not be limited to the demands of the physical body. It is a resurrection achieved in life, but it goes far beyond the horizons of this life.

The belief in the eternal life achieved while still incarnate (to use a term more familiar to our culture) is still alive today, both among the Guarani people, and among the Gnostic Christians of the Spiritual School of the Golden Rosycross, who, to a certain extent, are the spiritual heirs of Catharism. The search for the promised land, or the Land without Evil, is much more than the expectation that a millennial promise will be fulfilled - it is the assumption of the task of rebirth that grants access the true life. After all, "Those who say they must die first and then rise up are mistaken. If they do not receive the resurrection while they live, when they die, they will receive nothing" (*Gnostic Gospel of Philip*).