

Weaving webs of meaning: an anthropological analysis of tensions in the Brazilian pentecostal field

Abstract

This article discusses the classification of the Pentecostal Church God Is Love (IPDA) within the Brazilian Pentecostal field. The discussion emerged from research on Neo-Pentecostal discourses directed toward trans and travesti people, in which the IPDA was initially classified as a Neo-Pentecostal denomination. The article aims to revisit Ricardo Mariano's¹ typology of Brazilian Pentecostalism and to examine the processes through which denominations belonging to different historical trajectories incorporate practices and discourses associated with Neo-Pentecostalism. Based on a bibliographical and theoretical discussion and on selected cases from the Brazilian religious field, the analysis draws on the contributions of Max Weber, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Byung-Chul Han. The article argues that the IPDA should be understood historically as a second-wave Pentecostal denomination, while its incorporation of elements associated with Neo-Pentecostalism reveals a process of hybridisation within a competitive religious field. The discussion therefore highlights the importance of distinguishing between denominational classification and processes of transformation, appropriation and interaction among different Pentecostal traditions in contemporary Brazil.

Keywords: anthropology of religion, pentecostalism, neopentecostalism, brazil, religious field, pentecostal church god is love

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Introduction: classification and the Brazilian religious field

The contemporary Brazilian religious field is a volatile terrain. The categories through which the social sciences operate seem constantly to elude our grasp, either because phenomena transform more rapidly than our analytical tools, or because religious actors themselves actively contest the meanings attributed to these categories.

It was this movement that caught my attention during the research that resulted in my dissertation, *What Can the Body Do? Neo-Pentecostal Discourses on the Trans and Travesti Universe*.² In the second chapter, while mapping the main Brazilian evangelical denominations, I grouped the Pentecostal Church God Is Love (IPDA) among the Neo-Pentecostal churches. This was an imprecision. And an imprecision that, as the research progressed, became increasingly revealing. I consider this one of the principal ways in which we can put ourselves, as researchers, to the scientific test.

I emphasise this not because getting the classification right is a matter of taxonomic rigour for its own sake, but because, by treating the IPDA as Neo-Pentecostal, I was failing to perceive a more interesting phenomenon: the structural pressure that the success of the Neo-Pentecostal model, particularly that of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, exerts on denominations belonging to other historical lineages. The IPDA is not Neo-Pentecostal, but over the past few decades it has been absorbing elements from the Neo-Pentecostal universe. And this process of hybridisation, if investigated in depth, can tell us much about the dynamics of the Brazilian religious field as a whole.

The problem addressed in this article is therefore not limited to the classification of a particular denomination. It concerns the analytical consequences of religious classifications when historical and doctrinal differences coexist with processes of interaction, appropriation and transformation. If the IPDA belongs to the second wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism, how should we understand its incorporation of

practices and discourses associated with Neo-Pentecostalism? And what does this process reveal about the transformations taking place within the Brazilian religious field? These questions guide the analysis developed here.

This article therefore seeks not simply to correct a classificatory imprecision, but to deepen the analysis of the processes that make such classifications unstable. I aim to show that classificatory imprecision has concrete analytical consequences. When we call something 'Neo-Pentecostal' without distinguishing its specificities, we flatten phenomena that are historically quite distinct. In doing so, we may lose sight of the tensions that constitute them: between asceticism and prosperity, between sectarianism and media engagement, and between tradition and innovation.

To this end, I propose a three-part analytical trajectory. First, I revisit¹ typology and the debates surrounding it, showing how the classification of the Pentecostal 'waves' has been used and, often, misused. Second, I bring into the discussion authors who have been only marginally employed in the anthropology of Brazilian Pentecostalism, particularly Weber, Bourdieu, Foucault and Han, arguing that their conceptual tools help us to understand more finely the articulations between religion, the market, the body and power. Third, and finally, through an analysis of specific cases, namely the IPDA, the Universal Church, Bola de Neve and inclusive churches, I demonstrate that the Brazilian Pentecostal field is internally plural, and that this plurality requires from us a classificatory stance that is both more rigorous and more reflexive. The geographical scope of the discussion is Brazil as a whole, since the article addresses the Brazilian religious field from a national perspective rather than focusing on a specific locality or region.

The analytical stakes of religious classification

A useful typology and its limits

The Brazilian literature on Pentecostalism has produced, over recent decades, a range of typologies which, despite their limitations,

remain indispensable points of reference. The most influential is undoubtedly that of Ricardo Mariano,¹ who proposes dividing the Brazilian Pentecostal field into three successive 'waves'.

The first wave, classical Pentecostalism, can be traced back to the arrival of the Christian Congregation in Brazil (1910) and the Assembly of God (1911). It is characterised by strong sectarianism, rigorous asceticism, rejection of secular culture, an emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly glossolalia, and a deliberate distance from institutional politics. The second wave, also referred to as renewalist Pentecostalism or Deutero-Pentecostalism, emerged from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, with the founding of the Foursquare Gospel Church (1951), Brazil for Christ (1955) and, centrally to this article, the Pentecostal Church God Is Love (1962). This second wave retains the asceticism and sectarianism of the first, but intensifies its emphasis on divine healing and exorcism, and begins to make use, albeit still incipiently, of the mass media, particularly radio. The third wave, finally, is Neo-Pentecostalism proper, which emerged from the late 1970s onwards with the founding of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (1977) and the International Church of the Grace of God (1980). This third wave definitively breaks with asceticism, adopting the Prosperity Gospel, becoming deeply integrated into media and market logics, engaging directly in institutional politics, and developing a theology of spiritual warfare with a strong reliance on demonology.

This typology is useful. It helps us identify historical and doctrinal differences that might otherwise go unnoticed. Yet it also has its limits. The first, as Paul Freston³ points out, is that the very nomenclature 'Neo-Pentecostal' is contested. It is not a neutral label, but a category constructed within a struggle for symbolic hegemony within the evangelical field itself. The second limitation, more relevant to this article, is that the typology tends to be used mechanically: once a denomination is classified as belonging to a particular 'wave', it comes to be treated as though its identity were fixed and immutable.

It is precisely this mechanical use that I seek to problematise. The history of the IPDA shows us that a denomination may belong to a particular historical lineage, in this case the second wave, and yet, over time, absorb elements from other lineages. What is at stake here is not an essence, but a process.

The pentecostal church god is love and its classification as a second-wave pentecostal denomination

The doctrinal and practical evidence placing the IPDA within the second wave is robust. The denomination maintains a strong sectarian asceticism, condemns believers' involvement with the 'things of the world', statutorily prohibits the possession of television sets at home, under penalty of expulsion, and restricts women's clothing.⁴ It also remains, to this day, distant from organised institutional politics, in direct contrast to the structured electoral engagement of the Universal Church since the early 1990s. Its doctrine is firmly rooted in classical Pentecostalism, with an emphasis on salvation through faith, baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by glossolalia, the expectation of Christ's imminent return, and a literal interpretation of the Bible.

More recent literature on the IPDA, however, acknowledges that the denomination has been gradually absorbing discourses and practices from the Neo-Pentecostal universe, 'even as a Pentecostal denomination by definition', such as an increasing emphasis on healing and the interpretation of material deprivation as spiritual misfortune. This recognition, however, correctly captures an ongoing process of hybridisation, rather than an already established Neo-Pentecostal identity.

The distinction is analytically decisive. Hybridisation is a process, not an essence. Treating the IPDA as Neo-Pentecostal, even with qualifications, obscures the denomination's historical and doctrinal specificity and, more importantly, obscures precisely the phenomenon that most deserves our investigation and attention: the process through which classical and renewalist Pentecostal churches are pressured, by competition within the religious field, to adopt Neo-Pentecostal practices and discourses without thereby becoming Neo-Pentecostal.

This is where the anthropology of religion requires other analytical tools. Mariano's typology is a starting point, but it is not sufficient. To understand the dynamics of hybridisation and competitive pressure, we need tools that allow us to conceive of the religious field as a space of contestation, rather than merely as a collection of fixed categories.

Conceptual tools for a field of contestation

Weber and the protestant ethic in reverse

The Prosperity Gospel that underpins Brazilian Neo-Pentecostalism can be read as an inversion of the Weberian logic. Whereas ascetic Protestantism prohibited the enjoyment of material goods and channelled all psychic energy towards work and saving, with wealth serving merely as an indirect and involuntary sign of divine grace, the Prosperity Gospel presents material enjoyment as an explicit and legitimate objective of the life of faith. Prosperity ceases to be a by-product of asceticism and becomes a direct, almost contractual, promise of conversion. This transformation has also been associated with the growing articulation between Prosperity Theology, consumption and the legitimisation of capital within Brazilian Neo-Pentecostalism.⁵

There is, therefore, both a structural continuity and a rupture in content between Weberian ascetic Protestantism and contemporary Neo-Pentecostalism. The continuity lies in the fact that, in both cases, faith organises economic conduct. The rupture lies in the content of this organisation: where historical Protestantism repressed the desire for consumption, Neo-Pentecostalism celebrates it.

This inversion is not merely doctrinal; it is also social. It makes clear the response to a specific historical context: Brazil in the late 1970s and early 1980s, marked by the decline of the civil-military regime, the political abandonment of entire sectors of society, and economic recession, alongside the emergence of the neoliberal order on a global scale.⁴ At the symbolic level, Neo-Pentecostalism offers precisely what neoliberalism offers at the ideological level: the individualisation of responsibility for success and failure, the promise of material advancement through effort and merit, here understood as faith and tithing, and the reconversion of collective suffering into an individual ordeal that can be overcome. This relationship between prosperity-oriented religious discourse and market rationality has also been identified in studies of Brazilian Neo-Pentecostalism, particularly in relation to the legitimisation of consumption, entrepreneurship and material success.^{5,6} Recent scholarship has similarly examined the relationship between Pentecostal forms of religious government and neoliberal rationality, particularly through processes of subjectivation, economic conduct and the management of affect.⁷

With Weber,⁸ we can also foreground the concept of the disenchantment of the world (*Entzauberung*), the process through which modern rationalisation progressively expels magic and the supernatural from explanations of reality. In this analysis, Brazilian Neo-Pentecostalism represents a paradoxical re-enchantment of the world within capitalist modernity itself. Divine healing, exorcism, prophecy and miracles reappear not as archaic residues, but as

technologies fully integrated into contemporary market rationality and electronic media. This re-enchantment does not constitute a rejection of modernity, but rather one of its most characteristic expressions: a form of religion that, instead of opposing capitalism, incorporates and symbolically intensifies it.

Bourdieu and the religious field as a symbolic market

The absence of Pierre Bourdieu from anthropological analyses of Brazilian Pentecostalism is both striking and detrimental. In *The Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field*, Bourdieu⁹ proposes understanding the religious universe as a field, a structured space of positions marked by competition among agents, prophets, priests and sorcerers, for the monopoly over the legitimate management of the goods of salvation.

This relational dimension is particularly significant in the contemporary Brazilian religious field, which is marked by intense competition among Catholicism, Pentecostalism in its different waves, Neo-Pentecostalism, and Afro-Brazilian religions. Neo-Pentecostal churches have, to a considerable extent, prevailed in this competition because they have offered a religious product better adapted to the conditions of the contemporary symbolic market: immediate prosperity, healing, exorcism, a strong sense of community, and intensive mediation through the mass media. Neo-Pentecostal churches have, to a considerable extent, expanded their presence in this competition by adapting their organisational strategies, religious services and forms of communication to the conditions of a plural and competitive religious market.^{6,10}

The success of the Universal Church, and the pressure it exerts on competing denominations, including the IPDA itself, can, within this framework, be understood as the effect of a dominant position acquired within the religious field, one that reconfigures the strategies of all other agents. The IPDA is not Neo-Pentecostal, but it is pressured to adopt elements of Neo-Pentecostalism because the religious field has been reconfigured around the model established by the Universal Church. The expansion of the Universal Church can be understood within this broader process of competition and adaptation in the Brazilian religious field, particularly through its organisational structure, media presence and provision of religious services adapted to the expectations of its public.^{10,11}

Symbolic violence, a concept that Bourdieu develops particularly in *Masculine Domination*,¹² is equally central. The Prosperity Gospel tends to transform socioeconomic inequality into evidence of insufficient faith: those who do not prosper are said not to believe enough, not to have tithed enough, or not to have adequately broken the 'spiritual bonds' of poverty. This shifts responsibility for structural conditions of inequality onto the individual, with the active and voluntary complicity of the believer. By internalising this logic, the believer applies to themselves categories of judgement constructed from the standpoint of the dominant: poverty as a lack of faith, material failure as a sign of distance from God. In this way, they participate in their own subjugation; their body enacts what Bourdieu¹² describes precisely:

The socially modelled biological body is thus a politicised body, or, if one prefers, an embodied politics. The fundamental principles of the androcentric vision of the world are naturalised in the form of elementary bodily positions and dispositions, which are perceived as natural expressions of natural tendencies.¹²

This passage points us towards a concrete case of such symbolic violence, analysed by Jacqueline Moraes Teixeira.¹³ In her study of

the Universal Church's *Intellimen* programme, aimed at the formation of 'intelligent men', and of the institutional practice of vasectomy among pastors and bishops, Teixeira demonstrates how masculine domination operates concretely upon believers' bodies. Accounts by former pastors who brought legal claims against the IURD for moral damages after undergoing vasectomies under institutional pressure, some describing the feeling that they had become 'less of a man' following the procedure, demonstrate forcefully how the biological body shaped by society is a body that is implicated in politics. Or, if we prefer, it is a politics that becomes part of the body.¹² Studies of gender and Pentecostalism in Brazil have likewise shown how religious practices and discourses participate in the production and negotiation of differentiated gender roles and expectations.¹³

Foucault and the production of the neo-pentecostal subject

Neo-Pentecostal religious conversion can also be productively analysed through Foucault's concept of technologies of the self: practices through which individuals act upon themselves, transforming their own bodies, thoughts and conduct in pursuit of a state of perfection, happiness or purity.¹⁴ The believer who 'accepts Jesus', participates intensively in religious services, regularly pays tithes, fasts and engages in 'spiritual warfare' performs upon themselves a systematic set of operations that transforms them, producing a new body, a new identity, and a new relationship with desire, money, work and others.

Technologies of the self allow individuals, through their own means or with the assistance of others, to perform a certain number of operations upon their own bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves with the aim of attaining a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality.¹⁴

In this regard, the case of the Bola de Neve Church, founded in 1999 by Rinaldo Seixas, is particularly relevant to our analysis. Addressing a young urban audience associated with surf and skate culture and, more recently, social media, Bola de Neve produces what we might call a *management of desire through the language of freedom*. The church simultaneously 'restrains and stimulates libido',¹⁵ moralising the sexual behaviour of its members by advocating premarital virginity and heterosexual marriage, while at the same time displaying, celebrating and aestheticising young, athletic and desirable bodies through a visual and musical language that engages directly with contemporary consumer culture. This relationship between religious conversion, market rationality and practices of self-formation can also be observed in the development of Neo-Pentecostal churches, particularly through marketing strategies and new technologies of the self.¹⁶

This contradiction is, from an analytical perspective, its most interesting feature. Bola de Neve produces a form of subjectivity that simultaneously desires and denies desire, that seeks to be free while governing itself through rigid moral norms disguised as informality.¹⁷ It is an exemplary case of a technology of the self operating within the religious field: the subject is not simply repressed by an external authority, but encouraged to undertake a continuous process of regulation of their own body and desire, a process that presents itself to the subject as freedom.

Han and the disappearance of ritual

The spectacularisation of the Neo-Pentecostal ritual acquires an additional philosophical dimension when we turn to the critiques offered by the South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han¹⁸

concerning the ‘disappearance of rituals’ in contemporary society. The relationship between Pentecostal practices and contemporary media infrastructures also extends beyond traditional broadcasting, involving social media platforms through which religious knowledge, affect and forms of belonging are produced and circulated.¹⁹ For Han, traditional rituals, in the Turnerian sense of practices of liminality that produce *communitas* and effect genuine transformations in the subject, have lost their dimension of rupture and have progressively been subsumed by the logic of performance, optimisation and consumption.

Rituals, as symbolic actions, create a community without communication, insofar as they establish themselves as signifiers which, without transmitting anything, enable a community to recognise in them its signs of identity. What predominates today, however, is communication without community, as a result of the loss of social rituals. In the contemporary world, where the fluency of communication has become imperative, rituals are perceived as obsolete and as an unnecessary obstacle.¹⁸

In light of this passage, we can understand the mediated Neo-Pentecostal service, in this analysis, as a ritual in tension. It mobilises the language of ritual intensely, including collective effervescence, trance, glossolalia, healing and exorcism, while integrating it into the logic of television spectacle and individualised religious consumption. The believer-viewer, isolated before the television screen with a glass of water, does not experience the Turnerian *communitas* of bodies physically gathered in collective effervescence;²⁰ instead, they individually consume an electronically mediated ritual performance.

The relationship between Neo-Pentecostalism and media is particularly significant in the Brazilian context, where churches have historically adapted their religious practices and forms of communication to television and, more recently, to digital media.²¹ More recently, this process has extended to social media infrastructures, through which Brazilian Pentecostal actors produce and circulate religious knowledge, affective connections and forms of belonging.¹⁹

Here we find a productive tension between the classical Durkheimian understanding of ritual as a producer of social cohesion and Han’s critique of its spectacular dissolution in the contemporary media-saturated world, a tension that the study of Brazilian Neo-Pentecostalism allows us to observe empirically in practice.

What the concrete cases show us

The universal church and the neo-pentecostal paradigm

Among all the denominations analysed, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God is the one that most fully embodies the Neo-Pentecostal model according to Mariano’s typology. Founded in 1977 by Edir Macedo, it is organised around the ‘three pillars of healing, exorcism and financial prosperity’,⁴ with intensive use of the media, particularly following the acquisition of Rede Record de Televisão in 1989, structured political engagement since the 1990s, and expansion into more than one hundred countries. The Temple of Solomon, inaugurated in São Paulo in 2014, constitutes an architectural declaration of symbolic and material power that is difficult to compare within the contemporary Brazilian religious field.

From the perspective of the anthropology of religion, the IURD is an exemplary case of the reconversion of religious symbolic capital into economic and political capital, precisely the dynamic

that Bourdieu⁹ describes as fundamental to the religious field under conditions of modernity. Teixeira’s research²² adds a dimension of gender and biopolitics to this interpretation: the *Intellimen* project, aimed at producing ‘intelligent men’ through performative challenges publicised on social media, and the institutional policy of encouraging, and, according to several accounts, coercing, pastors and bishops to undergo vasectomies as a condition for advancement within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. These two dispositifs concretely articulate masculinity, reproductive control and neoliberal rationality.

God is love and the process of hybridisation

As we have seen, the IPDA belongs to the second wave. Yet over the past several decades it has been absorbing elements from the Neo-Pentecostal universe. One example is the growing emphasis on healing and the interpretation of material deprivation as spiritual misfortune, elements that, in classical and renewalist Pentecostalism, were secondary to the emphasis on salvation and baptism in the Holy Spirit.

This process of hybridisation is what most deserves investigation. It does not constitute a change in essence, but rather a response to pressures within the religious field. The IPDA is not Neo-Pentecostal, but it is pressured, in certain respects, to behave as though it were. This tension, between sectarian and ascetic tradition and the demands of an increasingly competitive religious market, is what makes it a particularly fruitful object of study.

Inclusive churches and the appropriation of pentecostal grammar

A rigorous anthropological analysis of the Brazilian Pentecostal field cannot be restricted to its hegemonic expressions. Marcelo Natividade’s research²³ on the so-called ‘inclusive churches’, Pentecostal denominations formed predominantly by LGBTQIAP+ people who had left conventional evangelical denominations, demonstrates that Pentecostal grammar is not the exclusive property of its hegemonic segments. It can be appropriated, and indeed is appropriated, by subjects whom dominant Neo-Pentecostalism persecutes and demonises.

The ethnographic case of the Contemporary Christian Church (ICC), which originated in a schism from the Brazilian branch of the Metropolitan Community Church (ICM), is particularly revealing. According to Natividade’s ethnography,²³ the ICC adopted, throughout its trajectory, a strategy of discretion and normalisation deliberately distinct from the explicit political activism of the ICM. It rejected the label of ‘gay church’, removed from its promotional materials theological discussions explicitly concerned with the legitimisation of homosexuality, and adopted a strongly Pentecostalist style of worship, including gospel worship, glossolalia, ‘spiritual warfare’ and anointing vigils, closely resembling that of conventional evangelical churches, with the exception of the predominantly homosexual composition of its members and leaders.

This dispute between two strategies, that of the ICM, centred on the political affirmation of difference, and that of the ICC, centred on the pursuit of legitimacy through similarity to the hegemonic evangelical field, illustrates, on a micro scale, precisely the dynamics of the religious field described by Bourdieu. Agents occupying positions of lesser symbolic power within the field negotiate different strategies for accumulating religious capital and seeking recognition, at times accentuating and at times suppressing their difference in relation to the dominant poles.

Discussion: classification, competition and hybridisation

The cases discussed above suggest that the classification of Brazilian Pentecostal denominations cannot be understood solely through fixed historical categories. Mariano's¹ typology remains an important starting point for distinguishing different trajectories within Brazilian Pentecostalism, but the cases analysed here indicate that these trajectories are not isolated from one another. The incorporation of Neo-Pentecostal practices by the IPDA, the consolidation of the Universal Church as a model of religious organisation and communication, and the appropriation of Pentecostal forms by inclusive churches reveal a field marked by circulation, dispute and transformation.

From this perspective, hybridisation should not be understood as the disappearance of denominational differences. Rather, it refers to the incorporation and reconfiguration of practices, discourses and forms of organisation across historically distinct religious traditions. The case of the IPDA is particularly significant because it shows that the adoption of elements associated with Neo-Pentecostalism does not necessarily imply a change in denominational identity. It indicates instead that religious actors respond to transformations in the field while maintaining important elements of their historical and doctrinal identity.

Bourdieu's concept of the religious field helps explain this dynamic by directing attention to competition among denominations and to the unequal distribution of symbolic capital. Weber's analysis, in turn, makes it possible to examine the relationship between religious conduct, economic rationality and the contemporary forms assumed by the Prosperity Gospel. Foucault contributes to understanding how these transformations operate at the level of the believer, through practices that shape conduct, bodies and forms of subjectivity. Finally, Han's discussion of ritual and contemporary performance helps illuminate the transformations produced when religious practices become increasingly mediated, spectacularised and incorporated into logics of communication and consumption.

Taken together, these perspectives indicate that the Brazilian Pentecostal field should not be approached as a homogeneous religious bloc. Its internal differences are maintained precisely through processes of interaction, competition and appropriation. The analytical relevance of the IPDA therefore lies not simply in deciding whether it should or should not be labelled Neo-Pentecostal, but in showing how classificatory boundaries themselves are challenged by transformations occurring within the religious field.

Conclusion: toward a critical and empirically responsible anthropology of religion

The analysis undertaken throughout this article suggests that the Brazilian Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal field demands a simultaneously rigorous and reflexive approach from the anthropology of religion. Rigorous in its classifications, distinguishing between classical Pentecostalism, renewalist Pentecostalism, and Neo-Pentecostalism without hastily homogenising them under a convenient classificatory label, as has recurrently occurred in the case of the Pentecostal Church God Is Love. Reflexive regarding the categories themselves, questioning, following Talal Asad,^{24,25} who produces them, on what assumptions they are based, and what political and symbolic effects they produce.

The incorporation of Weber, Bourdieu, Foucault, and Han into the established theoretical frameworks of the anthropology of religion has enabled us to deepen the analysis in three complementary directions. Weber allowed us to understand the Prosperity Gospel as a structural

inversion of ascetic Protestant ethics and also as a paradoxical re-enchantment of the world within capitalist modernity itself, a movement that does not seek to oppose modern rationalisation, but rather incorporates and symbolically intensifies it. Bourdieu enabled us to situate competition among denominations within a religious field structured by relations of power and symbolic capital, and to understand the gender domination observed in the IURD as symbolic violence operating through the active complicity of those who are themselves dominated. Foucault allowed us to understand religious conversion, fasting, prayer, and contemporary performative challenges as technologies of the self that produce, rather than merely repress, the subjectivity of the believer.

Reading the media spectacularisation of Neo-Pentecostal worship through Byung-Chul Han revealed a productive tension between the classical function of ritual as a producer of collective cohesion²⁰ and its contemporary dissolution into spectacular performance consumed individually. The incorporation of case studies on masculinity in the IURD²² and on inclusive Pentecostal churches²³ further demonstrated that the Brazilian Pentecostal field is not a homogeneous block, but rather a space traversed by internal disputes over gender, sexuality, and legitimacy. These disputes become visible only when analysis resists the temptation of oversimplifying classification.

The Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal phenomenon in Brazil is neither a mere form of "religious alienation" among the poor, nor a simple "functional response" to social anomie, nor a uniform doctrinal and institutional block. Rather, it constitutes a field of complex disputes over bodies, desires, memories, forms of belonging, and material and symbolic resources. These disputes reveal their richness and their violence when examined through an approach that is simultaneously theoretically grounded and empirically responsible, attentive both to broader structures of domination and to the smaller, sometimes unexpected, possibilities of appropriation, resignification, and dissent that even the most hegemonic religious fields cannot entirely control.

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