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The Modern, The Magic and the Ludic: The Pentecostal View Towards an Insecure Life. An Argentinean Case

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Introduction

The question of whether Latin American Pentecostalism favors or opposes modernization is already a classic one in Pentecostal studies. It is interesting to note that, in general, authors choose to make 'strong' claims in relation to this issue. There are those who conclude that Pentecostalism is a conservative force and others that assert that Pentecostalism, on the contrary, is a progressive force on the traditional-modern axis. A few authors have observed the possible ambiguities that, in these terms, Pentecostalism may present. In the following text I will attempt to show that the concept of 'ludism' allows us to provide new answers to the old question. This perspective is not meant to definitively answer "yes or no" the question of whether Pentecostalism favors or opposes modern life. On a different vein, my intention is to demonstrate how, for certain social sectors, the Pentecostal world view allows people to, as it were, live at the margins of modernity, sustaining an ambiguous relation with it.

This paper will be presented in the following order: First, I will briefly summarize some of the analyses that have been offered on the subject. Second, I will describe the social situation of some of the members of the congregation in which I did fieldwork and from whom the evidence I will use in this article will be extracted. Third, through the use of a few examples I will demonstrate how Pentecostalism allows a sort of back and forth movement between modern and magical views of the world. Then I will try to explain how this is possible, using the concept of Ludism (Droogers, forthcoming). Finally, I will establish certain possible parallelisms between the ambiguities of the Pentecostal world view and people's positions in the social structure.

Brief Bibliographical Review:

The debate on the character of the relationship between Pentecostalism and modernization is already present in the classic studies of Emilio Willems (1967) and Christian Lalive d'Epinay (1968), who focus mainly on Brazil and Chile. These studies identify and place the emergence and growth of Pentecostalism between the 1930s and 1950s. Both authors propose some sort of association between Pentecostal expansion and the processes of industrialization and urbanization that Brazil and Chile underwent during this period. Willems asserts that the ascetic values of Protestantism present in Pentecostalism induces a type of conduct which contributes to the structural transformation of Brazilian and Chilean societies. For Willems this transformation proceeds from micro on to macro contexts. First, Pentecostal values of hard work, thriftiness, and the importance of family life promotes the upward social mobility of converts, making this behaviour particularly meaningful to them. Because these transformations of behaviour occur in sectors such as family, work, state relations, etc., it is possible to assume that these values will expand across society favoring modernity (1967:164-179). Willems also argues that Pentecostal's traditional abstention in political activities is actually another form of protest against society. This due to the fact that political corruption was so rampant in the traditional order that any form of participation implied support for the status quo.

As I said, Lalive d'Epinay strongly disagrees with Willems. On the one hand, he argues that the authoritarian relationships between Pastor and parish 'reproduce... the paternalist model of the expanded families which are based as the *Hacienda* in the antithetic concepts of oppression and protection, grace and arbitrariness in sum, tyranny and paternalism' (1968:167). On the other hand, Lalive d'Epinay does not agree with the idea that Pentecostalism brings the 'Spirit of Capitalism' to Latin America. For him, in Pentecostalism 'neither progress nor hard work are essential values, the last one is seen as related to sin, since to go to work it is necessary to abandon the protective shell of the religious community' (1968:188). Finally, Lalive also disagrees with the idea that refraining from political and social involvement is another form of social protest. To Lalive this implies the abandonment of the role as citizens required by modern state (1968:165).

This debate, which one could assume is the product of a certain time period and a particular theoretical approach, has pervaded studies on Latin American Pentecostalism for almost two decades without coming to a conclusion. In 1980, for example, Judith Hoffnagel entered into the Willems-d'Epinay debate, with a position more aligned to d'Epinay than to Willems (Hoffnagel, 1980: 121). In 1986 and 1992 the question was addressed by Jean Pierre Bastian, who again sees a conservative force in Pentecostalism (1968:168). However, in 1990 the well known sociologist of religion David Martin argues through several examples for a positive relationship between Pentecostalism and modernization. In general terms all of these texts do not present great novelties in relation to the original terms in which the debate was established.

Gary Howe developed a more original approach to the subject. Howe (1980) presents a critical perspective on the way many of the previous authors thought of Latin American modernization. To him, Latin American modernization does not represent a clear passage from a traditional social order to a modern one. Modern institutions in Latin America grew during the 1930s to 1960s, but they incorporated an ambiguous function. Therefore, the prevailing order is one in which the modern and the traditional are mingled: State institutions do not follow strict rational bureaucratic principles or the idea of citizens with rights and duties. Instead, they are pervaded by clientelistic ties which undermine their rational functioning. The market does not operate as a space for open competition, but as space in which the corporate behaviour of industries struggling for state-guaranteed privileges is rampant. Furthermore, the job market does not provide rural migrants with jobs in the industrial sector, but are instead incorporated to the informal market pursuing 'ill defined' economic activities. Therefore, some of the institutions of modernity - the state, the market and the cities - were consolidated as result of the 30s - 60s Latin American structural transformations. However, this 'consolidation' of modern institutions did not mean the substitution of the traditional for a modern social order. Instead it meant the incorporation of both kinds of orders into a new type of institution.

Howe then compares Umbanda religion with Pentecostalism for the Brazilian case. He concludes that while the symbolic structure of Umbanda reflects what Brazilian society has of clientelistic and traditional, Pentecostal structure reflects what it has of rational and bureaucratic. The majority of the population integrated into some of these clientelistic ties would be reflected in Umbanda. Those excluded from clientelistic networks must establish 'modern' relationships with the state, and they are reflected in the Pentecostal value system (Howe, 1980: 135-136). Hence, even though Howe considers some of the complexities of Latin American modernization, he concludes that there is a positive association between modernity and Pentecostalism.

As I claimed at the beginning, even if there are elements which allow one to argue on one side or the other of the Pentecostalism-modernization equation, authors normally gave rather one-sided answers. Looking at this issue André Droogers (1991) suggested that it is possible to think of a paradoxical relationship between modernization and Pentecostalism. I hope to advance in this line of reasoning through the use of the concept of Ludism. I also hope to explore another element that has not been thoroughly examined by authors when defining and analyzing modernization processes. Normally, modernization has been defined by looking at urbanization, state transformation, market development and job relationships. Less attention has been paid to the

diffusion of scientific rationality that accompanies modernization. Only Johannes Tenekes (1985:68) makes a brief remark on the subject, arguing about the difficulties that popular sectors might have in incorporating scientific symbolism.

Insecure Life

As Howe has demonstrated in his comments on Latin America, many social sectors, because of their particular situation in the job market and in their relationships with the state, are left in an ambiguous situation in relation to the institutions of modernity. Due to certain recent transformations in its social structure some authors (Alberto Minujin, 1993, Alberto Barbeito y Rubén Lo Vuolo, 1992) assert that more people have fallen into these ambiguous positions in Argentina since 1976. There were basically two processes that have provoked this fall: a) a reduction in social policies and programs, meaning a reduction of the Argentinean welfare state; and b) a reduction in the formal job market. People therefore 'backslide' into the more informal economy. This produced certain transformations in the Argentinean social structure. On the one hand, those individuals who previously lived below the poverty line become even more socially vulnerable due to the reduction of favorable social policies and programs - for example, their access to health care and education diminishes. On the other hand social sectors that traditionally stood above the poverty line and within the formal job market start to fall below it and develop survival strategies within the informal economy. It is notable that the greatest expansion of Pentecostalism occurred in Argentina during the eighties when this process was at its peak.

The Pentecostal church where I did fieldwork is located in a neighbourhood in which this economic and social transformation has had certain impact, and is also a social sector that lives in the ambiguous zone in relation to modern institutions. To illustrate this I will briefly describe the position in the job market, the access to education and health care, and the relationship with state offices that people of the neighbourhood have.

Position in the Job Market

In order to assess the neighbourhood population's position in the job market I referred to school registration records which indicate the professions of the student's parents. The records illustrated that most of the women were homemakers. However in the majority of cases working women were employed as housemaids (21.1% of the total). Men were mainly construction workers (27.7%). It is interesting to note that 19.12% of all those working independently, and 12.18% of those working with no fixed income pertain to the construction industry. Only 9% of those working under official contracts belong to this branch of the industry (Barbeito y Lo Vuolo, 1992: 174). Besides construction workers, people in other professions in the informal economy included almost 50% of the total registrations. In many other cases it was hard to tell if the registered profession implied involvement in the formal job market or in the informal economy. However, it is possible to infer from these numbers that a significant percentage of the neighbourhood's population works in the informal economy.

Education and Health Care

The '*Mapa de la Pobreza en La Argentina*' (Poverty Map of Argentina) declares that only 3.2% of the children between 6 and 7 years in the municipality in which the neighbourhood I did fieldwork is located do not attend school. Therefore, we may infer that most of the children of the neighbourhood do in fact start primary school. However, according to the neighbourhood school data it is notable that many of the students have difficult schooling careers. During 1985 repeaters oscillate between 15% and 29% depending on grade. In that same year there were 44.33% over-

age students in the seventh grade - the last grade in primary school¹. With passage into secondary school, difficulties in continuing in the educational system become aggravated. There is a massive exodus from the schooling system in the 14 to 19 age group. Data from the *Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 1991* (1991 National Census) exemplifies the point. In the neighbourhood 3104 children between 10 and 14 years old were attending school while only 890 in the 15 to 19 age group attend. There are also clear restrictions in access to the health care system for people belonging to this social sector. Given their insertion into the informal job market many of them do not have access to health insurance or other forms of health coverage. The document '*La Pobreza en el Conurbano Bonaerense*' (Poverty in the Suburbs of Buenos Aires) indicates that between 42,6 and 54,5% of the poor have no health care coverage(:42). Medical services to these sectors is provided by public hospitals which are overwhelmed by an increasing demand and see their resources diminished by cuts in social policies (Alicia Gershanik, 1993: 158-160).

Relationship With the State

To illustrate how relationships between the neighbourhood population and the state occur I will use an interview which I did during my fieldwork. I have used this interview in previous work but I will use it again due to its eloquence. The interview allows one to clearly perceive the way that the state is pervaded by clientelistic relationships associated to the way political parties function in Argentina. The interviewee was Elvira, a young woman about 26 or 27 years old. She had recently had a baby and urgently needed milk for him and also some clothing for her other children. She turned to the *Consejera Vecinal* (Neighbourhood Councillor) to get them through a social plan that the municipality implemented to assist families in need. The *Consejera Vecinal* is also, and not coincidentally, a local leader of the political party in power at the municipality at that time. As Elvira asks for the milk and clothing she needs, the *Consejera Vecinal* asks her to affiliate to her party. Elvira tells the story in the following way.

[Elvira]-Chichi? I don't like her at all.

[Researcher]-You don't like Chichi?

[Elvira]-No, she's a bitch, she's a self-interested bitch.

[Researcher]- And she's a Peronist Councillor?

[Elvira]- I think she's a Neighbourhood Councillor, I don't know what that means.

[Researcher]-Ah, a Neighbourhood Councillor.

[Elvira]-Well that's what she is. She's one of those.

[Researcher]-And she is a Peronist?

[Elvira]-Well of course. The other day they signed me up to be a Peronist.

[Researcher]-And you don't like Peronists?

[Elvira]-No. Because they call you *compañera* [partner, companion], but they say it in a way... ou can see that they are being false from a mile away. And the other day I signed up to be a *compañera* as well, at least in that way, I said, they'll give me something.

[Researcher]-You signed up to get what, the food that Chichi distributes?

[Elvira]-I signed up because she asked me if I wanted to affiliate to some party, and if I wanted to affiliate to hers. So I said sure, why not?. Like as I said it's the same for me.

[Researcher]-And then what happened?

[Elvira]-Well, one day I went, I don't know if she was giving out milk, I don't remember what she was giving - oh yes - she was distributing some school clothes for the kids, so I signed up to get some clothing for Adrian [one of Elvira's sons] and that same day they asked me if I wanted to join to the *Peronist* party. So I say - okay - since I am here; if we are dancing let's dance.

¹The existence of significant numbers of students over age in the 7th grade implies a previous failure sometime during their educational career.

To conclude this section we can say that neighbours do not fully participate in modern institutions. Their position within the job market are not typical of modern life, their relationships with the state are also not clearly mediated by the institution of citizenship, their access to modern medicine is limited, as well as their access to the schooling system. In relation to this last point it may be important to stress that the limits that these social sectors experience in their access to the educational system implies a restricted socialization in scientific rationality. This hinders their ability to understand many of the issues and processes that affects their daily life, such as the functioning of the economic system or medical language.

The Modern and the Magic

In this section I will try to show how certain doctrinal elements of Pentecostalism have an ambiguous character; they promote both modern and magical perspectives on life. I will try to show this by examining how Pentecostal doctrine addresses two issues. First, I will examine the doctrine on economic issues, what is known (at least in Argentina) as the 'doctrine of prosperity'. Then I will look at how Pentecostal doctrine addresses the issue of divine healing. It is important to point out that conflicts on these topics exists among Pentecostals themselves, therefore different churches within the Pentecostal field construct different doctrines pertaining to these issues. In this study I will refer only to the way doctrine was expressed in the specific church where I did fieldwork.

Prosperity

During my stay in the Pentecostal congregation references to the job market and household economy were frequent. These subjects were repeatedly referred to at Sunday services, some doctrinal courses which I attended, and were also present in some of the interviews which I conducted with members. What was said about these issues I think is well summarized by presenting three different occasions in which the subject is referred to in one of the doctrinal courses I attended. These three references were made by the same person, the course instructor, on three different occasions, each during one of three different classes. During one of the classes the instructor read a section of the Bible: 'You will earn your bread with the sweat of your forehead'. After reading it he looked at the audience and made the following remark: 'Man must work, God says that he has to do so... if not he'll be miserable. He must be responsible in his work, he's responsible for sustaining his wife and children, he's the head of the family and the wife must submit to him. It's not like the man has to be a *machista* that when he enters the house everybody starts to shiver because they say "¡uuuhaa", here comes the monster, no, no, no. The men sometimes may help the women in the kitchen with the dishes just to help his mate... and the women must be at home and also be careful of the household economy... not just buy anything or be careless about prices and everything...'

These assertions seem to sustain Willems claim that Pentecostalism promotes rational economic behaviour and an emphasis on family life. However, during another class in the same course, one of the instructor's comments favors the sort of claim which Lalive d'Epinay makes. Reproducing the instructor's discourse: 'It is important that you save Sundays for God and the family - if you can't, you can't. I know there are professions like nurses, or policemen, or even bakers that sometimes have to work on Sundays and it is very hard for them, but a real believer will seek to change his profession. God will provide him with an even better position. You must know that sometimes it's the devil who provides jobs... jobs in which you may earn a high salary of 2000 pesos [US\$2000] and get a car and everything, but many times in order to comply with that job you must leave the church.' Having said this, a man attending the course commented: 'Yes, that's true, once I got a job in a factory with a good salary and everything and we started to stay away from church. Before I realized it five years had gone by in which we didn't come to church'.

The third reference to family economy is also the most frequently preached in services and presented in the numerous testimonies that members of the congregation deliver. This is how the instructor presented it: 'We must give God what belongs to Him. He asks only for us to tithe, he gives us 100 and from those 100 he asks only for 10, and if we give those 10 He will bless us greatly. If you give with a shovel, God in return will give you a truck full of blessings. I want to tell you the story of when I converted. To tell you the truth my wife and I were very bad economically. I had only enough money with me for our trip back home... well, we entered this church when it was only a small tent. In that moment the Pastor was preaching exactly about this subject and I felt moved, I was touched by the Holy Spirit and I gave the last coins I had in the offerings. We had to walk 20 blocks back home... the next day I had to look for a job and... well I don't remember if I borrowed money from my mother in law or... how it was that I... the thing is that the next day I went to apply for that job. I got there and there was already a pretty long line, I took my place at the back of the line. On top of that all the guys in the line were handsome so I said: no, I already lost this job, they won't hire me. However, of all those that were in that line the only one hired was me. I had no words to thank the Lord, I didn't know how to... [thank Him].

Before going on to the next example I will briefly analyze the three references the instructor gave to show why I say that the Pentecostal world view allows an ambiguous relation with modern institutions. In the first case, as I have already mentioned, it is easy to see the relationship between certain values of modern life and Pentecostalism. An emphasis on rational economic conduct and ordered family life would comply with the kind of rationality that - supposedly - a modern job market demands. However, in the second case we find a double departure from this view, which is deepened more still in the third example. On the one hand, we find the elements mentioned by Lalive d'Epinay, with the job market being depicted as an area in which satanic forces intervene. The Devil may 'provide' jobs, especially those 'good' jobs that set people apart from the church. The idea that family economy and the job market is intervened by transcendental forces is expanded in the third example. In this case it is God who opens the doors of a job to a faithful follower. In these last two cases, components of the economic sphere are explained as being the result of the intervention of transcendental forces. Here we have a jump from a modern and let's say 'rational' explanation of how the world of economy functions, to a sort of magical explanation in which transcendental forces act. I think this is where we may perceive why I said that the Pentecostal world view allows this coming and going, accepting and denying, the values of modernity. The view allows one to follow the values of modernity - hard work, ordered family life, and saving as channels for economic progress - and at the same time accepts a departure from them - the intervention of transcendental forces as causes for economic progress.

Divine Healing

The doctrine of divine healing assumes that there is a satanic origin to every disease: The Devil or one of his demons convinces the patient by 'whispering in his year' or 'talking to his mind' that he is really ill. This being the origin of sickness, a cure is achieved by asking the Holy Spirit, or Jesus himself, to set the ill person free from the bad spirit's influence. Normally, church leaders pray to God for Him to do this job and set members of the congregation free. Given that God, through His power, is able to free people from illness, the antidote against any possible physical injury rests in a solid faith in God. As the Pastor preaches: 'Since I got hold of the benefits of the Cross I have never been ill, in 28 years I have never been sick'. Even though this is the official doctrine of the congregation, in practice the majority of the church members consult a physician or take medicines even for the slightest cold. Pastors then face a conflict. On the one hand, it is risky to tell people not to go to the doctor - which is illegal - and also because there is always the risk that people may become more ill or even die. On the other hand, it is possible that even if the Pastor does instruct people not to go to the doctor they will probably still continue to do so. The Pastor resolves the conflict in the following way: 'I have nothing against medical doctors: they are

brought to earth by God, in His immense mercy, to alleviate the suffering of those that don't have enough faith'. We can see here again how the Pentecostal world view presents this ambiguous character towards modern world institutions. At the same time there is a magical view in which the causes of illness are transcendental forces, but still the practice is clearly entrenched in modern life. People go to the physician even if the sort of scientific-rational explanations offered for disease clearly contradict possible magical explanations.

The Ludic

The dualistic character of Pentecostal world view and practices has caused many researchers to ask whether or not Pentecostals truly believe in the direct intervention of transcendental forces in everyday life. Many times during my observations I have perceived simulation and forced 'sacred interpretations' of daily events. However, my observations also allow me to say that many times a great part of my informants really accept the alternative of transcendental forces acting in their daily lives. In spite of this, as I have tried to show, these same people often behave following a modern paradigm that leaves very little space for magical life perspectives. The obvious question then, is: how is this possible? Although it is difficult to give a definitive answer to such a question, I think the concept of Ludism (Droogers, forthcoming) may allow a certain explanation. In the rest of this article I will try to develop the sort of explanations that this concept enhances. I must admit that this concept is new to me and that I am far from being able to fully grasp its pros and cons, however I still think it is worth the exercise.

Johan Huizinga (1957) sees an element in play that pervades the whole of human activity. His definition of play -'specific and temporary worlds within the habitual world, that allow to carry an activity that is fulfilled in itself(:23) - highlights some of the central elements I want to point to when I speak of ludism. The possibility of play implies an alternative to momentarily interrupt one set of rules in order to adopt others which in turn may also be suspended in order to reestablish the former ones. It is important to mention that Huizinga, like other authors, asserts that there is seriousness in play. What I mean is that the concept of play does not imply that the activity developed as play is not taken seriously. For this reason, as Droogers does, I will use the term Ludic instead of play since the term "play" is more associated to non - serious activities. Droogers' concept of Ludism basically has two differences with that of Huizinga. It does not imply that adopting one set of rules necessarily means abandoning the other. For this reason, and here is the second difference, man's ludic capacity is his ability to sustain, at the same time, two or more paradigms of reality, managing the contradictions, paradoxes and dichotomies that this provokes. In this view, life and culture are not a coherent whole, but instead are the sum of imperfectly articulated fragments. Man uses a series of rhetoric elements and ambiguities present in the different paradigms to create an illusion of totality, and of unity, where in fact there is conflict and diversity (Ewing, 1990: 262).

This concept of Ludism, I think, will provide us a certain vantage point in order to understand some of the Pentecostal views and practices. My hope is that in this way we may discover other things in Pentecostal views and practice than what questions on simulation and manipulation have allowed us. If we admit as part of human nature this ability to, as it were, maintain a multiple view of reality, the ambiguities we have been pointing to in Pentecostal views and practices may appear to be ludic exercises. From this perspective, for example, the ambivalence present in the doctrine of divine healing could be viewed as a ludic exercise in which a modern practice - going to the doctor - and a magical understanding of disease are combined. Illness is explained as the result of a spiritual war between the forces of good and evil, but at the same time is treated as a biochemical process. As we said, life appears as the sum of fragments which many times enter in conflict. In this case a rhetorical element - the idea that doctors are created by God for those lacking faith - is used to create the illusion of coherence, where in fact there is contradiction.

In the case of the doctrine of prosperity, ambivalence may also be understood as a case of ludism. Economic progress is first presented as a result of personal effort and rational behaviour. Then we discover that it may also be the result of the way transcendental forces - God or Satan - act. As in the case of divine healing there are multiple and contradictory views of things in Pentecostalism. In one human forces dominate, in the other transcendental forces reign. Issues in the job market or in the family economy may be explained by referring to either of these two paradigms. In this case contradiction between both kinds of explanation are not so obvious as in the case of divine healing doctrine. Although, from our external perspective, there is tension between these 'magical' and 'rational' interpretation of issues, in emic terms this is not so apparent. There is not such a clear contradiction between the idea that one who works hard will make progress in life and the assertion that God may economically help the faithful. Pentecostals seem to rely on this ambiguity of doctrine to maintain a sense of unity and totality.

Pentecostal Views and Social Structure: A Meaningful Parallelism.

There is an element in what has been said up to here that surely has not escaped the reader's attention: both Pentecostalism and the positions of people in the social structure imply an ambiguous relation towards modern institutions. I think this general parallelism may be pursued a bit further. I will venture then to explore more precise forms of it in order to show why the Pentecostal world view may make sense for people of this social strata. Given people's insertion into the informal economy, the possibilities of finding jobs and making a living does not only depend on the accumulation of a good working reputation, in terms of talent and dedication. These values may help them, but they are not enough by themselves to guarantee a successful career. Fortune and uncontrollable situations are very important in one's capacity to make a living. I will give an example using some of my fieldwork observations. Those who work as informal construction workers doing small repairs in peoples homes, will find a job partly in relation to their reputation as good, honest and skillful workers. However, their possibility of getting a job depends as much on the fact that someone within their network of relatives and friends will require their services in a particular moment. Job demand does not flow in an orderly manner. At times there may be a peak of demand in which the worker may even have to reject some offers. Two weeks later he may suddenly be out of work and remain unemployed for two or three months. Hence, family economy and economic progress depends in part on the modern values of hard and dedicated work, but it also depends on uncontrollable forces. The doctrine of prosperity presented earlier reflects this ambiguous situation of people in the informal economy. It provides an alternative that combines rational and magical elements in explaining why and how personal economic progress is achieved. This reflects the kind of forces that guide the destiny of people who search for jobs in the informal market.

As I indicated earlier, access to scientific medicine by the congregation's social sectors is limited. Basically, the limitations are expressed in two ways. First, there is an 'objective' way: they are offered scant opportunities to be effectively assisted by medical services. Their access is materially limited. On the other hand, they also have a limited subjective access to medicine, since - due to scarce socialization in the scientific paradigm - they are hardly in a position to understand medical procedures and speech. This allows magical explanations of health problems - that in many cases are part of people's cultural traditions - to be more satisfactory than medical ones. On the other hand, people perceive that scientific medicine is generally more effective in dealing with illness than the traditional one. Therefore, people of this social sector find that the kind of medicine to which they have a more fluid - material and subjective - access is less effective, and that the more effective kind of medicine is less materially and subjectively available. The kind of perspective that Pentecostalism provides again reflects the ambiguous status that these individuals have towards a modern institution such as scientific medicine: it allows the use of scientific medicine while at the same time it provides alternative explanations and forms of cure.

The concept of ludism has allowed me to develop this sort of parallelism, but it has not been my intention to present them in a conclusive manner. However, I think that this ambiguity towards modern institutions that both specific forms of Pentecostal doctrine and certain social sectors sustain - coincidentally the sectors more responsible for the recent expansion of Pentecostalism in Latin America- is at least suggestive and worth exploring. At the same time I must confess that I still have certain doubts towards this concept. These doubts originate above all in that the concept implies an ontological claim: either man is in itself ludic thus creating this multiple views of things, or man lives a ludic life, and therefore multiplicity is an undeniable part of life itself. Whatever the case, I tend to be suspicious of ontological claims, in part -I must admit - out of my own prejudice, but also because ontological claims are always hard to prove. Even so, if the concept of ludism serves at least the purpose of introducing new questions and framing new perspectives it will fulfill part of its mission.

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