



# Elective Affinities and The Brazilian Hegemonic Spiritist Movement

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## Introduction

In Weberian thought, the conception of the expression elective affinities is in his classic work *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit of Capitalism"*, in which he seeks to explain, specifically, the possible relational nexuses existing between two forms of social relations – capitalism and religion, as demonstrated Löwy [1] that in Weber's work there is the presence [...] of convergent and analogous elements between a religious ethic and an economic behaviour: ascetic Puritanism and the saving of money, the Protestant work ethic and the bourgeois discipline of methodical work, the Calvinist valuation of virtuous craft and the ethos of rational bourgeois enterprise, the ascetic conception of the utilitarian use of wealth and the productive accumulation of capital, the Puritan demand of methodical and systematic life and the rational pursuit of capitalist profit. (pp. 131-132).

However, the thought that formulates the expression elective affinity in Weber shapes itself from open explanations without a specific, single meaning and transposes the particular understanding given to action by causality and classifies in a higher degree of importance the argumentation of the precedence between the material and spiritual elements, as follows.

In view of the enormous complexity of reciprocal influences between the material bases, the forms of social and political organization and the spiritual content of the reforming epochs, we can only proceed by first attempting to determine whether and at what points "elective affinities" between various modes of religious faith and professional ethics are perceptible. With this, and at the same time, we shall analyse, as far as possible, how and in what

direction the religious movement, as a result of these elective affinities, has acted upon the development of modern civilization Weber [2].

In the configuration for elective affinities given by Löwy, we have the modalities that do not affine within a specific social field, but pervade to others such as Between structural forms of community action and concrete forms of the economy – relate in the structures of religious actions and economic actions and Between religious ethics and economic ethos – as the indeterminate relation between economic rationality and strict religious ethics, although the "border between these different modalities are not watertight, they often find themselves overlapping one on another: the economic ethos, the lifestyles of social classes and their interests are far from always distinct aspects of social reality." Löwy, 2011, p. 137).

Based on these characteristics we observe the existence of elective affinities in the dissemination of hegemonic Brazilian Spiritism in a relationship of the Weberian theorization between religion and economy, namely in being Spiritualism "a religion of the book, of reading and of literacy, in a sense that hardly matches other religions." Lewgoy [3], of its diffusion in media modalities (films, soap operas, radio programs) and of the expansibility of public doctrinal lectures (social networks, YouTube videos, international congresses), which demonstrating that they exist, [...] events of religious life, which do not interest us, at least not primarily, from the angle of their economic significance and on its behalf, but which under certain circumstances may acquire an economic significance, from this point of view, given that certain effects result from them

which interest us from an economic perspective, are “economically relevant”. Weber [4].

This process of dissemination of Spiritism conforms to the similarity existing between the modalities that mirror the possibility of approximation of diverse cultural forms with religion and economy and that provide meaning for the mutual influences, choices and convergences in the face of Löwy’s proposition of elective affinity, [...] is favoured (or disfavoured) by historical and social conditions. If analogy and kinship as such proceed solely from the spiritual content of the meaningful structures in question, their relationship and their active interaction depend on precise socio-economic, political, and cultural circumstances. In this sense, an analysis in terms of elective affinity is perfectly compatible with the recognition of the determining role of economic and social conditions. Löwy [5].

Thus, although the process of genesis and solidification of the Spiritist Doctrine and the hegemonic Brazilian spiritist movement and the economy are related by affinity in different moments. In a first moment when the Doctrine was inserted in Brazil not as a reference to an economic order, but in the condition of status of a group of intellectuals represented by the bourgeoisie of the time and in a second moment due to the causal links between religious activity and actions related to the market.

After all, it is our thought that in the case of the dissemination of Spiritism it is feasible to observe both the proposition of Max

Weber and that of Michael Löwy as theories which explain elective affinities on the basis of being modalities of social interaction related by a mutual attraction characterized in the socio-economic and religious-cultural field in which capitalist and religious modernities operate.

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### Conflict of Interest

No Conflict of interest.

### References

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