

Secularism in Education

Secularism in public education is an old and still unrealized aspiration in Brazil, as in other countries. Our country has a history of links between State and religion that has always affected the autonomy of different fields, such as politics, science, and education. Thus, despite being a nation that has no official state religion and whose current Constitution ensures religious freedom and the right to believe and not to believe, the country experiences a series of confrontations and disputes involving attempts at religious interference in our legislation, public policies, and the guarantee of rights for various social groups. However, this quest for privileges, for the maintenance and expansion of the religious presence in the State's decisions, has never occurred without resistance. It is in this scenario of resistance and defense of secularism that the Observatory of Secularism in education is inserted. From this publication we share current debates on transversal themes of secularism of the State and public education, ensuring that everyone can have access to what is being debated, produced and defended by OLÉ in relation to these themes.

A network of teachers, students and activists that elaborated, gathered and disseminated positions related to secular public education. OLÉ's work seeks to identify the presence of religious practices in public schools as well as opposition to them, to share knowledge, and to disseminate political positions in favor of secularism.

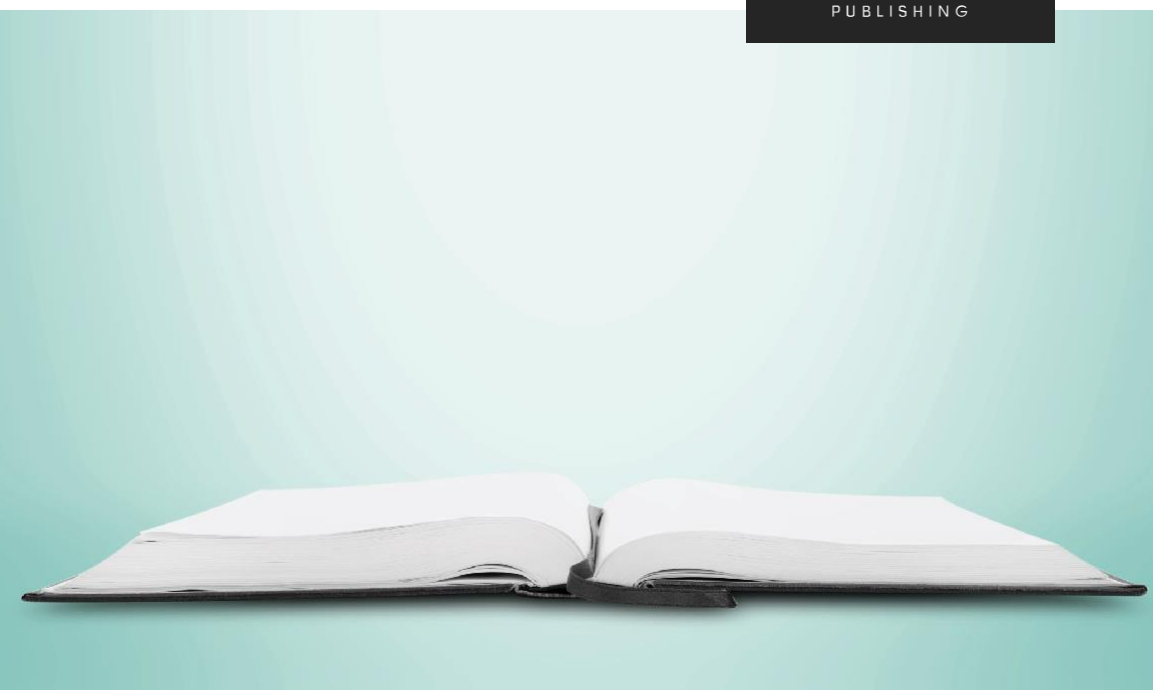


Observatory of Laicity in Education

Mendonça, Sepulveda, Sepulveda



OUR KNOWLEDGE
PUBLISHING



Secularism in Education

policies, concepts and practices

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"SECULARISM IN EDUCATION: POLICIES, CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES"
ORGANIZER:
LAICITY IN EDUCATION OBSERVATORY - OLÉ

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EDITORIAL OLÉ

Secularism in public education is an old and still unrealized aspiration in Brazil, as in other countries. Our country has a history of links between State and religion that has always affected the autonomy of different fields, such as politics, science, and education. Thus, despite being a nation that has no official state religion and whose current Constitution ensures religious freedom and the right to believe and not to believe, the country experiences a series of confrontations and disputes involving attempts at religious interference in our legislation, public policies, and the guarantee of rights for various social groups. However, this quest for privileges, for the maintenance and expansion of the religious presence in state decisions, has never occurred without resistance. It is important to register that since Brazil became a republic we have always had movements, leaderships and articulations in favor of the secular state. And in a more recent context, these movements have multiplied all over the country, even incorporating religious people of several denominations. It is in this scenario of resistance and defense of secularism that the Observatory of Secularism in Education - OLÉ is inserted. Its origin occurs in 2007 with the Observatory of Laicity of the State linked to the Núcleo de Estudos de Políticas Públicas em Direitos Humanos (Center for Studies of Public Policies in Human Rights), of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, where it remained active until 2013. Then OLÉ acted for six years as an independent network of professors, students and activists pro laicity of the State, which elaborated, gathered and disseminated positions related especially to laic public education. As of 2019, the Observatory has become an extension project of the Federal University Fluminense - UFF, where he has remained until today. OLÉ's work seeks to identify the presence of religious practices in public schools as much as opposition to them, to share knowledge, and to spread pro secular political positions. Our positions have no anti-religious feelings. We believe that religious communities have spaces and environments for their own worship and teachings, and that public school is not one of those spaces. To carry out these activities we prioritized participant observation. That is, we strove to critically analyze what was observed and intervene in the political debate, both on public education and on related issues that concern the secularity of the State. In this sense, we believe that the organization of this book can contribute to the diffusion in the educational field and in society as a whole about the debate on secularism and the implications of religious interference in public education. The content presented here was conceived based on the concrete experiences of educators, research on secularism that OLÉ follows and disseminates, and the debate accumulated by the observatory throughout its trajectory. Our expectation is that the analyses developed here will further the discussions about religion and public education, providing data, elements and analyses about the importance of secularism. We also hope to contribute to the demystifying the fallacious points attributed to secularism, such as an Atheist State or a State without religion and prohibition or curtailment of religious expression. The purpose of this publication and of our work is precisely to defend democracy and respect for diversity. Thus, this book has been organized in three sections. In the first, we present the Observatory of Laicity in Education, our main objectives and the concepts that largely refer to our work, as well as summaries of some of the research developed by our members. In the second, we present articles written by some of the participants of the observatory. Our proposal is that, through these articles, readers will be

able to dimension and get to know better part of the work we carry out. Finally, we share several documents that OLÉ has produced, collaborated with, and publicly manifested since its existence. From this publication we believe that we are making it possible for all militants, researchers, teachers, students and people interested in the themes of secularity of the State and secular public education to have access to what is being debated, produced and defended by OLÉ in relation to these themes.

Laicity in Education Observatory - OLÉ

SECTION I

WHO ARE WE?

PRESENTING OBJECTIVES AND CONCEPTS

WHO ARE WE?

PRESENTING OBJECTIVES AND CONCEPTS

Observatory of Laicity in Education

In May 2019, OLÉ became part of the Faculty of Education of the Universidade Federal Fluminense as a university extension. Since then, the Observatory of Laicity in Education is formed by teachers and students, pro-laicity activists who elaborate, gather and disseminate positions related to secular public education. To this end, OLÉ proposes to identify the presence of religious practices in public schools as much as opposition to them, sharing knowledge and spreading republican political positions. Currently, the Observatory has about forty members, including coordination, collaborators, advisors and students (undergraduate and graduate). It is worth mentioning that OLÉ has collaborators from different states of the country and that there is a diversity of fields of knowledge represented among students from different courses, such as pedagogy, history, geography, biology, as well as professors and researchers. OLÉ also has partnerships with institutions, movements and entities such as: the Center for Studies Education and Society, DHESCA Brazil - Human Rights Platform, the Democratic Education Movement - MED, the Center for Studies on Public Policy on Human Rights of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, the Teachers Against the School Without Party- PCESP, the University, Resistance and Human Rights / Interdisciplinary Nucleus for Teaching, Research and Extension in Human Rights - URDIR and the Research Group in Technology, Education and Culture - GPTEC/ IFRJ. This group of collaborators, in its different fronts, is focused on discussing the issue of secularism in the contemporary world, especially in Brazil, taking into account the problems that involve the relationship between State and Religion. One of OLÉ's main interests is to understand the problems concerning religious rights and the role of the State in face of the increasing religious discourse in Western societies, with a differentiated interest in the field of education. To this end, OLÉ develops different activities, such as feeding and maintaining the Observatory's web site (www.ole.uff.br). In 2021 the page had about 10,000 views. This data helps us to dimension the direct impact that this extension action has on the general public. Even reaching other countries. By the year 2022 the Observatory's goal was to reach 15,000 views, based on intense advertising of the site among research and extension groups, and also in the media. It is also worth mentioning that the process of internationalization of the site is underway. In addition, the Observatory offers extension courses, lectures in public schools and works to create a network of extensionists in defense of democracy, of the secular state and of secular public school. The idea is that these actions contribute to empower the Rio de Janeiro society, especially teachers, to spread secularism as a foundation of democracy. In a direct way, OLÉ intends to reach teachers and students from public and private schools in the greater Rio de Janeiro area. In order to carry out these activities, OLÉ is guided by a specialized bibliography and by the material already collected by the Observatory, with special emphasis on the Universal Declaration of Laïcité in the 21st Century, developed in 2005, on the occasion of

the celebration of the centenary of the separation of the State and the Church in France. Thus, we believe that the activities organized by the Observatory of Laïcité in Education can contribute to the training of the academic community and to society's ability to better discuss and work on respect for different religious manifestations. Moreover, with the maintenance of the webpage the students have organized access to the theme that involves the availability of material in the format of articles, books, dissertations and thesis; besides the pertinent legislation; the debate held in other countries, and the possibility of keeping up to date with the news released by the mainstream media. The presence of religion in public schools is not a new subject, nor is it something outdated, but it is the subject of heated debates that remain current. The connection between the State and the Catholic Church appeared in the Constitutional Charter of March 25, 1824, which declared in article 5 that the Roman Catholic Church would be the religion of the Empire. In the Republican Constitution of 1891, religion became a private matter, and religious teaching, for example, was forbidden in official schools. This Constitution determined the neutrality of the State, in the sense of not subsidizing or adopting religious cults, as well as not hindering their operation, forbidding any dependence or alliance between the cult and its representatives. However, it is worth noting that the republican regime established in Brazil in 1889 did not eliminate this intertwining of State and religion, as it maintained numerous privileges held by the Church, in education as in other fields. Thus, it is important to note that secularism in public education is an old and still unfulfilled aspiration in Brazil. And even though the first Republican Constitution was in force for a period of more than 40 years and contained mention of the laicity of public schools, it was not enough to prevent the resistance of religious groups in the Brazilian educational field. What we can identify throughout the history of Brazilian education is that the public school systems have constituted an arena of struggle for hegemony among Christian currents, to the detriment of other religious traditions and of those who profess no religion at all. It is also possible to find the presence of religion in the school throughout this trajectory in many ways, whether as a curricular subject, or with symbols, with the pedagogical actions of some teachers, or with the Christian perspective that permeates the curricula. This offensive by several religious entities to exert control over the curriculum of basic education in the public sector, with the support of sectors of the teaching profession and parliamentarians, has been increasing. This scenario, in our view, has worsened in the face of the Pandemic in Brazil. New limits between State, religion and public school have been crossed. The relationship between denialism and religious extremist action has intensified and advanced in front of the public school and University. In this way, the defense of a secular education, which included the development and elaboration on what this education would be, gained new supporters in the educational field among those who started to identify that the presence of science, critical thinking and intellectuality would be related to a secular environment. In a plural and democratic society such as ours, where various religions coexist within the same population, freedom of religion is directly related to the appropriate limits for reconciling the interests of the various groups and respect for the beliefs of each one. Moreover, since it is directly involved with the formation of the conscience of children and adolescents, as well as the exercise of these and other rights, the issue of religious presence in public schools comprises one of the most sensitive points in the defense of the secularity of the State. This perspective, a secular education is an element that opposes conservatism. Since it defends religious freedom. It also implies that not having a religion is also a right. A secular state does not associate itself with any religion and also does not provide privilege. Therefore,

it does not finance with public resources or establish agreements of any kind, since it has the obligation to ensure religious freedom for all subjects, which characterizes laicity as a pillar of democracy. In short, the defense of secularism is fundamental for us to have a truly democratic society in the fight against all conservative oppressions of contemporary society. That is, democratic and secular education takes on a pedagogical and positive task, addressing values and principles that propitiate the questioning and the breaking down of a series of moral barriers and collaborate to the approach of any subject without interdictions. This means denying the "neutral" school and defending a school that promotes the basic values that allow the very existence of a democratic order. Moreover, such assumptions point to the idea of the educational field as a space for promoting culture and recognizing the plurality of identities and behaviors related to differences. The actions developed by OLE are based on this understanding, which is that secular education represents a central element in the construction of a democratic education without any kind of interdiction. The observatory, since its foundation, has always sought to develop reflections on the different conceptions of the secular state and secular public education. Always aligned with what is popularly called "school ground". That is, throughout its trajectory, OLE has sought dialogue between theories about the theme of secularity and the experience and possible experiences in everyday life at school. And it was with this intention that one of the main spaces for promoting this dialogue began, the annual OLE Forum. Participant observation is OLE's motto. We are not satisfied with just recording what we see, but we strive to critically analyze what we observe and intervene in the political debate, both about public education and related issues concerning the secularity of the State. Therefore, we consider it important to disclose the concepts¹ that move and support us, because they are fundamental in our analyses and interventions.

RELIGIOUS FIELD	It is a concept from the Social Sciences, which designates the social space where agents and institutions dispute the monopoly of relations with the sacred. The religious field is, therefore, a field of conflicts.
CONCORDATA	A treaty signed between the governments of two states: the Vatican, which represents the Catholic Church, and one other. This treaty establishes privileges for this religious society to operate within the territory of the country in question. In general, the treaty establishes special conditions for operating in state institutions (schools, hospitals, prisons, armed forces), access to the mass media, tax exemptions, receipt of public financial resources, etc.
CONFESSIONAL	Term derived from confession, which is synonymous with religion.
CREATIONISM	It is the belief in the creation of the human being and other living beings by God, in their present forms, according to the account in the holy books of the great monotheistic religions, such as the Bible, in its Jewish and Christian versions, and the Koran.

SCIENTIFIC CREATIONISM	Movement that arose in the United States of America from the 1970s onwards based on the defense of Creationism as a scientifically legitimate body of knowledge and, therefore, capable of being part of the Science and Biology curriculum in US public schools.
DOGMA	From the Greek dogma-atos (decision of the popular assembly or king). A doctrine that does not admit of challenge is dogmatic. In the doctrine of the Catholic Church, dogmas are formulated in the holy scriptures and in the teaching of the popes, so that the faithful must follow them without discussion.
ATHEIST STATE	One that proclaims that any and all religion is alienated and alienating, in social and/or individual terms. To combat alienation, the atheist state tries to suppress any and all religions. If it cannot prohibit it completely, it makes its practices as difficult as possible, inhibits its diffusion, and develops continuous and systematic anti-religious propaganda.
CONFESSIONAL STATE	One who establishes a religion as official. As a result, this religion enjoys privileged conditions, as do its clergy. Sometimes being a follower of that religion is a condition for access to certain public positions, such as in the administration, in schools, and in the judiciary.
LAIC STATE	What used to be called a lay state is now called a secular state, one that has its legitimacy in the whole people (laikós, in Greek), that is, in popular sovereignty. O A secular state is impartial in matters of religion. It respects
	all religious beliefs, as long as they do not threaten public order, just as it respects non-beliefs.
CONCURRENT STATE	Even without having signed a concordat in the legal sense of the term, the concordat state protects a religion or a group of religions with political and/or economic privileges, explicitly or implicitly. The most common form of concordat state today is the one that results in the privileging of religions of the Judeo-Christian trunk, in the form of ecumenism or interconfessionalism.
FUNDAMENTALISM	It is the qualification of a religious movement that strictly follows the principles and/or practices of the founder, rejecting as deviations or heresies the changes made in the rites, values, as well as in the interpretation of the sacred texts.

LAICITY	Attribute of the secular position, whether of a state, an institution, of a group or of an individual.
LAICO	The secular position is impartial in matters of religion, whether in conflicts or alliances between religious beliefs, or in the actions of non-believers. The secular position does not imply the rejection of any religion. It implies, rather, that it does not engage in proselytism or in disputes between them by the faith of believers, nor in the criticism of any or all of them by non-believers.
LAKE	This term of Christian/Catholic origin originally referred to any individual who had not prepared for clerical functions, nor taken the vows leading to the priesthood. This term was extended to the State which had no official religion. The expression "lay state" was abandoned in favor of another, more appropriate one, that of a secular state.
RELIGION	It is a set of beliefs and values shared by a group of people who come together for certain ritual practices. Among the shared beliefs are that of a supernatural world; that of supernatural beings who can influence material life; narratives about the creation of living things, including human beings; in "life" after death. Religions can be monotheistic, believing in the existence of a single god, like those born in the Middle East (Judaism, Christianity and Islam); polytheistic, like Afro-Brazilian religions, believing in the existence of several supernatural entities; or even godless, like Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism.
SECULAR	This is an expression of Christian/Catholic religious origin that originally designated the entire world outside the Church. The secular world was then the world of economy, administration, politics, family, in short, everything that was not under the direct control of the Church. In short, secular was everything that concerned the worldly dimension of human life, that is, life in this world. In a broader sense, the term secular is also used to designate everything that is opposed to the sacred, to the inviolable, to what cannot be discussed, even outside the explicitly religious connotation.

After the concepts exposed above, it is necessary to emphasize that the religious field is how sociologists designate the social space where agents and institutions dispute the monopoly on relations with the sacred. Therefore, a field of conflict, in which each religion presents itself as true, authentic, even as having been created directly by the divinity. The others, consequently, they are considered the fruit of ignorance, of deviation from the true path, or of interests that are not authentically religious. These conflicts appear clearly, when religious militancy is more ostentatious. Or they are concealed by ideologies that emphasize the similarities between religious values and practices, as well as the presumed pursuit of the same ends by different paths. The religious field was born, in Brazil, with the Portuguese conquest of the territory and the people who inhabited it. The Lusitanian conquest took place in the midst of the Counter Reformation movement. Determined to regain the hegemony lost with the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, the Catholic Church created new organizations (the most important of which was the Society of Jesus) and increased its efforts to convert the peoples newly incorporated into the dominions of the Iberian monarchies. It was thus that the religious field was born, in Brazil, as a conflict, or better, as a combat of the "Soldiers of Christ" against the "ignorance" of the natives and the religious dimension of their lives. Symbolic violence was the keynote of evangelization, which used sophisticated forms, such as the missionaries' theater, and figures of high symbolic efficacy, such as the invention of Tupã to facilitate the assimilation of the figure of the Christian God. Against enslaved Africans, the material violence that marked their condition dispensed greater efforts with symbolic violence. When compared to other countries, the religious field in Brazil is especially complex, since it includes religions of different degrees of institutionalization and distinct cultural traditions. From Judeo-Christian monotheism to indigenous polytheism or of African origin, and the more recent incorporation of oriental traditions, including religions that do not have the notion of god. The syncretism is many and varied: popular Catholicism, Afro-Brazilian religions, are all syncretic formulas. As if this were not enough, the changes of religion that individuals experience during their lives are additional elements in the complexity of this field. Religions have very different degrees of institutionalization, with the bureaucracy of the Catholic Church occupying the highest degree. At the opposite extreme are the indigenous and Afro-Brazilian religions, devoid of formal organization, without a bureaucracy in the sociological sense of the term. In the middle of the road are the Evangelical Pentecostal Churches, some with a higher degree of institutionalization, others less, because the creation of a new church depends on the initiative and leadership of the dissident pastor or minister, inaugurating his own confession. Although the religious field seeks autonomy from other fields, it has entries in others. In the political field, its entry aims to impose its moral orientations on the whole of society, as well as to secure privileges, especially economic, political, and educational privileges. In the economic field, some religious societies, more than others, accumulate the financial resources that enable them to sustain their activities, both religious and non-religious. In the educational field, they spread their beliefs in their own schools and in public schools, through subjects in the curriculum. And they form ruling elites in Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Lutheran universities, and in colleges of various others. confessions. Even here there are important differences: the Catholic Church's entry into the political, economic, and educational fields is much greater than that of the Evangelical Churches; and the latter, in turn, greater than that of religions of African origin. In Brazil today, the religious field is undergoing great changes. The most notable is the fall of adherents of Catholicism, which went from 93.0% of declarants in the

1960 Demographic Census, to 64.99% in 2010. In recent years, in Rio de Janeiro and the Amazon, in general, the majority of the population no longer declares itself Catholic, but Catholicism remains hegemonic in rural areas and in the Northeast of the country. Complementing the fall of Catholics is the rapid growth of Evangelical Churches, which went from 4.0% of adherents in the 1960 Census to 22.89% in 2010. It is important to note that the category "Evangelical" is divided into three subcategories: Missionary, Pentecostal, and Undetermined. Also important, from a quantitative point of view, is the decline in the number of those who declared themselves adherents of Afro-Brazilian religions. Those who declared themselves "no religion" went from 0.5% in 1960 to 8.04% in 2010. This percentage of the population corresponds to the equivalent of about 15 million people who said they had no religion at all. Spiritists in the 2010 Census were the fourth largest religious group, with 2% of the population professing this faith. Candomblé, Umbanda and other religions of African origin represented 0.31% of the population, corresponding to a little over half a million people. Islam accounted for 0.02% of the population, while Judaism was professed by 0.06%. It is worth saying that since the annual census conducted by IBGE in 2020 did not occur, the most up-to-date data available on this topic are those of the Datafolha Institute, which conducted a survey in 2019 with 2948 people over 16 years old in 176 municipalities in the country. Even though a 2% margin of error is identified in all indices, it is possible to note a significant change in the proportion of Catholics. In 2010 these represented 64% of the population, and almost 10 years later they reached about 50% of the population. The Datafolha Institute survey also allows us to detect a significant increase in the number of evangelicals: from 22% in 2010 to 31% of the population. Among those who declare themselves as having no religion, the increase was from 8% to 10%. The religions of African origin showed an increase, from 0.31% to 2%. The decrease in the number of Catholics has been explained as an effect of the high degree of institutionalization of the Church, which would not give it the necessary agility to adapt quickly to the new social, cultural and economic situations of the country. It remained dominant in Brazil for centuries, but its reorientation from an elitist reference to a "preferential option for the poor" after Vatican Council II paradoxically distanced it from the popular classes. This is because the "socially engaged Catholicism", based on Liberation Theology, which disputed with the communists in the 1960s the political direction of social movements, through the action of the basic ecclesial communities, weakened the mystical elements of the religious experience, just when the demand for them grew. The change in the religious profile of the population is closely linked to the great migratory movements that have taken place in the country in the last 50 years, whether interregional or rural/urban. Both in the regions of expansion of the rural frontier and in the outskirts of the cities, notably in the metropolitan regions, the migrant populations established there, besides being detached from solidarity relations in the places of origin, are faced with a weak presence of state agencies installed in the places of destination, as well as a lack of social development policies. Living, in their great majority, in very precarious conditions, almost always bordering on misery, and culturally uprooted, these populations develop new social dispositions and new attempts to build their cultural identities, in which religion occupies an important place. It is the Evangelical Churches, especially the Pentecostals, that have presented significant religious alternatives for the poorest, precisely those where the greatest population growth is taking place. Hence, the growth of Pentecostalism is greater in the more economically dynamic regions, which includes the metropolitan regions of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In the poorer regions and less exposed

to social change, Catholicism remains stable. But the Catholic Church has developed strategies to regain its position, now threatened by the Evangelical Churches, including through the incorporation of their practices, such as, for example, the use of mass media, especially television. At the same time that the "socially engaged Catholicism" was contained, after the end of the military dictatorship, for which the pressure from the Vatican was decisive, a new movement erupted, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, coming from the United States, with a strong Pentecostal inspiration. In contrast to the former, a religiosity of an intimate nature predominates among the charismatics. The Afro-Brazilian religions present difficulties of analysis not found in those of the Christian tradition. Because their practitioners have been, for centuries, forced into syncretism, as a strategy for survival in the face of religious and political repression, even today many of them declare themselves Catholics. Even if repression no longer exists, it is common for Candomblé and Umbanda adepts to assume themselves as Catholics. For this reason, the number of practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions is greatly underestimated in demographic censuses. In recent years, Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestations have received strong support from the Public Power, as part of social inclusion policies. One of its effects was the promulgation of law no. 10.639, of January 9, 2003, which determined the insertion of "Afro-Brazilian History and Culture" in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, which will hardly fail to include the religious dimension. The social sectors where Pentecostalism grows are, in general, the same where there are more practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions, that is, among the poorest. As Candomblé and Umbanda are religions that do not have organizations that articulate the worship communities, without organized clergy, that do not resort to proselytizing or to television media, they are particularly vulnerable to attacks from Pentecostal churches that compete with them for the same public, preaching a "spiritual war" against beliefs considered demonic. In face of the growing Pentecostal attacks, those religions, endowed with low symbolic value in Brazilian society, lose adherents, despite the political support offered by the Public Power. Besides this, the retraction of Afro-Brazilian religions has been facilitated by the fact that the Pentecostal churches, despite adopting the myth of "purity of faith", in fact perform a type of syncretism that has affinities with religiosity of African origin, even though, unlike the latter, they project an image of the world polarized by good and evil. Such affinities would explain the transfer of followers between such different religions. Finally, a brief comment about those who declare themselves "no religion. Although they are not necessarily atheists or agnostics, comprising those who refuse the institutions and beliefs available in the religious field, the increase in their number is significant. While in 1991, 4.8% of the population declared themselves "no religion", in 2010 this proportion reached 8.0%. Although they are few in absolute numbers, the speed of growth is greater than that of the adherents of the Evangelical Churches. Thus, we realize how complex the religious field is in Brazil, since religions in search of hegemony develop political and practical strategies for their consolidations. This is one of the reasons why OLE defends the guarantee of the secular state. But what is the secular state anyway?

What is the secular state?

It is not easy to define the secular state. It is easier to say what it is not. Like democracy. But for us at OLE, the secularity of the state is a process. In the old days, states based their legitimacy on the sacred, so the king or emperor was considered a God or his son or his envoy. Then he ruled by divine right, as if a mere mortal had received political power from a God. Therefore, the ruler's power was considered sacred, drawing from this his legitimacy, which spread to the entire state. With this religious basis, the state privileged one religion over others. Examples of such privileges abound, past and present, in both monarchical and republican political regimes. If States were not born secular, a State becomes secular when it does away with religion for its legitimacy, which is based exclusively on popular sovereignty. In other words, when the State does away with religion as an element of social cohesion and national unity, it becomes a secular State, even without saying so in the Constitution or proclaiming it to the four winds. The first result of secularism is that the State becomes impartial in matters of religion, whether in conflicts or alliances between religious organizations, or in the actions of non-believers. The secular state respects, then, all religious beliefs, as long as they do not threaten the order public, just as it respects non-belief in religion. It neither supports nor hinders the spread of religious ideas or ideas contrary to religion. The second result of the secularity of the State is that collective morality, particularly that which is sanctioned by laws, no longer has a sacred character, that is, it is no longer protected by religion, but is defined in the realm of popular sovereignty. This means that laws, including those with ethical or moral implications, are made with the participation of all -believers and non-believers, as citizens. The secular state cannot accept impositions from religious institutions, so that such or such a law is approved or vetoed, nor that some public policy is changed because of religious values. But, at the same time, the secular state cannot ignore that religious people of all beliefs have the right to influence the political order, asserting, as much as non-believers, their own version of what is best for society as a whole. In any case, it is worth remembering that the secularity of the State is a process. There is no such thing as a totally secular State in the world, just as there is no such thing as a totally democratic State. Like democracy, secularity is a process, a social and political construction.

And What is the Non-Laic State?

The secular State is neither confessional nor interconfessional. The former is that which privileges a certain religion or group of religions, transferring to it (them) public financial resources, directly or indirectly, legally sanctioning its moral guidelines and introducing its (their) doctrine (s) into the curricula of public schools. The confessional State can have an exclusive religion, forbidding the others, or privilege one(s) and tolerate others. The Brazilian State was confessional during the Empire, just as contemporary States such as Great Britain, Iran, Israel and Denmark are confessional, having privileged religions, respectively, Christianity of the Anglican Confession, Islam, Judaism and Christianity of the Lutheran Confession. Some people think that legal separation between the state and religious societies (church-state separation) is enough for secularism to exist. This is not so. There are countries that have no official religion and are not secular. On the other hand, there are former monarchies, with official religion, which are more secular than certain Latin American states. For example, Great Britain and Denmark are more secular than Brazil and Argentina, which formally separated from the Catholic Church more than a century ago.

The secular state is also not atheist. This corresponds to the state that proclaims that any and every religion is alienated and alienating, in social and individual terms. In order to combat alienation, the atheist state then fights any and all religions. If it cannot prohibit it completely, it makes its practices as difficult as possible, inhibits its diffusion, and develops continuous and systematic anti-religious propaganda. If the secular state is not confessional, interconfessional, or atheist, can we then say that the secular state is the same as lay or secular?

Secularization of the State and secularization of society

For certain sociologists, the process of secularization is broader than the secularization of the State—the process of secularization of Society would encompass that of the secularization of the State. For others, however, there is relative independence between these processes, so that the secularization of the State may go further than the secularization of society, or the other way around. OLÉ has chosen to distinguish between these two processes. There are countries that maintain a close relationship with a religious society, even having state religion, but that society is quite secularized, such as Great Britain and Denmark. Others, on the other hand, have a secular state in a society with institutions permeated by the sacred, such as the United States and India. Still others occupy intermediate and transitional positions. In Algeria and Turkey, the secular state is under strong pressure to merge with the dominant Islam in society and to assume the Koranic prescriptions for the body politic. In Brazil and Italy, the secularization of society is advancing while the secularity of the State is at a standstill. If the secularization of the State is halted in Brazilian society it must somehow influence the Brazilian public school that is also secular, but what is a secular public school?

What is a secular public school?

The secular public school is proper of the secular State. Only in a situation of extreme incongruity, and for a short time, is it possible for a secular school to exist in the official school system if the State is subject to the hegemony of one or more religious institutions. In the same way, the secularity of the State is not compatible with a public school subjected by religion. Is the Brazilian State secular? Are federal, state and municipal schools secular? In this text we will define the criteria to collaborate with the diagnosis of the public school systems, with respect to the laicity of the education provided in them.

1. In a secular public school, religion is neither a teaching subject nor an adjunct to other subjects. In other words, there is no Religious Teaching, not even on an optional basis, for reasons which can be found in various sections of this page; nor does religion clandestinely penetrate the content of other subjects. Religion may be the subject of analysis in Philosophy, Sociology and History, but it is not a reference to support values, worldviews, behavior or attitudes. For example, in a secular public school, prayers are not said before entering the classroom or at the beginning of each class; it does not even appear in the teacher's speeches and admonitions, such as, "Be quiet, Jesus is watching you!" or in disciplinary gimmicks, such as "pulling up" prayers to calm an unruly class.

2. In secular public schools, teaching is guided by a critical attitude towards knowledge, that is, there is no sacred or unquestionable knowledge. Everything can be put under the examination of reason: Literature, History, Geography, Science, etc. Therefore, the textbook cannot be considered unquestionable or sacred, it cannot be presented as the depository of ready and finished knowledge. It is not the end of the questions, just a very useful tool for access to information and questions.

In the same way, the word of the teacher cannot be understood as that of a prophet, but of a "midwife" in the process of access to knowledge, as in the happy image of Socrates, presented 24 centuries ago. There are religions that have sacred books. According to their followers, they contain the truth dictated by a supernatural entity. In a secular public school, there can be no book with these characteristics. It is necessary that teachers and students remember, at all times, that knowledge is historically produced. What is accepted as the last word today may be superseded tomorrow. Thus, students have to be prepared for the changes in science, culture and technology. And if this does not start from the beginning of schooling, it will be difficult to reverse the willingness to accept ready-made formulas. In this respect, the secular perspective of the public school coincides with the best in contemporary pedagogy.

3. The secular public school does not aim to "put the children on the track", from which they will never leave. Nothing is more against the pedagogy of the secular school than the passage from the book Proverbs, from the Bible, so often repeated by the supporters of authoritarian pedagogy: "Teach a child the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Only those who think that everything is already known and mastered by the masters of yesterday and today can assume that they have the track map ready for all time. If this orientation serves for Judeo-Christian religious teachings, it cannot be transferred to education, especially to that which the secular state maintains.

4. A secular public school considers and respects the religious choices of students and their families, without being bound by statistical criteria of the dominant religions - what is the religion of the majority? The school cannot belittle children because of the religion they practice in their homes or worshipping communities. Even if it has to go against some of its precepts, as in the case of the evolution of the species, which horrifies those who cannot (or will not) go beyond the literal understanding of the Bible. It does not hold hostage this understanding, which needs to dissolve, but treats with respect what needs to change. The secular public school does not repress or humiliate children and young people, not even when they need to wear clothing appropriate to the rites of their religions or eating practices at certain times. It accepts, for example, that students belonging to Afro-Brazilian religions remain in class with their heads covered, if this is a requirement of the initiation rite, when they are not in class. Instead of forcing them to remove their headscarves, in the name of dominant religious beliefs, camouflaged by some general rule, such as the prohibition of wearing caps in school.

5. The secular public school does not abandon practices or contents proper to school culture or to popular culture because the adepts of this or that cult may be offended. How to do this has to be invented, and it won't be easy, due to the long time of subjection of public schools to the dictates of religious institutions - Catholic for five centuries, Evangelical now, together at times, separate and rival at others. It is not "averaging" with the dominant faiths. It is not even accepting the religious prejudices that students bring from their families and their

worshipping communities. These prejudices must be met with courage, determination, and pedagogy. This is the case of the rejection of homosexuals by religious currents that say that the Bible condemns them, that they are sick and need healing. The secular public school cannot incorporate this homophobia of religious origin, any more than it needs this kind of justification.

6. There is no place for totalitarianism in secular public schools. There are those who pretend to solve society's problems through a conception of education that covers all dimensions of individual and social life, as if all educational processes were subject to a single set of values and a unified intellectual and moral direction. As it happened in the European Middle Ages, at the time of the so-called Christianity, and in Nazi Germany. Nazi, fascist and similar parties are growing all over the world, but who defends today this totalitarian education (called integral), in Brazil, are sectors of the Catholic Church: to submit everything to the religious dogmas and precepts - to theirs. Well, this kind of education is neither possible nor desirable today, for at least two reasons.

(i) The complexity of modern society, in which religious (or any other) institutions are not alone in driving socializing processes. Even schools run by religious institutions depend on state approval to operate. There are several educational processes that converge and diverge: family, school, religious institution, mass communication, political groups, coexistence groups, sports groups, etc. (ii) Democracy demands the abandonment of any pretension of totalitarian education, under any name, even disguised by the term integral, which has many different meanings, according to the context in which it is used.

The school, however much it is called upon to play socializing roles in place of families, cannot claim to take over all educational activity. Neither can educational institutions. Neither can the mass media. Not even the State. The search for coordination and consensus is the way of democracy also in the educational field. At the State level, educational matters are properly the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, but they pass through the Ministries of Culture, Communications, and Sports, to mention only those with the most obvious interface.

From the points presented above, we can conclude that it is not enough to suppress the most ostensible elements of religious presence in public schools for them to be effectively secular. Even without these elements, the school may be preparing individuals endowed with attitudes propitious to follow propagandists of various kinds - religious, politicians, TV presenters, etc. - for not having been able to awaken, promote, and exercise the power of religion. -, for not having been able to awaken, promote and exercise critical thinking. To make politics based on religion, even more so based on a book considered sacred, is a clear symptom of the lack of secular education.

The secular public school demands an adequate preparation of teachers and other educational professionals, as well as adequate material resources such as libraries, science labs, and spaces for expression of arts and leisure. In other words, the secular public school demands much more than the routine of traditional teaching (even if it has electronic novelties). It also demands from educators a special professional commitment and an attentive pedagogical and ethical conscience. It is as difficult to define the secular school in a few words as it is to define democracy. Both are under permanent construction, which is why defining them, as well as building them, can only be the result of a continuous collective theoretical and, above all, political-practical effort.

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY OLÉ MEMBERS

The members of the Observatory of Laicity in Education develop their research and studies in relation to the defense of laicity as one of the principles of a democratic state, and its repercussions in a public and secular school. The expansion of democracy involves combating religious practices and religious teaching in public educational institutions, as it enables the religious freedom of all who inhabit the daily lives of our schools. However, despite the seriousness of our arguments supporting the secularity of the State, the presence of religion in the public school space is still a reality, even if it goes against the constitutional premises and democratic principles. Religion is part of public school and does not appear only in the classrooms of the teachers assigned to the task of religious education. This is only one of the ways of occupying this space which is vastly disputed by religions. The teaching of religion in the school routine occurs not only by the consecrated path of the classroom, but also by ideological directives, which happen without legal shelter and are based on questionable practices such as the exposure of religious symbols in the principal's office; the prayers developed in some moments; masses; exposed bibles; as several manifestations that privilege faiths, are also forms of teaching and colonizing the daily life of school institutions. Thus, as already mentioned, the members of OLÉ weave their research in favor of the defense of secularism and the implementation of democracy in public schools and universities. In order to briefly present the main axes of this research, we have constructed the following summary:

Axis 1 - Educational Policies

Themes involved in educational policies and focused on the right to education, human rights, and democracy. They also work on the issue of religious teaching in public schools. One of the main objectives of the research in this axis is to contribute to the knowledge of the formation of the educational field in Brazil, focusing on the process of autonomization in the face of the religious field. To this end, they work with the perspective of reviewing the formation of Brazilian educational systems, especially at the central/federal level, from the concern with the process of formation of the field, autonomizing itself from the political and the religious. Researchers: Allan do Carmo, Luiz Antônio Cunha, Bruna Marques Cabral, Carlos Roberto Jamil Cury, Fernanda Pereira de Moura, Ivanilda Figueiredo, Renata Brito, Roberto Arriada Lorea, Pâmella Passos, Fernanda Moura, José Antônio Miranda Sepulveda, Fernando de Araújo Penna, David Gonçalves Soares, Pedro Henrique Lessa Torres, Pedro Henrique Nascimento de Oliveira, Regis Eduardo Coelho Argüelles da Costa.

Axis 2 - Science and Religiosity

They deal with the broad topic of the presence of religiosity in the contemporary world. And how they affect scientific activities. The projects in this axis also investigate religious beliefs between practicing scientists and students in scientific training. They also include the investigation of science teaching in basic education with regard to the teaching of the origin of life and evolution, themes that are objects of both the sciences and religions. The research developed in this axis also revolves around the social representations, practices and contexts associated with the coexistence of religious beliefs expressed in different environments of formation and scientific production such as laboratories and other spaces in the academy,

university classrooms and in elementary education. The origin of life and the universe, evolution, and phenomena of nature have been the focus of this research, as well as the training of biologists and psychologists. The teaching of death in the health area and in university training and high school, nursing, and middle school settings has also been addressed. Researchers: Cristiana Rosa Valença, Eliane Brígida Falcão, Mônica Waldhelm, Rodrigo Borba, Viviane Vieira

Axis 3 - Secularism, gender and sexuality

This axis includes research on how religion has been interfering in the practices of teachers in the daily lives of public schools with regard to issues such as gender and sexuality. One of the main proposals of the research in this axis is to investigate, based on the teachers' and students' narratives and on the practices carried out, the values and knowledge that educators have from their religious beliefs about homosexuality. It is also being investigated with religious leaders the knowledge, values and practices developed in religious spaces in relation to homosexuality, through the narratives of these subjects and document analysis, i.e., reading the rules of the religions to which these religious leaders belong, since many educators take into their professional practice values acquired in the professed religions. Researchers: Amanda Mendonça, Denize Sepulveda, Antônio Hugo Moreira de Brito Júnior, Renan Corrêa dos Santos, Romã Duarte Neptune, Maíra Indio do Brasil Dezerto da Motta, and Thalles Gustavo Leite Couto..

SECTION II ARTICLES

BIBLES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: EXAMPLE OF RELIGION-DRIVEN EDUCATION POLICY

Allan do Carmo Silva PhD student in Education - PPGE - PUC-Rio/ CNPQ Fellow Public school teacher - SEMED - Nova Iguaçu The present article aims to analyze the decision-making processes around a municipal law for education, with notorious religious influence, approved in the City of Nova Iguaçu/RJ in the year 2016. Such analysis takes into account how the actors positioned themselves regarding the insertion of religion in the public school environment, thus expressing their deepest beliefs about the topic. Thus, the place of religion in this work refers to the actors, their beliefs and disputes around the presence or absence of religious elements in public environments maintained by the State. This is a cutout of my research at the doctoral level in the Post-graduate program in Education at PUC-Rio (Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro), with the results already achieved in this research in its final phase and written in the second semester of 2022. I use the referential in Political Science, starting with Matland (1995), who brings the Ambiguity and Conflict Model, and continue with the theory of Sabatier (1987) in his Defense Coalitions Model. These authors contribute to understanding the conflicts around a policy and the positions and beliefs of the actors acting in the decision-making processes. From them it is possible to evaluate policies that fail to be implemented due to their ambiguities and conflicts and that even so keep their impact in the political arena, favoring the visibility of groups in defense of such policies in the long run. These models also contribute to the organization of information and the grouping of actors involved in different coalitions, with distinct or even antagonistic beliefs. For a more specific analysis in the educational field, I turn to authors who study the religious influence in Brazilian Education and the issue of secularism (CURY, 2013; FISCHMANN, 2016; CUNHA, 2016; 2018; 2020). Also in the field of Education, elements of conservatism pointed out by Apple (2002; 2003) whose relevance in the present discussion contributes to the understanding of the strategies of conservative groups that use curricula in the defense of a conservative ideology in public education. Cunha (2018) points out the reduced autonomy of the educational field in the face of the religious field that expands in the discussions about religious education in the Supreme Court and in the approval of the National Common Curricular Base in the sense of taking the focus away from the conflict between religious and secular to a secondary conflict that would be the confessional or interconfessional (CUNHA, 2018), giving support to the demands of religion at the expense of secularity in Education in Brazil. Fischmann (2008) questions the religious influence on educational policies, when it comes to the offering of a religious education subject in public schools. This author agrees with the studies of Cury (2013) when she points out that the connection of the Brazilian State with the Catholic Church for four centuries brings complicating factors to be considered. Among them is the very acceptance by the State that religious teaching should take place, even though the offering of this subject is totally contrary to a secular stance in the educational area. Fischmann also exposes the conflict that such a stance has been causing, having a more recent work analyzing the positions of religious people in the public hearing held by the Supreme Court in June 2015 (FISCHMANN, 2016), on the Direct Action of Unconstitutionality regarding the legal text on religious teaching in public schools. As for conservatism in education, and the connections

with religious presence in politics, Apple (2002) brings analyses that are pertinent to this work. For him, conservatism has been changing in the last decades, noticing a turn to the right in the political field, which he calls "conservative restoration" (Apple, 1993; 1996; 2002), the result of the victorious conflict undertaken by the right to build a broad consensual alliance. In part, this new alliance has been very successful because it has managed to overcome the dominance of common sense, that is, it has managed to creatively project different social tendencies and commitments, organizing them under its general authority on issues related to the social good, culture, the economy and, as we shall see, education. (Apple, 2002, p. 57) This author points out that "authoritarian populism and religious fundamentalists have had a substantial influence on curriculum policy and practice" (Apple, 2002, p. 71). This insight contributes to the present work to provide consistency and connection to the public policy models presented here. The methodology used was document analysis and interviews with the actors directly linked to the decision-making processes of the law and analysis. The documents that were accessed and that were published on the internet were cited with their authors, indicating the source or website accessed. The interviews to the specific actors followed the parameters of the Ethics Chamber of PUC-Rio, and the interviewees whose political mandates or religious positions made them public to the point of hindering their anonymity in the research had the option of authorizing their identification or not. The interviews were conducted face-to-face with the actors in 2022, audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The documents accessed were the following: law 4612/2016, approved by the City Council of Nova Iguaçu (CMNI), bill 120/2016 with its justification, recommendation 08/2016 from the Public Prosecutor's Office of Rio de Janeiro, and the Direct Action of Unconstitutionality (ADI 0063505-67.2017.8.19.0000) in the Court of Justice of Rio de Janeiro. Also used as a source of information were publications on the official channels of the Nova Iguaçu Teachers Union (SEPE-NI) on the internet, news in newspapers with a large circulation in the region, and posts made by the councilman on his social network. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with the following actors: A director of SEPE-NI, the councilman who proposed the bill and the pastor who was identified as the creator of the text presented at CMNI and the Catholic Bishop, who represented the Catholic Diocese of Nova Iguaçu at the time. These interviewees are directly involved in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu, and it is pertinent to present and contextualize the research field.

The City of Nova Iguaçu: public schools, religion and the law under analysis

To understand the context in which the law under analysis was passed, I present some data about the municipality, as well as some results of my recent research on the subject in this city. Nova Iguaçu is part of the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro and is located 33 km from the capital of Rio de Janeiro. This municipality has a territorial extension of 521.21 km² and just over 800 thousand inhabitants, being the largest municipality of the Baixada Fluminense in territorial extension and the second largest in population. The religious profile of its population has been changing in the last decades. The data regarding the religious profile of the municipality's population still needs to be updated, being from the 2010 IBGE census, but they already show that the number of people who declare themselves Evangelical (294,099 people, representing 37% of the population) exceeds the number of Catholics (263,499 people, 32% of the population) and that there is a significant number of people who declare themselves without religion (168,600 people, 21% of the population)². These data

point to changes in the religious profile, however they show a certain continuity of the propagation of religious trends linked to Christianity and the tendency to constitute a moral majority, since Catholics and Evangelicals total 69% of the population, sharing certain beliefs and values, which are evident in the way these groups understand and act in the public sphere. As for the presence of these religious in education in the municipality, I highlight that in 2013 I was able to carry out a research in which the insertion of religion in public schools was evident, much promoted by declared actors of the religions of greater numerical presence (SILVA, 2013). I also highlight that, according to the Municipal Secretariat of Education (SEMEDI), this public education network currently has 143 schools, serving 65,000 students, from kindergarten to the second segment of elementary school, and currently has 3,648 regular classroom teachers³. During my research in 2013 I could see that in the school environment the presence of religious manifestations was naturalized, which conformed to the customs and doctrines common among Christians (evangelicals and Catholics). Even though the subject of religious education was not taught, it was common to have moments of prayers, biblical readings, ceremonies, and rites that favored the Christian religious segment. At that same time I was able to interview some education secretaries and see that the support for these practices in schools varied according to the convictions of the managers in charge of the portfolio, with no clear definition from the head of the executive branch on the issue of secularism in public school practice. With this, I was able to find a former secretary of education who stated in an interview that during her administration she tried to implement religious education in public schools, in a format that she defined as multi-faith, encompassing values of different religions in the municipality. This secretary was also favorable to the religious presence in schools, with different types of religious manifestations, as long as it covered all the religions present in the schools' work environment. So, in 2006 and 2007, a commission was appointed in SEMEDI to discuss and plan the religious education, a commission composed of female employees, one Catholic, one Evangelical, and one Spiritist. There were some meetings with religious people at that time, but there were some obstacles in the definition of the contents because there were tendencies to favor one or another creed in these discussions. With the departure of this secretary, another secretary took over and shelved the issue of religious education in public schools. So for the present article I observe the clashes around the theme from the year 2006, when there was this attempt to implement religious education by SEMEDI. After this period, several municipal laws in Nova Iguaçu were directed to some kind of recognition of religious manifestations linked to Christianity. An example of this is that in the year 2014 there was the approval of 15 laws in the City Council of Nova Iguaçu (CMNI) authorizing the construction of monuments in honor of the Bible in different neighborhoods of the municipality. It is possible to see this type of monument to the Bible in public spaces with the Paço Municipal, in front of the Nova Iguaçu City Hall, and in the entrance hall of the CMNI building. Thus religious elements of the Christian confession continue to figure in public spaces and to have legitimacy via laws approved by parliamentarians. When focusing on the area of education in the municipality, it is important to observe these nuances around it, since education does not follow in isolation from the disputes in society. Apple (2002), analyzing the tensions in American education, states that the education is a space of conflict and compromise. It also becomes the stage for great battles over what our institutions should do, whom they should serve, and who should make those decisions. And yet, it is itself one of the major arenas in which resources, power, and ideology play out as they relate to policy, funding, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.

Thus, education is both cause and effect, that is, determined and determinant. Thus, there is no hope that any single analysis can fully interpret all of this complexity. (Apple, 2002, p. 56) Understanding education as this arena of disputes, where antagonistic groups try to imprint their marks and their positions. This is how I arrive at this law in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu-RJ. In 2016, a law was passed that provided for the partnership of the executive power for the distribution of Bibles in the public schools of the municipality. This law, authored by Councilman Luisinho (PSD) had the following content: LAW NO. 4.619 OF SEPTEMBER 9, 2016 Authorizes the Executive Branch to enter into partnerships for the distribution of the Bible in schools in the Nova Iguaçu municipal network, and makes other provisions. Author: Councilman Luis Henrique Souza Barbosa - Luisinho

THE CITY COUNCIL OF NOVA IGUAÇU, BY ITS LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES,
DECREES AND I SANCTION THE FOLLOWING LAW:

The Executive Power is authorized to sign partnerships to instruct the schools of the Nova Iguaçu Municipal public network in the project of Bible distribution with emphasis on ethical, moral, civic, scientific geographic knowledge, and historical facts of great relevance. Single paragraph. The project should be optional, and parents or guardians should give express authorization for their children or guardians to receive a copy of the Bible.

Art. 2 This Law will go into effect on the date of its publication. NELSON ROBERTO BORNIER DE OLIVEIRA Mayor

For an analysis of this law and the elements that brought conflicts to the point of it not being implemented in the municipality, I see the need for an exposition of the theoretical framework proposed here. To this end, I briefly summarize the main concepts of the theoretical models proposed for analysis.

Analytical Models in Public Policy

As for the study of public policy, Lotta (2019) lists five assumptions for analysis in public policy today: first that the idea of formulation and implementation are not distinct stages, but continuous decision-making processes that cut across different actors in the decision-making chain; second that decision-making processes are complex in distinct perspectives, both in levels and layers of implementation; third that there is a high interactivity in the implementation process; fourth that there are many factors influencing and interfering with implementation; and fifth that it is proposed to understand policy as it is and not simply as it should be (Lotta, 2019, p. 10). The present analysis starts from these assumptions, understanding that such decision processes are dynamic and continuous, and it is possible to look at the theoretical production without the concern of separating each stage of the policies, but having the stages cited by the theorists just to facilitate the analysis, having in mind that each stage will be imbricated in the next and in the previous one in the complex decision processes. The analysis of public policy implementation has growing studies in Brazil and abroad. According to Lotta (2019) such studies have markedly four generations of researchers: initially with research emerging of the top down type, with prescriptive analyses that observe whether laws are actually being complied with; secondly bottom up research, which considers local contexts much more; then a third generation trying to combine the two previous strands, focusing on synthetic models of analysis; and finally a fourth generation of

more hybrid research and with more presence of sociology and multiple methods in these analyses. In education, the conflicts over legislation were pointed out by Apple when he said that in general, it is almost a truism to say that there is no simplistic linear model of policy formation, distribution, and implementation. Complex mediations always occur at all levels of the process. There is a complex politics within each group between those groups and external forces in the formulation of policy, when it is put on paper as a legislative enactment, in its distribution, and in its reception at the level of practice. In this way, the state may legislate changes in curriculum, assessment, or policy (a measure produced itself through conflict, agreement, and political maneuvering), but the authors of policy and the authors of curriculum may not be able to control the meanings and implementations of their texts. All texts are "permeable" documents. They are subject to "recontextualization" at all stages of the process. (Apple, 2003, p. 105-106) Education appears in this context full of complexities in the implementation of public policies. Hence the importance of understanding policy analysis models in general and thus observe the area of education more broadly, taking into account the ambiguities and conflicts from a legal text.

Ambiguity and conflict model

Matland (1995) presents the Ambiguity and Conflict Model. To this end, he proposes a framework in which policies are more likely to be implemented as originally proposed when they have few ambiguities and few conflicts. Ambiguity is understood as the degree of uncertainty of a policy, with terms or lack of terms and specifications that make it broader and subject to different interpretations. The idea of conflict refers to the degree of disagreement in the formulation and implementation of these policies.

In this regard, Matland provides the following framework:

	Low Conflict	High conflict
Low Ambiguity	Administrative Implementation	Policy Implementation
High Ambiguity	Experimental Implementation	Symbolic Implementation

This framework is understood as follows:

Administrative implementation: when there is little conflict and little ambiguity in the policy. In this case the rules are clear and the actors have little autonomy to change anything in the policy, obtaining very similar results, regardless of the context.

Policy implementation: when there is a lot of conflict, but little ambiguity. In this case the ruler puts the policy into practice, even if there is conflict.

Experimental implementation: occurs when there is little conflict but high ambiguity. Such policies open space for actors to implement in different ways, and experimentalism allows adaptation even for purposes other than those initially foreseen by the policy.

Symbolic implementation: occurs in contexts of high conflict and high ambiguity, with great difficulty in putting such a policy into practice.

Based on the model proposed by Matland, the law under analysis in this paper has points of high ambiguity and that, in turn, were generators of conflicts that culminated in its non-implementation. The first point highlighted is the source of funds for the acquisition of Bibles to be distributed to 65 thousand students in the public school network. It is also not explained who would be the entities with which the government would partner for this distribution. Although one of the people interviewed during the research stated that the Bibles would be the result of voluntary donations, the text does not give the source of the resources or even the specifics of whether they would be donated and how this donation would be received. Another point is the use of the holy book, since the law proposes the distribution and not exactly the teaching of the elements contained in the biblical texts, but the expression "with emphasis on knowledge..." leaves open how the biblical text could be used. Since receiving it would be optional on the part of the student, it is not foreseen to be optional also for the time when the book would be quoted or used in the pedagogical work. The bill also does not state whether this knowledge extracted from the Bible would be used in a specific discipline such as religious education, or whether there would be any professional qualified to do this reading of the Bible with the emphasis specified in the text of the law. The conflict generated was evidenced in the figures of SEPE-NI and also by the Public Ministry of Rio de Janeiro (MPRJ) and the Court of Justice of the State of Rio de Janeiro (TJ- RJ). The MPRJ recommended that the Nova Iguaçu Municipality refrain from "entering into agreements, contracts, bids or to delegate, authorize or acquire directly or through the intermediation of other entities the bibles for distribution" (MPRJ - Recommendation no. 08/2016). The argument regarding the secular character of the State and the "freedom of belief of the population by allowing subsidies to a specific religious segment (Christian) with public resources. Minorities not practicing the subsidized religion would thus be maliciously violated in their rights. SEPE-NI, on its turn, divulged on its official channels the MPRJ decision, reaffirming the secular character of the public school. The public ministry continued this struggle against the law and proposed a Direct Action of Unconstitutionality 0063505-67.2017.8.19.0000 in the TJRJ, activating the mayor of the City of Nova Iguaçu and the City Council of that municipality. Apple, when criticizing authoritarian populism and also noticing the conflicts generated by the insertion of religion in school, states that: It is an agenda that has increased its power, not only rhetorically, but also by informing conflicts over what schools should do, how they should be funded, and who should control them. This agenda, although it does not end there, includes aspects such as gender, sexuality, and the family. It extends to a much broader spectrum of issues that relate to what really counts as "legitimate" knowledge in schools. And in this very broad arena of concerns about the total corpus of school knowledge, conservative activists have not found any success when they have pressured textbook publishers to transform what they wanted and to change important aspects of state educational policies regarding teaching, curriculum, and assessment. (Apple, 2002, p.71) In this way, with high ambiguity and high conflict, the law has not been implemented, although one of the supporters of the law has stated that until the year 2022 it will continue to demand from the public authorities, via CMNI's Religious Affairs Commission, that this law be discussed again and that it actually be implemented. For Matland (1995) laws with high conflict and high ambiguity tend to be of symbolic implementation. Thus, even if it were implemented in schools, it would have so many variations according to the actors, and would run into so many conflicts of voices contrary to the effectiveness of this law that the implementation would hardly meet the expectations of its proponents.

Defense Coalition Model

The Defense Coalitions Model presented by Paul Sabatier (1987) brings an analytical model in which different actors are analyzed in their defense and antagonism postures. In the same subsystem it is common to observe two or more coalitions that are articulated by the continuity of their agenda over some time in politics. The emphasis observed in this work is on the belief system and the diffused learning among the actors that generates ideological disputes and influences future political changes. I sought to identify different actors, advocates and opponents of this law. I thus found two advocacy coalitions: a coalition in favor of the presence of religious elements in school. For these actors, the religious element is suitable for ethical, moral, civic, cultural, geographic, scientific, and historical teaching; and a coalition against this religious presence in public schools, with its actors based on teaching based on human rights and the principles of secularity of the State.

In order to better understand these coalitions, I call the first "**religious coalition for education**" and the second "**secular coalition for education**". I considered the first coalition as religious because even though its actors deny the religious factor, insisting on the moral, ethical and knowledge-acquisition character, one should still consider the Bible first of all as a sacred book to the Christian religion and, therefore, a religious element. This coalition was also moralizing for having in this religious element the basis for ethical, moral, civic standards, etc. In this way it opened the space for the valorization of moral standards proper to a segment of Christianity. I considered the second coalition as secular because I observed the concern to distinguish the religious from the state, and for defending that the State could not be ruled by religious interests nor favor one religious segment in detriment of others. The defense of religious minorities was also a tonic in this coalition, as well as the concern in

The Religious Coalition for Education focused on the figure of the councilman who proposed the bill, on the person of the pastor who indicated the text for the proposal, on the support of the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Nova Iguaçu, on the express support of five councilmen from CMNI, who even recorded videos together with the councilman who proposed the law declaring their support for the project, and on other pastors of evangelical churches who expressed support for the proposal. In this coalition, I tried to identify their beliefs around the need for the insertion of religious elements in the school environment in order to promote positive values among children. The Laic Coalition for Education in the municipality showed itself mainly in the figure of SEPE-NI and in that of the MPRJ and STJ-RJ, mainly in the figure of Associate Justice Luiz Zveiter. SEPE's action was firstly to support and replicate the decision of the MPRJ in orienting the suspension of the measures foreseen in the text of the referred law. I had the opportunity to interview one of the directors of SEPE_NI and in her speeches the disapproval of this law was evident, showing the need to prioritize other areas in schools, to carry out projects that aim at peaceful coexistence among students. Her basis was the defense of a secular, democratic education, attentive to minorities and human rights not guided exactly by religion. To understand these coalitions, I base myself on the assumptions first presented by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1998). These authors present five premises of the Defense Coalitions Model (SABATIER; JENKINS-SMITH, 1998), which are: 1) There is technical information in coalitions and this information is part of politics; 2) the subsystem is the best unit of analysis to observe these coalitions; 3) these coalitions act for long periods, and should be studied over a decade or more; 4) the actors in the coalition go beyond the so-called iron triangle (administrative bodies, legislative committees, and interest groups at the

same level of government); and 5) The design of a belief system is charged with a deep core, a political core, and a secondary core that will undergo changes according to the learning solidified in the deep core of the belief system. I proceed with the first analyses about the coalitions found around this type of law in the studied subsystem. As for the first premise, the technical information of the religious coalition proved to be an ideological action, not directed by rational factors, in the sense that there is no completeness as to the potentiality of the proposed text to become a law to be actually implemented. Besides the ambiguity points of the law, the actors who propose and approve it at the CMNI, besides the municipal executive itself, seem to be unaware of the constitutionality of the proposal, the principles that govern public administration such as the autonomy of the powers (legislative and executive), the observance of the source of budget impacts on public coffers, the lack of indication of the source of funds, and the imposition on the executive itself regarding the functioning and organization of the municipal public. Moreover, questions about the principle of secularism of the state and religious freedom are not observed in the text approved and sanctioned. In this way, the Lay Coalition presents the technical terms that should govern the formulation of the legal text and that end up indicating unconstitutionality defect, with the ADI being well-founded for this law. It should be noted that the law is initiated by a proposal of a religious person. Even so, the text could be analyzed by a technical body capable of considering the elements that would make such a proposal consistent with the constitutional principles of the Democratic State of Law. Civil society can participate in the legislative mandates, but it is up to the parliamentarians to observe more carefully the procedures for the effective approval of a law. This technical information and basic elements for Brazilian democracy seem to have gone unnoticed by all the members of parliament who unanimously approved the law, as well as the mayor, who sanctioned it without any veto or restriction. The conflicts for the implementation of this law arise later, with the actions of the Public Ministry that bar its implementation by the executive branch. As for the second premise, the time frame, with the analysis beginning in 2006, going through the time of the law's approval, until the ADI proceedings, which went until 2019. This longer period of time shows how much the theme of religion at school is present in the discussions. This constant religious presence in the discussions favored the approval in 2019 by the CMNI of the law that aimed to implement religious education in the municipal network of this city. Thus, the law under discussion in this paper served to keep the religious agenda on the agenda of the city council and give visibility and protagonism to religious people who support this type of policy for education. As for the third premise, the analyzed subsystem is the public education system of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu. This subsystem has been going through religious interference, even though it does not actually have the discipline of religious education. As already stated here, since 2006 There were moments of greater or lesser religious presence in public schools. The whole context around and the appreciation of the elements linked to the evangelical Christian faith favored the bill to be considered positive by the councilmen who approved it. As for the fourth premise, there were many supports from parliamentarians for law 4619/16. Besides the parliamentarians, the supporters of this law were mainly religious people, evangelical pastors and the bishop of the Catholic Diocese of the region. Semed did not express a position at the time of the approval of this law. The actors opposed to this policy were mainly the SEPE- NI and the MP-RJ, which called for the defense of the secular state and the non-subsidization that could favor one religion in the municipality. As for the fifth premise, it is important to emphasize the beliefs of the evangelical segment regarding the

salvific importance of their beliefs. Thus, for Christians, by propagating their beliefs there would be an improvement in society. Apple analyzes evangelicals as follows:[...] evangelicals in general see themselves as those to whom God has revealed it. To repeat: empirically, they are much more likely than main stream Protestants to claim that there are unchanging, absolute moral standards. They are more likely to say that "Christian morality" should be the law of the land, and less likely to believe that other people - even those who are not Christians - are capable of choosing their own moral standards. And more than others, a significant fraction of them tend to believe that public schools should instruct children in clearly Christian values. But it is important to understand that, for evangelicals, this is not an attempt to dominate others. It is, rather, a solid and deeply held belief that the world would be a much better place if everyone followed "God's ways. (Apple, 2003, p. 163) In this way, there is among the defenders of the Christian religious presence in public spaces the belief that the propagation of the evangelical faith would be something positive for society. I then sought the most deeply rooted beliefs of different actors accessed here, and to do so, I set out for document analysis and interviews with the actors who stood out in each advocacy coalition.

Defense Actors and Coalitions

As for the actors, Councilman Luis Henrique Souza Barbosa, known as Councilman Luisinho, gave an interview for this research and chose to allow his identification in the research, mainly because he considers himself a public person and whose political mandate can be easily seen. His party affiliation did not follow a single party, being affiliated throughout his trajectory to the PSB (Brazilian Socialist Party), PC do B (Communist Party of Brazil) and PSD (Social Democratic Party), showing during the interview a certain disinterest in the party acronym, exercising his mandate as councilman in the PC do B, but changing at the end of the mandate in order to be a candidate in the 2016 elections. Still regarding his party affiliation, the analysis helps to realize that even actors from parties and even those with political training with leftist movements, can also ally themselves with conservative movements and project themselves with this type of alliance. According to the interviewee, the party did not exert any influence during the passage of the law. The former councilman did not show himself to be religious, but much more a representative of the interests of his constituency in the electoral stronghold of a district of Nova Iguaçu, being cited as a neighborhood lacking public power actions. He claimed to have belonged to the Catholic church during his childhood, but nowadays he sporadically attends an evangelical church. He cited his brother Paulo, who is a pastor of an evangelical church and who gave him great support for the formulation of the project presented to the House. He also said that the presentation of the project was much more a demand from his supporters, and stated in an interview that "For me, for me it's much more a demand, right? For them all of a sudden a question. But for me, oh, I'm not going to present it because suddenly I have to give some electoral gain" (Councilman Luisinho). With this, the councilman was not an advocate of a religious element entering the school, but said he saw no harm in having a policy that, as far as he understood, would be positive for the students of the network. After the approval of the law in CMNI, the then councilman endorsed his campaign in the 2016 elections precisely with the banner of the approval of this law, having made several propaganda videos where several actors, parliamentarians, and religious people expressed support for this law. Paulo Henrique Souza declared to be the founding pastor of the Apostolic Church 100% Jesus, an evangelical pentecostal church in Nova

Iguaçu, having the title of Apostle in his religious denomination, thus being known as Apostle Paulo, as I will quote him along this text. This pastor also agreed to be identified in the research. As the brother of Councilman Luisinho, he found in this mandate the opportunity to present the project that aimed at the distribution of Bibles in public schools. In the interview, this pastor showed his conviction about the concept of secularism and tried to show the Bible as a book of knowledge and ethical values, thus trying not to associate the Bible with a religious belief. He also claimed to have a wide campaign to insert the same project in other municipalities, having success in the city of Foz do Iguaçu, where he personally went and got councilman Jairo Cardoso (DEM) to present the same text for the appreciation of the City Council, under the PL 141/2021⁴. The influence of this religious in accessing parliamentary environments shows how much there is interest in spreading the project that had been tested in the city of Nova Iguaçu. Dom Luciano Bergamin was the Bishop of the Diocese of Nova Iguaçu from 2002 to 2019. This bishop had an intense presence in the support of public policies in the city, always attending politicians who invited him to speak about a certain policy. In the case of the project Bibles in Schools, he even recorded a video with councilman Luisinho, emphasizing the value of having the sacred book available to children and teenagers in the public school system, always concerned with the transmission of ethical values considered as universal. He gave an interview for this research in August 2022, also agreeing with his identification in this research. The Nova Iguaçu Teachers' Union was represented by teacher Samanta Cristina Aguiar Pereira, being one of the directors of SEPE_NI, at the end of her mandate in the month that she gave the interview. She also agreed to be identified in her statements in the interview. She is a teacher from the municipal public school system, being active in the actions of the Union in recent years and said that, as for religiosity, at the moment she does not declare herself practicing any religion, but that she is connected to Candomblé. Luiz Zveiter has been a Justice at the Court of Appeals of the State of Rio de Janeiro since October 5, 1995. He is a member of the Special Panel of the TJ-RJ. He was the reporter of the Direct Unconstitutionality Action that dealt with the law under analysis. Even though he was not available for an interview, it was possible to see his positions in the lawsuit filed in the TJ-RJ and in his speeches to the press, the first being his speech registered in the O Globo newspaper where he said that the project of Bible distribution in schools "points to indoctrination and religious proselytism, in absolute affront to the fundamental guarantees of the democratic state and the right to religious freedom"⁵. Other players mentioned in the research had a punctual performance, without presenting a greater activity regarding the theme, even if they positioned themselves regarding the project at that specific moment.

Analysis of beliefs expressed by the actors

To identify the coalitions' belief systems, I tried not to focus on the values and dogmas of the religion in evidence, but on how the actors saw the insertion of the religious element in public education. In this way, I highlighted three beliefs in the texts of the listed documents and in the speeches of the actors interviewed that seemed to form the deep core of the belief system in each coalition:

Religious Coalition for Education	Lay Coalition for Education
Religion as necessary for the formation of the citizen	The formation of the citizen is independent of any religious element or teaching
Ethical values need to be transmitted through religion in school	Ethical values should be based on human rights and democracy, without the need for religious elements in the school
Secularism implies freedom for religious activity and presence in public spaces, whether state-run or not, not only in private spaces	Secularism implies that the State does not favor any religion, while respecting the presence of minorities religious and non-religious in public spaces maintained by the state

About religion being necessary for the formation of the citizen, the legal support is in the Law of Directives and Bases for Education (Law 9394/96) which states that

Religious teaching, with optional enrollment, is an integral part of the basic education of citizens and is a subject of the normal schedule of public elementary schools, ensuring respect for the religious cultural diversity of Brazil, forbidden any forms of proselytism. (LDB 9394/96 - Article 33, available at http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/19394.htm, accessed in May 2022) With this wording, the citizen's education would be linked to some religious education, which would be determined by each federated entity. As for the criticism to this type of teaching, Cunha (2020) brings the following criticism:

(i) the non-existence of this subject, despite the constitutional determination; (ii) mandatory offer of this subject, in the Catholic version, despite the Constitution foreseeing it as optional; (iii) competitive cooperation between Catholics and Evangelicals in the common offer of this subject and/or in intra and extra-class religious practices; and (iv) confessional religious teaching, with distinct classes for Catholics and for Evangelicals. In all cases where religion is present, Afro-Brazilian cults are discriminated against. Students practicing candomblé and umbanda, when identified, are harassed, especially when they need to keep their heads covered as part of an initiation rite. (CUNHA, 2020, p. 2)

Thus, to imagine religious teaching as an integral part of the basic education of the citizen is somewhat questionable. Even so, the law on religious education finds an echo in the law on the distribution of Bibles analyzed here. In the justification of PL 120/2016 that originated the law approved in Nova Iguaçu one can read: This proposition intends that the biblical knowledge softens the social problems faced by all of us, because regardless of creed, it encompasses ethical, moral and civic principles that aim to guide the life path that will contribute to keep our children away from problems so latent today (PL 120/2016 - Alderman

Luizinho) Religion is primarily posed as the solution to society's ills. The well-educated citizen would be the one who has some knowledge of, and belongs to, religious dogmas. The speech of councilman Luisinho brought this idea when he stated that This is more or less how your child reads the Bible. You don't have to think that he is going to become an evangelical, no. But if he follows what is there, he will certainly be a good person and will fulfill his role in society. (Luisinho, interview) The Bishop of the Nova Iguaçu Diocese, on the other hand, repeated the phrase used by the councilman: ...It's a phrase I found, it's not mine, but I don't think so if we handed out more Bibles and Church books. Today the children. We wouldn't need to hand out many Bibles in the jails (Bishop Luciano Bergamin). This phrase was used a lot by councilman Luisinho in his social networks at the time of the law's approval, there being some videos of disclosure in his social network on the internet in which he says "If the Bible enters the schools, it certainly won't need to go to the prisons"⁶. This statement shows the religious book held as sacred among Christians as capable of directing towards the common good. Pastor José Mauro Rodrigues, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Nova Iguaçu's Bairro da Luz, although with an occasional appearance, stated in a video deposition that this project Bibles in Schools would 'cause a revolution in Nova Iguaçu [...] this project will do something that will change the lives of children, teenagers and young people in our city". This pastor also cites the emphasis on "if the Bible is in the school, it will not be in the prisons".⁷ This stance is analyzed by Apple when he notes that For these groups and for many conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists, only through a return to the infallible interpretations of the Bible can we save ourselves and especially our children from these dangers. The Bible, and the Bible alone, offers a path to a society that is truly ethical and right in all its institutions. Therefore, according to Pat Robertson, the Bible is "a proper guide for politics, government, business, family, and all the affairs of mankind. It presents us with spiritual laws that are "as valid for our lives as the laws of thermodynamics." (Apple, 2003, p. 142) Apple (2002) will advocate the 'return to teaching the non redeeming vision of the Bible and the motivation (or requirement) of a climate in schools where such learning will create new emphases" (p. 72). This implies in perceiving the Bible as a book proper to the religious, of a certain creed, and that the school should have new perspectives without the religious tutelage to support the plural relations that occur there. Regarding the transmission of ethical values through religion, Dom Luciano stated the following: Then, let's go to something fundamental, basic, that it is possible to realize our students understand the value of life, the values linked to family and society in which man is a being open to the transcendent. Then, each one will experience and be the reality in his own way and in his own manner. (Bishop Luciano Bergamin) I realized that the belief as to Christian values being essential to the school was being put forth by the religious. The same was stated by the Apostle Paul: You can go out into the street with you and we begin to ask society this lady you have a son? Who would you like your son to receive a biblical copy and study ethical, moral, civic principles in it? [...] You walk into the classroom with a Bible, like a textbook. But that's where the pedagogy is. The pedagogy used from the Bible in values education. When you come to a child and you use a principle of he does, obey his father, which is the first commandment that promises to be a form of religion. When you come to your child, so to speak, bless your father, respect the elderly. (Apostle Paul) The risk regarding this teaching of values using religious elements of the Christian faith lies in what Apple called moral absolutes:

[...] Evangelicals - even more so than fundamentalists - 'are the most likely of all the major Christian traditions to affirm belief in moral absolutes. There is a firm rejection of moral relativism. Not human reason, but God and the Bible are the sources of guidance in a person's life." Human and institutional authority are secondary to these more spiritual bases.(Apple, 2003, p. 161-162)As for the concept of secularism, I understand that it is a concept in dispute, and it is common for antagonistic groups to use the same concept, but in a different way.

According to Bishop Luciano Bergamin:

It is that the State today does not have its official and any religion either, but that it welcomes all religious dimensions, that it is pro-life and that it is for the common good. The structure welcomes all expressions to experience, because it brings human rights to its State in the future. The Catholic Church is no longer the church of the state and, above all, the country. Although until recently the majority was Catholic and therefore the majority that sees the feast of Our Lady of Aparecida to Christmas. **(Dom Luciano Bergamin)**

To the Apostle Paul,

Laïcité, that you don't mix the State with religion, it is totally exempt. So much so that the project, in order not to hurt this secularism, will say that the project is optional. And the father, authored by the dear one, you can't take the. The article 1634 As for civil, it is up to the Father, not the State. Isn't education the State's responsibility? It's up to the State. You know what infrastructure is, it's infrastructure. And if it is a concessionaire, it has guaranteed rights **(Apostle Paul)**.

Here the pastor was quoting the Brazilian Civil Code article that says "Both parents, whatever their marital status, are responsible for the full exercise of family power, which consists in, regarding the children: I - to direct their upbringing and education"⁸. This posture brings some contradictions since, even if the parents could reject the reception of the Bible, there would be no way to reject the teaching itself with the use of the Christians' holy book. So the defense of teaching the Bible in school contradicts the civil code itself in the point quoted by the interviewee.

In contrast, SEPE-NI representatives were against this need. For both interviewees religion. SEPE's position is to defend secularism and defend plural secular public education. So, once again, we will be against secularism, and we will attend to how much other religious denominations feel detailed and marginalized when you distribute as didactic material, right, a book of a doctrine, of a single religion. How harmful is this to the school as a whole? **(Samanta)**

The director of SEPE-NI completes her speech by stating that

... I think that secularism is to leave the religious field and leave the religious and the scientific, each one in its own space. I think that secularism is this. So, I think that it is taking the religious out of the arbitration of the scientific field. Because when you put the Bible as a reference source, including in geographical relations, then you are saying that it will have centrality. For example, I am taking from the law that you read, that it will be the centrality of the looks that will be cast there, on the content inside the school, on perceptions and that are

historically constructed. And that you can't put your religion or the religion, the faith that you profess as a lens for you. So, this is the way (Samanta) In this way the union, as representative of the professional category of teachers in the Nova Iguaçu network, takes a stance in defense of secularism as the absence of religious elements in the school. This union reaffirms in its publication page on the Internet that By imposing the Bible as school material, a book of a single religion, the City Hall of Nova Iguaçu goes against constitutional provisions that ensure the laicity of the State and the principle of isonomy, disregarding diversity and respect for the freedom of religion of students in the public school system. From a democratic perspective, the education offered in the different school systems should ensure that children, youth and adults have access to books used by all religions, without the State making distinctions that can lead to religious prejudice and persecution of minorities⁹

This type of opposition to the values defended by the religious coalition was also observed in the arguments of the Ação Direta de Inconstitucionalidade, ADI imposes on the state powers a posture of impartiality and equidistance in relation to the various religious conceptions, which did not occur with the edition of the municipal law. And, finally, even if the law had an ecumenical character, that is, even if it contemplated the distribution of books of other religions, the violation of secularism would remain visible in the face of the continued transgression of state neutrality.¹⁰

Thus, the law ceased to be implemented, but not without having contributed to the religious agenda remaining in the educational policy of the municipality.

Conclusion

Law 4619/16, of the City of Nova Iguaçu, which authorizes the municipal executive to conduct partnerships for the distribution of Bibles in the public schools of the municipality, is highly ambiguous and its content raised conflicts after its approval. Thus, its implementation was suspended after the Direct Unconstitutionality Action that affirmed the transgression of the principle of secularity of the State and other norms of public administration. It is noteworthy that even though it was not actually implemented in schools, it was used as an argument in an election year, when the actors publicized the law in order to obtain some projection with the electorate that could see this initiative as positive. The coalitions that presented themselves followed the intentions of previous years, mainly with the presence of religious people (Catholics and Evangelicals) interested in inserting religious elements and values in public schools. As the city does not have the implementation of the discipline of religious education, the insertion of a sacred book and its valorization for the study of contents of other subjects favors the Christian religion in the dissemination of its values and dogmas to a large audience. The resistance to this policy by SEPE-NI shows the representativeness of the teachers in the search for an education that guarantees the plurality of ideas and not the imposition of dogmas in schools. Also, the actions of the Public Ministry and the ADI itself in the TJ-RJ show how much such a policy lacked elements that would make it constitutional enough. Even though this policy was not implemented in the City of Nova Iguaçu, the religious agenda continued and other laws emerged with strong religious support, especially with the approval of the law that implemented religious teaching in the municipality in 2019¹¹

The religious coalition has been active in influencing policy and injecting religious elements and values that they consider important to the public school. Their beliefs in the importance of religion being present in the school, in the transmission of values based on the Christian religion, and having the concept of secularism as freedom of religious activities even in public environments maintained by the state provoked reactions and conflicts with groups that today fight for a more democratic and plural school, free from religious tutelage. The analytical models and Ambiguity and Conflict (MATLAND, 1995) and the Coalition Advocacy (SABATIER; JENKINS-SMITH, 1998) proved to be complementary for the analysis of the public policy, being the conservatism expressed in authoritarian populism and religious fundamentalism pointed out by Apple (2003) an important element to understand the groups that formed the coalitions, their beliefs, and the conflicts generated from this municipal law.

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RELIGIOUS TEACHING AND PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN BRAZIL: A BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW

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The official presence of religion in public schools by means of a specific discipline is not a new subject, nor is it something outdated or even outdated, but it is the subject of heated debates that are still in vogue today. The offer of this subject by the public authorities has come back to the fore in recent decades due to state and municipal legislation that has brought innovations and revived themes and discussions that had been dormant. A central element in this process was the debates surrounding the drafting and approval of the 1988 Federal Constitution. As a strategy to assure the space for religious education in public schools, the Catholic Church, through its state coordinators of this discipline and other sectors of the states, delegated to legally legalized Catholic entities the role of articulating the national mobilization, materialized by a petition delivered to the National Constituent Assembly (ANC). This cause was taken up by the Interconfessional Association of Curitiba (PR) (ASSINTEC), the Council of Churches for Religious Education (CIER) of Santa Catarina and the Pastoral Institute of Campo Grande, MS (ISPAMAT).

The Association of Catholic Education (AEC), the education sector of the National Confederation of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB), and especially the National Reflection Group of School Religious Education (GRERE) also acted with great commitment. These entities entered the National Constituent Assembly with a proposal to regulate the discipline, with the amendment presented under number PE 0004-1, which was the second largest popular amendment to reach the ANC, obtaining almost 750,000 signatures. It was up to Representative Sandra Cavalcanti (at the time Liberal Front Party-PFL/RJ) to take up the defense of the inclusion of religious education in the public school system as a constitutional right. After much negotiation among the different groups involved in the dispute over religious education as a school subject, and numerous changes in the proposed text, the final wording regarding the subject was: Art. 210. Minimum content for elementary education will be established in order to ensure common basic education and respect for national and regional cultural and artistic values. § Religious teaching, of optional enrollment, will constitute a subject in the normal schedule of public elementary schools. The inclusion of this paragraph generated a lot of controversy, especially among the defenders of the secular state, who argued that the text went against other passages of the legislation that prohibited the interference of the state in religious matters foreseen in other passages of the constitutional charter, such as, for example, in the following article:

Art. 19 - The Union, the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities are forbidden

I - establishing religious cults or churches, subsidizing them, hindering their operation, or maintaining with them or their representatives, relations of dependence or alliance, except, in the form of the law, for collaboration in the public interest. The National Constituent Education Forum in Defense of Free and Public Education came up with a basic formulation regarding education which was that "public, free and lay education at all levels of schooling is

the right of all Brazilian citizens, without distinction of race, age, religious confession, political affiliation or social class. Faced with the demand for secular education in public schools, the privatist reaction at this time was to guarantee the spread of the old doctrine: maintenance of its presence optional, but part of the curriculum and school timetable.

It can be said, then, that at the time of the drafting of our Federal Constitution, the educational agendas involving religious teaching revolved around the defense of the secular State, understood by its supporters as the guarantor of democracy and tolerance, versus the defense of freedom of belief. The debate about the relationship between individual rights and public liberties in a democratic Republic became explicit in the Constituent Assembly.

About this debate, Fischmann (2008) pointed out that the 400 years of union between political power and the Catholic Church made the principle of laicity in the Republic follow two paths; the first involving legislative aspects, and the second referring to the experience at the cultural and social level. According to the author, this centuries-long relationship between the Catholic Church and the State has repercussions in the current debates on the issue of secularism. Under this union between the State and the Catholic institution and its influence on the development of legislation, it is important to mention the patronage regime, still in Colonial Brazil. According to this regime, the State had the prerogative to appoint bishops, to remunerate the clergy, and even to veto determinations from papal bulls. In this period, teaching, in the few educational institutions existing at the time, was taught mostly by religious people, and the school had as its goal the formation of values in a religious tradition, that of the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore, the identification between the State and this institution, manifested by the official Catholic presence in schools, marked this period of Brazilian education. The concern of the authorities of the time was to reconcile the teaching of the first letters, which included learning to read, write and count, with religion. This connection between the State and the Catholic Church also appeared in the Constitutional Letter of March 25, 1824, in which it was declared in its 5th article that the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church would be the religion of the Empire. About this union Cunha says

The teaching of the Catholic religion in Brazilian public schools in the imperial period was a consequence of the union between the State and the Church. This heritage from colonial times was so strong that some said that the Catholic Church in Brazil was nothing more than an appendix of the civil administration (CUNHA, 2009, p.344). Still in this period the first law dealing with teaching and religion was promulgated, the imperial decree of October 15, 1827, which, besides reaffirming the connection between the State and the Church, pointed out the competencies of the teachers in its article 6: The teachers will teach reading, writing, the four operations of arithmetic, practice of broken, decimals, proportions, the most general notions of practical geometry, the grammar of the national language, and the principles of Christian morals and the doctrine of the Catholic religion and the Roman Apostolic, provided for the boys' understanding, preferring the Constitution of the Empire and the History of Brazil for their readings. Thus, the religious influence in education and the identification between the Empire and the Catholic Church remained throughout the imperial period. Even though this influence diminished during the 19th century, particularly after the so-called "religious question" (1872-1874)¹², it continued to be significant. The relationship between Church and State, at this time, was one of distancing and confrontation, especially due to the positivist ideals that supported the drafting of the first republican Constitution. It was at this juncture that the State and the Catholic Church modified their agreements and, with the promulgation of the Republican Constitution of 1891, religion became a private matter, and religious

teaching was forbidden in official schools. This Constitution determined the neutrality of the State, in the sense of not subsidizing or adopting religious cults, as well as not hindering their operation, forbidding any dependence or alliance between the cult and its representatives. The Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1891 made no mention of God, and separated the public sphere from the private sphere.

Even though the first Republican Constitution, in force for more than 40 years, contained specific mention of the laicity of public schools, it was not enough to prevent resistance from the Catholic Church and other groups favorable to religious teaching. Soon after its promulgation the diffusion began that the laicity established in the constitutional text would apply in the sense of prohibiting a religious approach to the school curriculum, but not a religious teaching subject. All the pressure and political articulation of the Catholic Church allowed that still in the First Republic the reincorporation of the teaching of religion in the public school in the form of a subject occurred.

It is worth noting that this resumption of religious teaching also relied on a tactic defined by the Catholic hierarchy to deal with the political situation of the time, which was the investment in the formation of cadres of the political elite, which led to a large growth of Catholic schools in the First Republic. Moreover, throughout this period, Catholics sought to regain hegemony over the public space, in particular over public schools, and to consolidate their role as maintainers of order, achieving this feat with the provisional government of Vargas. In 1930 the provisional government of Getúlio Vargas began and, already in the following year, there was a process of rapprochement of the State with the Catholic Church and a rupture of the principle of secularism that had been implemented with the proclamation of the Republic. The state of Minas Gerais played an important role in the articulation of this rapprochement, because Francisco Campos, who had been secretary of Interior of this state, took over the Ministry of Education and Health in Vargas' provisional government, accredited by the profound educational reform he promoted, in which, for example, through a decree catechism was introduced in the elementary school maintained by the state government and approved a law in the Legislative Assembly that determined the presence of religious teaching in the public schools of the state network in 1929. Francisco Campos, always acted in defense of authoritarian and anti-liberal ideas. He believed that the introduction of religious teaching was not only a result of the Catholic Church's support to the Vargas government, but a State ideology, capable of fighting the international leftist ideologies and to give support to a nationalist ideal, leaked in authoritarianism. In this perspective, he created Decree 19.941 of 30/04/1931, which introduced religious teaching in public schools in the primary, secondary and normal systems. In article 1, the decree stated that teaching was optional ("The teaching of religion is optional in primary, secondary, and normal schools"); article 2, on the other hand, established that only students whose parents or guardians requested it at the time of enrollment would be exempted from religion classes. In other words, unlike a common elective subject, in which only those who enroll are obliged to take it, in this case everyone should take it, with the exception of those who expressly request not to take it. The decree also states in Article 3 that it would be necessary to form a group of at least 20 students who were willing to attend classes in order for religious instruction to be taught in official educational establishments. The "National Coalition for a Lay State", led by Artur Lima de Vasconcelos Lopes, was launched as a response by the defenders of secular thought. The movement was composed of Protestant denominations, such as Lutherans and Methodists, as well as spiritualists, anarchists, freemasons and several currents of intellectuals. The coalition

had a bulletin inside the newspaper *A Lanterna*¹³, where its manifestos and pro-laic state ideas were disseminated. The mobilization against religious instruction in public schools, besides the coalition, included several educators, as well as personalities from different areas, among whom were figures such as: Anísio Teixeira, Fernando de Azevedo, Lourenço Filho and Cecília Meireles. The latter especially through the column "Comment" of the *Diário de Notícias*, in which she presented a series of texts to debate the issue of the relationship between State and religion, to divulge the activities of the coalition, as, for example, in the article published in this column in 1931: A little provincial decree, to please some curates, and attract some sheep... Because - it is not believed that any profoundly religious spirit - whatever its religious orientation may be - can joyfully receive this Decree in which the most harmful effects for our homeland and for humanity are fermented (MEIRELES, 06/5/1931). In this same period, the Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education was also noteworthy, citing secularism as one of the fundamental principles of public education: Secularism, which places the school environment above religious beliefs and disputes, far removed from all sectarian dogmatism, subtracts the student, respecting the integrity of his personality in formation, from the disturbing pressure of the school when used as an instrument of propaganda for sects and doctrines. (Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education, 1932). Despite this resistance from the laity, pressure from Catholic groups that enjoyed social prestige and the actions of organizations such as the Catholic Electoral League - LEC¹⁴, allied to the government's fear of a communist infiltration in various sectors of society, especially in education, made the Catholic Church victorious and achieved the presence of the subject in the new Magna Carta. As a result, religious teaching in public schools was assured in the Federal Constitution of 1934, under the terms of article 153, which stated Religious teaching shall be optional and taught in accordance with the principles of the religious confession of the student, as expressed by his parents or guardians, and shall constitute subject matter of the primary, secondary, professional and normal public school timetable. "(Constitution of the Republic of the United States of Brazil, 1934: Art. 153). It can be noted, then, that from the proclamation of the Republic to the Constitution of 1934 we find important aspects about the regulation of religious education, such as the role of the State in offering the subject and its optional character. These elements are central to the regulation of the teaching of religion in the public school system and will guide the contemporary debate on the subject. However, it is worth noting that the first years of the 1930s were years of great effervescence in the relationship between the State and the Catholic Church. In this period of our history, the Catholic Church lost a number of privileges and even though it was still clearly the majority and hegemonic in the religious scenario, no longer had total control over the state. Thus, in spite of the rapprochement promoted by the Vargas government between the Catholic Church and the State, the social configuration of the country was no longer the same as in the times of the Empire and the First Republic. What conformed at this moment was a "reciprocal collaboration" between the State and the Catholic Church, which did not necessarily imply an alliance between the parties. Based on this new political configuration, the Federal Constitution of 1937, granted in the "Estado Novo"¹⁵, removed the preamble of the classic invocation of the "protection of God", constant in the other Brazilian constitutional letters. The subject was kept in the text, but no longer enjoyed the same prerogatives as before, as in the Charter of 1934. Religious teaching was no longer a compulsory subject in school curricula, no longer a right, but a concession that would depend on the Government's discretion, according to article 133 of the Constitution:

Religious teaching **can be contemplated** as a subject of the ordinary course of primary, normal and secondary schools. It may not, however, constitute the object of obligation of the (Constitution of the Republic of the United States of Brazil, 1937). Between 1942 and 1946, even with the reduction of authoritarianism under Getúlio Vargas, the educational sector underwent numerous normative changes, many of them concerning the role of public schools. Thus, according to the regime implemented by the Estado Novo, through organic laws and numerous decrees, education in general should form individuals, emphasizing the patriotic role and giving emphasis to civic education and physical education.

As for religious instruction, it was present in the following way in this legislation: in the decrees dealing with Industrial and Commercial Education, it appeared as an educational practice; in the decrees relating to Secondary and Agricultural Education, it appeared as part of the studies; and in Normal Education, it was provided for as a subject. Even though in this period the Federal Constitution in force only provided for the possibility of offering religious instruction, the decrees and organic laws represented an important element in guaranteeing Catholic intervention in the public school system. The pressure from the Catholic hierarchy for the official presence of religion in public schools was increasing. The main argument used was that religion had a social role and that it was up to religion to teach values. In addition, the idea that Christian attitudes contributed to peace and social tranquility was reinforced. The strength and articulation of the Catholic institution again prevailed, and the following device was inserted in the 1946 Constitution

Art. 168 - Teaching legislation will adopt the following principles: (...)

V - Religious Education constitutes a subject in the timetable of official schools, is of optional enrollment and will be taught according to the religious confession of the student, manifested by him, if capable, or by his legal representative or guardian; (Constitution of the Republic of the United States of Brazil, 1946: Art. 168).

In the following decade, the great emphasis on the issue of religious instruction was the disputes involving representatives of the New School and Catholics. The Scholasticovists defended public and democratic schools, as well as the end of government subsidies to private schools. This dispute between the secularists and the defenders of religious teaching in the public system generated the "Educators' Manifesto - Once Again Convoked", of 1959, which pointed out: "The struggle which has opened up in our country between the supporters of the public school and those of the private school is, at bottom, the same struggle that has been waged and is being intensified hourly in this country, hourly in that country, between the religious school (or confessional teaching) on the one hand, and the lay school (or lay teaching) on the other hand. We are against all those who want to make religion an instrument of politics and against all those who want to make politics an instrument of religion." ("Educators' Manifesto - Convened Once Again, 1959). The Brazilian educational scenario of this period was, then, strongly marked by the debate between Catholics and laymen about the role of the State regarding public education. The Catholic Church positioned itself in favor of confessional private schools and also in defense of the subsidy of these schools by the government, and the secular representatives, in favor of free public schooling, without subsidizing private schools. This was the conjuncture that preceded the drafting and approval of the Law of Directives and Bases of 1961, when the discipline reappeared in article 97, which did not foresee that religious teaching should be given according to the religious confession of the student and said that the discipline should be part of the regular timetable, composing the area of studies of Moral and Civic, Arts and Physical Education. This first LDB also

prohibited the use of public resources for religious education, but this prohibition was removed a few years later by Law 5.692/71. In the late 1960s, the presence of religion in the public school system gained new elements and was reinforced by Decree Law 869/69, which instituted the discipline of Moral and Civic Education in all Brazilian schools, public or private, whose purpose was to form students focused on civism and morality, central elements for the military regime. Added to this process is the approval of Law n. 5.692/71 which, besides promoting changes in the organizational structure of national education, made reference to religious teaching in public schools in Article 7, sole paragraph: "Religious teaching, with optional enrollment, shall be a subject of the normal schedule of first and second grade official establishments" (Ministry of Education and Culture. Law n. 5.692/71).

As we have explained, religious instruction, even with minor changes in the wording and being the object of transformations with respect to the form in which it has been presented in public schools, has been maintained in our legislation. However, such permanence is not without conflicts, always exciting its proponents and critics, making the debates between individual rights and public liberties, in the sphere of political representation, as well as within civil society, always on the agenda. Although this brief account of the regulation of religious education shows us that it did not originate in the 1988 Constitution, it should be noted that it represented a landmark in the institutionalization of the subject and serves as a benchmark to this day for various state and municipal legislations about this subject. The fact is that, soon after its promulgation, numerous projects and proposals for the effective insertion of religious education as a curricular component in the states emerged. A clear example of this process was the Rondônia Constitution, enacted in 1991. The Magna Carta of the state foresees aconfessional religious teaching with "biblical principles" for the entire elementary school. Other state legislations, with different models and principles, emerged in the same period. Added to this is the fact that the situation after the approval of the Magna Carta of 1988 influenced and provided for the creation of the Permanent National Forum for Religious Education (FONAPER) in 1995. FONAPER is an organ inherited from mobilizations linked to the Catholic Church, but with the involvement of representatives of other confessions and declares its commitment to "the diversity of thought and religious and cultural options of the student", with values that would be supra-confessional, such as dignity and ethics. This Forum has dedicated itself to promoting meetings and campaigns, to elaborating documents and publications, to defining curricular parameters and forms of training for religious education and its teachers, and, above all, to the defense that this subject is the right of every citizen.

And it was precisely in a meeting of FONAPER, in March 1996, that the creation of what this group called the PCN's (National Curriculum Parameters) of religious education took place, in reference to the official document prepared by the Ministry of Education. This text presented the fundamental Christian guidelines for the discipline in the country. According to this document, the objective of religious teaching should not be the study of a particular religion or of religion, but the study of the transcendent, of the various ways it manifests itself in history, it is the study of the religious phenomenon in its philosophical, sociological, historical, psychological aspects, etc. The National Curricular Parameters for religious education say, referring to the general objectives of the subject for elementary school: Religious Education, valuing the pluralism and cultural diversity present in Brazilian society, facilitates the understanding of the forms that express the transcendent in the overcoming of human finitude and that determine, subjacently, the historical process of humanity (FONAPER, 1997).

FONAPER also began to work to include a legal provision alluding to religious education in public schools in the 1996 Law of Directives and Bases for Education, which was being drafted. The Forum and the CNBB were the two main entities that acted directly to guarantee the presence of the subject in the new Brazilian educational legislation. The goal was successful, and with the approval of the new LDB, the implementation of religious education in all public and official schools was foreseen. However, what was in Law 4024/61 was repeated, that is, the inclusion of the expression "without onus for the public coffers. This clause was the target of much criticism from advocates of religious education in the public school system.

In the midst of all these questions involving Art. 33 of the LDB of 1996, the Federal House and Senate approved the article, and the law was then sanctioned by the President of the Republic. However, due to a lot of pressure and political articulation from Catholic legislators, the following year, the then federal deputy Padre Roque (Workers Party - PT), rapporteur of the commission in the federal chamber that debated the issue, was responsible for presenting a substitute to Article 33. Thus, on July 22, 1997, Law 9475 was sanctioned, which maintained the offer of the subject on a non-denominational basis in the school system, to be taught in the normal schedule of public elementary schools, in accordance with the other subjects in the curriculum of the state public network. The new legislation reaffirmed that it is up to the regional systems to regulate the procedures for defining the contents and the rules for qualifying and hiring teachers. The main element that differentiated it from the previous one was that in the new wording the expression "at no cost to the public coffers" was deleted, and what became record was: Art. 33: Religious teaching, of optional enrollment, is an integral part of the citizen's basic education and constitutes a subject in the normal schedule of public elementary schools, ensuring respect for the religious cultural diversity of Brazil, forbidding any form of proselytism.

§ 1. The educational systems will regulate the procedures for defining the contents of Religious Education and will establish the rules for qualifying and hiring teachers.

§ Paragraph 2º The educational systems will hear a civil entity, constituted by the different religious denominations, to define the contents of Religious Education. (Law 9.394/96, modified by Law 9.475/97).

The controversy involving the approval of this article even reached the National Council of Education. In a normative opinion on the subject, still in the validity of the first wording of Art. 33, the National Council of Education, based on opinion CNE nº 05/97, pronounced itself in order to settle the question regarding the financial burden of the offer of this subject by the public authorities, since "there would be a violation of Art. 19 of the Federal Constitution, which prohibits subsidies to religious cults and churches". The opinion also stated: [... by Religious Education is understood the space that the public school opens for students, optionally, to initiate or perfect themselves in a particular religion. From this point of view, only the churches, individually or associated, may accredit their representatives to occupy the space as a response to the demand of the students of a given school. (CNE, 1997).

With the new legislation in effect, the CNE, through resolution 02/98, established that the subject should be integrated into the concept of an area of knowledge, defining guidelines and structures for reading and interpreting the essential reality, to guarantee the possibility of autonomous participation of the citizen in the construction of his religious references. The 1997 legislation brought significant changes in the concept of religious education, including

the model to be adopted, the selection and organization of content, as well as the pedagogy used and the training of teachers who work in this area.

The brief trajectory of the debate involving religious education in public schools, presented here, shows that, after ceasing to be the official religion of the State, the Catholic Church kept up the pressure to guarantee its official presence in schools and slowly and gradually recovered its bases of social support, even regaining prerogatives within the Brazilian State. From this perspective, the Catholic Church organized itself to transform the admissibility of the discipline, guaranteeing it as a Constitutional right. This strategy of normalizing religious education as an official subject intensified after the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution. As a consequence, the CNBB, through its sector of religious education, soon afterwards divulged orientations to the bishops and state coordinators, aiming to accelerate the accompaniment of the elaboration of the State Constitutions and minor laws. This process generated specific elements and legislation in each state, as is the case of Rio de Janeiro.

Concordat Brazil / Vatican

As already discussed, religious education was present in all Brazilian republican constitutional charters, with the exception of the Constitution of 1891, almost always linked to the idea of projecting freedom of religion or belief. It is based on these concepts, which provide for the question of the private forum, the guarantee of freedom of worship and of public manifestation of thought through ceremonies, rites or through teaching, that a whole argument has been built in defense of religious teaching in the public school system that remains to this day. Both the position of maintaining religious education in the public school system, as a right to freedom of belief, and the position that questions the offer of this subject in public schools based on the understanding that in a secular state it is not up to the government to guarantee the teaching of such a subject, make up the scenario of the field of disputes involving religious education. The fact is that this battle that has been waged since the Republic has acquired new elements and subsidies, and is now in full swing.

A highly relevant element regarding recent episodes involving the State-religion relationship was the signing of a bilateral agreement, the Concordat, between the Brazilian government and the Holy See. The argument used in the presentation of such proposal was the regulation of the "Legal Status of the Catholic Church" in Brazil. The long debate over the approval of this document included, from the beginning, opposition movements to the agreement between Brazil and the Vatican. Such resistance processes came from religious minorities, social movements, especially the women's and feminist movements. There was also a confrontation regarding the approval of such agreement made by a certain group of parliamentarians, academics and researchers. In short, what all these actors presented was that the Concordat represented a threat to the guarantee of Brazil as a secular state.

Thus, in the period leading up to the signing of the Concordat, the strategy of this range of movements, public figures, and members of academia was the development of a series of mechanisms whose objective was to address and reaffirm the theme of secularism. From this perspective, there was, in 2007, the creation of the Observatory of State Secularism at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, for example, as well as the foundation of the Association of Atheists and Agnostics in 2008. In the same year, the XII LGBT parade in São Paulo was called "Homophobia kills; for a truly secular State." Also started in the same period initiatives such as the campaign "Brazil for all", which brought the importance of the removal of sacred symbols from public spaces. However, even with this mobilization, the text from the

Vatican was presented to the National Congress, becoming proposition, that is, matter submitted to the deliberation of the Legislative House and in March 2009 it began its processing by the Federal Chamber, under the reference MSC 134/2009. It is worth noting that the message sent to the executive that presented the text to Congress was dated November 12, 2008, i.e., three months before the document was sent, it was already in progress. was under the possession of the Presidency of the Republic, which did not make it public nor held any kind of debate with civil society on the subject. Moreover, Fischmann (2009) mentioned that the elaboration of such a document involved a process of contact of at least two years between the Federal Executive and the Holy See. In Congress, the document was sent to the Committee on Foreign Relations and National Defense (CREDN) and to the Committee on Constitution and Justice. In the first commission, at the request of the Minister of Foreign Relations, it was sent as an urgency request and it was requested that its processing did not include passing through the plenary. It is worth mentioning that at this moment there was great pressure from the CNBB for the immediate approval of the agreement. There are records, according to Fischmann (2009), of meetings between CNBB representatives with the president and the rapporteur of CREDN. In opposition to this attempt to approve the document, and as a matter of urgency, Federal Deputy Ivan Valente (Socialism and Liberty Party - PSOL/SP) requested that the proposal be analyzed also by the Commission of Education and Culture (CEC) and by the Commission of Labor, Administration, and Public Services (CTASP). The deputy's argument was that Article 11 of the document, which deals with religious teaching in the public school system, dealt with a theme pertinent to Brazilian education. In addition, Article 16 of the same text, which foresaw the denial of the employment relationship of volunteers who provide services to Catholic institutions, also represented a theme of interest to other commissions, such as the CTASP. Ivan Valente also requested, together with other congressmen, the holding of public hearings on the theme of the Concordat and religious teaching. The CNBB reacted immediately and argued that the hearings represented attempts by religious minorities to delay approval of the agreement, saying that other faiths should propose "equal agreements" so that they would not claim Catholic privilege. Fischmann (2009) mentions, however, that the Catholic institution is the only denomination that has legal personality under international law, the Vatican, which inevitably leads to a breach of isonomy, since no other denomination would have equal possibility.

The progress of the project in the Federal Chamber of Deputies shows how much this issue is involved in ideological and political disputes, as well as in the conception of the State. The Education and Culture Commission, following the rapporteur's opinion, even deliberated a reservation to the text, but, however, an agreement between the concordata's defenders and part of the "evangelical bench" led to its withdrawal in plenary, as well as all the other amendments presented. The agreement sealed by most parties led to the full approval of the Concordat, in exchange for the summary approval, and also full approval, of the project that deals with the so-called "General Law of Religions" (PL n° 5.598/2009). Even in the midst of these polemics, Congressman Bonifácio Andrada (Brazilian Social Democratic Party-PSDB/MG) gave a favorable opinion on the approval of the document, without holding a public hearing. There was also an agreement to remove the In exchange, the public hearings proposed by those opposed to the approval of the document would become panels, with the presence of a representative from Itamaraty and a university researcher specialized in the topic. The first panel took place, but, afterwards, the agreement was broken, and the document

was voted on urgency, being approved by 301 votes in favor against 49 votes against. The document, which it is worth mentioning provides for a series of fundamental rights associated with freedom of belief, worship, and even religious education, was approved in the House of Representatives through Legislative Decree Project No. 1736/2009, as shown in Article 11 of the Concordat: The Federative Republic of Brazil, in observance of the right to religious freedom, of cultural diversity, and of the confessional plurality of the country, respects the importance of religious education in view of the integral formation of the person.

§1º. Religious teaching, Catholic and of other religious confessions, with optional enrollment, constitutes a subject in the normal schedule of public elementary schools, ensuring respect for the religious cultural diversity of Brazil, in accordance with the Constitution and other laws in effect, without any form of discrimination. (Agreement between the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Holy See - November 2008) The possible impacts of this concordat and its repercussions on public schools, and on the very concept of the State, have been the object of criticism and concern by educators, researchers, and social movements. For this group, the concordat will deeply aggravate the religious disputes in public schools, and will thus spread throughout the country the struggles for hegemony already manifested in some educational networks. Furthermore, it represents a step backwards in relation to §1 of Art. 210 of the Constitution and to Art. 33 of the LDB, which currently delegates to the educational systems the election of the contents of religious education and forbids proselytism.

This agreement between Brazil and the Vatican, also approved in the National Congress, besides hurting the laicity of the State and the fundamental freedoms, interferes directly in what concerns religious teaching, since one of the main aspects of the text is precisely the provision for confessional teaching in public schools. It is quite true that there is already a reciprocal recognition of title and freedom to open and administer confessional teaching institutions in our Constitution, but the agreement expands this relationship and establishes what the configuration of religious teaching in public schools should be, foreseeing a purely confessional model of teaching, divided between "Catholic and other religious denominations". By determining in this agreement the model to be adopted for religious education in Brazil, the Catholic Church seeks to reaffirm its hegemony in the public network through confessional education, since, according to the mapping produced by the research of Giumbelli (2008), one of the elements of great prominence regarding the implementation of the discipline today is precisely the heterogeneity in the models adopted, prevailing mostly the "interconfessional" or "supra-confessional" teaching. In this way, although most of the legislation does not label the model of religious education to be adopted, the prevalence of the non-denominational model in the states is notorious. The format confessional, where the division of students is made according to creeds, as well as the corresponding contents, was adopted only in Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo and Bahia. The others opted for the "interconfessional" model, as in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, or even "supra-confessional", as in the case of São Paulo. A fact that deserves mention in these legislations is the recurring affirmation about the Brazilian religious plurality. Many point as a principle this respect for diversity, attributing to religious education the duty of knowledge and recognition of the multiple expressions of religious life. According to Giumbelli (2008), expressions such as "transcendent", "sacred", and even "religious phenomenon" are common in these legislations to denominate a common field among confessions and traditions. Even in the states that adopted the confessional model, in which this common ground is refused, one notes the presence of formulations involving pluralism and respect for Brazilian religious diversity.

Giumbelle (2008), however, calls attention to the fact that this pluralism in practice is quite limited, with some hegemonic creeds having a privileged position in relation to the others. The author also states that this is an effect common to all models. Whether because of the differentiated attention to religious agents or through mechanisms in everyday school life, such as the presence of symbols, festivals linked to these faiths that are included in the official school calendar or even in the syllabus worked by the whole institution, these privileges are guaranteed. It is also important to mention that there are states using a diversity of mechanisms to build consistent structures for the implementation of religious education. These states have been using a range of strategies, which, according to Giumbelli (2008), include the multiplication of agents within the organizational chart of the Secretaries of Education who are specifically responsible for this discipline. In Minas Gerais, each Regional Superintendency of Education has a Regional Commission of Religious Education, which is under the command of a Central Commission of Religious Education. In Rio de Janeiro, a similar mechanism was adopted, with the creation of regional articulators of religious education. Several specialists believe that the offer of religious education, as it has been regulated in the states, is unconstitutional and hurts the secularity of the State. Jurist Daniel Sarmento, Adjunct Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro and Regional Attorney of the Republic, argues that political power, exercised by the State in the public sphere, should be based on equally public reasons, that is, reasons whose possibility of acceptance by the public in general is independent of particular religious or metaphysical convictions. He presents the following position: The secularity of the State, taken seriously, does not end with the prohibition of explicit adoption by the government of a particular religion, nor the prohibition of public support or privilege to any confession. It goes beyond, and involves the republican claim to delimit their own and unmistakable spaces for political power and faith. In the secular state, faith is a private matter (SARMENTO, 2010). Defending this position, jurist Daniel Sarmento sent a Direct Unconstitutionality Action (ADI 4439) to the Federal Supreme Court (STF), requesting an interpretation of the norms to make it clear that religious education in public schools can only be of a non-confessional nature, with a prohibition on the admission of teachers as representatives of religious confessions. The petition was presented by the deputy attorney general, Deborah Duprat, at the end of July, when she was acting as attorney general at the STF. In the prosecutor's opinion, the only way to make the secular character of the Brazilian State compatible with religious education in public schools is by adopting a non-confessional model, in which the syllabus of the subject consists of a presentation of the doctrines, practices, history, and social dimensions of different religions, as well as non-religious positions, such as atheism and agnosticism, without taking sides on the part of the educators. Deborah Duprat also argued that it is not possible to admit that the public school is transformed into a space for catechesis and religious proselytism, Catholic or of any other confession. For the prosecutor, public school is not the place for confessional teaching and also for the "interconfessional" or ecumenical, because the latter, although not aimed at promoting a specific confession, aims to inculcate in students religious principles and values shared by the majority, to the detriment of atheistic, agnostic views, or of religions with less power in the socio-political sphere. Finally, the action requested an injunction to suspend the effectiveness of the provisions considering that, until the final judgment of the action, the offering of religious instruction in public elementary schools that adopt the confessional model may cause serious and irreparable damage to the legal order, in addition to offending the extra patrimonial rights and values of

the children and adolescents who attend these schools, as well as their families, which, by their very nature, are impossible to repair. Given the complexity of the issue, its social relevance, and the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, the deputy attorney general requested that a public hearing be held at the STF. The referred public hearing was promoted by the STF in 2015, OLÉ and CEDES - Center for Studies Education and Society were represented and they stated that the existence of the discipline of religious teaching in public schools would mean a step backwards, when the 1988 Constitution is compared to the 1891 Constitution. They emphasized that it was necessary to guarantee to the students of public elementary schools the right to religious freedom and the right not to profess any religion, with the end of overt or covert religious proselytism in public schools. In this way, if the Constitution determines its offer as a subject, on an optional basis, the OLÉ representatives sought to present to the minister reporting the ADI, Luís Roberto Barroso, a panorama of the objective situation of religious teaching in public schools, the from the educational field. Thus, they exposed that religious education in public schools, although optional in the letter of the law, has been treated in practice: 70% of the public elementary schools teach this subject, among which 54% require compulsory attendance; 75% of them do not offer activities for students who do not want to attend these classes. And what is worse, it has been used for religious proselytizing purposes. On the occasion of the public hearing, a manifesto signed by several entities, including OLE' and CEDES, was launched. Not even the entities that signed the Manifesto, among which were also the OLÉ, which stressed the need for the STF to establish limits and parameters for religious education, because they knew that it was not only about declaring religious education non-denominational, as intended by ADI 4439. The limits defended by the manifesto were: (a) the impediment of state funding to any of the confessional forms, including interconfessional ones, of religious teaching in public schools and that any form of religious proselytism on public school premises be prevented, (b) the impediment that teachers of religious teaching be representatives of religions and the impediment of the requirement of specific qualification in sciences of religion or religious teaching, since the contents related to non-denominational religious teaching, such as philosophy, history, (c) the prevention that religious education in public schools be considered an alternative to a secular ethical education of civic values, citizenship, public liberties, and human rights and that the unconstitutionality of the legal provision that classifies it as an "integral part of the basic education of the citizen" be declared, highlighting the importance of the implementation of the National Guidelines for Education in Human Rights, approved by the National Council of Education in 2012, (d) the impediment of counting religious teaching in the national minimum workload for basic education, (e) the impediment of automatic enrollment in religious teaching, requiring parents or guardians to expressly manifest their intention to enroll, (f) the impediment of transversal offering in fundamental education or its offering during the compulsory and universal components of the school curriculum, and finally (g) that the National Council of Education be asked to elaborate a normative rule that would foresee, in a detailed way, negative limits to the relationship between religion and public education, among them, the removal of religious symbols and the prohibition of religious prayers as part of school routine in public schools, and that the CNE would also be asked to elaborate a national protocol of registration and procedures related to the confrontation of cases of religious intolerance, racism, homophobia/lesbophobia/transphobia, sexism, and other discriminations that occur in public and private educational institutions. This list of impediments claimed by the manifesto did not prevent any of the ministers from

advocating incisively that religious instruction be an integral part of the formation of the citizen, a political and pedagogical absurdity. Therefore, for the defenders of secularism in public education, there would be no reason for greater expectation in the vote on ADI 4439 in the STF, after the vote of the reporting justice Luiz Roberto Barroso. After all, most of them adopted the idea that religious teaching is the teaching of religion, and not the teaching of History, Sociology or Philosophy of Religions, and wanted to ensure the maintenance of this in its confessional model in public schools, despite all the data that the *Amici Curiae* favorable to the granting of the request of the PGR brought to that trial in their briefs and oral arguments. And who won and who lost with the judgment of ADI 4439 by the STF? Those who defend the confessional modality of religious teaching in public schools, as is done in Rio de Janeiro, have won. With this result, it is expected that other states will move in this direction, led by the Catholic Church, mainly, and some Evangelical Churches, secondarily. The pressure groups in favor of the formation of a category of teachers trained in specific religious education degrees, a pressure group that would emerge from the bill by the then Congressman Marco Feliciano, improved by Congressman Pedro Ucsai, No. 309/2011, lost. All the elements presented here about the current political situation involving the implementation of religious education accumulate to what Cunha (2009) called the loss of relative autonomy of the educational field. According to the author, the offensive of several religious entities to exert control over the curriculum of basic education in the public sector, with the support of sectors of the teaching profession and parliamentarians, has been increasing. According to this line, religious teaching in public schools represents a series of serious threats to citizens' rights, notably in the field of the right to freedom of conscience, belief, and worship, of sexual and reproductive rights, of the right to access to science and its results, among others. In a plural and democratic society such as ours, where various religions coexist within the same population, freedom of religion is directly related to the appropriate limits for reconciling the interests of the various groups and respect for the beliefs of each one. Moreover, because it is directly involved with the formation of the conscience of children and adolescents, as well as the exercise of these and other rights, the issue of religious education in public schools comprises one of the most sensitive points in the defense of the secularity of the State.

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**THE SECULARITY OF THE STATE AND EDUCATION: THE VALORIZATION OF
DISCUSSIONS ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN BRAZILIAN PUBLIC
SCHOOLS.**

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I - Conservatism and its influences on pedagogical practices

This article is about the initial results of a research that is being developed in the Scientific Initiation Scholarship Program (PIBIC) of UERJ and that has the same title as this article. Its main objective is to carry out a bibliographic mapping on the site of the Observatory of Laicity in Education¹⁶ (OLÉ), on the link "Library", in the tabs: "Texts Available on the Internet", "Thematic dossiers on Laicity" and "Thesis Databases". This survey is making possible the basic organization and classification of the empirical material that integrates the corpus of the research.¹⁷The research in question was based on other studies we have developed; through them, we could see that in some school routines there is discrimination and persecution against LGBTIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transvestite, Transgender, Transsexual, Intersex and Asexual) students, which are often practiced by some teachers and employees. In our interviews, these professionals attributed the causes of homosexuality and bisexuality of students to two basic issues: illness or a wrong educational orientation. They claimed that homosexuality and bisexuality are condemned by the Bible, and that as evangelical educators they had a mission to heal and educate LGBTIA+ students to return to the correct path, which is the religious path. Thus, we had clues, indications, and signs (GINZBURG, 1989) that the issue of discrimination and harassment against this group of students was motivated by the religious conservative issues of some teachers and staff members. These religious values and beliefs often enable LGBTIA+phobic¹⁸ and sexist¹⁹ practices to develop in many school institutions. In order to understand what the conservatisms are, we need to unfold on the word conservatism, because it carries in itself a particular problem, since it is somehow related to human behavior. This issue influences the understanding of the word, because it leaves it loaded with an emotional charge that hinders the weaving of a more scientific interpretation of conservatisms (SEPULVEDA & SEPULVEDA, 2019). The existence of an emotional charge in the use of this concept helps us understand one of the main problems of contemporary society: the polarity of arguments, which puts the terms of public debates in constant tension, reinforcing a binary worldview. This analysis reduces the possibilities of multiple interpretations of social reality, submitting them to a single typology, in this case, the opposition between conservatives and progressives. Progressives are those who have an optimistic attitude about the possibilities of development of human rights. And conservatives are those who deny such possibilities. This way of understanding reduces conservative practices to the existence of progressive practices. In other words, it would only be possible to understand conservatism based on opposite practices. Because we consider this conception too superficial and limited, we intend to get

away from the search for a definitive concept and analyze conservatism as a process; therefore, from a historical perspective. Because of this, we cannot examine society neither in a binary nor in a reductionist way, because we suppress the processual construction of concepts. In other words, it is not possible to freeze history in rigid structures of analysis, because the historical process is always unequal and contradictory, as Thompson (1981) defines it. (SEPULVEDA & SEPULVEDA, 2019, p. 870) Taking into account the historical-processual perspective, we do not agree that conservatisms are only a reaction, as Bonazzi (2000) says. We also disagree with the thesis that conservatism produces neither knowledge nor political agents. Conservative political parties have existed for centuries and are proactive, especially with regard to economic and technological development. Authors, such as Hirschman (1992), do not consider that the proposal of social transformation is always progressive. Although there are social changes with transformative arguments they do not necessarily generate benefits for humanity (SEPULVEDA & SEPULVEDA, 2019). An example of this are the neoliberal reform proposals that directly attack labor and social security rights with the discourse of modernizing financial systems, adapting them to the needs of the contemporary world, what some authors, such as Barrington Moore Jr. In practice, these proposals mean losses for workers. As such, reacting to this is an attitude worthy of the working class; that is, the so-called progress is not always positive. Indeed, we can understand that understanding conservatism necessarily involves understanding it within the field of political debate. And that we are not interested in the question of morals and human behavior, but rather in the collective and political debate of the term. Drawing on Hirschman (1992), who constructed a work on conservatism in which he analyzed 200 years of its rhetoric, we conclude that such oratory presents itself as confronting any change of political order that proposes, in some way, to modify the established power relations in a society. (SEPULVEDA & SEPULVEDA, 2019, p. 870-871) In view of this, it is necessary to emphasize that conservatisms are not the same, therefore, they are not the same, they are historical categories that result from procedures in which the consequences are distinct, over time. We understand conservatism as something established from a conservative culture, the result of the regularity of arguments employed in analogous situations by various historical agents. Thus, it is not possible to think of conservatism as a static category, either sociologically or anthropologically. That is, history is marked by disputes, especially by what has been called class struggle. In the dispute for power that occurs in the field of culture, conservatism is an important element in the construction of class interests and class consciousness itself. In such a process, not only the material conditions of survival are in dispute, the are also the symbolic conditions, composed of various arguments, of different natures. (SEPULVEDA & SEPULVEDA, 2019, p. 872) It is important to note that as of 2019, the year of the inauguration of the current president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, who is part of the extreme conservative right-wing political spectrum and is supported by the religious bench of the National Congress, LGBTIA+phobic and misogynistic practices have increased in many schools, as the nation's top boss has already evidenced several times his prejudices against the LGBTIA+ population and against women, which ends up strengthening actions of this nature. Due to his position, Bolsonaro's position has gained a political outline that ends up "authorizing" many religious leaders to develop discourses against LGBTIA+ rights, such as being against the use of condoms, against same-sex civil unions, against women's rights, such as, for example, receiving equal salaries to men or even making use of maternity leave, etc. These discourses lead to an increase in the practice of some religious teachers in relation to

these students, as well as to persecution against teachers who develop themes in their classrooms that value sexual, gender, racial, and other differences. This scenario shows us that the Brazilian State and many public schools have failed to respect the principle of secularity of the State and the democratic rights of LGBTIA+ educandxs and women.

II - Secularism of the State

We understand that a secular state is one that does not support any specific religion.

According to the Brazilian Constitution of 1988:

Art. 19 - The Union, the States, the Federal District and the Municipalities are forbidden

I - establish religious cults or churches, subsidize them, hinder their operation or maintain with them or their representatives relations of dependence or alliance, except, in the form of the law, the collaboration of public interest; [...] III - create distinctions between Brazilians or preferences among them.

Thus, according to the quote, it is possible to understand that the Brazilian State cannot maintain with any religion a relationship of dependence or alliance, which shows that one cannot have, in a public school subsidized by the State, religious proselytism by teachers. In relation to this issue, the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education 9394/96 emphasizes in its article 33 that (...) religious teaching, with optional enrollment, is an integral part of the basic education of the citizen and constitutes a subject of the normal schedule of public elementary schools, ensuring respect for the religious cultural diversity of Brazil, forbidden any forms of proselytism. However, many practices of teachers within many schools in public education networks toward LGBTIA+ students and girls give evidence of this religious proselytism, hurting the principle of laicity of the State, as well as the fundamental rights of Brazilian citizenship and human rights. Many times, the attitudes of these professionals coming from the learnings obtained through religious faith, as they themselves claimed in some of our research, disrespect the constitutional right of Brazilians regarding non-discrimination. Let's see: It is the duty of the family, the society, and the State to ensure the child and the adolescent, with absolute priority, the right to life, health, food, education, leisure, professionalization, culture, dignity, respect, freedom, and family and community life, in addition to protecting them from all forms of neglect, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty, and oppression (BRASIL, 1988). Therefore, in order to allow for the dignity of the human person, it is necessary to repudiate all and any form of discrimination. Although we know this, we also know that in the multiple daily forms that social relations take, the complete suppression of discrimination appears more as a utopia and project than as a lived reality. Even so, we understand that in the daily life of public schools, educators have as one of their obligations to protect children and adolescents from all forms of neglect, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty, and oppression. They cannot practice acts of discrimination against some students due to a behavior that associates the issue of dissident sexualities and genders to²⁰ that emerges from their religions, because in this way they also attack the principle of secularity of the State. The State has become secular, that is to say it has become equidistant from religious cults in assuming one of them as the official religion. Modernity is increasingly distancing itself from *cujus regio, ejus religio*. Secularism, which is consistent with freedom of expression, of conscience and of worship, cannot coexist with a State that is the bearer of a confession. On the other hand, the secular State does not adopt the

religion of irreligion or antireligion. By respecting all cults and adopting none, the State frees the churches from a control regarding the specificity of religion and frees itself from religious control. This means, at the same time, the displacement of religion from the state to the private and the assumption of laicity as a concept referred to state power (CURY, 2004, p. 183). The laicization of the state was proclaimed to remove the Church's monopoly on truth in the process of modern construction of democratic society. Secularism is a principle for the construction of democracy, and can be understood as one of the necessary elements for its development. Thus, for democracy to become increasingly effective in the Brazilian reality, we need to make efforts to enable secularism to really take root in society and within public schools (SEPULVEDA & SEPULVEDA, 2017). Thus, it is necessary to combat through effective activities religious teaching and educational practices that are based on religious beliefs and, therefore, discriminate and persecute LGBTQIA+ students and girls. Thus, our research is configured as one of the ways to combat such practices and help teachers and students with information about gender issues, sexualities, and secularity.

III- Methodology

In the development of our research we used the Indicative Paradigm of Carlos Ginzburg (1989). This theoretical and methodological reference allows us to make a reading from clues, indications and signs of the abstracts of dissertations and thesis that deal with the themes of gender, sexuality and secularity on the OLE website. In this way, it tries to capture elements not accessible by traditional means of investigation that cannot account for the multiple relations, that is, it does not allow capturing the nuances and unexpected aspects of reality. Therefore, the Indication Paradigm seeks to investigate what is not in evidence. The work based on clues puts into dialogue different types of knowledge and interpretation of reality, especially those linked to qualitative aspects, which can only be reached indirectly, and to knowledge derived from concrete experiences. (ESTEBAN, 2001, p. 36) Ginzburg (1989) reminds us of the need to work on the signs that reality presents. To read clues and signs, to try to understand through them some of the meanings of what we do not know. we have the capacity to understand in another way; to apprehend in them information of the real that is not accessible through traditional means of research. This is the basis of the Indic Paradigm.

Therefore, Ginzburg's theoretical reference consists in investigating what is not on show, since reality does not show itself as such. Situations that are often considered insignificant can express a lot to the researcher, since they are images of the researched reality.

This logic of discovery through clues can be found in the ancient paintings of the Italian painter and art critic Morelli (pictorial details), in some fundamentals of psychoanalysis (the "symptoms" studied by Freud), and in Sherlock Holmes' method of investigation. The latter constitutes in the opinion of the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg and the Catalan philosopher Josep Ramoneda, the most perfect example of the "paradigm of clues", which is characterized by the passion to penetrate the hidden or secret dimensions of the underworlds made of the waste and offcuts of logocentric thinking (PAIS, 2003, p. 32). Thus, the Indicator Paradigm is a theoretical and methodological framework that allows for different interpretations of reality, since it does not use evidence, which can often hinder the construction of different ways of reading the observed problem. Ginzburg (1989, p. 151) argues that for years man was a hunter and that he "learned to reconstruct the shapes and movements of invisible prey by the footprints in the mud, broken branches, dung acorns, tufts of fur, tangled feathers, stagnant

smells." For the author, besides verbal and written documentation, man has developed other ways of knowing. According to him, the researcher must go in search of clues, indications, and signs, mobilizing all his senses. Employing the Indicative Paradigm presented by Ginzburg, we also tried to capture the negligible details, we followed clues and collected indications in the documents present in OLÉ's website in the library tab.

III - OLÉ's page

We started the search by browsing OLÉ's page to get to know the site's organization logic better, and then we did the search in the "Library" tab, as can be seen in the following image.

Figure 1 - Screenshot of the OLÉ home page, with an arrow to the "library" tab.



Source: <http://ole.uff.br/21>

In the second moment, we started reading the abstracts of theses and dissertations that were present in the OLÉ site and separated those that addressed the issues of gender, sexuality and secularity. We read 219 (two hundred and nineteen) abstracts of theses and dissertations (the total number of dissertations and theses in this tab), of which 44 (forty-four) addressed the issues of gender, sexuality, secularity and public education.

Figure 2 - Screenshot of the "Library" tab with an arrow indicating the subtopic in which the texts present in the collection were searched virtual OLÉ.



Source: <http://ole.uff.br/22>

Then, we started to search for the full texts of dissertations and thesis, which were initially mapped in the "Library" tab of OLÉ. For this, we searched the sites of the graduate programs where these productions were developed and, from there, we fed the link²³ that we created in the OLÉ page to deposit these files. In them, we found forty-four (44) academic productions. The institutions where these dissertations and thesis were developed are Pontifical Catholic University of Goiás (PUC- GO), Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), Methodist University of São Paulo, Universidade do Estado da Bahia (Uneb), Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp), Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Triângulo Mineiro, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), Universidade Federal de Grandes Dourados (UFGD), Universidade de Fortaleza (Unifor), Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RJ), Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Faculdade Unida de Vitória, Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU), Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP), Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), Universidade Estadual de Minas Gerais (UEMG), Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUC-RS), Universidade de São Paulo (USP), Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA), Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB), Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC-SP), Universidade Tuiuti do Paraná (UTP).

Figure 3 - Screenshot of the "Library" tab, with an arrow indicating the link "Thesis - Laicity, gender and sexuality".



Source:<http://ole.uff.br/24>

Finally, we mapped and collected, in the CAPES (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior) thesis database, dissertations and theses on secularity, genders, and sexualities with research conducted in public schools. Through this survey, we fed the link "Theses - Laicities, genders and sexualities" and divided by the years of publication of each text, as can be seen in the following image.

Figure 4: screenshot of the link "Thesis - Laïcité, genders and sexualities", with year markings to identify the organization of this topic



.Source: <http://ole.uff.br/25>

As soon as we started the search on the CAPES website, we noticed the absence of theses and dissertations produced from the year 2018 that dialogued with the researched themes. So far, we found 30 (thirty) theses and dissertations in the CAPES database on the researched theme. It is also important to mention that the dissertations and theses from the years 2020 and 2021 have not yet been made available on the aforementioned site, so our investigation focused on the period from 2014 to 2018.

BRIEF CONSIDERATIONS - Weaving relations with research

When we began the process of searching for texts on gender, sexualities and secularity, our first step was to look in the "Library" tab of the OLÉ website. Thus, we observed that there were no theses and dissertations on the themes of gender, sexualities and laicity until the year 2012, so that, in the referred site, the productions dated later years and were focused only on the issues of laicity and religious teaching. However, we identified in the CAPES thesis database that even before 2012 there were already works that discussed these issues that we investigated. During the research, we had clues, indications and signs that secularism - whether related to education or not - was more researched than the themes of gender and sexuality, presenting a greater number of thesis and dissertation productions. In this sense, we noticed that a good part of these theses and dissertations came from private and Catholic universities, and defended the permanence of religious teaching in schools. We also found investigations denouncing religious institutions that acted for their own benefit. For Hoff (2017), the Brazilian legislation does not impose unanimity in the way of applying religious education, so some states end up adhering to a confessional model. By analyzing that the research that defended the permanence of religious teaching in schools was mostly associated with private institutions, we can signal that the permanence of religious teaching in schools is - in the cases researched - mostly defended by private institutions of higher education. Regarding the investigations of theses and dissertations that discuss gender, sexuality, secularity and public education, we had a hard time finding theses and dissertations that could interconnect these subjects, we had a very small quantitatively small quantity that interrelate these issues. In view of the above, we observed the need to study the issues listed, so that human and democratic rights prevail over conservative attacks, since we understand conservatism as a rhetoric, a way of seeing the world and weaving its narratives into it (SEPULVEDA & SEPULVEDA, 2020). We also highlight that from 2019, with the election

of Jair Bolsonaro, there was a large-scale conservative advance within the Brazilian public machine. As we have already signaled in this text, the current president allied - and is still allied - with religious groups of Christian matrices of the extreme political right (SEPULVEDA, 2019). For all that said, we understand that this research helps combat the conservative rhetoric coming from the federal government and from the religious extreme right-wing evangelical parties in the National Congress, which becomes imperative in the production of knowledge that transgresses these narratives, so that the laicity of the state is actually respected. In the case of fundamentalist conservatives, what counts as truth is the Christian religious discourse. Thus, one of the fundamental elements for fundamentalist conservatives is the interdiction (FOUCAULT, 1996) of arguments that strengthen the social and human rights of minorities, that is, the rights of women and the LGBTIA+ population (SEPULVEDA; SEPULVEDA, 2020, p. 100). Based on the thought of the authors cited above, we understand that conservative movements in Brazil seek concomitantly to break, or at least weaken, the secularity of the Brazilian State, and, in addition, to attack LGBTIA+ populations and women with discourses based on religions of Christian matrix. That is why the mapping and the availability of the identified texts on the sites of OLÉ and CAPES are so important. Through them, people will be able to understand the existence of conservatism, as well as other movements against secularism and the debates on gender and sexuality, and also how these forces have established themselves within the public power and what strategies they use. Furthermore, it enables teachers and students to build scientific knowledge about secularism, genders, sexualities, and the necessary respect for the differences that make up Brazilian society. It is important to highlight that the year 1988 is a milestone in the history of Brazil. Its importance is due mainly to the restitution of democracy, which, in addition to the rescue of political rights, once usurped by the civil-military dictatorship, brought with it secularity as a fundamental democratic right, as already mentioned in this article. Not coincidentally, the present research, which is developed in a moment of extreme conservatism in our country, in which the laicity of the State is threatened, is woven within the site of the Observatory of Laicity in Education. For our research, the website became one of the means by which we could reach the initial conclusions of the research presented, and, furthermore, defend processes that directly assist in the maintenance of the rights of the LGBTIA+ population and the rights of women, therefore, the justification of laicity is fundamental for democracy to become stronger and stronger!

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**UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A STATE PUBLIC SCHOOL IN
THE CITY OF NITERÓI - RJ**

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The objective of this text is to demonstrate the functioning and impacts of Religious Education (RE) within a public state school in the city of Niterói/RJ, from its agents, that is, RE teachers, coordinators and school directors. The school studied was the Liceu Nilo Peçanha²⁶, an important state school in the city. The theme of this study involves conflicts and resistance, and so we embarked on this research aware of the polemics and discomfort it could generate. We started the field study in September 2021, looking for documents that could demonstrate the existence of religion, officially and unofficially, at Liceu Nilo Peçanha. This task became much more complicated than we imagined. It was very difficult to have access to the existing documents in the Institution, not only because of the terrible state of conservation, but also because of the difficulty in accessing them and, mainly, because we were still living the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided a real turnaround in the most diverse aspects of daily life. The field study was possible because during the period described, the schools were already open, but still under some sanitary protocols. Therefore, we were still living the reflexes of what was named as the greatest sanitary crisis of the last 100 years. The systematization of the theory, the investigative method, and the procedures were fundamental for the exercise of this research, because it led us to dialogue with the object and to reach the intended objectives. During the research planning, the methodology that proved to be most appropriate was the qualitative one. In this sense, Mirian Goldenberg (2004, p. 53) argues: "Qualitative data consist of detailed descriptions of situations with the aim of decompromising individuals in their own terms". For data collection, semi-structured interviews and document analysis were conducted. The interview is a technique that allows us to collect indications of the ways in which each interviewee perceives and means his or her reality. However, we must take into consideration that "working with these research instruments it is good to remember that we deal with what the individual wishes to reveal, what he wishes to hide and the image he wants to project of himself and others" (GOLDENBERG, 2004, p. 85). In February and March 2022, the interviews were conducted, which were also an arduous task, because we needed to make several contacts with the subjects we intended to interview so that they would find time in their schedules for the task. It is important to highlight that all interviewees authorized the publication of the interviews given, however, we prioritized the use of pseudonyms in order to preserve their identities. Two interview scripts were prepared. One for the school management team and another for the Religious Education teachers. At first, there were two RE teachers, but in the week we conducted the interview, one of the teachers left the school and was reassigned to another school closer to his home. The questions selected for the principal team concerned the

position the interviewee held in the school; his/her religious positioning; his/her opinion about RE in the curriculum; his/her perception about possible conflicts concerning religion in the school environment; and his/her position about religious symbols inside the school. The questions designed for the RE teacher covered the following topics: her original background; her religious positioning; how long she has been teaching the subject and why she chose to do so; her opinion about the competition for RE; whether she practices any religious function outside of school; the contents listed for the subject; whether she faces any difficulties in teaching RE; and her position about religious symbols inside the school. Following these scripts, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in full for analysis of the data collected. It is important to point out that the questions were elaborated with the concern of bringing to the scene the subjects' relationships with religiosity and the presence of RE at Liceu Nilo Peçanha.

1 - The Informants' Profile

The interviews were conducted with two assistant principals, one pedagogical coordinator, and one Religious Education teacher. To preserve their identities I identified them as follows: assistant principal (DA1), assistant principal (DA2), pedagogical coordinator (CP), and teacher of Religious Education (PER). Besides the questions contained in the interview script, some data such as age, gender, race, religion, education, and time in the job needed to be investigated for a better understanding of the place from where the interviewees speak. DA1 is 64 years old, self-declared white, female, and a non-practicing Catholic. She has a degree in Physical Education and Veterinary Medicine and has been an assistant principal for thirty-five years, eight of which at Liceu Nilo Peçanha. DA2 is 55 years old, self-declared white, female, and Catholic. She has a degree in Pedagogy with a specialization in the area of education and has been in the position of assistant principal for eight years. The CP is 45 years old, self-declared as brown, female, and practicing the evangelical religion, Baptist. She has a degree in History and has held the position of pedagogical coordinator for three years at the High School. The PER is 45 years old, self-declared as brown, female, and practicing the evangelical religion. She holds higher education degrees in Theology, Languages (Portuguese/Greek) and Pedagogy and has been a high school RE teacher for eighteen years. After this contextualization of the informants, we will proceed to the data analysis, returning to the focus of this work, which is the investigation of contradictions and possible tensions between secularism and Religious Education at Nilo Peçanha High School.

2- Data Analysis

The data collected in the interviews were categorized in order to systematize their analysis and allow a better reflection on the findings. The data collected were approximated and analyzed, following the following categories:

A) The insertion of Religious Education in the public school curriculum

In the context of the state of Rio de Janeiro, RE has some particularities. Not all the municipalities have RE, but there is a prescription from the state Secretary of Education for this discipline. This demonstrates a tension between the federative entities. For, the existence of a national legislation such as CF, art. 210 and the LDB, art. 33, which foresees the offer of RE, however, also foresees that the responsibility of basic education is of the states and municipalities. Taking into account that the school in question is a state school, this

characteristic echoes in conflicts to the offer of RE in Niterói for the different segments. This is because a student who leaves a municipal school, in which there is no RE, moves to a state school in which RE is on the curriculum. It is worth noting here the lack of work on Religious Education in Niterói. The municipal public system of Niterói, in its Organic Law, makes mention of the discipline of Religious Education in article 226:

Art. 226 The institution of religious instruction, as a subject in the normal schedules of municipal schools, will be administered with:

I - optional enrollment and taught by teachers from the municipal teaching staff, ensuring its ecumenical character.

II - guarantee of alternative activity for students not enrolled for religious education. (NITERÓI, 1990).

However, its offer is not effective in the schools of the municipal education system in Niterói. This ends up generating an inconsistency between the federal and state regulations and their performance at the municipal level, since the municipalities are the main federal entities responsible for the provision of elementary education and the offer of RE is mandatory at this stage of education. Even though it is located in the municipality of Niterói, the school in question in this case study belongs to the state network, in which RE is offered. Regarding the presence of RE as a subject in the regular schedule of public schools, the four interviewees were favorable. However, they had some reservations. The CP and PER reported that they think the nomenclature of the subject is wrong, because both believe that the name Religious Education means that each student should have a class of their declared faith. DA2 mentioned that RE should be part of a larger project, integrated with other subjects such as Philosophy, Sociology and History. According to her, "it should not be only that time of one subject, it could have a proposal of something more applicable. DA1 was more objective and practical in relation to the presence of RE in the school, because although she is in favor, she said that currently the subject has become a problem in the state system of Rio de Janeiro. According to her, this year the RE enturmation is happening and a new class can only be formed when it reaches the maximum capacity of 42 to 45 students and, therefore, it is very difficult to put in the same schedule several classes to reach this number. She went on to say that it was very difficult to put together the timetable, without knowing beforehand which students would opt for RE, and that this would generate a big problem with regard to the assembly and teacher availability for this subject. With regard to the number of students not opting to attend high school RE, there was no consensus in the responses of the interviewees from the management team. DA1, who is responsible for the time table, among other administrative tasks, responded without hesitation that the number of non-optional students was around 75% of the enrolled students. Unlike DA2 who reported that there was a very reasonable number of students who opted for the subject. While CP knew that there were students who opted out of RE classes, but did not know the percentage. However, the opinions of DA2, CP, and PER were similar about the reasons students do not choose to attend RE classes. For them, the students do not know what they are going to study and think that they are going to experience some kind of religious preaching, so they lose interest. Regarding the filling of the workload for students who do not opt to attend RE classes, the answers from the four interviewees were the same: "the students stay in vacant class". The answers about the workload of non-optional students show us how the presence of the subject of RE can generate problems in public schools,

because even though its offer is mandatory, its enrollment is optional, but the optional character implies a choice for another activity that fills this vacant time, as Cury warns us. [...] for the optional character to be effective and the possibility of choice to be exercised as such, it is necessary that, within a regulated space such as that of the school institutions, there be the opportunity to choose between religious instruction and another equally significant pedagogical activity for as many as do not make the choice for the first. Inactivity, dismissal, or situations of apartment living in places that generate embarrassment are not considered options. Now, this (these) alternative pedagogical activity (activities), constant of the pedagogical project of the school establishment, equally to the religious teaching, should deserve, from the school to the parents or students, the due communication, so that they can manifest their will before one of the alternatives. This exercise of choice, then, will be an important moment for the family and students to exercise (CURY, 2004, p189). Still on the insertion of RE in the curriculum, PER was asked what requirements she considered important to be a Religious Education teacher. She answered that, in the first place, it was identification with the subject and this she had, because she had already worked with adolescents in the Sunday school of her church. In addition, she needed to have identification with the profession, since in her words, RE classes demanded a lot of her: - If I compare my performance in a Portuguese class and my performance in a RE class, I can tell you that I feel much more demanded in the RE discipline, because we are going to be working with emotions, with life situations that demand a great deal of emotional expenditure. So, being prepared to offer that student, besides content and dialog, a support. We end up becoming a reference and many students end up looking for us in the corridors to deal with individual issues and, when I see that they are more delicate cases, I send them to the direction, but, sometimes, it's just a chat, wanting an ear to talk. So, this relationship between RE teachers and students is different from the relationship between teachers of other subjects and students (PER). The above statement is consistent with some of the results obtained by Ana Maria Cavaliere (2006) in her research conducted between 2005 and 2006 in 14 state schools about the implementation of Religious Education in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The author highlights that Religious Education ends up occupying spaces beyond its function provided by law, acting in areas of school life related to educational guidance. The vast majority of the justifications for the presence of religious teaching in school are based on reasoning that characterizes it as a resource for calming tempers, for confronting psycho-pedagogical problems, for guiding young people from a moral, ethical, and social solidarity point of view (CAVALIERE, 2006, p. 181).

Therefore, according to Cavaliere (2006), religious education in Rio de Janeiro, of a dogmatic-denominational character, undergoes a metamorphosis and starts to deal with tasks for the students' global socialization. Another controversial issue is the confessional nature of the subject implemented in Rio de Janeiro state schools after the approval of state law 3.459/00. The teacher interviewed claims not to work this way, but when asked if she works or has worked with catechesis or any teaching activity within a religious community and if she considers or has considered this practice relevant to her current work with Religious Education in the public school system, she replied that the work she did in the Sunday school at the evangelical church she attends helped her a lot to develop a more appropriate language with the students.

- I work with teenagers and this connection that I had in Bible school helped me to understand this generation. The changes are occurring, but they are still the same, the demands are the

same. So, this experience of mine helped me a lot to develop a more adequate language, closer, as if it had been an internship (PER).

About the contents that she considers important to be worked on in the subject of RE, the teacher reported that she prefers to work on values.

- I think we are living in a time when they (students) are feeling very alone. So, when I work on any subject related to the family, it is something differentiated, we notice the reaction. And this issue of values, of respect, of what love is, what it is to live love. Very simple things that we can bring from any religion, but that, sometimes, in life, in practice this does not happen. So, I think that working on values and family, family relationships are the topics that make more difference and sense to them. Sometimes I work with contents that involve historical influences, but I give preference to working on values (PER).

As we can see, confessionality in practice does not happen. Cavaliere (2007) found that the interconfessional form is the form considered possible to be applied by teachers of RE and that the solutions have been found by the teachers themselves, due to their particular visions of what this interconfessional work is. However, as we can see in PER's account, even affirming the interconfessional character of her work, the dogmas of her particular creed, even if not intentionally or explicitly, end up appearing covered by the sense of universal values.

The teacher in her speech wants to give the impression that she proposes a secular discussion in her classes by working with universal values. However, she is reproducing a discourse based on the ideas of FONAPER. In the absence of guidelines, from the Union, to the educational systems about the offer of Religious Education, FONAPER filled this normative vacuum, elaborating proposals of Curricular Parameters for Religious Education and of Curricular Guidelines for Licensing in Religious Education, providing continuing education courses for teachers, elaborating books and other materials, and organizing several events such as congresses and symposia. The Permanent National Forum on Religious Education (FONAPER) emerged from the Reflection Group on Religious Education (Grere), created by the CNBB during the Constituent Assembly period of 1987-1988. Luiz Antônio Cunha (2018) states that the entity, recognized as a private group with Catholic affiliation, had the purpose of influencing deputies and senators in favor of the amendment that provided for the offer of confessional RE in public schools. Therefore, when the teacher assumes that she works with autonomy in the choice of topics and contents in her classes, she is actually transmitting ideas fostered by a private group, originally of Catholic affiliation. The influence of FONAPER is not limited, in its unofficial proposals, to the organization of RE, but also goes beyond the political field when it participates as an important agent of pressure in the development of public policies, such as the BNCC. This free participation is due, in part, to the Brazil-Vatican/Santa Sé Concordat, promulgated in 2010, which deals with the legal status of the Catholic Church in Brazil. The agreement signed between Brazil and the Vatican "confers privileges for this religious institution to operate in the territory of the country in question" (CUNHA, 2013, p. 933). Thus, representatives of the Catholic Church end up acting in a privileged way in state institutions, having tax exemption and access to mass media and also receiving public financial resources. In contrast to this agreement, as previously mentioned, the Attorney General of the Republic (PGR) presents the Direct Action of Unconstitutionality (ADI) No. 4.439 in 2010, requesting the interpretation of some items of the Concordat by the Federal Supreme Court, based on the Federal Constitution and art. 33 of the LDB. The authors of the ADI point out the risks of offering confessional or interconfessional/ecumenical

RE for the principle of state laicity that guides the Magna Carta, since they could favor proselytizing practices. However, the ADI was judged and considered unfounded by the majority of the STF justices, who held that the confessionality of Religious teaching does not harm the laicity of the State or religious freedom, and is constitutional due to the optional nature of enrollment in the subject.

b) Questions and conflicts generated by Religious Education

The interviewees' answers about how teachers of other subjects react to the presence of RE in public schools were not consensual. The two principals claimed never to have perceived any problems. The CP, on the other hand, said that teachers of other subjects do not recognize RE as a subject, seeing it as a disposable subject, which does not count attendance or grades.

PER, the oldest employee among those interviewed, reported that she found it difficult to be accepted in the first years she entered the High School.- They said that the state is secular, which is a fact, and that it shouldn't have RE. That it was absurd to have RE. So, in the first and second years, there were these clashes with teachers. There was one teacher who wouldn't even greet me, not only me but the other teachers who taught RE at the time. (PER)

From this testimony, we can see that the mandatory presence of Religious Education in the curriculum of public schools can generate tensions and conflicts. Moreover, Cavaliere (2007) points out that the initial resistance to RE was due in part to internal disputes within the teaching profession for space in the curriculum, and also to an effective uneasiness with the institutionalized presence of religion in the school space.

When asked about the occurrence of questionings or conflicts generated by the presence of RE at school, the interviewees also varied in their answers, which leads us to reflect that the perception of a certain fact depends on the experiences and interests of the subjects.

DA1 said that she had never noticed any conflict with regard to RE at school, only the questioning of some guardians who, at the moment of enrollment of the student, when they have to choose whether or not he/she will attend the classes of this subject, ask which religion will be taught in the classes. DA2, on the contrary, says there are no questions about RE, but says there are conflicts about religion in some classes. According to her, there are clashes between teachers and students, because there are teachers who do not believe in the existence of God.- A student left the school because the teacher doesn't accept the existence of God. He says that belief in God or a religion, I'll use his words: "- It would be related to people who like to live in misery, who graze. These people have to live grazing because they believe in God, that this is a form of domination, of manipulation, of oppression."

Not only this case, but this year, for example, we have already had two cases, more or less, with the same speech. Teachers, especially in Sociology, but also in Philosophy and History are very aggressive and offend students who have their own beliefs. I don't think it is good manners for teachers to speak this way (DA2). Like DA2, the PC also reported problems among teachers of other disciplines, because they think "it is a matter of lack of reason, of baiting, or alienation, the fact that the student professes a faith in the classroom. [...] a student from NEJA III sent me a message saying that there was a political and religious discussion inside the Sociology class, and that the teacher exposed his idea, his opinion, and when she went to debate saying that she was religious and didn't agree with the political position he defended, that she thought that since we are in a democracy she could argue, the teacher raised the tone of his voice and was super harsh with her. According to her, the professor said that she was alienated, influenced by the Internet and the media, and that she didn't have a

thought of her own, and this made her very upset, because she is an adult of 40 years old. She said that she was very upset because the teacher was extremely rude, saying that she was wrong, that she was clueless because of her political and religious position. She got sick, she felt dizzy, and the teacher didn't help her. The classmates helped her and at no time did the teacher get up to ask her how she was doing or to help her. The student told me that she found this very cold. She and a classmate even said that the teacher doesn't teach any content and that the teacher's class is only to talk badly about the current government or about religions. Another case happened in philosophy class, in which a third grader said that the teacher asked a question about faith, asking if those who have faith use reason? And he asked if anyone had faith, if they followed any religion. Only one girl raised her hand and, according to this student, the teacher said that whoever has faith is crazy. I called the teacher to talk and he said that he didn't say that. He said that faith is not rational, so faith is something that is possible to have, you can have it, but there is no way to prove it rationally. So, according to him, it was a misinterpretation by the student. He said that he does not believe in God, but that in his classes he never said that God did not exist (CP). The reports above demonstrate how delicate matters related to religion can be and how they can generate conflicts in the public space, since they imply rethinking the very meanings attributed to the concept of religious freedom and secularism. These occurrences reveal that religion is strongly present in public schools through individual religious belonging and goes beyond the limits of religious education classes. Situations like these put the idea of secularism in check, since, by highlighting the identity differences provoke discriminatory attitudes, contradicting, according to Diniz, Lionço & Carrião (2010, p. 23), the device of secularism, because "it is expressed by pluriconfessionality and not by confessional neutrality". In addition to discriminatory attitudes, the religious presence at school can determine models, define hierarchies and generate symbolic violence (SILVA; MENDONÇA; BRANCO; FERNANDES, 2014). The symbolic violence⁴⁴ can be exercised when certain attitudes, or the presence of rituals or symbols that instill meanings as legitimate, allowing cultural impositions in a naturalized way. In the occurrences reported by DA2 and CP we cannot say that there was symbolic violence, because, according to the text by Silva, Mendonça, Branco & Fernandes (2014) this is an invisible form of coercion, because it is based on beliefs and prejudices presented as legitimate by the dominant and thus also perceived by the dominated. Therefore, it does not fit in such occurrences, because the students realized that both their opinions and their beliefs were not being respected by the teachers, to the point of taking these occurrences to the management team, in one case to the extreme of the student leaving the school. The situations reported also allow us to reflect on the fragility of laicity in public school. According to Cunha (2014, p. 22), "the secular public school considers and respects the religious options of students and their families," because the school cannot belittle students because of the religion they practice and believe or the fact that they have no religion, even if it needs to go against some of its precepts. The secularism allows the debate about religions inside the school, tensions and conflicts occur, as Fernandes (2014) found in his thesis, when Christians, atheists, and representatives of other ways of understanding spirituality, or the absence of it, inside or outside the public school, dispute truths, premises, dogmas, and precepts. Like Fernandes (2014), Silva (2013) also found in her research in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu that the presence of religion in school did not serve for a more peaceful experience among different religious denominations. Through interviews with teachers and direct observation, she found that the work with so-called universal values proposed by many advocates of the

presence of religion in public schools has turned into an imposition of religious practices and a reason to sharpen differences and stifle minority voices. In the same way, Mendonça (2012) analyzes in her study the problematic articulation between education and religion. The author conducted her research in a state school in Rio de Janeiro, located in Copacabana, and found different signs and manifestations of religion in the school institution and its repercussion in the process of formation and socialization of the students. In his work, Mendonça (2012) builds the hypothesis that, through the pedagogical action of the various professionals of the school institution, the naturalization of the religious presence and the propagation of values and norms referenced in a particular creed end up being presented as universal. In this sense, the constant presence of religion in school is configured as an element of exclusion and of dissemination of prejudice.

c) The naturalization of religious symbols inside the school

When asked about the presence of religious symbols in the school, the interviewees mentioned two symbols: the saint in the school entrance hall and the crucifix in the main hall. Before the analysis of the data collected about this category, I find it pertinent to visualize these symbols through the pictures below.



Figure 1 Santa from the high school entrance hall / Personal collection



Figure 3: High School's Great Hall Crucifix Source: <https://en.foursquare.com>



Figure 2- Santa from the high school entrance hall / Personal Collection

In this category, the informants converged in their answers when asked about how they viewed the presence of religious symbols at school. All four reported that they do not mind such a presence and see it as a historical issue, a cultural heritage. Here at the high school we have a saint, Nossa Senhora da Conceição, at the school entrance, that has been there for a long time. When we from the administration got here, it was already there. When I studied here, from 1973 to 1975, it was already there. There is also a crucifix in the high school's main hall. I don't see anything wrong with these symbols. I don't see why we should remove them. I think that we have to respect all religions, and the presence of the saint at the entrance of the school won't interfere in anything, because nobody is obliged to pass by there and pray, therefore, I don't see any inconvenience in the presence of these symbols at school. (DA1).

DA2 recognizes that the public school is secular, but sees no problem with the presence of Catholic religious symbols inside the school, even though she recognizes that such presence bothers some employees.

The school is secular. In the case of our school, it is very old, it comes from another time. So, using these symbols as adornment is fine. Here at school some people who have no beliefs at all, who see faith as a form of manipulation, question the existence of the image of the saint at the school entrance. This questioning comes from certain teachers, but no students question it. And there is also a very old crucifix in the auditorium that has already generated the question that it should be removed, because it is a form of indoctrination, let's say, that is making reference to a particular religion and the school is secular. On the other hand, the school has a historical building and this is part of the school's history, so removing it would maculate a whole history (DA2).

PER, although not bothered by the presence of Catholic symbols in the school, thinks that since the State is secular, it should not have them. However, she says that the presence of the subject of Religious Teaching should also be questioned. This teacher's speech presents a clear contradiction. First, because even though she understands that the State is secular, she doesn't mind the presence of a Catholic altar at the entrance of a public school. Second, because at the same time that she says that the presence of the subject of RE should be questioned in a secular state, she is in favor of its insertion in the curriculum, to the point of taking a public contest to teach this subject.

I think it is a difficult situation to change, because it has become a historical situation. I don't mind it, but it gets into a big discussion, because if the State is secular, it shouldn't have it,

and on the other hand, there is the discipline of RE, how to deal with this? I don't mind, but it is a question to be asked (PER). This teacher also reported that such symbols do not interfere in the way she teaches RE and that she even thinks that most students have never noticed the presence of the saint at the entrance of the school, just as she had not noticed it when she studied at the high school from 1991 to 1993. Like PER, who sees the presence of Catholic religious symbols as a historical issue, the PC thinks the same way, adding that she sees them as a cultural heritage. Even though they claim to be Evangelicals, these two employees do not mind these Catholic symbols being part of the school.

- I think it's all a matter of history. The Catholic symbols that exist in the high school are a tradition that comes from the schools of old. It is a cultural heritage. So, I think that it is not a question of spreading the word. or encourage the Catholic Church. It is a characteristic of the time when the schools were created. But, I think that if an evangelical student is allowed to have a service, a Catholic to pray a mass, then everyone else can profess their faith at school. (CP). From these statements, we can see that the presence of religious symbols, specifically Catholic ones, are naturalized in public schools and are part of the construction of school culture in these places, because they end up showing that the school is not only a place for the transmission of knowledge, but it is, at the same time, a place of "inculcation of behavior and habitus" (JULIA, 2001, p. 14). This process was built, since our colonial past, when the Catholic religion played a central role in the formation of Brazilian society (CUNHA, 2011). The Catholic representation still occupies a prominent place in our culture, as pointed out by Valente (2020).

- Religion in Brazil is a regulating mechanism in the life of the population; religious precepts are present in the calendar (Christmas, Easter, Saint John), in the communication of Brazilians (Graças a Deus, Ave Maria, Nossa Senhora, Vai com Deus, Fica com Deus etc.) and in leisure practices (church attendance and events promoted by the church) - in short, in the ways of being, acting, thinking and feeling. All this indicates the appreciation of religions by Brazilians and reveals the centrality that religiosity has for the population. (VALENTE, 2020, p. 3). Thus, the Catholic symbols exposed in the Liceu demonstrate the intentionality, even if silent, of religion in communicating and educating according to its ideology. This is because spaces are never neutral, and the school is inserted in this concept, full of meanings that mark the relationships of those who inhabit it, and, therefore, communicates and educates (VIÑAO FRAGO, 1995). Based on this premise, the Liceu Nilo Peçanha was constituted as a place-territory marked by religious elements, hegemonically Catholic, which inculcated its ideals to the point of transforming them into something natural, common to all. Another important point to be analyzed regarding the religious artifacts on display at the Liceu can be extracted from the statement of the CP, when she justifies the presence and permanence of such artifacts by seeing them as cultural heritage. About this, Giumbelli (2008) clarifies that: "Culture as heritage" can refer to a cumulative conception, which therefore involves a gradation, assuming a point beyond which the accumulation becomes worthy of signification and valuation. It is selective in the sense that it can be used to distinguish certain objects, inventions, events, monuments, etc. from others (GIUMBELLI, 2008 p. 89). Therefore, even practicing another religion, and having the knowledge that the public school is secular, the PC understands that such symbols have their value, which was built over the years, to the point of giving them the status of cultural heritage and, therefore, should not be modified. This argument is widely opposed by Sarmiento (2008) who claims that this patrimonialism causes

confusion between the public and the private. According to this author, religious symbols in public places are not mere adornments, used only to beautify the environment. The disagreement with the presence of such symbols is not driven by "aesthetic or artistic concerns", but rather by the belief that public establishments, such as schools, in a democracy, should not be identified with any religious belief, under penalty of offending the constitutional principle of secularity of the State. (SARMENTO, 2008).The data collected through the interviews demonstrated that the presence of religion is a reality in public school, inculcating its values, even if implicitly, and it is not only accepted but also seen as a cultural patrimony. This acceptance is related to the school culture that has been constituting the crystallization of religious symbols and practices, hegemonically Christian, in such a way that, many times, they are not even perceived on a daily basis. Some authors have also found the presence of religion in public school naturalized in everyday practices. In his research, Silva (2013) showed that activities such as the ritual of the Easter meal naturalizes the Christian religious manifestation in the public space. Besides him, Mendonça (2012) also observed that the presence of religion, especially Christian, occurs in pedagogical practices, curricula, activities, and even gestures, being seen and defended as something that is already part of the school environment and that does not go against the construction of a secular public school. Valente (2020) noted the presence of religiosity in public school in a hidden way, which, according to the author, legitimizes and maintains it in a perennial way. In his research conducted in five public elementary schools in Petrópolis, Medeiros (2012) also found religious practices, hegemonically Christian, such as: celebration of Thanksgiving Day with the participation of the priest and pastor, prayers before classes and meals, and development of projects such as the Fraternity Campaign, Easter, and Bible Week. Even if naturalized, practices and speeches that involve religion appear as a complex and conflicting issue inside the school, because they reflect the personal history and identity positions of the subjects involved, and may generate attempts at invisibilization, demonization, and prejudice, putting secularism in jeopardy. The information obtained in this research also brought to light that the presence of religion officialized through Religious Education in public schools, while causing questions, also causes acceptance by the professionals, to the extent that they see the subject as propagating values and ethics and, therefore, is justified as an important subject for the proper functioning of the school. However, this goes against the arguments of Fischmann (2008, p. 9), who in her analysis says "that the issue of religious teaching in public schools is one of the most sensitive points in the defense of the laicity of the Brazilian state and fundamental rights of Brazilian citizenship, as well as human rights. Like her, Cunha (2013), also opposes the above statement that students would only gain from the subject of RE, because it would promote tolerance with each other. For him, "in the real world, there are dominant and dominated beliefs, which divide students rather than unite them. (CUNHA, 2013, p. 935). However, as we can see, religion is at school in many ways and not only linked to the subject of RE. Thus, it becomes relevant that all religious manifestations and representations be analyzed more broadly, not only from the perspective of a specific discipline. Therefore, in this work, the secular conception is defended as the possibility of offering a pluralistic and democratic education guided by the construction of critical attitudes towards knowledge, in which religious belonging or non-religious belonging is accepted, without the need for a discipline that demarcates or makes them invisible.

Concluding Remarks

When one intends to talk about the relationship between public school and religion, one must keep in mind that it is a complex and very controversial subject, since it involves understanding the processes of clash and conciliation of religious differences that constitute the school environment within a secular State. Thus, the purpose of this research was to investigate the contradictions and tensions between secularism and Religious Education in public schools, starting from the agents who work at Liceu Nilo Peçanha. The analysis of the data collected in the interviews showed how much religion, especially Christian, is accepted and seen naturally at school, also revealed that religious practices and speeches can also generate many conflicts, because they involve identity positions of those involved. In this way, the religiosity present inside the school through different historical times, brings to light the power relations that are established among individuals and can generate, conflictive or peaceful relations at each period of its history, with the set of cultures that are contemporary to it. From the understanding that religiosity, mainly derived from Christian religions, has always been present inside the school, being inculcated, transmitted and naturalized through school culture. We can see the naturalization of the Catholic symbols present in the school by the professionals interviewed. Thus, the field work was fundamental for the understanding of the presence of religion in public schools. The information collected in the interviews demonstrated that religious symbols and practices, especially Catholic ones, are accepted and even justified, as important diffusers of ethical and moral values inside the school. The informants were aware that the State, constitutionally, is secular, and therefore the public school should also be secular. Therefore, they were against confessional RE, but they do not mind the presence of Catholic religious symbols, which leads me to verify that the Christian religion (Catholic) was naturalized through the school culture transmitted for years. In closing, we emphasize that in a school that is configured as a place of dialogue and formation, Confessional Religious Education seems a great contradiction. After all, religions are loaded with dogmas and prejudices that can hurt the principle of secularism and democracy itself. Believing in a religion seems healthy to us, however, the school space needs to attend to the differences, the doubts and the uncertainties. A democratic society needs a secular school, because we believe that this is the best way to deal with differences within schools.

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SECULARISM IN EDUCATION AND TEACHING SCIENCE AND BIOLOGY: UNSETTLING ISSUES IN THE FACE OF UNAVOIDABLE CHALLENGES

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INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

October 2022. Brazil finds itself in an atmosphere of apprehension and tension, where progressive social groups seek breath to resist and (re)exist in the face of the risks of continuity of an anti-democratic and violent regime, which both represents and concretizes various threats to the most vulnerable lives of political minorities: women, people who do not fit heteronormative standards, Afro-Brazilian, indigenous and traditional communities, and Brazilians from the lower social classes. On the horizon, a breath of hope arrives like a gentle breeze, which can be the announcement of a period of (re)construction of a fractured country or signify a sigh capable of oxygenating our bodies to face a strong gale on the way. History will tell us what will happen after October 30, 2022, but some questions are already poignant in the present time. Among these issues is the laicity of Education, which has become a target of attacks orchestrated by conservative political actors in our country (TEIXEIRA, HENRIQUES, 2022). Understood in a polysemic way by different political groups and often misrepresented on purpose to manipulate some sectors of Brazilian society, secularity is one of the main focuses of dispute in the scenario portrayed above. To avoid any kind of doubt, we assume here the concept of "laic" employed by the Observatory of Laicity in Education (OLÉ) based at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF) and made available as an entry in a freely accessible dictionary²⁷ :

The secular position is impartial in matters of religion, whether in conflicts or alliances between religious beliefs, or in the actions of non-believers. The secular position does not imply the rejection of any religion. It implies, rather, that it does not engage in proselytism or in disputes between them for the faith of believers, nor in criticism of any or all of them by non-believers. From this perspective, we can affirm that we have lived with (or survived?) inhospitable times to the principles of secularism, both in the Brazilian State and in the educational field. As a consequence, a series of obstacles, questions and problems have arisen or become more acute in our country, which have been the substratum for the intensification of clashes, embarrassment and intimidation to educators. Among which are male and female teachers of science and biology who are victims of censorship when addressing issues that question religious dogmas or values (DORVILLE, SELLES, 2018). Thus, the present text, constructed in an essayistic tone and aimed at sharing sensibilities and reflections, aims to think about secularity as an indispensable requirement for critical teaching practices based on the didacization of scientific knowledge. We are interested in glimpsing and discussing challenges experienced in the training and teaching work under the prism of secularity, breaking down factors, themes and dimensions of the curricula of Science and Biology that can ground a realistic and contextualized debate on disputes that we need to fight and meanings that we need to (re)construct today amidst so many clashes. With this, we seek to add to the

reflections of authors who have thought and problematized dimensions of the debates on secularism for the teaching of Science and Biology from different theoretical and methodological matrices, but that converge in an attempt to find and signal ways to overcome some challenges posed by the cooling of the conditions of teaching work especially with regard to the possibilities of addressing biological evolution in the classroom (DORVILLE, TEIXEIRA, 2019; VERRANGIA, CASTRO, 2019; VALENÇA, 2021). The chapter consists of a brief introduction and three other sections that refer to aspects of the discussion involving the laicity in the scope proposed for the text: the first section considers historical elements that jointly interpellate the laicity of education and the teaching of Biological Sciences, while addressing the deleterious effects that the current panorama brings to the approach of certain themes dear to the teaching of Sciences and Biology. The second section, a cross-section of research conducted by one of the authors (SILVA, 2015, 2022), exemplifies and analyzes in a comparative way between Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay how the issue of secularism can interfere in the conceptions of teachers and in Biology curricula, especially regarding the topic of biological evolution. A third section focuses on the actions of the former Minister of Education to address the disaster generated in Brazilian society during the pandemic of COVID-19 by the movement led by the Brazilian president, an amalgam of religion, scientific denialism and conservative ideology, which compromised the secularity of education and the fight against the disease guided by scientific bases. Finally, the text closes with some considerations by way of conclusion.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE DEBATES

Not by chance, the president of the republic who most encourages violence and authorizes the arming of the Brazilian population is also the one who has historically shown himself to be the greatest enemy of the secularity of education and of national science. In the crosshairs of those who bless with one hand and pull the trigger with the other, both teachers who seek to share scientific knowledge in their pedagogical actions and militants for the real separation between State and religion are faced with the dismantling of public policies and the equipping of institutions that should guarantee that constitutionally protected rights are respected. When we consider the history of science teaching in Brazil, we can see that the twentieth century was marked by curriculum disputes that for quite some time tried to legitimize the pedagogical value of a given scientific method, theoretically hypothetical-inductive and shared by different reference sciences (Biological Sciences, Physics, Chemistry, Geology and Astronomy), as something capable of contributing to the training of future generations (MARANDINO; SELLES; FERREIRA, 2009). This ideology was based on the belief that working with the scientific method would enable students to assume an active and investigative posture and the development of reasoning anchored in reason, apart from religious optics or actions driven by feelings - often labeled as "irrational", as Borba and Selles (2022) discuss. As a result, the space for what could not be deduced and elaborated based on the scientific method became increasingly scarce in science and biology classes. Curricular traditions oriented by laboratory experimentation and systematized observation of natural phenomena began to gain strength and to figure as teaching strategies that should be privileged. On the other hand, outside the school walls and in times/spaces alien to scientific logic (or sometimes scientific, to register a criticism to some ways of thinking and doing science that have also been propagated in schools), worldviews crossed by religious

mysticism and by explanations ascribed to faith have also strengthened and expanded, gaining more and more followers, but not always seen or taken into account by science teachers. Science and Biology or scientists. The stage was set for clashes between scientific knowledge and religious beliefs that would give tone to some of the concerns of the present time. During the civil-military dictatorship, such tensions already existed, but they were asphyxiated by authoritarianism that prevented free manifestation and the construction of collective debates, especially around controversial and polemic themes. However, the privileges of the clergy were maintained and the conservative wings of the Catholic Church continued to disseminate their ideology, with the support of the State, without any space for dissent and problematization, even if some of the more critical ecclesiastical strands tried to strengthen social movements that denounced violence, injustice and inequality. From the 1980s on, during the redemocratization of Brazil, these divergences were negotiated and put in the background in the face of the effort to build a welcoming and plural nation project. At least in the texts of the laws and the new promulgated Constitution, it would be assured that the Federative Republic of Brazil would act in an inclusive and democratic way, aiming at conditions so that all people could live in conditions of full citizenship. However, the 1990s and 2000s brought a strong managerialist and mercantile reversal that put the country's economy as the main public agenda. With this, educational policies gradually began to reflect neoliberal assumptions and to incorporate discourses on efficiency and effectiveness, presenting more and more devices to control curricula and mechanisms to regulate the autonomy of schools and teachers (SELLES, 2015). On the other hand, in the religious field²⁸, the "prosperity theology" in Protestant denominations and the "charismatic renewal" in the Catholic Church began to empty out religious perspectives more engaged in fighting the social problems in vogue during the previous decades and to value moralistic agendas, linked to the dogmatization of customs, habits and precepts. As an aggravating factor, in recent years, Brazil has been going through a process that Michael Apple (2001) calls conservative restoration or conservative modernization in which alliances between sectors linked to financial capital and groups extremists under the influence of conservative Judeo-Christian values have been the keynote of several public policies. In this partnership, the State becomes strong in the imposition and surveillance of individual and collective behavior, so that the conservative morality is imposed on the entire population and can hardly be circumvented, but weak in the regulation of the market, allowing big business to dictate the rules of economic relations, propelling privatizations and emptying measures of social assistance and welfare, labor legislation, etc. As pointed by information and considerations raised by works such as those by Borba, Andrade and Selles (2019), Piccinini and Andrade (2019) and Borba and Selles (2021), signs of conservative restoration can be easily identified in noticeable changes when comparing different versions of the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC), the main curriculum policy in force in Brazil and which serves as an anchor for others, such as the High School Reform and the Common National Base for Initial Training of Basic Education Teachers (BNC-Formação). These changes in the text of the policy deal with the suppression or superficialization of knowledge and opportunities for discussion on issues such as sexual and gender diversity, ethnic-racial relations, studies of biological evolution from a (neo)Darwinist perspective, and the consequences of anthropic actions on the environment. Such themes are targets of the conservative agenda because they call into question moral and behavioral conducts prescribed by sacred books and/or religious traditions. In this sense, we should also remember the role that the organization School

Without Party (ESP) took on in the agency of parliamentarians and other public policy makers (PENNA, 2018), as well as in the censorship and ideological persecution of education professionals who did not reproduce in their classes worldviews linked to the right-wing political spectrum or the Judeo-Christian viewpoint. To become a potential target of accusations and threats, it was enough for a teacher to teach something that sounded more "left-wing" or that could be perceived as a challenge to some religious dogma. By trying to catechize different school actors, reproducing religious discourses and instilling practices forged in Christian churches, the Escola Sem Partido also strained the secularity of Brazilian education by intimidating teachers, obstructing classes, and discrediting teaching materials that were against the ideological indoctrination intended by its creators, among whom were businessmen. When we consider this context of the fragility of the secularity of education and the interference of private subjects and groups in the field of public affairs, we see that there are specific developments for the teaching of Science and Biology. Both teacher training and the work of working teachers in schools are in the limelight. This leads us to focus in a more detailed way on certain issues, allowing us to deepen our reflections.

DOES SECULARISM INFLUENCE THE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN ARGENTINA, BRAZIL AND URUGUAY

When speaking of secularism in South America, it is important to emphasize that there is practically no religious neutrality in the history of this continent. There has always been and remains a difficulty in separating Church and State in Latin countries (MARIANO, 2011), occurring positive and negative discriminatory treatments for certain religions, depending on the dominant political field, linked to cultural and historical traditions of each country (ORO, URETA, 2007). The role of the Catholic Church exemplifies this historical phenomenon, with its tensions and clashes in the search for space (ESQUIVEL, 2003), building a complex relationship far from secularism. Therefore, religious influence is intricate with various nuances, including in Latin American educational policy, and, when analyzing the teaching of biological evolution, a potential noise can be perceived in relation to creationism and its pseudoscientific current, intelligent design. This issue has been pointed out as of immediate and near future potential risk in the context of the continent (CORNISH-BOWDEN, CÁRDENAS, 2007). Worldviews are placed in an antagonistic way when analyzing the teaching of biological evolution and the condition of a non-Laic state may interfere in this clash, considering the recent changes in the religious spectrum in Latin America, with the growth of evangelicals, notably of strands Neo-Pentecostals more dogmatic, and the reduction of Catholics (FRESTON, 2010). In this complex context it is important to dimension the resurgence of creationism, as the perception of a supernatural and personal creator, opposing the evolutionary theory (PENNOCK, 2003). But it is not even simple to define this creationist movement, because within it there are more or less science denialist lines. Its framework would include three basic axes: the strict, progressive and theistic creationists. The most extreme would be the first, with a literal interpretation of the Christian Bible and strongly denialist, also called young earth creationists, who believe that the Earth would have been created in the last ten thousand years, contrary to any scientific evidence, and with strong appeal in Latin American society. The second group, also with strong social acceptance, would include the so-called interval creationists, or progressives, who elaborate interpretations that seek to use the biblical days as geological days, for example, accepting

scientific discoveries related to astronomy and geology, but not those related to the Darwinian theory, because the issue of the creation of species by God would not be susceptible to relativization. Finally, there is the group of theistic evolutionists, who do not see a clash between creationism and the evolutionary process, believing that evolution was the means that God used for His creation. This strand finds space among scientists and religious teachers in Latin America. These types of creationisms are not clear in the perception of each individual, especially in an environment of variable religious influence like the Latin American one, with overlapping conceptions (NUMBERS, 2006). There is a clear perception of growing conflict regarding the teaching of evolution in Latin America, not yet as clear as in the U.S. and some European countries, but advances in the pseudoscience of intelligent design have occurred in Brazil and several other Latin American countries. Chile, for example, already presents this type of manifestation and biologists from other nationalities report difficulties in teaching evolutionary theory. Thus, we can glimpse an effective problem with a tendency to become worse, especially in Brazil (CORNISH-BOWDEN, CÁRDENAS, 2007). Research points out that relatively few countries in Latin America do not mention God in their constitution, and have different gradations of the level of religious participation in politics. For this research, three distinct patterns of secularism were considered for the selection of the countries in the survey (ORO, 2007). Countries that clearly define in legislation the separation of church and state, but with privileges for the Catholic Church: El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Uruguay. Countries with this clear definition, with equal rights for all beliefs or secular: Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Venezuela. Countries with an official religion, therefore non secular: Argentina, Bolivia and Costa Rica (ORO, URETA, 2007). From the previous data, the historical construction of the relations between State and Church, and the analysis of recent changes in the distribution of religions in Latin American countries, it was defined that the research conducted by Silva (2015, 2020) and portrayed here would occur in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. It was taken into account the finding that Argentina is the least secular country, due to the strong participation of the Catholic Church and its presence in the Constitution, relativizing that in recent decades this interference has decreased, notably from the political rise of the Kirchner couple, with possible repercussions on society and education (ORO, 2007). We also considered the Argentine educational environment, which was once a Latin American benchmark of quality, but has lost excellence in recent times, largely due to the deterioration of the country's economic framework (MELO, 2009). Brazil has been considered a falsely secular country, which despite legislating for the separation between the State and the religious field, does not carry it out. There is a strong presence of religious groups in society, politics, and education. The growth of evangelicals, the decline of Catholics, and a slight increase of atheists, agnostics, and people without religion (MARIANO, 2013) is consolidated, which sets up a favorable environment for conflict, including for teaching the subject of biological evolution. There are active movements opposed to the teaching of Darwinian theory and this level of clash also proves to be growing, therefore, secularism is distant from the Brazilian reality (DORVILLÉ, SELLES, 2016). The historical difficulties inherent in the Brazilian educational context were also considered, highlighting the problems concerning science education, including the teaching of biological evolution (SCHWARTZMAN, BROCK, 2005, TIDON, VIEIRA, 2009). Uruguay, in turn, has consolidated secularism in society, with a strong refusal of any religious influence on public policy, such as legislation on abortion, drugs and same-sex marriages (DE

CARVALHO, 2020). In the educational field, the educational indicators are positive, in relation to the Latin American context, with wide school coverage of its population (PILETTI, PRAXEDES, 1998). In this research it was considered that in addition to the secular or non-secular condition of each country, the religion of each teacher could influence their elaboration on the teaching of evolution and the issues that permeate it. To make the comparative analysis of the perceptions, the BIOHEAD-CITIZEN questionnaire was used as a research instrument, widely used worldwide for investigations that seek the concepts of Biology teachers (CARVALHO, CLÉMENT, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were also conducted on the themes and collective discourse analysis of the teachers was performed (LEFEVRE, LEFEVRE, et al. , 2009). The questionnaire asked about the religion of the teachers in each country, and there was a prevalence of Catholics in all countries, with this prevalence being higher among Argentines. A higher number of Protestant teachers (or evangelicals) and spiritualists among Brazilians. Another difference between the countries was the number of agnostic or atheist teachers; few Brazilians declared themselves as such, unlike Argentines and Uruguayans, revealing a more intense religiosity among Brazilian teachers. We sought to take these patterns of religiosity of teachers into consideration in the analyses of the questionnaire responses. To characterize the relative (or false) secularism in Brazil (CURY, 2004), and consider this condition in the analysis of the answers from the political condition and influence in the educational field, we can mention the Bill 8099/2014, of November 13, 2014, proposed by one of the most voted federal deputies in Brazil, Pastor Marcos Feliciano. This project foresees in its amendment that "Creationism content shall be inserted in the curricular grid of the Public and Private Education Networks. ²⁹". The legislation was not approved, but was received favorably by the base and the evangelical population (SILVA, MORTIMER, 2015), the religious segment that grows the most in Brazil, and that stands out in the sample by the number of Biology teachers professing this belief, raising reflections on how these professionals conceive secularism and the teaching of evolution. On the other hand, more than half of the Brazilian teachers positioned themselves independently of religion regarding the question concerning the origin of the human species, considering the appearance of humanity as a natural event (SILVA, MORTIMER, 2020, SILVA, OLIVEIRA, et al. , 2021). It seems that even having a belief, Brazilian Biology teachers seem to accommodate their religious and scientific knowledge during their Biological Sciences course (LEÃO, COSTA, et al. , 2019). One question from the BIOHEAD-CITIZEN questionnaire addresses secularism, whether politics and religion should be separate, and the results are presented in chart 1 below. Comparative and statistical analyses were done to see if there were significant differences between the teachers in the countries investigated.

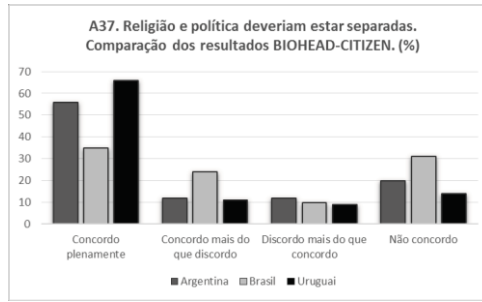


CHART 1: Comparison of Biology teachers' opinions among the selected countries on the separation of religion and politics (SILVA, 2022).

The data indicate that the condition of false Brazilian secularism seems to be more significantly linked to the views of teachers who do not consider the separation of church and state. In the compared results, those who least fully agreed with the separation of politics and religion are those who most disagreed with this division. The statistical analysis corroborates this perception, with Brazil and Uruguay being at the statistical extremes of alignment with secularism, with Argentina having an intermediate position, closer to the Uruguayans, with a favorable opinion of separation between Church and State. This analysis shows that the issue of secularism is very complex in Brazil, even when considering a qualified sample, which includes Biology teachers, all with higher education, and therefore a privileged part of the population. Thus, the Brazilian population (SILVA, SILVA, et al. , 2013), and a portion of Biology teachers (SILVA, 2022), reveal that there is a desire for no separation between the State and the Church. Certainly, this position impacts the teaching of evolution and the possibility of attempts to legislate the teaching of creationism in Brazilian schools (MALAFAIA, 2009). Chart 2 below shows the results of the questionnaire regarding the separation between science and religion in each country, in a comparative way.

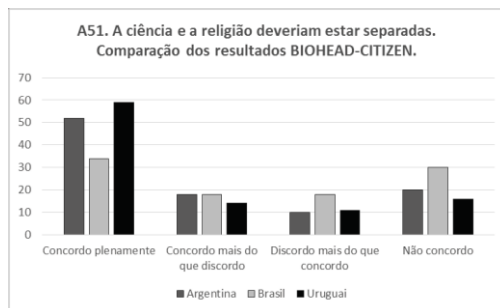


CHART 2: Comparison of Biology teachers' opinions among the selected countries about the separation between science and religion (SILVA, 2022)

As expected, Uruguayan teachers, inserted in a secular country, after positioning themselves in favor of the separation of politics and religion, followed the same line in relation to science and religion. The position of Argentinean teachers was little different, also taking a disruptive position in relation to science and religion. But once again, the Brazilian teachers were divided about the split between religion and science. When we analyzed the questions about creationism, intelligent design, and even about the themes related to the content of biological evolution in the school subject Biology, the Brazilian teachers were the ones who presented answers originating from a mixture between their faith and their knowledge about the subject. These trends in the three countries were confirmed through interviews with the teachers, and their collective discourse showed that religion was preponderant in hindering the teaching of Darwinian evolution (SILVA, MORTIMER, 2020). Statistical tests confirmed that the most significant differences occurred between the responses of Brazilian teachers compared to Argentinean and Uruguayan teachers, with no notable disparities among the latter. This difficulty in separating or accommodating scientific and religious knowledge, and the search for mixing between the two fields was also perceived among Biological Sciences students in Brazil (SILVA, SANDRA, et al. , 2014, SOUZA, CARVALHO, et al. , 2009), who will be future teachers, therefore continuing this cycle of complication in science education, something also confirmed among current teachers (GIBRAM, SILVA, et al. , 2014). This quest to merge science and religion may also be influencing the acceptance of the pseudoscience of intelligent design in Brazil (SILVA, CARVALHO, et al. , 2016), because some teachers and even the population may be adhering to this conception believing that it would be a way to accommodate science and religion, although this hypothesis denies the main scientific assumptions of evolutionary theory (AYALA, 2007). On the other hand, the discussion of the interviews with the teachers used the methodology of collective discourse analysis. In this approach, the most relevant speeches of each teacher on the central questions of the semi-structured interviews were separated. We tried to find out which were the main resistances to the teaching of evolution and the existence or not of conflicts regarding the subject. Then first person speeches were constructed, grouping the scope of the answers in the same line (LEFEVRE, LEFEVRE, 2006). In this way the speeches of each country in relation to the subject were discussed and compared to reach conclusions. In this cutout are presented the analysis of the collective discourse of Brazilian teachers for our argumentation. Two categories of difficulties were detected in this analysis, both of which are of interest in this discussion about the secularity of the State and of Brazilian education. The first deals with the existence, even obvious, of a clash between science and religion in the teaching of biological evolution. According to the collective discourse of the teachers: I notice a very strong conflict with the religious question. This conflict has manifested itself in two ways in my classes on evolution. The very religious students, especially evangelicals, manifest that I am teaching something that affronts their beliefs, something sinful. Another conflict I witnessed was between atheists/agnostics and evangelicals, and when I approached the subject of evolution, there were mutual accusations, one group not accepting the arguments of the other and generating an irreconcilable antagonism. (SILVA, 2022, p. 125) No Brazilian teacher verbalized that there is no conflict for teaching biological evolution, and religion was given as the main reason. Unlike the Argentine and Uruguayan teachers, among whom many indicated no conflicts and many more didactic obstacles than of any other nature, especially religious. This shows that the religious issue is strongly present in Brazilian society and has ample room

for attempts to insert dogmatic views of beliefs in the educational environment. The teachers' speech is worrying, especially when one is aware that the current government has the support and backs evangelical radicals (ABRANTES, ALMEIDA, 2006), many of them against the teaching of biological evolution and in favor of creationism (MARTINS, 2001). The space of the Brazilian classroom presents itself as a place of clash and not of dialogue, a clash that may favor those who intend a state marked by their faith and severe developments in relation to school education. The second category extracted from the discourse of the collective subject of Brazilian teachers was the existence of an internal conflict in these professionals when teaching the Darwinian theory. This conflict was unique among Brazilian teachers, nothing similar emerged among teachers from other countries, revealing the level of the challenge for teaching Science and Biology in Brazil. The collective discourse of these professionals can be summarized in this way: On the one hand, I know that I must teach evolution, but I myself have my doubts about the subject; what will my students say? When I try to accommodate the scientific knowledge of the origin of man, for example, in relation to primitive primates, I clash with my religious knowledge coming from the Bible. I find it difficult to discuss with students the controversial issues of teaching evolution because I lack arguments to do so, I did not get them in my training. I try to bring the divine figure to the subject of evolution to make the two fields of knowledge compatible. (SILVA, 2022, p. 125) Teachers recognized their difficulties in dealing internally with the topic and lack of grounding in the classroom, hindering the approach to this particular content. Aligning this issue, there is the external clash with the strong religiosity of Brazilian society. There is a confusion regarding the conceptualization of what is a theory, assimilating it as if there were doubt that evolution is a fact (GOULD, 1981), something very exploited by those who advocate against the secular state, who end up finding in the teachers' speech argumentation for this movement. Moreover, these professors propagate an unnecessary and counterproductive combination of science and religion in the teaching of biological evolution, which makes the class on evolutionary processes inadequate, since it carries elements foreign to the content and fosters a religiosity that affronts the already consolidated scientific precepts. This also explains the level of acceptance of the pseudoscience Intelligent Design in Brazil and the strong presence of Biology teachers in the Brazilian Society of Intelligent Design. Finally, it is evident the need to increase the initial and continued training of these teachers, to prevent them from being co-opted by denialists, religious or not, interested in embedding in the State the idea of a non secular nation and interfering in scientific education. This training can also improve the quality of the classes and demonstrate to the students that a theory is a hypothesis that has been confirmed and that this confirmation occurred through a series of evidences from several areas of knowledge.

CONSEQUENCES OF MIXING SCIENCE DENIALISM AND RELIGION IN EDUCATION: THE CASE OF THE MINISTER-PASTOR

All the reasoning presented above shows a worrying picture in Brazil regarding the possible paths of those contrary to secularism, in relation to education and the teaching of biological evolution, originating from professionals who should have the qualification and ethical-pedagogical commitment to refute this kind of idea. However, considering that this data was produced almost a decade ago, the question that remains is: has something changed in Brazil at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century? And the answer is yes, it has changed, and a lot, to a much more serious situation, with an even clearer threat to the condition of secularity of the Brazilian State. During these almost four years of the mandate of the president elected in 2018, the federal government has suffered all kinds of religious interference, even capitulating before the most prominent and media believers, with its maximum expression in the Ministry of Education. After two disastrous ministers for various reasons, the president decided to assume the non-existence of the secular state and appointed an obscure pastor to the post. And he quickly showed what he came for. The list of speeches (and actions, or lack of them) of this minister over almost two years has shown how an individual incompatible with the position assumed can be harmful to a Ministry that directly influences the present and the future of the entire population of the country. His manifestations and directions, while minister of the portfolio, can be considered unfortunate and totally inappropriate to the function exercised, completely insensitive to the demands of the educational systems, and dissonant in relation to what the majority of the educational field defends from studies and research. During his erratic mandate, Milton Ribeiro emphasized ideological agendas and annulled any relevant action, wasting the quality technical staff of this government sector and harming the performance of this body, even obstructing the support to states and municipalities during the pandemic period. On August 9, 2021, the pastor declared to TV Brasil: "university should, in fact, be for the few, in this sense of being useful to society"³⁰. The elitist, segregating and excluding character represented by the ideological field to which the minister-pastor belongs could not be more evident, even more coming from the one who should be the promoter of public policies of educational inclusion and improvement of the quality of Brazilian universities. In this same interview, the minister-pastor showed once again his lack of sensitivity, empathy, and total incompatibility with the important position when he said: "Some children with disabilities are 'impossible to live with'"³¹. The violent disrespect to children with disabilities and their families in this kind of statement is unmentionable. This speech illustrates what a religious state, which chooses its representatives based on the criteria of faith and not on criteria related to competence and technical-academic experience can produce. One can see that in these speeches of the then minister of education, the vile phenomenon of exclusion occurs as a consequence of a supposed superiority of those elected by faith. Instead of bringing an element of solidarity and otherness to the government, the minister-pastor generated exactly the opposite in a ministry that should excel in encouraging the processes of inclusion in the classroom. On September 24, 2020, the pastor revealed more traces of his prejudiced and discriminatory thinking by stating that "Gays 'come from maladjusted families'"³² and complemented within his ungodly verse: "When the boy is 17, 18 years old, he will be able to choose. And it is not normal. Biology says that gender is not normal."³³ The explicit homophobia nullifies any possibility that this ministry has policies aimed at the LGBTQIAP+ community, after all, the cause of

non-compliance with the socially constructed heteronormative standard would be the maladjustment of families in his torpid vision. As an aggravating factor, the then minister still tried to anchor himself in an erroneous, eugenicist and pseudoscientific perspective to support his speech, demonstrating how dangerous the mixture of science and religion can be, especially for those who hold political power. Endorsing this prejudiced perception, he added in the same interview: "Trans teachers cannot encourage students to 'walk that way'"³⁴. The minister-pastor made it clear that the criterion for choosing teachers should not be pedagogical competence or educators' sensitivity towards the educational process. The criterion, as was clear from his positions and opinions, should be an ideological, religious and "supposedly" moral alignment within a sick and excluding "normality". This is because he proclaimed in his inauguration speech that: he would commit to follow the "secular state" and to maintain a "great dialogue with academics and educators"³⁵, imagine if he thought differently. The only different project embraced by the Ministry of Education since 2019 was the proposal for homeschooling, or homeschooling, tailor-made for Brazil's radical religious movement. The project was approved by a chamber of federal deputies and by a Senate that has a large caucus called "BBB", referring to the "Bible", the "ox" and the "bullet", gathering politicians elected by votes of Christian people, defenders of agribusiness and of armamentism among the civil population. This signals a contradiction in relation to the principle of the secularity of the State and, as was to be expected, had little concrete repercussion in the Brazilian educational reality, despite serving to please conservative groups. After all, without even going into the merits of the evils that this kind of education can generate for the development of children and adolescents³⁶, the pandemic of COVID-19 and the emergency remote education have shown that educating at home is a very difficult task. This shows how the weakening of secularism can be harmful, leading to a waste of time, energy and resources, to such an important area for any country, but especially for Brazil, which is education. Four days after taking office, Ribeiro contracted COVID-19 and announced that he would work remotely. At the same time, he announced on social media that he would treat himself with azithromycin, ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine, and then said that he had already noticed "the difference for the better from one day to the next"³⁷. The president of the Ministry of Education proved to be a staunch follower and disseminator of the negationist ideas of the President of the Republic regarding the pandemic and its innocuous and dangerous treatments (SILVA, 2021). In this regard, one should not attribute so much negationism only to the intricate mixture of State and Church, after all, historically many popes were staunch defenders of science and were successful even in facing pandemics (SILVA, 2022). It is interesting to connect these stances with those groups that advocate for creationism. During one of the most critical periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, a group of Brazilian scientists, led by the leader of the intelligent design movement in Brazil, Marcos Eberlin (SILVA, 2020), signed a letter supporting the government for the use of drugs, such as chloroquine, against COVID-19 without any scientific proof. This sequence of interrelated events demonstrates how the non-separation between state and church can be detrimental to the country, including for dealing with a health crisis, as impactful as a pandemic. But nothing could better illustrate this perverse effect of the lack of real secularism in Brazilian education than the series of accusations and events that culminated with the almost forced resignation and imprisonment (even if for a short period) of this minister-pastor. A recording of a meeting of Milton Ribeiro, revealing that there was a parallel cabinet inside the Ministry of Education composed of two other pastors, has appeared in the press. In the recording, Milton Ribeiro

says that in order to receive funds, the municipalities had to pass through the sieve of the two religious men and that this was a special request from the President of the Republic. Later on, it was revealed that these pastors received benefits such as purchases of Bibles, bribes, gold, etc., making more evident the risks of a non secular State, which cannot be secular and pretends to be confessional, and offers benefits and powers to certain religions in detriment of others, seeking personal and political dividends in exchange for these privileges.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

October 5, 2022. Start of the dispute for the second round of elections that will define the next president of the country. News reports illustrate how even the false secularism has ceased to exist to be replaced by an inescapably confessional State, doomed to subservience to religious dogmas. The main newspaper of Minas Gerais, "O Estado de Minas", has on its front page a headline: "A Not Holy War" and a full-page story: "Religion Opens the Presidential Race Agenda". The pictures show the two candidates in the midst of religious people, in spaces that refer to their beliefs, and extensive reports show cooptation by the churches and a range of concessions to pastors and priests. In these reports there is no mention of a government plan that contemplates issues related to the environment, science, and education. Therefore, safeguarding the specificities between the country's projects defended by each of the candidates and the notorious authoritarian and violent inclination of one of them to the detriment of a more popular and democratic bias of the other, in the Brazil of 2022 and in the next four years the religious discourses emanating from Christian churches and their dogmatism will condition the mandate of whoever is elected. The radical right has established itself, and grown, supported by the most extreme religious people. The moderate right was almost completely extirpated from the Brazilian political spectrum in this election; and the left, by survival, had to surrender to this pernicious fusion of State and Church, extinguishing any possibility, in the near future, of a truly secular Brazilian government. As discussed throughout this chapter, in hard times of threats to democracy, the debate about the secularity of education becomes unavoidable, which evokes the rescue and proposition of a firm political and professional commitment of Science and Biology teachers (VALENÇA, SANTOS, 2022). It is not possible to think of a real Democratic State of Law without also thinking that an impartial State in matters of religion, one that is not proselytizing, is a requirement for the construction of a more egalitarian, just, peaceful, inclusive, and living nation. When we look at the teaching of Science and Biology specifically, it is also possible to see how the fragile laicity in our country negatively affects pedagogical processes, especially those related to topics that clash with religious worldviews. The case of the obstacles posed by the clashes between religion and science in the approach to biological evolution in schools is the most evident and drastic, as exposed in the presented part of Silva's study (2015, 2020). Such an obstacle deprives generations of students from understanding the most important process in the history of life on planet Earth and the most powerful theory that exists within the field of Biological Sciences. On the other hand, science education in Brazil, Latin America and the world, coexists with the growth of creationist movements, reinforcing difficulties in one of the most prominent contents, which is the evolutionary theory (POOLE, 2008). This blockage seems to be emerging in classrooms by demands of students and teachers, anchored by the spread of creationist ideas through new forms of communication,

widely used by fundamentalist groups that defend these conceptions (ARAÚJO, DOS REIS, et al. , 2021).How the revival of creationism in Latin America reaches classrooms and the curriculum of science and biology must be measured and analyzed. This movement cannot be ignored in relation to its impact on students' education (MEYER, EL-HANI, 2013), since the subject of evolution reverberates in scientific knowledge as a whole, in related areas such as health and agriculture, for example, being considered one of the pillars of Biology (DOBZHANSKY, 1973). We must recognize that the development of curricula is intrinsically related to the history of educational policy in each country, which in turn is linked to the emphasis and denials of each culture (MAIA, PEREIRA, 2011). It becomes important to consider that in a given region, or country, or population group, citizens tend to want school curricula to be aligned with their religious convictions, which, in the case of dogmatic groups, may imply the exclusion of Darwinian evolution (BERKMAN, PACHECO, et al. , 2008). An example of this comes from the U.S., where even though it has been overcome in the courts of law, efforts to insert creationism and intelligent design into the school and curriculum are often recorded (PADIAN, MATZKE, 2009). This type of attempt does not only occur in the U.S., having been noticed in Brazil, Turkey, South Korea, and several parts of the world (SILVA, 2017).Often, these actions are revealed by abstaining from the subject of evolution in the classroom, by limiting the time spent on the content, or to avoid controversies with the creationist argument, even if it is not possible to confirm the intentionality (BERKMAN, PACHECO, et al. , 2008). Fortunately, the number of studies analyzing the teaching of evolution and its controversy with the religious field is growing, sizing up the conceptions of students and teachers, as well as its impact on curricula (JOURNELL, 2013) Finally, the issue of secularism is once again put in the spotlight in Brazil, since an educational issue, which reverberates on the quality of the Science and Biology classes, is perceived by the religious bias and it is glimpsed that it can also affect the development of educational policies (CURY, 2004). Thus, especially in the current times, October 2022, it is urgent to continue reflecting on how teachers and students strongly marked by their religious beliefs, seek to reconcile religiosity with scientific knowledge (COBERN, 1996) and clues to find gaps, grooves and fissures in the blockages that interdict the secularity of education and bring serious consequences for the teaching of Science and Biology.

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ANNEXES

(Manifestos, letters and collective documents signed or supported by OLÉ)

Appendix 1

PUBLIC STATEMENT

SECULARISM AND PUBLIC EDUCATION: IN DEFENSE OF THE FULL APPLICATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN BRAZILIAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Released on the occasion of the Public Hearing on ADI 4439 under discussion at the STF

The institutions that sign this manifesto call the attention of educators, students, parents, educational managers, members of the justice system, social and union movements, and the population in general to the importance of the Public Hearing that will take place in the Federal Supreme Court (STF), this Monday, June 15th, in the scope of the Direct Unconstitutionality Action (ADI) 4439 on religious education in public schools. This is an unprecedented opportunity for the affirmation and protection of religious liberties and liberties of thought and belief in the public education system, liberties that are prerequisites for the exercise of all other fundamental rights and that are at the basis of the democratic and republican state. Its guarantee is the secularity of the State, the impartiality of the State in matters of religion, which prohibits collaboration between the State and religions for purposes that are not exclusively in the public interest (therefore, not admitting the use of the State for religious purposes), while protecting religious liberties and promoting a social environment favorable to diversity, tolerance, and the full realization of the human rights of all. The ADI, proposed in 2010 by the Attorney General's Office (PGR), seeks to confront one of the main obstacles to secularism and the full exercise of freedoms arising from the presence of religious teaching in Brazilian public schools. As a result of pressure from religious organizations during the Constituent Assembly process, in opposition to the defense of a fully secular public education led by the educational field represented in the Forum in Defense of Public School, religious teaching was provided for in paragraph 1 of Article 210 of the 1988 Constitution. Since then, the way in which religious education is offered and configured in public schools has been the subject of intense discussion, with obvious damage to constitutional freedoms, religious diversity, and human rights. At least two aspects of the implementation of the constitutional provision have been consolidated, which have been going beyond the constitutional limits and which, therefore, deserve the attention of the STF both on the occasion of the Public Hearing and of the judgment of the ADI. The first strand of unconstitutional interpretation goes beyond religious education itself as a "subject", even though it is related to it. As shown by studies promoted by researchers in the educational field - some of whom were enrolled in the Public Hearing - and also by the National Rapporteur for the Human Right to Education of the Brazilian Platform for Human Rights, the constitutional authorization for religious teaching is taken as a gateway for the violation of secularism in public schools, in acts that range from the practice of prayers to the adoption of religious doctrines in the treatment of pedagogical and disciplinary issues, reaching situations of

intolerance against atheists, the LGBTTT population, and practitioners of non-hegemonic religions, with special prejudice to religions of African origin. The opening represented by religious teaching in public schools reinforces a confusion still widespread in public agencies and public servants, between private conceptions and beliefs and public ethics. This creates almost insurmountable daily obstacles to the implementation of some mandatory education guidelines, such as the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture, human rights, and sexual and gender diversity. The second unconstitutional interpretation manifests itself in the application and regulation of religious teaching in public schools. Also based on the studies cited, we can conclude that, in spite of the constitutional limitations, what is common today is the presence of non-facultative confessional (or interconfessional) religious teaching in Brazilian public schools. Confessional because it is applied according to guidelines formulated by the religious field, in explicit versions, as in the case of Rio de Janeiro, but in general disguised, in most of the country, as nonconfessional. This religious field that works in religious education has in common the concept that this "is part of the basic education of the citizen" (evidently a confessional concept and, therefore, unconstitutional, which was included in the LDB by Law 9.475/97). And not optional because it has been offered in a "transversal" way in the early grades of elementary school (when it is not also offered in kindergarten and high school), because the automatic enrollment of students in the subject is common, because there are constraints to non-attendance, because there is no other optional subjects offered in elementary school and because, in general, religious education is counted in the minimum workload of public education. Seeking to address these unconstitutionality, the ADI opposes the section of the agreement between the Brazilian State and the Holy See that provides for "Catholic and other religious teaching" in the country's public school system (article 11, paragraph 1 of Decree No. 7.107/2010). He also asks the STF to interpret article 33 of the Law of Directives and Bases for Education (LDB), which determines that religious education "is an integral part of the basic education of citizens," to prohibit confessional, interfaith or ecumenical teaching, as well as the admission of teachers as representatives of religious denominations. We understand that the initiative of the PGR is more than opportune, especially because it seeks to confront recent setbacks that further threaten the construction of a public environment favorable to tolerance, religious freedom and diversity in the country. The agreement between Brazil and the Holy See and the declared intention to apply confessional teaching "Catholic and of other confessions", added to the recent rise of the religious conservatism and its political expressions in the branches of government, leaves no doubt about the relevance of the pronouncement expected from the STF. On previous occasions, such as in the joint judgment of ADI 4277 and ADPF 132, on the legal recognition of homo-affective unions, the STF has already clearly positioned itself in favor of the secularity of the State and the consequent separation between the private conceptions of agents and public interest. Taking into account the unconstitutional interpretations that are consolidated in practice and in legislation, we believe that the pronouncement of the STF in favor of ADI 4439 should also establish parameters for the interpretation of both the limits that the rule of secularity inscribed in item I of art. 19 imposes on the application of § This is not only because of the limits inscribed in the very wording of art. 210, both of the Constitution, but also because of the limits inscribed in the very wording of the latter. Such negative parameters for religious education are absolutely necessary, even if the Supreme Court were to fully grant the request of the Attorney General, because only with them will it be assured that the decision will not be captured by the non secular interests

that hegemonize various state apparatuses. In this sense, we understand that the STF should make explicit in the decision a set of negative limitations to the offer of religious teaching in Brazilian public schools, complementary and assecutory to the basic claim of the OPG, all with the aim of ensuring the Constitution, public freedoms and non-discrimination that it aims to protect with absolute centrality. These are the necessary limitations:

- 1- - That no state funding be directed to any of the confessional forms, including interconfessional forms, of religious education in public schools and that no form of religious proselytism be permitted on public school premises. Such limitation becomes even more necessary in the face of the gigantic challenge of implementing the new National Education Plan (Law n. 13.005/2014), which establishes twenty ten-year goals aimed at expanding access, improving the quality of education, and overcoming the country's immense educational debt;
- 2- - Besides not admitting that teachers of religious education be representatives of religions, as proposed by the PGR, it is not admissible that specific qualification in religious sciences or religious education be required, since the contents related to non-denominational religious education, such as philosophy, history, geography and social sciences, can already be taught and make up the basic training of teachers of the humanities;
- 3- - That religious education in public schools not be placed, under any circumstances, as an alternative to a secular ethical education of civic values, citizenship, public liberties, and human rights, and that the unconstitutionality of the legal provision that classifies it as "an integral part of the basic formation of the citizen" (Law n° 9.394/96, art. 33, caput, altered by Law n° 9.475/97) be declared. In this sense, we emphasize the importance of implementing the National Guidelines on Human Rights Education, approved by the National Education Council in 2012;
- 4- - That the optional subject of religious education not be counted in the national minimum workload established in art. 31, II, of Law 9.394/96 and in the mandatory workload regulated by the different municipal, state, and Federal District systems;
- 5- - That, in respect for the rule of optionality, automatic enrollment, as commonly occurs in relation to other subjects in the curriculum of elementary school, should not be allowed, requiring parents or guardians to expressly state their intention to enroll;
- 6- - That in respect to the constitutional definition of religious education in public schools as a "subject" and to the fact that it is optional, it should not be offered across the board in elementary school or during the compulsory and universal components of the school curriculum.
- 7- - That the National Council of Education (CNE) be requested to prepare regulations that provide detailed negative limits on the relationship between religion and public education, including the removal of religious symbols and the prohibition of religious prayers as part of school routine in public schools, as provided in the recommendations of the National Rapporteur on the Human Right to Education and deliberated by the II National Conference on Education in November 2014. That the National Board of Education also be requested to prepare a national protocol for registration and procedures related to dealing with cases of religious intolerance, racism, homophobia/lesbophobia/transphobia, sexism and other discrimination occurring in public and private educational institutions.

Federal District, June 15, 2015.

Appendix 2

AGAINST OPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN THE WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP!

This petition, published in English, demands that FIDE (International Chess Federation) reconsider its decision to hold the Women's World Chess Championship in Iran. According to the petition, in its handbook, FIDE explicitly states its guiding moral principles and one of them is that the organization "rejects discriminatory treatment on national, political, racial, social or religious grounds or on account of sex" (F.01 (1) (2)). However, by taking the championship to Iran, it is breaking that promise to its members and subjecting them to discrimination on all fronts.

These violations include:

- Restrictions on dress for women players. In Iran, women are legally required to cover up with a hijab. Failure to comply is punishable by fines or imprisonment.
- Speech restrictions for female players. Women have been arrested for speaking out in favor of women's rights in Iran.

Also according to the petition, several countries (including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom) have issued warnings about travel to Iran. Participants who are citizens of these countries would be traveling at their own risk.

These are just a few of the many potential dangers faced by women players who have qualified to compete in the World Cup. These women are being asked to choose between achieving their highest aspirations and protecting their civil liberties - and their lives.

The petition proposes two solutions:

- Change of venue or postponement of the competition until another organizer can be found to host the championship in a "conflict-free" location.
- Requirement that the wearing of hijab be optional and not warrant any discrimination based on gender, nationality or any other human rights, as pointed out in the FIDE manual (listed above).

These issues go far beyond the world of chess. Although there has been social progress in Iran, women's rights remain severely restricted. This is more than an event. It is a fight for women's rights.

(This text was written from a free translation made by OLÉ of the text of the petition)

Appendix 3

ARCHIVING OF BILLS NO. 7180/2014 (AND ITS APPENDICES) AND NO. 1411/2015

We, the undersigned, request the shelving of the following Bills currently in progress in the House of Representatives: PL no. 7180/2014; PL no. 7181/2014; PL no. 867/2015; PL no. 1859/2015; PL no. 2731/2015 (these first five are joined together); and PL no. 1411/2015. These six projects put at risk the foundations of school education and criminalize the teaching practice. The PLs n° 7180/2014 and n° 7181/2014 intend to include an article in the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education and another in the National Curricular Parameters, the principle of "respect for the convictions of the student, his parents or guardians, with family values taking precedence over school education in aspects related to moral, sexual and religious education, forbidding transversality or subliminal techniques in the teaching of these topics". This proposal is unconstitutional, since our Constitution states in art. 205: "Education, a right of all and duty of the State and of the family, will be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship, and his qualification for work". Families, State and society must collaborate in education, guided by republican values. The foundations of school education and the advances accumulated in recent years, such as cultural plurality, ethics and citizenship in the curriculum, would be deconstructed with the approval of these projects and, for this reason, they received a negative opinion in 2014 and, for the same reasons, should be rejected in 2015. PL no. 867/2015 includes, among the guidelines and bases of national education, the "School without Party Program". The organization with the same name argues that teachers are not educators and that the expression "forming citizens" so often used by teachers would translate in practice into "making the heads of students". Defending that "teachers are not educators" puts into question the process of valuing the profession and the models of teacher training progressively consolidated in the country, which are expressed even in the new guidelines for teacher training (Resolution CNE/CP 02, of 07/01/2015). Moreover, this bill is completely contradictory to many other current educational legislations, since, at the same time that it defends the plurality of ideas, it proposes the prohibition of "activities that may be in conflict with the religious or moral convictions of the parents or guardians of the students. How would it be possible to avoid anything that might go against any student's convictions? Besides all this, students could anonymously denounce teachers directly to the Education Departments, which would forward the cases to the Public Prosecutor's Office. This condition is also unconstitutional, since an anonymous denunciation removes the autonomy of school management, defended in the Constitution and in the LDB. The school as a space for debate would be doomed if this bill were to be approved. We also fight the inclusion of the "School Without Party Program" in municipal and state education networks. The PLs n° 1859/2015 and n° 2731/2015 attempt to end the discussion of gender in schools. PL 1859/2015 includes a single paragraph in the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education: "Education shall not develop teaching policies, nor shall it adopt school curriculum, compulsory subjects, or even in a complementary or optional manner, that tend to apply gender ideology, the term 'gender' or 'orientation sexual." It is effectively banning a much needed discussion in our

schools, especially regarding human rights. The discussion of "sex education," for example, works in the direction of preventing sexual diseases and early pregnancy. Research shows that this work in the classroom has prevented students from starting their sex lives prematurely. Frighteningly, however, PL 2731/2015 opens the possibility for teachers who fail to comply with the "prohibition of the use of gender ideology, sexual orientation and the like, or any other kind of ideology" to be imprisoned for up to two years and dismissed! Who will decide what constitutes this "any other kind of ideology"? It is an arbitrary restriction of the freedom to teach that only harms the students, with harmful fruits for society as a whole. We also fight the legal attempts to prohibit the discussion of the topics "gender" and "sexual orientation" in municipalities and states. The PL no. 1411/2015, proposed by Deputy Rogério Marinho from PSDB/RN. This project typifies a new crime: ideological harassment. "Ideological harassment is understood as any practice that conditions a student to adopt a certain political, partisan or ideological position or any type of embarrassment caused by others to a student for adopting a position different from his own, regardless of who the agent is" (Art. 2). By its description, this would be a typical school crime, but the bill provides for an increase in the penalty when the crime takes place inside educational institutions. So, even outside the classroom, the teacher would not be able to exercise his or her freedom of speech?

It is the effective criminalization of the teaching practice. Teachers who are found guilty of this crime can go to jail for up to a year and a half and also pay a fine. For more information about these projects: <https://www.facebook.com/contraoescolasempartido>
<https://liberdadeparaensinar.wordpress.com/>

Appendix 4

FOR THE END OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

End of religious instruction in public schools

Today, as provided in the constitution, public schools teach religious education as an optional subject. However, as the Brazilian State is secular, we must correct this aberration and, by means of a PEC, remove religious teaching from Brazilian public schools. In the end, we must correct this aberration and, by means of a PEC, remove religious teaching from Brazilian public schools. However, this variation in nomenclature only exists because of a State's inability to apply laicity correctly, most likely because of pressure from religious entities. Nobody condemns the freedom of worship and belief, on the contrary, we should vigorously defend it, but religiosity should be taught in temples and not in public schools with public resources. Tolerance to the various faiths can be a phenomenon studied in several disciplines, such as arts, philosophy, history, geography, etc. Religious proselytism is still very present in Brazilian society and we should not allow it to continue. A discipline of religious teaching would give room for this problem. In the Republican Constitution of 1889 secularism was taken seriously and religious teaching was abolished from the Constitution. However, in 1931, due to Getúlio's need for political support, Vargas gave in to pressure from the Catholic Church and reincorporated religious teaching in public schools. This inconsistency continued in the following constitutions. Today we can see that religious teaching in public schools is far from being accepted by everyone. As it was possible to see in the public hearing held at the STF on June 15, 2015. Of the 32 guests, a significant portion mentioned their discontent with the existence of religious teaching in public schools in any of its forms. We know that public education lacks resources and infrastructure, and the teaching of religions outside the already existing contents, such as history, philosophy, geography, literature, arts, etc., generates an additional cost for schools that could be reinforcing other much more important subjects, such as math, Portuguese, science, or even a foreign language. We know that Brazil has very low indices in international evaluations about the educational level of its students, and the gap in relation to the average is absurd. While the median of the countries in Mathematics was 482, Brazil scored almost 100 points lower, i.e. 391. In Science, the median was 491, while Brazil scored 405 points. In reading, while the median was 488, Brazil got 410. As a comparison of what would be ideal, Finland, a country that treats its students with respect and values education without putting absurd pressure on them, had the following scores 519 in math, 545 in science, and 524 in reading. With this data we can realize that Brazil needs much more investment in basic education, than in an optional subject of an essentially proselytizing nature.

Appendix 5

OPEN LETTER TO THE COUNCILORS OF THE CNE

Dear counselors, dear counselors,

I would like to position myself, as someone who participated as an evaluator of the first version of the Common National Curriculum Base (BNC), regarding the presence of Religious Education in it, in order to contribute to the analysis of this controversial aspect of the proposal. What follows disregards the debate on the legitimacy or otherwise of the presence of Religious Education in the text of the BNC and in Basic Education.¹

The first sensitive and problematic point of RE in the BNC is the expansion of the presence of RE in the educational system that the text ends up assuming or inducing. This is the problem of the definition of the workload, a matter on which the CNE has already pronounced itself several times, attributing its responsibility to the States and Municipalities, as in the Opinion CNE/CEB n° 16, approved on June 1st, 1998. Through the BNC, RE gains, with one stroke of the pen, what its advocates would never have dreamed of achieving through the usual political channels: the projection of its expansion to nine years of elementary school throughout the country.

The second point concerns the legal requirements for determining the curricular content of RE. We immediately note the exclusive presence of experts connected to FONAPER (Permanent National Forum for Religious Education) in the team responsible for the elaboration of the curricular component of RE.² What is the justification for such a limited and cohesive team? There is none. The BNC does not follow the legislation in this case, since the reformulation of article 33, of the LDB, by law n° 9.475/97 (July 22, 1997) states that "the teaching systems will hear a civil entity, constituted by the different religious denominations, for the definition of the contents of religious teaching" (our emphasis). How can the MEC invite only members of FONAPER, a Catholic entity, to represent the different religious denominations from all over the country in the BNC? Following the LDB, the mentioned Opinion CNE/CEB n° 16 ratifies that the workload of RE can only be determined in each educational system, after consultation with the most diverse religious denominations, and other opinions of the CNE reinforce the restriction of the definition of the content of RE to local educational networks.³

For the reasons above, it is clear that removing RE from the BNC is a legal requirement, beyond the debate about the merit of the existence or not of RE in the Basic Education curriculum. If, however, the removal of the curricular component of RE from the BNC were not a legal requirement, it would be necessary, at the very least, to reformulate it entirely, if we take as a basis the last version of the text presented. Let's see.

First of all, I make explicit my premise that all the eventually reasonable and important content and goals of RE that we may find in the text presented in the BNC (and they are few) should rather be worked on in the curricular components of philosophy, history, and social sciences. If the goal of RE, as advocated in the BNC text, is not proselytizing, there is nothing that RE can add to the various anthropological, sociological, and philosophical approaches about the religious phenomenon, as a proposal for reflection, discussion, sensitization, etc., aiming at the understanding of this phenomenon and respect for diversity. But the following brief presentation of the contents and goals of RE does not go into the merits of this question.

I will only highlight, through some examples, the enormous degree of generality and vagueness of the contents and objectives offered as a curricular component of RE. In the very first objectives, we read:

"To perceive oneself as a person dependent on other people and on the relationships that are established in the family, school, religious, community, and environmental collectives.

"Recognize that the 'self' establishes mediated relations with nature and society by the body, by languages, and by historical and social specificities.

" To recognize oneself as a member of a nucleus of family coexistence and social organizations, where different corporeities, identities, beliefs, practices, customs, etc. etc. etc. coexist. "

Note that the above objectives are aimed at the first year of elementary school. This proposal is clearly unacceptable for a secular state that has the minimum of care for the basic education of its children. Its maintenance means leaving room for all kinds of proselytism. And these vague and general objectives are not restricted to young children, they reappear even in the ninth grade:

" To organize and design one's own life in the collectivity, considering ethical, aesthetic, economic, political, and sociocultural principles. "

There is no need to go on. There is, in almost the entirety of the RE curriculum component, a high degree of generality and arbitrariness that speaks for itself. Even when addressing religious content *stricto sensu*, we find formulations such as:

" Recognize that religious doctrines underlie the maintenance of religious worldviews and the transmission of their contents. " (!)

For all of the above, we are of the opinion that the proposal for RE in the BNC is theoretically and pedagogically inappropriate, in addition to not complying with legal provisions, including those issued by the CNE itself. Keeping RE in the BNC, at least as formulated so far, is a disrespect to the intelligence and good faith of all Brazilians; it is an attack against the responsibility of the State in what concerns the offer of a quality public education, secular and free, as determined by our Constitution.

Appendix 6

SCHOOL WITHOUT PARTY: TEACHER WITHOUT FREEDOM!

Last week it became public the lawsuit filed by the Federal Public Ministry in Rio de Janeiro (MPF-RJ) against the Union of Pedro II College Employees (Sindscope), the Socialism and Freedom Party - Rio de Janeiro (PSOL-RJ), the rector of the Pedro II College, Oscar Halac, the Pedro II College professor and councilman, Tarcísio Motta de Carvalho, as well as three other teachers and two Pedro II College employees. The allegation presented is of administrative improbity acts that occurred inside the Pedro II College in the São Cristóvão II unit, which would have come to the knowledge of the MPF-RJ through representations and testimonies provided by parents of students of the institution. This is not the first action against education professionals at the school. The Colégio Pedro II has suffered numerous accusations and its teachers have been the target of persecution and harassment for working with content considered by supporters of the **Escola Sem Partido** movement as inappropriate for the school environment. The trajectory of Colégio Pedro II as a precursor in various educational policies and teaching practices is known to all. Its history has always placed it as a reference in quality public education, plural and democratic. This path of prominence puts it at the current juncture, in which freedom of education is being threatened in Brazil with the growth and intensification of debates and organization involving the Escola Sem Partido movement, as one of the main institutions where this movement seeks to impose its precepts. The discourse of ideological neutrality, of plurality and diversity of ideas in school, has been gaining strength in the Brazilian educational scenario to actually put conservative, obscurantist and reactionary projects. Teachers have been accused of using their teaching freedom to indoctrinate and manipulate children and young people, which has appeal among mothers and fathers who are concerned about the education their daughters and sons receive. The **School Without Party**, therefore, views teachers as "ideological and partisan agents" and students as "captive audiences and passive victims of ideological agents. The factoid of the neutrality of the teacher was created, as well as that of the student as "victim" of a process of ideologization. We know that in truth this discourse of neutrality supports the preservation of the current education model. An excluding, unequal, and uncritical education. Moreover, this supposed neutrality also serves to limit and curtail the performance of teachers, since any topic that is not consensual, that can mess with family beliefs, will inevitably cause the teacher to be accused of a supposed crime of ideological manipulation. And this is another important point of teaching that is being threatened by this movement, especially in Colégio Pedro II. Teachers and professors are suffering embarrassment, losing the freedom to choose what they consider to be the best approach on a given theme. Their classes are being photographed and recorded, their activities are exposed as "proof" that contents considered inappropriate are being approached, etc. In other words, there is a picture of instability and political persecution for education professionals, which now acquires an even more dangerous character, which is the lawsuits. We of OLÉ, against the **School Without Party** and who have always defended the freedom of teaching, we stand in solidarity with the education professionals of the Colégio Pedro II, victims of these harassments, persecutions and judicial attacks. We join the fight for a school as a place of citizenship education, promotion of democratic values and respect for human rights.

Appendix 7

MANIFESTO FOR A SCHOOL WITHOUT MACHISMO

As teachers of Basic and Higher Education, committed to a plural education, based on democratic principles, we subscribe to this manifesto, stating our position against the bills that treat the issue of gender as an ideology and propose the exclusion of this theme from the school universe. We clarify that the term "gender" is not an ideology, but a concept used in several areas of knowledge to understand diversity and combat violence caused by intolerance. This debate is essential for the consolidation of an education based on respect for differences. The social, political, and religious groups that treat gender as an ideology have a mistaken idea of the term, and are based on prejudiced assumptions about issues such as family and sexuality, guided by limited and ethnocentric views that do not respect otherness. Gender studies do not want to impose standards or ways of being a man or a woman in society. On the contrary, such studies seek to understand the diversity that exists in the construction of identities, at the same time that they expose the reproduction of asymmetrical power relations, expressed in violent manifestations of machismo and homophobia. Bills that aim to ban the pedagogical approaches on gender in the Brazilian educational system must be considered an affront to democracy and to the fundamental objectives of the Republic, expressed in the Federal Constitution of 1988, in item IV of Article 3: "to promote the good of all, without prejudice of origin, race, sex, color, age, and any other forms of discrimination. "These legislative initiatives also hurt the principles that guide National Education, expressed in the Law of Directives and Bases for Education (LDB/1996), which, in its article 3, guarantees: "II - freedom to learn, teach, research, and divulge culture, thought, art, and knowledge; III - pluralism of ideas and educational conceptions; IV - respect for freedom and appreciation of tolerance. The LDB/1996 also determines the inclusion in school curricula of content related to human rights and the prevention of all forms of violence against children and adolescents, guided by the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (Law no. 8,069, of July 13, 1990). It is worth mentioning that, since 1997, the PCNS Primary School already treated Sexual Orientation as one of the transversal themes, fundamental for democracy and citizenship. Such initiatives that intend to curb the debate on gender, present in several legislative houses in the country, are in fact part of a political project of authoritarian and fundamentalist power, which seeks to eliminate the contradictory, denying human plurality, sexual freedoms and the autonomy of the subjects of the Brazilian educational process. Thus, they consolidate themselves as a discourse that denies the otherness, eliminating from the pedagogical practice the reflection and the construction of an autonomous thought. Likewise, they disregard an institutionalized academic research field formed by male and female researchers who foster interdisciplinary debates and guide public policies. The conservative escalation in education, which is part of a wider process of political dispute on the directions of Brazilian society, imposes setbacks in the socio-cultural formation of the Brazilian people by criminalizing the school debate on gender. It also obstructs the involvement of educational institutions in the deconstruction of oppressions related to gender and sexuality, an urgent task in our society. As educators who are sensitive to the demands of the classroom, we are concerned about the emergence of initiatives that establish a unilateral and authoritarian education, imposing censorship on teaching practice. In search of an inclusive and plural education, for the freedom of teaching, for pedagogical autonomy, for the respect to gender identities, the teachers of the School Without Machismo Collective sign this manifesto:

Appendix 8

SCHOOL WITHOUT PARTY AND WITHOUT MEANING: NOTE OF REPUDIATION

In recent years, we, educators and pro-laity activists, have been surprised by the growth and intensification of debates and organization involving the School Without Party movement. The action of this segment extends to the National Congress, legislative assemblies, and city councils, and is especially worrying in the social networks. The proposal basically consists of approving bills that aim to curb what its authors call the ideologizing process in the classroom. One of the proposals presented even foresees jail sentences for teachers. Its supporters argue that there is indoctrination taking place in schools and defend what they call political neutrality. To this end, they foresee punishment for teachers and interference in the curriculum and teaching materials in schools. In addition, the members of this movement are against the presence of subjects such as gender and sexual orientation in schools. According to the group, the teacher, when dealing with these issues, can compromise, precipitate or direct the development of personality and sexual identity of their students. The project invests against what it defines as "gender ideology". The strategy that this group has been using is to transform their proposals into ordinary law. To this end, they have created a draft of the Bill - School without Party Program, which serves as the basis for any parliamentary representative who is willing to present it in the legislative houses at any level of the federation. There are already several bills in progress. In these projects it is also foreseen that teachers "may not make party political propaganda in the classroom or encourage their students to participate in demonstrations. The justification is that it is up to the parents to teach their children a moral education that is in accordance with their own convictions. The School Without Party conceives the teacher as an "ideological and partisan agent" and the students as "captive audience and passive victims of ideological agents. There are several extremely serious points defended by this group, among them the notion, opposed by critical and progressive education, that students are devoid of ideas, of their own thoughts, and that they are therefore, according to the project they defend, "passive victims. We believe that students are not blank sheets of paper that the teacher fills in, but agents, thinking beings, who interact and reflect on the issues through the teachers' mediation. The approval of these projects by Brazil represents censorship in the act of educating through the fallacious discourse of neutrality. The teacher, like all other social beings, is a political agent. He has a position and an ideological basis. But this does not define him as an "indoctrinator". He provides intellectual tools for the student to develop his own ideological bases. Besides, neutrality is a position, that of conservation of the current model. Is this the education we want to perpetuate? Another fundamental point to mention is that the project's defenders disqualify the school as a place for the formation of citizenship, promotion of democratic values, and respect for human rights. In this sense, the approval of these projects, for us of OLÉ, represents an attack against the legislation that governs the public school in Brazil. It is up to Brazilian citizens, therefore, to denounce the strategies and maneuvers that attempt to disrespect the Constitution that defines the Brazilian State as Democratic and Republican. The "School Without Party Bill" is, therefore, for us, unconstitutional. Given this scenario of total disregard for the constitutional rules, OLÉ calls attention to the threat that hangs over public education in the country. It is up to all of us, especially educators, to pressure the parliamentarians of our cities and states in order to prevent the approval of these PL's. They represent a violation of the principle of education. They represent a violation of the principle of democratic and secular education that we believe in and defend!

Appendix 9

IN DEFENSE OF THE SECULAR STATE, FREEDOMS AND THE STRUGGLES FOR DEMOCRACY IN BRAZIL (2014)

The Strategic Movement for a Secular State, having met in a national seminar held in Brasilia on 26, 27 and 28 August, comes to the public to manifest itself on the challenges to be faced in the framework of the Brazilian democratic state. This Movement is composed of civil society groups for the defense of human rights, composed of women, black people, LGBT people, academics, religious groups and organizations, organizations of atheists and agnostics, and other legitimate social actors who should be listened to in their own beliefs and claims for human rights. We defend Secularism because we understand that respect for diversity and freedom of religion, belief and conscience is only possible in a Secular State, and that this freedom must be guaranteed as much as the fight against intolerance. Only a Secular State makes it possible to guarantee and protect both the plurality of religions and the right to manifestation of groups and individuals who have no ties to religions, such as atheists and agnostics. Democracy is strengthened in the secular state. In the Brazilian context, this is a process still under construction. In this sense, MEEL repudiates the advance, in the current national political scenario, of intolerant groups that preach discrimination and hate speech. These groups, in order to accomplish their power projects, often use the fundamentalist religious discourse to imprint their racist, sexist, homo/lesbo/transphobic, patriarchal, classist, and violent face in the dispute of consciousnesses, meanings, and concepts. From a self-attributed position of moral superiority, such groups delegitimize the experience of others and commit systematic violations to the rights of various social segments, if not with the direct contribution, then with the connivance of the State. We also denounce the criminalization process and the setbacks in the field of human rights undertaken by the fundamentalist religious group, allied, when convenient, to ruralists and other conservative forces in Congress, which undermine democratic guarantees already won by historical struggles of social movements. These groups act with violence against terreiro peoples, promote the genocide of the black and indigenous population and interfere in individual liberties, exert control over the bodies and sexuality of women, in particular with regard to abortion and the exercise of sexual orientation and gender identity and have negatively affected the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Taking this scenario into consideration, the MEEL warns Brazilian society and expresses its opinion about the following initiatives underway in the Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary branches:

- for the approval of PLC 122/2006 for the criminalization of homo/lesbo/transphobia;
- for the decriminalization of abortion;
- for freedom of belief and an end to intolerance and violence against religious manifestations;
- for the full implementation of Law No. 10.639 (African and Afro-Brazilian history teaching) and Law No. 11.645 (indigenous peoples' history teaching) and for the creation of public policies to fight and prevent homo/lesbo/transphobia in public and private schools;
- by the favorable judgment by the STF of the direct action of unconstitutionality nº 4439, which questions religious teaching in public schools;
- by the end of the sale of the programming grid of radio and TV stations and of the granting of grants to religious denominations;

- for an end to the use of public resources for proselytism and religious imposition in the areas of health and education.

We defend the broad discussion of legislative initiatives with civil society, in the context of a political reform that is broad, popular, and democratic, so that the legislation does not represent the religious and doctrinal vision of its legislators, but is based on human rights and the diversity and plurality of world conceptions.

Finally, in view of the electoral process underway in the country, we see with extreme concern the proliferation of platforms based on the reproduction of imposing and discriminatory religious morals. Thus, we call on the Brazilian population to demonstrate in the ballot box its commitment to the achievements in the field of human rights and in defense of the secular state.

Brasília, August 28, 2014.

Appendix 10

TECHNICAL NOTE MPF 01/2016. ESCOLA SEM PARTIDO FEDERAL PUBLIC MINISTRY

FEDERAL ATTORNEY FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CITIZEN

Technical Note 01/2016 PFDC

Themes: Education. Education and Human Rights. Law of Directives and Bases of National Education. Summary: Opinion about the proposal of the School without Party Movement (ESP) and analysis and manifestation about the Legislative Proposal 867/2015, which includes, among the guidelines and bases of national education, the "School without Party Program". The School without Party Program is presented as a joint initiative of students and parents, allegedly concerned about the degree of political-ideological contamination of Brazilian schools, at all levels: from elementary school to higher education. The PL that incorporates its ideology, under the pretext of defending principles such as "political, ideological and religious neutrality of the State"; "pluralism of ideas in the academic environment"; freedom of conscience and belief, puts the teacher under constant surveillance, mainly to prevent him/her from affronting the moral convictions of the parents. As will be shown below, the legislative initiative is born unconstitutional. Art. 205 of the Constitution brings as the first objective of education the full development of people and their qualification for the exercise of citizenship. Then, it also states the purpose of qualifying them for work. This order of ideas is not fortuitous. It is part of the paradigmatic turn produced by the 1988 Constitution, in which the State's actions are guided by a plural conception of national society. Only a relation of equality allows individual autonomy, and this is only possible if each one is assured of sustaining his or her many different conceptions of the meaning and purpose of life. That is why the public space, the space of citizenship, where collective projects are placed and defended, must, as a norm, ensure the free market of ideas. And the school, in enabling each one to fully develop his or her capacities and preparing for the exercise of citizenship, must necessarily be committed to all kinds of pluralism. At this point, it is necessary to unmask the apparent commitment that both the PL and the ESP have with this constitutional principle. Starting with the misuse of an expression that, in itself, is absurd: "ideological neutrality". The most modernly accepted definition of ideology, by John B. Thompson, is "the ways in which meaning (or signification) contributes to maintaining relations of domination. A dominant power can legitimize itself by involving at least six different strategies: promoting beliefs and values that are compatible with it; naturalizing and universalizing such beliefs in order to make them obvious and seemingly inevitable; disqualifying ideas that might challenge it; excluding rival ways of thinking; and obscuring social reality in order to favor it. Thus, there is, ontologically, no neutral ideology. On the contrary, for Adorno, ideology is a form of "identity thinking" that expels singularity, difference, and plurality beyond its borders. Hence 1 Apud EAGLETON, Terry. Ideology: an introduction. Trad. Silvana Vieira and Luís Carlos Borges. São Paulo: Boitempo Publishers, 1997, p. 18 FEDERAL PUBLIC MINISTRY - Prosecutor's Office Following this line, Eagleton states that the opposite of ideology would not be truth or theory, but difference or heterogeneity². What is revealed, therefore, in the PL and its inspiring document is the nonconformism with the victory of the diverse emancipatory struggles in the constituent process; with the formatting of

a society that has to be open to multiple and different worldviews; with the fact that the school is a strategic place for political emancipation and for the end of sexist ideologies - that condemn women to a naturally inferior position, of racism - that represent non-whites as perpetual savages, of religion - that present the world as the creation of the gods, and of so many others that intend to fulminate the contrasting versions of the truths they preach.

The PL subverts the current constitutional order, for numerous reasons: (i) it confuses school education with that provided by parents, and, with that, the public and private spaces;

(ii)(iii) it impedes the pluralism of ideas and pedagogical conceptions (art. 206, III); (iii) it denies the freedom to teach and the ample possibility of learning (art. 206, II); (iv) it contradicts the principle of the secularity of the State, because it allows, within the scope of the school, a public space in the constitutional conception, the prevalence of particular moral/religious views.

Finally, and most seriously, the PL goes against the fundamental objectives of the Federative Republic of Brazil, especially those of "building a free, just, and solidary society" and of "promoting the good of all, without prejudice of origin, race, sex, color, age, and any other forms of discrimination.

I determine the forwarding of this Technical Note:

i) to the Parliamentary Articulation Office - Assart/PGR, as a subsidy for PL 867/2015 and its appendices, as well as for all related legislative proposals in Congress that refer to the inclusion of the Program without Party in the guidelines and bases of national education;

ii) to the Secretariat of Institutional Relations of the MPF - SRI/MPF;

iii) to the Minister of Education;

iv) to the National Council of Education; v) to the National Council of Human Rights - CNDH;

vi) to the National Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents - CONANDA; vii) to the National Secretariat for the Promotion of the Rights of Children and Adolescents - SNPDC/SDH;

viii) to the National Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office; and

ix) to the National Council of Attorneys General - CNPG.

Brasília, July 21, 2016.

Deborah Duprat

Federal Attorney for the Rights of the Citizen

Appendix 11

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF SECULARISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Preamble

Considering the growing religious and moral diversity within present-day societies and the challenges encountered by modern states to foster harmonious coexistence; considering also the need to respect the plurality of religious, atheistic, agnostic, and philosophical beliefs and the obligation to foster, through various means, peaceful democratic decision-making and, finally, considering the growing sensitivity of individuals and peoples with respect to fundamental freedoms and rights, encouraging States to seek a balance between the essential principles that favor respect for diversity and the integration of all citizens with the public sphere, we, academics, scholars and citizens of different countries, propose the following declaration for each one's reflection and public debate: **Fundamental principles**

Article 1: All human beings have the right to respect for their freedom of conscience and to practice it individually and collectively. This respect implies the freedom to adhere or not to a religion or philosophical convictions (including theism and agnosticism), the recognition of the autonomy of individual conscience, the personal freedom of human beings and their free choice in matters of religion and belief. This also implies respect by the State, within the limits of a democratic public order and respect for fundamental rights, for the autonomy of religions and philosophical convictions.

Article 2: In order for states to be able to guarantee equal treatment of human beings and of different religions and beliefs (within the limits indicated), the political order must have the freedom to elaborate collective norms without any religion or belief dominating public power and institutions. Consequently, the autonomy of the state implies the dissociation between civil law and particular religious or philosophical norms. Religions and belief groups must participate freely in the debates of civil society. States may in no way dominate this society and impose doctrines or behavior a priori. Article 3: Equality is not only formal; it must be translated into political practice through constant vigilance so that there is no discrimination against human beings in the exercise of their rights, particularly their rights as citizens, regardless of whether or not they belong to a religion or a philosophy. For the freedom to belong (or not to belong) to a religion to exist, "reasonable accommodations" between national traditions arising from majority groups and those of minority groups may be necessary.

Secularism as a fundamental principle of the Rule of Law

Article 4: We define secularism as the harmonization, at various socio-historical and geopolitical junctures, of the three principles already indicated: respect for freedom of conscience and its individual and collective practice; autonomy of politics and civil society from particular religious and philosophical norms; no direct or indirect discrimination against human beings. Article 5: A secularizing process emerges when the state is no longer legitimized by a religion or a specific current of thought, and when the set of citizens can deliberate peacefully, with equal rights and dignity, to exercise its sovereignty in the exercise of political power. Respecting the principles indicated, this process takes place through an intimate relationship with the formation of the entire modern State, which intends to guarantee the fundamental rights of every citizen. Then, the elements of secularity necessarily appear in every society that wishes to harmonize social relations marked by plural moral or religious interests and conceptions.

Article 6: Secularism, thus conceived, constitutes a key element of democratic life.

It inevitably involves the political and the legal, thus keeping pace with the advances in democracy, the recognition of fundamental rights, and the social and political acceptance of pluralism.

Article 7: Secularism is not the exclusive heritage of a culture, a nation or a continent. It may exist at junctures where this term has not been traditionally used. Secularization processes have occurred or may occur in various cultures and civilizations without necessarily being called such.

Debates about Secularism

Article 8: The public organization of the calendar, official funeral ceremonies, the existence of "civic shrines" linked to forms of civil religion, and, in general, the balance between what has emerged from historical heritage and what is attributed to the current pluralism in matters of religion and belief in a given society, cannot be considered to be settled definitively, and to launch into the terrain of the unimaginable. Rather, this constitutes the core of a peaceful and democratic secular debate.

Article 9: Concrete respect for freedom of conscience and non-discrimination, as well as the autonomy of politics and society from particular norms, must be applied to necessary debates concerning issues associated with the body and sexuality, with illness and death, with the emancipation of women, the education of children, mixed marriages, the status of adherents of religious or non-religious minorities, of "non-believers" and of those who criticize religion.

Article 10: The balance between three constitutive principles of secularism is also a guiding thread for democratic debates on the free exercise of worship, on freedom of expression, the manifestation of religious and philosophical convictions, proselytism and the limits arising from respect for the other, as well as the necessary interferences and distinctions between the various fields of social life, the reasonable obligations and agreements in school or professional life.

Article 11: The debates on these different issues bring into play the representation of national identity, public health rules, possible conflicts between civil law, particular moral representations and individual freedom of decision, as a framework of the principle of compatibility of freedoms.

In no country and in no society is there an absolute secularity; nor are the various solutions available regarding secularity equivalent.

Secularism and the Challenges of the 21st Century

Article 12: The representation of fundamental rights has evolved greatly since the first proclamations of rights (late 18th century). The concrete meaning of the dignity of human beings and equal rights is at stake in the proposed solutions. The state limit of secularism today faces problems arising from specific statutes and common law, from divergences between civil law and certain religious and belief norms, from compatibility between parental rights and what conventions international consider as children's rights, as well as the right to "blasphemy" or to freedom of speech.

Article 13: In the various democratic countries, for numerous citizens, the historical process of laicization seems to have reached a national specificity, the questioning of which raises fears. And the longer and more conflictive the laicization process has been, the greater the fear of change. Nevertheless, profound mutations occur in society, and secularism could not be rigid and immobile. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid tensions and phobias, in order to find new answers to new challenges.

Article 14: Where they occur, secularization processes have historically corresponded to a time when the great religious traditions dominated social systems. The success of such processes has created a certain individualization of the religious and of that which refers to beliefs, which becomes a dimension of personal freedom of decision. Contrary to what is feared in certain

societies, secularism does not mean abolishing religion, but freedom of decision regarding religion. It also implies, nowadays, where necessary, detaching the religious from what is settled in society and from all political impositions. However, those who speak of freedom of decision also refer to the free possibility of religious authenticity or conviction.

Article 15: Therefore, religions and philosophical convictions are socially constituted in cultural resource sites. The secularity of the 21st century must allow for the articulation of cultural diversity and the unity of the political and social bond, in the same way that historical secularities have had to learn to reconcile religious diversities and the unity of this bond. It is from this global context that it is necessary to analyze the emergence of new forms of religiosity, both combinations between religious traditions, mixtures between the religious and the non-religious, new spiritual expressions, but also diverse forms of religious radicalism. Likewise, it is in the context of individualization that one must understand why it is difficult to reduce religion to the exclusive exercise of worship, and why secularity as a general framework for harmonious coexistence is, more than ever, desirable.

Article 16: The belief that scientific and technical progress can engender moral and social progress is currently in decline; this contributes to making the future more uncertain, making it more difficult to project, and making political and social debates less legible. After the illusions of progress, we run the risk of unilaterally favoring cultural particularisms. This situation urges us to be creative with regard to secularity, to invent new forms of political and social bonding, capable of taking on this unprecedented conjuncture and finding new relationships with the history that we build together. Article 17: The different processes of laicization correspond to the different developments of states. Laicities, on the other hand, have taken different forms, depending on whether the state is federal centralist. The construction of large supra-state complexes and the relative but real detachment of the juridical from the state generate a new situation. The state, however, is more in a phase of mutation than of real decline. It tends to act less in the market sphere, and loses, at least in part, the Benefactor State it has occupied in many countries to a greater or lesser extent. On the other hand, it intervenes in spheres hitherto considered as private, that is, intimate, and perhaps responds more than in the past to demands about security, some of which may threaten liberties. Therefore, we need to invent new links between secularity and social justice, as well as between guaranteeing and extension of freedoms individual e individual and collective freedoms.

Article 18: While there is vigilance that secularism does not, in this context, adopt aspects of civil religion or sacralize itself in any way, learning its inherent principles could contribute to a culture of civil peace. This requires that secularism not be conceived as an anticlerical ideology or as an intangible thought. Moreover, in contexts where the plurality of conceptions of the world presents itself as a threat, it should appear as a real richness. The democratic response to the main challenges of the 21st century will come through a dynamic and inventive secular conception. This will allow secularism to truly show itself as a fundamental principle of coexistence.

*Statement presented by Jean Baubérot (France), Micheline Milot (Canada), and Roberto Blancarte (Mexico) at the French Senate on December 9, 2005, on the occasion of the celebrations of the centennial of the separation of State-Churches in France.

Appendix 12

EUROPEAN LETTER PROPOSALS FOR A EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SECULARISM

Article 1: No to the legalization of dogmatic bans Within the European Community, civil, political, cultural and social life must be organized with respect for all individual and collective freedoms linked to the general interest and the public good. Community law must, moreover, promote the necessary progress in the face of the limitations to civil rights that still exist in certain European states. Absolute freedom of expression and artistic creation will be guaranteed in all the member states of the Community, without any pressure group-confessional or congressional-being able to limit these rights in the name of prohibitions that concern only their own members. The practical application of the advances of scientific research will benefit from complete individual and collective freedom, within the framework of a civil law voted by elected and legally responsible bodies. Religious prohibitions may not be taken into account by community legislation.

Article 2: Rights of women and children

The status of women and their right to participate equally in civic and social life shall be unambiguously recognized. The common European law shall not allow any limitations based on specifically confessional, ethnic, or cultural grounds. Legal provisions concerning children shall take into account their future status as free and responsible citizens, and shall guarantee as far as possible their defence against doctrinal or dogmatic conditioning which may be imposed on them, in particular against the sexual mutilation which may be performed on minors under supposedly cultural or religious pretexts.

Article 3: Mutual Tolerance and Equal Rights and Duties

The Community institutions shall promote the practice of mutual tolerance and respect for ethnic and cultural differences within a framework of complete equality of rights and duties for all citizens of the Community; they shall refuse to give way to racist and segregationist forces, whether in political or in social life. They will take as a fundamental principle that the legitimate right to be different must never give rise to unacceptable differences in rights.

Article 4: Independence from churches and religions

The community institutions will ensure the absolute independence of official bodies, public services, and European legal activities from churches, clergy, and all confessional influences. The public services of the community will assume the civic, social, cultural, and educational responsibilities arising from Community policy, which will not be assigned to private organizations: in matters of religion, the exercise of legitimate individual and collective rights will be guaranteed by Community law within the private sphere to which they belong, without ever interfering with the public and political domain.

Article 5: Primacy of the general interest

Community institutions will give absolute priority to the general interest and the public good, without ever legalizing or allowing the establishment of particular privileges - individual or collective - and without submitting to the claims of pressure groups that seek undue gain, contrary to the general interest and social equity. This concern should be imposed on the various economic and social systems that may coexist within an inevitably diverse Community.

Article 6: Solidarity among Peoples

The Community institutions and bodies will encourage national governments and public and private bodies to practice solidarity between peoples, States, and social categories, however different these States may be from the point of view of their economic, social, and cultural systems, or however disparate their standards of living. This solidarity aims to find solutions for social justice conceived in a broad framework, outside of which no economic expansion is possible.

Article 7: Freeing the Citizen from Communal Constraints

In the areas defined as falling within their competence, the elected leaders of the Community institutions shall avoid basing their policy and their actions on a conception whose application could contribute to a violation or a limitation of the constituent values of secular humanism and of the modalities of its implementation. They will ensure, in particular, that ethnic, confessional or cultural groupings - the source of rivalries and confrontation - are not favoured, but that the individual citizen is always considered as the fundamental element of European civic life.

Article 8: Free dissemination and expression of secular values

Member States whose national constitution and legality are not secular will be required not to impede in their legal sphere the free circulation of secular ideals, on equal terms with other ethics and ideologies. The governments of the member-states of the Communities will commit themselves to respect the community decisions that are imbued with secular values, or that explicitly so. Secular humanism, marked by respect for all beliefs and opinions, for the rights of individuals and for fundamental freedoms, will be strictly respected by the authorities and institutions of the Communities, which will facilitate its promotion and expression, with the aim of general interest and social cohesion.

Article 9: Secularism, a Guarantee for a Europe of Peace and Harmony

The philosophical, ethical, moral, and civic values on which secular humanism is based make it acceptable to all spirits passionate for freedom, tolerance, and justice: it has, therefore, a universalistic vocation, since it proposes opportune and positive solutions to numerous social and civic problems that arise in most European countries...and elsewhere. It is therefore essential, and in the general interest of individuals, social groups, and all nationals, that lay humanism be taken into account and promoted at the European and extra-Community levels, and that it serve as a foundation for the emergence of a necessary European citizenship.

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