ALIGNMENT BETWEEN PAUL RICOEUR'S THOUGHT AND THE BNCC PROPOSALS

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between the concept of laicity, as proposed by Paul Ricoeur, and the BNCC[2] (National Common Curricular Base) with the aim of developing a pedagogical proposal for Religious Education that promotes citizenship and respect for religious diversity. It questions the importance of the BNCC in this context, reaffirming the referential role of the Science of Religion in the teacher training process and the provision of essential content and approaches for Religious Education, particularly by attempting to understand the religious phenomenon in a holistic manner without favoring one religious tradition over others. It is therefore deduced that this kind of understanding elevates Religious Education to the status of an indispensable curricular component for education directed towards democratic and civilizational values.

Keywords: Science of Religion, Religious Education, Laicity.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Brazilian academia and society, the logic of the Enlightenment ideal prevailed, relegating religion to the private sphere, while modern society embraced a democratic organization based on other humanistic ideals. The religious languages that constitute social webs were disregarded, and the focus shifted to exotic religious expressions, displaying a curious and interesting attitude towards aesthetics at the

expense of the political and behavioral aspects of the religious field (ALVES, 1984). There is an attempt to regulate issues that go beyond strictly religious places and times, through the involvement of religious movements in the political and partisan sphere.

Martins (2020) observes numerous cases of religious intolerance in the Brazilian scenario and a growing tension towards the revival of conservative or fundamentalist Christian values. This reveals a conflict between normative systems and the need to deepen the anti-scientific commitment in academic research and advocate for other humanistic, democratic, and civilizational commitments with greater dedication, in order to acknowledge the need for an ideal society.

In academia, there are still many possible achievements involving public debate and societal reflection as a whole. Religious Education (RE) emerges as a privileged space to continue this discussion, demanding an education focused on students' sensitivities so that they can understand the religion of others as a constitutive element of human and daily experience. This would enable a proactive reflection on universal civilizational values.

In a democratic and secular society, there is no place for catechetical and doctrinal teaching in public schools. However, models of RE have varied greatly in response to social and political transformations in each era. In the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB)[3], RE was regulated with certain specificities to prevent proselytism and ensure respect for Brazilian religious and cultural diversity (BRASIL, 1997).

The theme of laicity and the separation of church and state is part of the discussions surrounding RE. In Brazil, the model of "laicity of recognition" was established, in contrast to models in the United States and France, for example, where the state recognizes the existence of religion - in its multiple manifestations - assigning duties and rights to them but not taking sides with any particular one (PORTIER, 2011). In

the French model of laicity, where religion is separated, or in the American model, which fully admits religious freedom, there is a difference compared to Brazil, where the "separation could be considered flexible because it recognizes the religious fact" (LAGES, 2016, p. 157-158).

From modernity onwards:

> A religião foi relegada ao foro íntimo dos indivíduos e deixou de ser uma questão central para e na sociedade. Entretanto, a religião não se contentou com esse lugar e, constantemente, o tem extrapolado rumo às diversas áreas que compõem a sociedade. Isso ocorre, pois, a religião molda o sentido de vida das pessoas e interpela todas as áreas da vida dos sujeitos, religiosos ou não. Considera-se a religião como uma visão de mundo que dá a direção e conduz a forma como o indivíduo religioso vê as coisas e age sobre elas. A religião se torna uma verdade para o religioso que enxerga o mundo através das lentes religiosas (SOUSA MARTINS; RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 139).

In Brazil, the religious phenomenon is evident in schools through religious individuals. Religion is expressed through clothing, behaviors, and speech, sometimes tainted with prejudice and intolerance. It can be deduced that religious beliefs need to be considered for their potential to provide vital impetus for the actions of these individuals, beyond what is traditionally considered religious practices.

In light of these initial considerations, we seek to answer the following problem question: What kind of pedagogy should Religious Education (RE) follow to be legal, secular, and meaningful for the promotion of citizenship and respect for religious diversity, while also considering how the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) addresses these issues? The concept of secularism, according to Ricoeur (1997), emerges as an analytical category, alongside documentary research focused on the BNCC, especially regarding RE. Documentary research, according to Fonseca (2002), relies on various sources that have not undergone analytical treatment, such as the BNCC, which is an important document that can be considered a primary

source for this research. The corollary objective is to explore a pedagogical model applicable to RE. In a preliminary manner, it is considered that the BNCC proposes the Science of Religion (CR) as a reference for RE, to understand religion from a holistic perspective, without favoring a particular religious tradition but rather promoting dialogue about the role of religion in society.

2. SECULARISM AND RE

Ricoeur (1997) provides the basis for justifying the presence of RE in Brazilian public schools. He points out two practices viewed in light of a normative ideal, secularism. For him, there is the secularism of the State and the secularism of Civil Society. The former is defined by the abstention of the French constitutional text, which asserts the non-state subsidy of any form of worship and institutional agnosticism, resulting in the strict separation between the church and the state and delimiting their roles. The latter is understood in the implicit dynamics of coexistence among insoluble differences, as well as in the lack of public discussions about convictions and professions of faith.

The school stands at the threshold of both practices because it is a state service with constraints on subsidizing cults; however, it becomes a stage for mediating disputes and disagreements within civil society, which is one of the tasks of education. Ricoeur analyzes the French scenario and overcomes objections to RE based on conceptions of state secularism that dismiss the social aspect.

Just as Freire (1996) criticizes "banking education," Ricoeur understands that the school does not merely serve as a source of information. On the contrary, its essential pedagogical task is to "teach how to discuss." Students should have "access to their own past, to their own cultural heritage, which encompasses, in addition to the Greek legacy, Jewish and Christian origins" (RICOEUR, 1997, p. 178). This applies to national education because the value of religion is an integral

part of the history of the formation of the Brazilian state. According to Passos (2007, p. 65):

> Trata-se de reconhecer, sim, a religiosidade e a religião como dados antropológicos e socioculturais que devem ser abordados no conjunto das demais disciplinas escolares por razões cognitivas e pedagógicas. O conhecimento da religião faz parte da educação geral e contribui com a formação completa do cidadão, devendo estar sob a responsabilidade dos sistemas de ensino e submetido às mesmas exigências das demais áreas de conhecimento que compõem os currículos escolares.

However, the religious phenomenon must be an observable content in the school task of "teaching how to discuss." Religion brings into the realm of education the element of secularism expressed in civil society. Indeed, the school should introduce students to the "pluralistic issues of contemporary societies, perhaps by listening to opposing arguments presented by competent individuals" (RICOEUR, 1997, p. 178).

The school cannot exclude topics from the daily lives of students, which are predominant in Brazilian culture. According to Mouffe (2006), religion cannot be eliminated from public discourse merely because it mobilizes antagonistic feelings among people, as democracy is established in the tension between the logic of identity and equivalence and the logic of pluralism and diversity. Therefore, her proposal consists of an agonistic pluralism that invokes individual passions for public debate, in the mediation of constitutional rules, recognizing that reason does not have prominence as an attribute of collective identification but rather of values, beliefs, and passions.

Rodrigues (2013, p. 224) understands this process as an education for civic formation:

> Mas a noção de cidadania tem sentido político e visa à formação de sujeitos autônomos, preparados para exercer suas liberdades, cumprir suas obrigações e "participar" no debate público tanto pela escolha de representações legítimas e pelo voto, quanto pela atuação engajada nas arenas de

discussão do projeto coletivo que objetiva melhores condições de existência para todos e todas.

According to Connolly (2011), in the context of an ideal regime of multidimensional pluralism, people's beliefs and demands are articulated in the public space, and simultaneously, they are able to retreat relationally from their positions, in order to recognize legitimate contestability regarding what their creeds mean to others. This attitude, instead of isolating minorities, facilitates the negotiation of agreements and respect among individuals. Therefore, considering the school and Religious Education (RE) as a privileged locus for carrying out these movements of exposing beliefs and stepping back in the face of others, according to Connolly's thought, points to the recognition that such a practice needs to be taught to achieve proper civic education.

According to Pieper (2014, p. 144), "all the difficulty of the theme of RE in public schools arises because of the place it occupies: at the crossroads between the State and Society." According to Ricoeur, limiting the debate on the religious phenomenon in schools and using the school space for proselytizing practices neglects the fundamental ideal of secularism for building a just and democratic society.

Therefore, the secular state should not subsidize religious worship within schools. The secularist alternative that advocates total abstention from religion generates a certain ignorance about religion, leading to fear, superstition, fanaticism, subservience, among other things. There is a "need to understand the culture, religion, or absence of religion of others: to know in order to coexist, alterity, and solidarity" (LAGES, 2016, p. 293).

It is argued here that this goal can only be achieved through RE mediated by a reference science capable of understanding religion broadly and not subsidized by religious traditions. In this case, the Science of Religion (CR) emerges as a discipline that comprehends the symbols and meanings generated within religious traditions. According to Pieper (2018, p. 8), "in addition to providing knowledge about religion,

the intention is to rescue the human experiences preserved in religions and show their relevance to the present, promoting the overcoming of religious intolerance and respect for diversity." CR is not about a confessional or proselytizing approach to religion but "through the promotion of understanding religion from humanistic values, the aim is to broaden the cognitive and practical horizon of the student" (PIEPER, 2018, p. 8).

3. CR, RE, AND BNCC

The BNCC recognizes CR as a reference for RE, just as the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs)[4] for the Bachelor's degree in CR do. The specific competencies for RE, according to the BNCC, are:

> Conhecer os aspectos estruturantes das diferentes tradições/movimentos religiosos e filosofias de vida, a partir de pressupostos científicos, filosóficos, estéticos e éticos. Compreender, valorizar e respeitar as manifestações religiosas e filosofias de vida, suas experiências e saberes, em diferentes tempos, espaços e territórios. Reconhecer e cuidar de si, do outro, da coletividade e da natureza, enquanto expressão de valor da vida. Conviver com a diversidade de crenças, pensamentos, convicções, modos de ser e viver. Analisar as relações entre as tradições religiosas e os campos da cultura, da política, da economia, da saúde, da ciência, da tecnologia e do meio ambiente. Debater, problematizar e posicionar-se frente aos discursos e práticas de intolerância, discriminação e violência de cunho religioso, de modo a assegurar os direitos humanos no constante exercício da cidadania e da cultura de paz (BRASIL, 2017, p. 435).

The first competency presupposes that RE delves into the foundations of religion, upon which it constructs its discourses, which are expressed through myths, symbols, theologies, rituals, ceremonies, and, in essence, in all aspects that encompass the religious experience. The focus is on an investigation to gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge that religions produce, their practices, but not to reproduce them in schools. On the contrary, it is to understand them better.

RE does not aim to lead students to become religious subjects, which would constitute a completely proselytizing practice contrary to current laws governing education in schools. Instead, it seeks to comprehend the meanings of religious discourse and how they underpin religious practices, which seems to be a plausible way to clarify the relationships that religion establishes with the various spheres of students' social and cultural life, as well as the school as a whole.

In RE, knowledge of traditions and religious movements and philosophies of life can occur based on the following assumptions: scientific, involving sociology, anthropology, history, and psychology to provide more specific descriptions of religion; philosophical, attempting to offer more normative definitions and interpretations of existence according to the symbols and doctrines of religious traditions; aesthetic, involving aspects of how the religious phenomenon manifests itself; ethical, investigating the conduct norms that guide people.

The second BNCC competency aims to understand, value, and respect religious manifestations and philosophies of life, their experiences and knowledge, in different times, spaces, and territories. Religious traditions and philosophies of life, in general, were developed and transmitted to specific social groups, times, and intentions. Therefore, there is a need to translate, interpret, and contextualize these contents for contemporary application. In other words, just as spaces considered sacred are significant for religious traditions - places filled with symbols, rituals, and more - the meanings are linked to readings and hermeneutics derived from oral and written religious traditions. RE, in addition to promoting knowledge about religious traditions and philosophies of life, can understand how these sets of guidance connect with notions of time and space to promote respect for religious manifestations that occur in territories considered sacred for religions.

Students who study the various manifestations of the religious phenomenon and philosophies of life that permeate their daily lives can, likewise, recognize and identify not only their own religion but also that of others, which introduces the fourth

competency: recognizing and caring for oneself, others, the community, and nature as expressions of the value of life.

The religious experiences of students can be considered a relevant factor. Watch:

> Mesmo que não professe uma fé específica, o sujeito, por causa das relações que contrai com seu meio, em alguma medida, tem conhecimento sobre o religioso ou sobre o dado religioso. Portanto, cabe ao docente a tarefa de mapear quais as tradições religiosas presentes em sua comunidade de alunos e alunas, a fim de ensinar sobre religião tendo como base as referências mais próximas do grupo. Nesse sentido os conhecimentos derivados do cotidiano dos discentes são considerados como essenciais, visto que espelham algo que deriva da própria vida de cada sujeito, portanto, são conhecimentos formulados a partir do concreto, da realidade sociocultural de cada um. Ensinar a partir do concreto implica reconhecer a historicidade do outro e, com isso, promover oportunidades de aprendizado a respeito de conteúdos significativos (SOUSA MARTINS; RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 145).

The third and fourth competencies intersect at this very moment because, in didactic terms, students' experiences cannot be disregarded in the classroom but need to be connected to the themes and discussions that locate the images and representations known to them in their social reality. In other words, "mapping the religious field of the school constitutes a valuable teaching tool" (SOUSA MARTINS; RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 145). This opens up space for asking questions with the aim of driving a teaching practice of RE that seeks to reconstruct knowledge about religious issues in the school context, namely: "what religions are represented in the school environment? What are the religious (sacred) spaces around the school unit? Are there prominent religious leaders recognized by the school community?" (SOUSA MARTINS; RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 146).

Indeed, when it comes to religious diversity, the fifth and sixth competencies for RE in the BNCC are realized, namely:

> Analisar as relações entre as tradições religiosas e os campos da cultura, da política, da economia, da saúde, da ciência, da tecnologia e do meio ambiente e debater, problematizar e posicionar-se frente aos discursos e práticas de intolerância, discriminação e violência de cunho religioso, de modo a assegurar os direitos humanos no constante ao exercício da cidadania e da cultura de paz (BRASIL, 2017, p. 435).

The aspect of civic education is important here because, by learning about religious diversity, students can acquire:

> A capacidade de formular e manifestar opiniões sobre suas preferências, participação na vida política e econômica do Estado brasileiro, participação nos debates articulados no âmbito da esfera pública, o conhecimento dos seus direitos e deveres e, o reconhecimento da alteridade e da diversidade (cultural e religiosa) para a convivência social respeitosa (RODRIGUES, 2013, p. 226-227).

In the BNCC, RE is divided into three thematic units that involve the materiality of the religious phenomenon, watch:

> Identidades e alteridades. Nessa unidade pretende-se que os estudantes reconheçam, valorizem e acolham o caráter singular e diverso do ser humano, por meio da identificação e do respeito às semelhanças e diferenças entre o eu (subjetividade) e os outros (alteridades), da compreensão dos símbolos e significados e da relação entre imanência e transcendência [...]. O conjunto de elementos (símbolos, ritos, espaços, territórios e lideranças) integra a unidade temática Manifestações religiosas, em que se pretende proporcionar o conhecimento, a valorização e o respeito às distintas experiências e manifestações religiosas, e a compreensão das relações estabelecidas entre as lideranças e denominações religiosas e as distintas esferas sociais [...]. Na unidade temática Crenças religiosas e filosofas de vida, são tratados aspectos estruturantes das diferentes tradições/movimentos religiosos e filosofas de vida, particularmente sobre mitos, ideia (s) de divindade (s), crenças e doutrinas religiosas, tradições orais e escritas, ideias de imortalidade, princípios e valores éticos (BRASIL, 2017, p. 436-437).

In relation to these three units, Wach (1990) helps to understand the reality of RE in national public schools. With Wach, it is possible to develop possibilities for teaching

religion in light of an implicit division: the theoretical-systematic dimension and the empirical dimension, which allow structuring the content in accordance with curricula.

The unit "religious beliefs and philosophies of life" can be placed in the theoretical-systematic dimension because it addresses the normative elements of the religious phenomenon, as well as elements of thought and doctrine, i.e., "more or less defined and coherent theoretical statements" (WACH, 1990, p. 32). The units "identities and otherness" and "religious manifestations" are compatible with the empirical dimension of religion, referring to the practical aspect that "is carried out in religiously inspired acts" (WACH, 1990, p. 38-39).

According to Sousa Martins and Rodrigues (2018, p. 147), "lesson planning and RE practice can be carried out as suggested by the classification: part theoretical-systematic and part empirical." However, there is a third didactic aspect of RE aimed at refining this division: "what is theological" and "what is the experience of religion," within the broader framework of the curriculum for Elementary Education (EE). Nevertheless, "such separation has didactic purposes, as in the field of experience as experienced by the religious subject, such classification does not exist" (SOUSA MARTINS; RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 147).

It is worth noting the stages of cognitive and psychological development of students. RE, according to the LDB, operates in EE and targets children and adolescents aged 6 to 14. Therefore, the BNCC articulates the idea of holistic education:

> Que se refere à construção intencional de processos educativos que promovam aprendizagens sintonizadas com as necessidades, as possibilidades e os interesses dos estudantes e, também, com os desafios da sociedade contemporânea. Isso supõe considerar as diferentes infâncias e juventudes, as diversas culturas juvenis e seu potencial de criar novas formas de existir (BRASIL, 2017, p. 14).

It is expected that, in the Early Years, children are able to:

> Fazer perguntas e de avaliar resposta, de argumentar, de interagir com diversas produções culturais, de fazer uso de tecnologias de informação e comunicação. Demandam trabalho no ambiente escolar que se organize em torno dos interesses manifestados pelas crianças, de suas vivências imediatas para que, com base nessas vivências, elas possam, progressivamente, ampliar essa compreensão, o que se dá pela mobilização de operações cognitivas cada vez mais complexas e pela sensibilidade para apreender o mundo, expressar-se sobre ele e nele atuar (BRASIL, 2017, p. 56, 57).

The BNCC text incorporates meaningful learning, where learning, regardless of age, depends on the preceding cognitive structure and is linked to new information (AUSUBEL, 1980). According to Sousa Martins and Rodrigues (2018), meaningful learning occurs when individuals' universe of knowledge transforms in the light of new data, information, and new ways of interpreting prior knowledge: "meaningful learning can be said to occur when the set of experiences, notions, and prior knowledge of the learning subjects come into contact and engage with new horizons of knowledge" (SOUSA MARTINS; RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 148).

According to Fowler (1992), there are seven stages that people experience throughout their lives in apprehending and interacting with the religious phenomenon. In this perspective, elementary school children and adolescents would be in the third stage, mythic-literal faith, from 7 to 12 years old, where:

> A fé é corporativa, pois o grupo tem grande influência, produzindo o sentimento de que pertence a um grupo de fé, caso o meio o proporcione. Com isso aprende a linguagem das lendas da comunidade específica. Nesse estágio, a criança começa a estabelecer diferenças entre os conceitos de natural e sobrenatural. Contudo, a ideia de deus continua a ser entendida ne maneira antropomórfica.

Based on the didactic-pedagogical assumption:

> Pode-se dizer que a tematização do fenômeno religioso em sala de aula deve iniciar-se pelo concreto, isto é, pelo conteúdo relativo às imagens, aos símbolos, as indumentárias, as comidas, aos ritos, as performances religiosas, dentre outros. Paisagens religiosas, construções

> de templos e espaços sagrados, nomes de ruas e de monumentos públicos, filmes religiosos e outros exemplos do cotidiano dos educandos e educandas, nesse sentido, podem ser considerados um material didático rico para a prática escolar. O recurso a essa materialidade da religião deve ser requisitado especialmente nos anos iniciais, dos 6 aos 10 anos de idade, aproximadamente (SOUSA MARTINS; RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 148).

As this set of images is introduced into the classroom, meanings are gradually discovered. In the Upper Years, it is possible to discuss meanings in a more refined way because the child-adolescent, in their psycho-cognitive dimension, "has already acquired the appropriate structures for creative discussion and critical debate on religious discourses and what they imply for the relationships between religious groups, society, rights, duties, culture, customs, politics, among other topics related to the spheres of social life" (SOUSA MARTINS, RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 149). In this phase, the transition from childhood to adolescence is noted, "marked by intense changes resulting from biological, psychological, social, and emotional transformations," followed by the expansion of social bonds and emotional ties, as well as intellectual possibilities alongside the ability to reason more abstractly (BRASIL, 2017, p. 58).

In the Upper Years, students develop psycho-cognitive faculties that allow them to understand religion from a discursive-theological perspective. In this phase, "it is possible to introduce the debate on the issue of religious freedom, recognition, and respect for the diversity of the religious phenomenon, or the influence of religion in different fields of the public sphere" (SOUSA MARTINS; RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 149).

The CR does not aim to verify the veracity of faith or religious experiences. RE does not intend to assert one religion over others but rather "construct knowledge about the constitutive religious traditions of the religious field known by the school community [that] results in citizenship education that respects alterity, different points

of view, and distinct ways of being-in-the-world" (SOUSA MARTINS; RODRIGUES, 2018, p. 149).

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is important to emphasize that CR serves as a reference for dealing with pedagogical, didactic, and educational issues related to RE. According to Ricoeur, the school represents a place between the State and civil society. On the one hand, students should not be denied access to religion, even if they are not religious subjects; on the other hand, this teaching should be provided in a non-proselytizing manner.

The BNCC recognizes CR as a reference for RE because it offers a holistic understanding of religion without favoring any religious tradition over others. The specific competencies and thematic units of RE have many points of connection, showing that this model of RE promotes citizenship education that engages students in dialogue, discussion, and respect for religious diversity.

Despite the recognition of justifications for RE based on theoretical and legislative advancements, CR still needs to deepen methods to make RE relevant and effective, especially in the political debates involving religious institutions in the public sphere. It is also necessary to disseminate the results obtained from research in the humanities, especially regarding the issues surrounding proposals for the complete dissolution of RE from public education in Brazil. Therefore, this text emerges as an invitation to further refinement and deepening of this debate, demonstrating that the discussion of religion and the public sphere is also an educational concern for the transformation of Brazilian society.

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APPENDIX - FOOTNOTE

2. Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC).

3. Lei de Diretrizes e Bases (LDB).

4. Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais (DCNs)

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