

# Poetic Religiosity in Brazilian Urban Peripheries

Marcos Henrique de Oliveira Nicolini  
UMESP: São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo, Brazil

Starting from the observation of a greater religious pluralism of the Brazilian society, we ask ourselves, in the first instance, if it is a movement does not present itself as a paradigmatic change. That is, if as beliefs underlying social relations in a binary world of identity exclusions would not be in a process of weakening, allowing us to perceive new ways of latent arrangements. In a second instance, after recognizing that plurality requires recognition of the freedoms of belief and expression, we question the limits of such freedom point to a cosmopolitan ethics. For that matter, we take as reference in the non-religions in the Brazilian urban peripheries.

*Keywords:* pluralism, no religion, periphery

## Summary

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## Introduction

The latest censuses conducted by the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)<sup>1</sup> signalled a certain trend towards religious pluralism in Brazilian society, not only with the greater presence of evangelicals, but also rather remarkably, of those labelling themselves non-religious (atheists, agnostics and religious without institutional affiliation), in addition to the growth of spiritualists, of Jehovah's Witnesses and even those whose membership is indeterminate or who attest to multiple affiliations. Upon drafting the introduction, we can point out some numbers that allow us to indicate this greater religious (and non-religious) diversity in Brazil.

We must remember that at the beginning of the 20th century, almost the entire Brazilian population were said to be Catholic Christian, and that, according to the IBGE Census, in 2010 there were fewer Christians than there were Catholics in 1980, as shown in the Figure 1.

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Marcos Henrique de Oliveira Nicolini, Ph.D., Science of Religion, UESP.

<sup>1</sup> Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

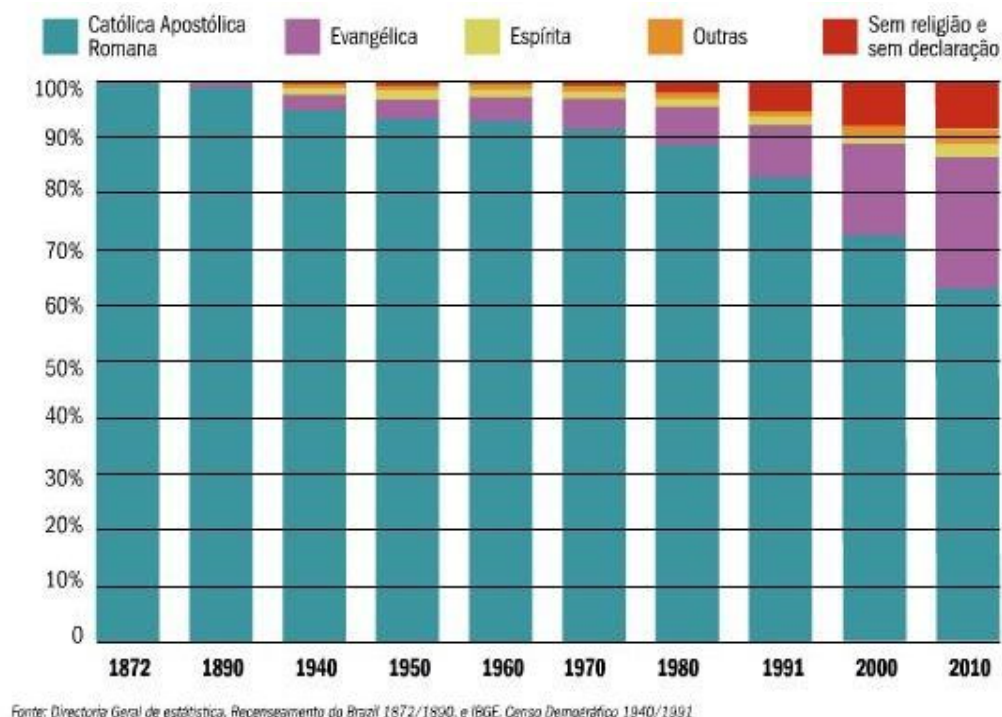


Figure 1. Religious census in Brazil: 150 years.

In more detail, we note data from the last two censuses conducted in Brazil, as shown in the Table 1.

In view of the Table 1, we can observe that while we observe a growth of Pentecostal Evangelicals, non-determined Evangelicals and other Christians, we also see a decrease in the participation of Christians in the entire Brazilian population. Christians totalled 89.44% in 2000 and added up to 86.92% in 2010. Not only can we see a greater diversity of Christian groups, but also greater religious diversity outside the frontiers of Christianity.

Concomitantly, we are faced with loftier public speech (political or otherwise) about religious bias. Presence is marked not only by the use of media, mass events (marches for Jesus, gospel shows, etc.), but also by political action, in elective disputes and in the governmental arena, with remarkable commitment referenced in their religious beliefs. Besides these means, we can verify the use of biblical names and terms in the appointment of institutions or companies (whose purpose is not necessarily to promote or market religious products), and the more frequent promotion of religious tourism, both in Brazil and to sacred places, such as Israel, Santiago de Compostela and Rome. These are some examples, but they do not exhaust the possibilities of pointing out the phenomenon of public presence<sup>2</sup>, of what was prescribed as withdrawn to the private realm. This public presence in the political field, has raised questions and criticism.

But before we dwell on issues pertaining to the conditions of religious presence potential in the public space, we must point out that diversity, as we know, is not restricted to religion. We must then note a certain movement that alters the fixity, interweaving within the production of identities and recognitions, of individuals

<sup>2</sup> We must highlight the extension of the concept of the public sphere, which goes beyond that which has restricted it to the political or to the State. Our enlargement is intended to encompass in the public sphere that which has public visibility, which has advertising, as the text of Norberto Bobbio (1986) allows us.

and groups. We can perceive a certain detachment, which is becoming more and more accentuated, from the duality of us-them, good-evil, truth-lie, enclosed in traditional references, and we turn to plural and less fixed forms of identities. For example, with respect to traditional identities from sexuality, we have abandoned the dualism that restricted it to the male-female couple (not only present in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but also in the Greco-Roman tradition) and perceived a certain complexity. We allow ourselves diverse arrangements such as homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality and non-sexuality, which implies new identities and struggles for recognition, which expand traditional configurations without a complete abandonment of those traditionally accepted identities.

Not only the question of sexuality requires new architectures, but also those related to the family, maternity and paternity, gender and women's issues, etc. We are not only faced with diversity, but also with the struggle for recognition of the demands of these new identities, which go through the freedoms of composing identities, exposing their preferences and seeing their demands recognised on an equal footing with other possibilities.

Table 1

*Religious Census in Brazil*

	2000	2010
Roman Catholicism	73.57%	64.63%
Brazilian Catholicism	0.29%	0.29%
Orthodox	0.02%	0.07%
Evangelical Mission	4.09%	4.03%
Pentecostal Evangelical	10.37%	13.30%
Non-Determined Evangelical	0.96%	4.83%
Other Christian	0.14%	0.77%
Adventist	0.12%	0.12%
Jehovah's Witness	0.65%	0.73%
Spiritualist	0.02%	0.03%
Spiritist	1.33%	2.02%
Umbanda/Candomblé	0.31%	0.31%
Judaism	0.05%	0.06%
Buddhism	0.13%	0.13%
New Oriental Religions	0.09%	0.08%
Other Oriental Religions	0.00%	0.01%
Islam	0.02%	0.02%
Esoteric Traditions	0.03%	0.02%
Indigenous Traditions	0.01%	0.03%
Other religions	0.01%	0.01%
No religion	7.35%	7.65%
Atheist		0.32%
Agnostic		0.07%
Undetermined and Multiple Affiliations	0.44%	0.49%
Total	100.00%	100.00%

Another example that we can mention brings with it national boundary issues, a traditional mark of identifying a population within a given territory, the brand of a nation, now confronted by globalisation. If at any given moment, the concept of globalisation sought to account for the flows of goods and capital between

the borders of countries, we can perceive that global issues require and imply recognition of the flows of people and cultures, as well as of risks that transcend national borders<sup>3</sup>. In this way, not only do we globalise goods and capital, but we realise that certain risks do not recognise traditional frontiers. From natural disasters (such as the one that caused a tsunami in Asia, reaching Africa), to disasters whose causes go back to the misuse of technologies (such as oil spills in the oceans), pollution caused by the greenhouse effect and global warming, as well as regional conflicts that promote flows of refugees, financial crises promoted by speculators who use legal flexibilities, as well as the extinction of jobs resulting from technological change and/or the transfer of industrial plants to other national domains, etc. All of these events have the globalisation of risk in common (Beck, 2010). Events such as these have caused new social and ecological, local and global guidelines to emerge.

Even at the core of the issues about the diversity and complexity of contemporary society, we can recall the flow of people and cultures through national borders. Certainly the flow of people is not a new fact, especially when we talk about Brazil. The new fact is not that countries such as Brazil receive immigrants, but the fact that these immigrants bring with them demands for recognition of their cultures and identities. Private cultures and identities that demand public recognition. The public space is no longer the space of homogenisation and becomes (what we might call) the post-Babel space, which seeks recognition of diversities.

These findings enable us to say that we would not only face greater religious diversity, but also facing diversity in societies (local diversity, but integrating global issues) and the emergence of new forms of recognition struggles in a more plural and complex world. The search for the homogenisation of civil society from an effective public power (the State) (by regulations and coercion), doesn't seem to respond appropriately to the agenda promoted by this complex plurality.

The supposed deficit of adequacy poses the question to us about the search for recognition, the publicity of the demands for the bias of the public presence of private values, beliefs and interests, the arrangement of which would take place in a secular and democratic society. Plural and complex societies are becoming strained by conflicting interests, coming from different groups, which seek to make their private demands public. The demands for recognition and the tensions arising from these claims are placed before us, as well as the way in which societies articulate and arrange such demands, which within a democracy are taken for granted. The case of religion is seen here as an example of arrangements that are accurate, in plural, complex societies, which have the fundamental political model in democracy. These societies value their secularism while understanding the ethical demand that the struggle for recognition requires.

In this sense, the plurality (here highlighted by religious diversity), which opens up the possibility of greater freedom of individual choice, and the organisation of religious institutions which arise in the field of advertising and even politics, taking the premise of freedom of expression, emphasise questions about secularism within a democratic State. From this common presence of diverse beliefs, we can perceive tensions arising from competing and co-present worldviews, religious and non-religious, sometimes with strong universalist biases. Tensions stemming from the presence of private beliefs (religious or philosophical) of a universalist nature, i.e., beliefs that, although private, specific to individuals or groups, have (community) as a premise to be valid for everyone, requesting the right, given as fundamental to these groups, to be observed by

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<sup>3</sup> We remember here, the distinction proposed by Ulrich Beck between globalism, which involves the flow of capital, and globalisation, which indicates the flow of people, cultures, etc. (Beck, 1999).

all. Compounded by the fact that such beliefs are both competing, and often, colliding, which involves a non-agreement purported by rival frameworks.

Our work aims to face the dilemma between freedom of conscience and expression and the public presence of universal beliefs in plural and complex societies, whose tense encounter between individuals and groups with conflicting beliefs which seek recognition of their demands, requires social ethics that do not turn diversity into fragmentary and violent ruptures.

### **Secularisation, Democracy and Globalisation, a Difficult Arrangement**

Interested in the confirmation of the growing plurality of society and the public presence of religions in Brazil, we intend to address the resulting overlapping tensions with the concomitant presence of universalistic bias ideologies in plural societies that allow us to perceive both the legitimate freedom of conscience and expression of each group, as well as the possibilities of mutual recognition. We reiterate that religion is presented to us here as a privileged space for reflection, which aims to emphasise the mutual presence of conflicting ideologies (worldviews) within the same society and which are, at best, demanding of recognition. In addition, we should note that religion allows us to perceive two axes of tension: The first among beliefs, resulting from religious diversity, while they can elicit conflicts determined by the universalist pretension inherent in certain beliefs; the second between religious ideologies and metaphysics and those ideologies and metaphysics that intend to replace or eclipse the religious. In both axes, it is possible to note the tensions promoted by particular beliefs of universalist bias. The paradox occurs when a plural and democratic society encounters particular worldviews with universalist pretensions, whether religious or secular.

We recall that the passage from the pre-modern to Modernity, which brings with it the question of loss of the central role (peripherisation) of religion in the social order, aroused the watchful eye of philosophers and social scientists. Society (more precisely the public space: The State and Civil Society), the rule of which was founded upon the law of nature and this is in the Scriptures, which refer to the mysterious law of God, starts to seek its civil constitution in positive codes, without that sacred and divine reference. The civil power that rested on the ultimate divine foundation and civil society, which watches over the eternal Laws, seek another order, that which, presumably, would not be tributary to religion. If society begins to seek order without the sacred reference, religion, hitherto present in all customary norms and codes, would be displaced to the periphery, relegated to a private belief. On the one hand, the rationalisation of society and the affirmation of the norm, on the other hand, the peripherisation and the plurality of religious beliefs.

This movement of rationalisation (and affirmation) of society, the public-social, and privatisation of religious beliefs, has been conventionally called secularisation. Secularisation took on an air of inexorability, purging all of the sacred from the public sphere of society, privatizing it (Pierucci, 1998). The advance of the secularisation of the public (and to a large extent, of the private) has implied and carried out the privatisation, or even certain elimination of religion<sup>4</sup>. Atheism ceased to be an excrescence liable to political condemnation, as in John Locke, in some cases becoming the usual<sup>5</sup>, the norm.

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting the debate between Luc Ferry and Marcel Gauchet, in which each of the debaters advocates a model of secularisation. While the first defends the appropriation of religious language, abandoning the divine reference, the second advocates the abandonment of this heritage and the search for a language. Both, however, start from the premise of an inexorably reversible secularisation (Ferry & Gauchet, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> We bear in mind European and Asian countries, with a strong presence of atheists.

Even if we discard the hypothesis of a mechanical determinism for secularisation<sup>6</sup>, there would be the hypothesis of the permanence of the belief that it would be imposed irreversibly, irresistible in societies undergoing modernisation. In such societies, which would adopt modern values<sup>7</sup>, the cooling of the public presence of the religious and a certain homogenisation would be verified<sup>8</sup>, on account of modern rationality, in the legal and social order, as well as the scientific order. On the other hand, if we take the hypothesis that secularisation can be understood as the passage from the use of consecrated resources, things and individuals, destined for the religious, to the secular use (Marramao, 1997), we must be sensitive to the pre-modern idea of a Christian Europe, i.e., to those fundamental beliefs that sought to make societies homogeneous from the universalist character of the Christian faith. From such beliefs, however, their transcendental references would be expurgated, once exposed to an immanentist rationalism, maintaining its universalist and homogenising character.

Secularised societies sought to move the transcendent foundation (Christian, i.e., God), in view of the establishment of an immanent foundation, notably rationalism: modern reason. This movement, of the passage from a transcendent foundation to an immanent foundation, gave rise to a modern criticism of the foundation itself<sup>9</sup>, or perhaps to rationalist fundamentalism. In contradiction to this Archimedean point, the modern took democracy as a reference, which was desired as opposed to the monarchy<sup>10</sup>. Thus, not only have they failed to restore the expurgated foundation, but also reintroduced plurality to the West, as opposed to the power of one. We have already pointed out earlier that our societies, from the last quarter of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, have become increasingly distant from those monistic, fundamentalist, universalist and homogenising beliefs, undermining not only theological metaphysics but also the metaphysics of secularisation. In a certain sense, secularisation still claims its own secularisation.

Secularisation, according to the perspective adopted and outlined above, can be understood as a movement based on and by reason (the metaphysical belief in the positivity of reason), which instigates a critique of the beliefs and values of religion, aiming at the autonomy and centrality of people, this is taken as the measure of all things. The transcendental-divine foundation would be replaced by the immanent rationality of people, preserving a certain requisite of homogeneity of society from a universal principle<sup>11</sup>. However, what can be verified in the second half of the twentieth century, is another arrangement, other than homogenisation from a universal principle.

Not only have societies pluralised within national borders, but differentiation in societies has become more evident: mutual presence and publicity as a demand for recognition. National borders have become more porous and the influx of people and cultures has broadened the diversity of societies. Globalisation does not only allow the flow of capital, but also the reduction of distances between cultures and mutual visibility. Plural

<sup>6</sup> According to the reading that Pierucci makes of Max Weber.

<sup>7</sup> From a certain immanent rationalism, in contrast to a logic founded on the transcendent, within a metaphysics, the ultimate foundation of which is the Law of God.

<sup>8</sup> Homogenisation on two axes: within the nation, within the borders of the nation State, determined by laws, language and certain habits; and commercial, marked by norms and management models of transnational companies, which requires both the homologous technical knowledge of its collaborators and legal adaptations in the countries in which they operate (Rondrik, 2012; Santos, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> We highlight here the critiques of Nietzsche and the nihilistic sense that it confers to modernity, as well as the critique of Max Weber (2004) to the intellectuals who seek a last plea to knowledge. We also highlight the work of Terry Eagleton (2016), which presents the fundamental work of modernity, aiming at a metaphysical anchorage, but which resulted in aporia.

<sup>10</sup> We underline the conflict between the power of one in opposition to the power of many.

<sup>11</sup> If reason leads to truth, which is one, the progress of reason leads to the uniformity of society, we might say.

societies, referenced within the democratic model, were confronted with the demands of recognition of groups that share the social space. When secular societies, which imply a certain homogenising bias from their universal reason, became democratised and globalised, they began to live with greater diversity and plurality, however, with the demand for recognition of these particularisms. The society, on the one secularised hand, which implies a certain prohibition of the public recognition of private beliefs (of those non-secular beliefs), and on the other democratic hand, based on freedom of conscience and expression, is strained by the sharing of a heterogeneous society, influenced by influxes and the presence of diversified cultures. This tension between the secular (homogenising) and the democratic (recognition of diversity) demands more complex models for the new local and global arrangements.

Secularisation articulated on the basis of political power and on social order, in democratic societies, found its limits when its ordering principle was faced with the plurality arising from globalisation. Secularisation, which brought with it the latent belief in the departure of religion from the public sphere, or even the withdrawal of religious belief from the private domain, was confronted with the question of the return of the religious and its demand for public recognition, its publicity<sup>12</sup> in plural societies. Secularisation, supported by the rationality of people, by the belief in the progress of knowledge and having the sense of its promises<sup>13</sup>, but confronted by the limits of reason, by nihilism, by the twentieth century and by globalisation, in democratic societies, found its verifiable limits in the return of the religious and in pluralism.

### **Democratic and Secular Society: A Possible Arrangement**

Some theories about secularism were proposed in order to establish local arrangements based on general principles that allowed us to go beyond the limits of monism. Leaving aside the idea that laicism is a French way of saying secularity (i.e., *laïcité*’esp pas secularization en français), Jean Bauberót and Micheline Milot (2011) proposed four articulable and interpretive principles for the secular State, namely: equality in the law, freedom of conscience, the wall of separation between Church and State, and the neutrality of the State vis-à-vis different religions.

Unlike the theories of secularisation, the architecture of which pointed to the inexorable homogenising universalisation given by means of a fundamental principle, such a theory of the secular State prioritises local arrangements based on the gravity conferred on each principle, i.e., on the privilege that each society confers on each one of these general principles. In some of these local arrangements, space can be offered to pluralities; therefore, such a society should arrange liberty with equality, neutrality with separation<sup>14</sup>. In this way, demonstrating both the differences between societies and their States, those differences can emerge resulting

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<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that one aspect of this religious advertising comes as a result of the modern propensity for knowledge. Research institutes, by arguing individuals about their beliefs and publishing the data in statistics, give visibility to the religion and make its presence public, albeit allegedly private. Say, to make it public that more than 22% of the Brazilian population claims to be evangelical, confers unprecedented political power to this social group. Let’s say, it puts the evangelicals in the political game.

<sup>13</sup> We recall here the first few words of Erich Fromm in “To Have or To Be?” (1987).

<sup>14</sup> An example of these weights and measures that configure local secularities can be obtained in a society that greatly values equality and substantially reduces individual freedoms. In this case, we would be tending toward a secular State of totalitarian bias; on the other hand, if society overvalues individual liberty over equality, we tend toward liberal societies, the inequalities of which become increasingly unjust. The secular arrangements do not point us only towards relationships between civil and religious power, as it allows us to understand the multiple and complex current metaphysical clashes therein.

from pluralities and that enable the struggles for recognition within each State<sup>15</sup>.

The proposition of secular States, according to our reading of Bauberót and Milot, dialogues, with little noise, with contemporary plurality and enables local arrangements in which freedom of conscience may be interwoven with freedom of expression, so dear to democracy and cosmopolitanism. Not only are freedom of expression and freedom of conscience co-extensive, but freedom and equality will seek their measure of local equilibrium<sup>16</sup>. Not only having the freedom to believe, but also the freedom to publicly present beliefs and seek recognition of the values interwoven into these beliefs, with a view to the democratic principle of majority participation (statistics and what is desired to be expanded) in the drafting of legislation and in compliance with the agreed arrangements. Similarly, in a democracy, equality in the application of the law does not imply a passive position of the citizen, who is only called upon to obey the laws. Equality of treatment, according to the democratic tradition, is obeying the laws which participated<sup>17</sup> in its production, without any of the parties of civil society being prohibited. Democracy points to participation within the laws, to which the broadening majority agrees. In this sense, the democratic State does not privilege or neutralise any of the parties of civil society in advance, it regulates the political debate and ensures compliance with the agreement, which is required in the demand for equality in the application of the law, while guaranteeing the freedom to believe and to express the demands of recognition. The democratic State recognises the demands and fosters dialogues aimed at agreements, albeit precarious, among the debaters<sup>18</sup>.

Now, the secular democratic State, as we are describing here, is not arranged as a homogenised society, a possibility which may be present in the secularist theory that is articulated with the nation State and the sovereignty of political power. On the contrary, the democratic and secular State assumes plurality in the fact, as given. It is in the sensitivity to the tensions themselves, arising from the struggles for recognition that the State seeks its neutrality and distinguishes itself (separates itself) from the diverse groups (of private interests) within civil society. The concepts of secularism and democracy approach when we pay attention to the premise that within a secular State, legislators and officials will be imbued with their duty not to respond to the wishes of particular groups, seeking to take care of the public, by the will of the majority (Blancarte, 2008).

In addition, we can say that the effectiveness (so to speak) of democratic secularism would be in the plurality, which hinders the production of the majority which brings with it, the claim to enforce its particular worldview (beliefs and ideologies) upon others. Before being a risk factor, the plurality of society (social fragmentation) becomes the medium in which each party seeks to make their demands recognised and to find arrangements that are formed as more or less stable agreements. In this sense, democracy (the power of many) and secularism (the absence of privilege and the denial of the prohibition of parties) are realised in the

<sup>15</sup> In their work, both Bauberót and Milot demonstrate how the arrangements arising from privileges to one or more principles, can configure different secular States. Thinking about secularism is, as we understand it here, first of all realising the clashes over the conceptual semantics and the privileges of general principles. See Milot, 2008 and Bauberót, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> We can think of equality as acting as a centrifugal force of concentration and eradication of the differences in society, compressing everything into a hard and serious core. On the other hand, we can think of freedom as acting as a centripetal force of dispersion and social fragmentation, widening distances and hampering solidarity. Joint action would enable a certain cohesion with differentiations.

<sup>17</sup> It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the forms of political participation, or the distinction between direct and representative democracy.

<sup>18</sup> It is worth pointing out the work of Véronique Lecaros, which deals with the transition of Peruvian society from the monopoly of the Catholic religion in the late nineteenth century, to a plural society in which the State recognises diversity and adopts secular principles through democratic debate (Lecaros, 2012). Thus, we can say that the democratic State does not aim at consensus, but at compromises and agreements.



possibility of contiguity.

If on the other hand we cannot talk of a secular State, but of arrangements of general principles that configure each localised secular State, and on the other hand, the design of this, according to the local arrangement of general principles, must enable articulation, by contiguity, with democracy, i.e., as a democratic and secular society. Through a democratic and secular State, embedded within a secular and democratic society, as we indicate here, there is the possibility of an arrangement for the expansion of freedom of belief (religious and non-religious conscience) and to express such beliefs, with the expansion of equality under the law. That is, the recognition of demands and participation in agreements that affect the groups involved, this arrangement being mediated by the State. In mediation and in guarantee of agreements, isonomically distanced from the parties<sup>19</sup>, we found the potential conditions of a State that would correspond to a secular and democratic society. Such a society implies the recognition of its plurality and freedom of expression as a way to fight for recognition.

In principle and as a matter of principle, in a democratic and secular society, religions (and any other beliefs, ideologies and lifestyles) would not be excluded from public debate (even those beliefs, private ideologies and particular lifestyles of a universalistic character). However, their demands should be subject to the production of majorities<sup>20</sup>. It is the absence, a priori, of a majority in a pluralistic and complex society that must prevent particular beliefs of universal character from imposing themselves on everyone. Unlike the theory of secularisation, as we point out above, carrying with it the belief in a legitimate elimination of religious belief in the public space (or even any beliefs with a metaphysical basis), States in a democratic and secular society will mediate legitimate conflicts and demands, in accordance with rules that regulate the public debate, without exception, as a matter of principle, of any of the debating parties. Democracy, then, comes to be understood, not as the space of consensus, but of the contradictory and of the clashes of worldviews, under the aegis of freedom and equality, mediated by a State that contests conflicts and guarantees signed agreements: neutral, according to the laws, and contrary to privileges.

We are not facing societies devoid of conflict, but those in which such conflicts find room for agreements through dialogue. We are not facing societies where the “peace of the graveyard” reigns, but those in which social justice is given through the recognition of differences, of the freedom to believe and not to believe, expressing beliefs and in which the debate and participation in the search for agreements between parties is broadened<sup>21</sup>. What we want here is to highlight the urgency of the expanded recognition of demands with a view to equality in treatment and to the freedoms of conscience and expression, mediated by a State which contests conflicts and guarantees agreements, according to democratic rules. A third element that, according to the rules, contests debate and enforces agreements.

### **Secular Cosmopolitanism: Recognition of Demands**

Social changes take place, most of the time, due to movements in the periphery of society, although that

<sup>19</sup> What is meant by the separation between the State and Civil Society, as well as the denial of privileges to one group to the detriment of others.

<sup>20</sup> See Miller, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> At this point we should be able to distinguish between differentiation and fragmentation. Perhaps we should think of fragmentation as diversity arranged with incommensurability, the lack of recognition of the other, and differentiation as a diversity with recognition. It is the recognition of the other that allows us to foresee an ethical opening, a certain search for values that at the same time inhibit the centrifugal movement of freedoms and the centripetal movements of equalities. Nevertheless, it escapes us to the limits of this work, although it fits the record.

does not mean that only the periphery provokes changes, so Ian Shapiro (2016) proposes in an instigating but hyperbolic way. There are no guarantees, however, that such changes will bring benefits to growing amounts of individuals or groups of such a society. If we do not get guarantees here, we should ask ourselves whether other non-peripheral groups of a society can guarantee them and at what cost. The purpose of our work is not such discussion, but, taking into account that our society (Brazilian: plural and complex) is said to be democratic and points to a State referenced in a secular society, we intend to discuss the potential conditions of a plural society, in which the groups consider that the freedom of expression of their demands in the public space will be taken up and discussed under the aegis of equality under the law. A society in which the prohibitions of secularisation (which excluded all obscurantist lines spoken) are no longer imposed on its constituent parts. I.e., the unilateral determination that forbids the free expression of religious (or philosophical) beliefs in claims for public recognition no longer produces a subservient response in these groups. These groups, understanding the democratic rules and the norms of the public debate, legally and legitimately organise themselves and place themselves within this debate.

We should highlight this point: According to the secularisation thesis, we say original, the secular power takes ownership of the goods of religion (for sacred use) and operates them in a secular manner, for non-religious purposes. At the same time, religion is moved from the centre of society, passing to the periphery, thus talk thereof becomes private, finding no public resonance. In spite of this modern prescription for religion (and private philosophies), religious parties are gaining legitimacy, according to democratic rule, and expounding their beliefs publicly, whether in the political sphere, or in civil society and the market. Supported by freedom and equality, they refer to legal channels and occupy advertising space, without submitting to secularisation. The secular power is no longer recognised as sovereign. In a democratic society, there is no way to curb the speech of a Senator or a Federal Representative of the Republic, whether he/she is presenting demands of religious parties, of minorities, or of class interests, etc., that is to say a representative of any belief whatsoever.

The alleged prohibitions are sometimes particularistic understandings with universalist bias, namely, ideology with a universal claim founded on beliefs other than those of the speakers who oppose it and seek to prevent it. If we have hitherto pointed to democratic and secular values, their procedures, general principles and arrangements, we realise that recognition requires an ethical, extra-legal, but social opening. If plurality and complexity are given by society, in particular civil society, they are the ethical values in the same society that we should seek. Our work requires us to shift the State's gaze toward society, leading us to a legal and coercive movement, to the pedagogical and the intersubjective. Secularism, as the arrangement of principles which take the State as a standardisation space for the struggles for recognition that distances it from the parties in dispute, and democracy as the form of participation in the ordering of society through the production of majorities, still lack an ethical route.

We indicate above the possibility that social changes also occur due to peripheral movements in society, by a certain displacement of the centre of social gravity. As Sérgio Paulo Rouanet tells us, "(a) change is necessary in the case of materially underprivileged groups or groups governed by repressive rules and institutions, and (b) it must be conducted in such a way as to take fully into account the autonomy of the people concerned" (Rouanet, 1990, p. 131). In other words, the displacement of social sensitivity to a place far from the centre (of an alleged point of balance, towards the space of vulnerability and neediness, recognising such

characteristics), would encourage a certain movement in society: the movement of freedom of speech and equality under the law. On the one hand, this shifting promoter of change may alter the socio-political centre of gravity: from the preservation of a given social order that benefits established groups, towards change through recognition. Such a shift requires another code of ethics, which recognises both the peripheral demands and the public speaking ability and skill of these concerned populations<sup>22</sup>.

The new arrangements arising from this debate will legitimise the participation of those concerned, excluding any consent by coercion (Rouanet, 1990, p. 142). The issue is that in a democratic and secular society, the premise of freedom of expression is assumed without a priori prohibitions, while opposing the various facets of the impositions of particular, universalist and homogenising beliefs, while the ethical component invites us to shift the centre of social gravity. So at this point, we open our dialogue with cosmopolitanism.

Let's address cosmopolitanism, which contains a critique of the homogenising models of universalist particularisms, in its various forms: beliefs, ideologies, and lifestyles. That which criticises the moral and cultural arrangements that are no longer legitimate in pluralisms and demands for recognition, pointing to segregation and injustice. Such cosmopolitan people, as Anthony Appiah tells us, signal the value not only of "human life, but of human lives in particular, which means to focus on the practices and beliefs that give them meaning" (2008, p. 13). Cosmopolitan equality is not imposing a heteronomous identity on that which is different, but also recognising the differences and individualities. The particularities and differences are valued, while rejecting the homogeneity of universalised particularisms.

This cosmopolitanism is not a project the end of which is given *a priori*, an ideal, but "it begins with the simple idea that in the human community, such as national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence, dialogue, in its oldest sense, of human life together, of association" (Appiah, 2008, p. 16). Such dialogues articulate universal values (precarious and provisionally established in communications), with local values (p. 18), recognising the particular human lives and the humanity that transcends borders, in an always provisional and never imposing articulation, to be a dialogue (p. 22). Its actions are guided by values, "and values also shape thoughts and feelings (p. 40) and "our language of values is one of the main ways to coordinate our lives with each other. We appeal to values when we try to do something together (p. 42).

The basic values that are present and expressed in our everyday language allow us to outwardly seek understanding by means of dialogue, i.e., a certain communication of values that we intend to share and guide our common actions. The cosmopolitan person does not take the belief in common and aprioristic values for granted, but in the willingness to dialogue in order for us to share a space of dialogue that opens us up to mutual recognition. Cosmopolitan people understand that our vocabulary is malleable and flexible, and it is these elements that allow for adjustments and agreements, as opposed to universalists who seek a specific, shared, unique and semantic vocabulary (p. 68). Although the vocabularies are different, in the meanings and in the importance of the values involved, it is the difference and concordance with what we have to do that leads us to act (pp. 76-77). We return to the question of freedom and equality: the malleability and non-fixity of the vocabulary allow us to reciprocally recognise each other. We would be faced with freedom of expression and equality in building agreements, even in the extra-legal field.

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<sup>22</sup> As Raymond Boudon points out, rationality and rational decisions are restricted to individuals or social groups, but they would be diffuse in society (Boudon, 2010).

Cosmopolitan people start from an observation: individuals within a society are different and society is plural, therefore “cosmopolitan people think that human diversity is important because it supports the need for cooperation and collaboration between people to live” (p. 109), thus “cosmopolitanism [...] begins with what is human in humanity” (p. 134). It is the difference, not the identity, that occupies a significant space in the cosmopolitan language, i.e., of cosmopolitan people:

They believe in human dignity beyond nations and live their belief. They share these ideals with others from around the world, speaking several languages. Like the good globalists they are, they make full use of the Internet. This brotherhood of men and women resists the frantic and growing consumerism of modern Western society. They also face the temptations of nationalism, the reducers of the nations from which they originate. They would never go to war on behalf of their country, but would be the first to engage in a campaign against any nation that was against universal justice. However, they flee from local submissions, reject traditional loyalties, are independent of their family clan. They are naturally opposed, because they believe in what is important to them: the building of an enlightened world community of men and women. That is why they discredit traditional religious authorities (and disagree with their obscurantism and condescension). They do not consider themselves totally anti-religious. Far from it in fact, but their faith is simple, clear and direct. They usually feel trapped between the fight against global demons and the discouragement of a hopeless struggle. However, they are always soldiers committed to making the world a better place. (Appiah, 2008, p. 137)

Secularism (not only the current idea of separation and neutrality of the State combined with the freedom and equality of individuals, but the shift of the maintenance of order away from the centre to the periphery which is demanding of recognition), democracy (the production of majorities through the struggle for recognition in civil society) and cosmopolitanism as the search for dialogue around ethical values recognisable in language, between individuals, allow us to glimpse potential conditions of sharing common spaces. A complex path that takes complex societies into account, but which recognises the individual as an ethical agent, i.e., an individual in plural societies.

### **Secular Religiosity in Plural Societies: Those Without Religion in the Brazilian Peripheries**

We start from the observation of a growing social plurality, exemplified in this work by religion. Such diversity on the one hand implies a greater array of opportunities for individual choices, collaborating with freedom of conscience, which brings freedom of expression with it in democratic societies. On the other hand, differences can produce tensions between the bearers of conflicting world views, who believe in universalist values, and who sometimes intend to create a homogenised society from their particular lifestyles. Such a plural society may tend to become fragmentary, and to glimpse Hobbesian hell in the distance: the war of everyone against everyone. Such a fragmentary, centrifugal bias was sought to be faced by centripetal models, which pointed to a foundation of secular order, that is, modern reason. In our case, we accepted the challenges posed by democracy and by secularism in plural societies, which led us to encounter cosmopolitanism as an ethical route, the recognition of legitimate differences and the effort of a common sharing of the social realm.

We recall that the criticism that modern secularism has laid on religion, that is to say, the order founded on a universal and metaphysical principle, returns to itself, by way of reflective criticism<sup>23</sup>. Resting on the sovereignty of universal Reason, the secularisation of people (abstract) as a measure of all things, seems to have found its Achilles tendon. Societies homogenised by a common theoretical conception of sovereign power and the nation State, ordered by positive institutions, as well as the homogeneity required by global enterprises, were confronted by the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Critical reflexivity, however, is not restricted to

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<sup>23</sup> Giddens, Beck, & Lash, 2012.

that made by intellectuals, but extends to the ordinary individual. The critical reflection made in the squares and in the taverns does not, however, bring with it unanimity about the meaning of a return to the *Status quo ante*, to the order founded on the metaphysics of religion, which can find an echo in the modern metaphysics of immanence. Critical reflection is embedded in freedom of conscience, freedom of expression and equality in the application of the law, not in the theoretical sense, but on an individual basis. Critical reflection is shifted from the intelligentsia to the ordinary individual, or rather, as Julien Benda would say, from the clergy to the layperson.

The layperson we are referring to is not necessarily that which resembles the secular, and is not necessarily an individual who has moved from an order founded on religious beliefs to an order founded on Reason and radical immanence. The layperson here is the one who—following the etymology of the Greek word—has no part in inheritance, as opposed to the clergy—*klerós*, heir, proprietor<sup>24</sup>. Faced with political inheritance and economic inheritance, or even facing religious inheritance and secular inheritance, the layperson is what we could call the socially excluded third party, he/she is neither part of the power of the State nor does he/she have any share in the power of the market<sup>25</sup>, nor in belonging to Religion nor in modern atheism, while living in societies governed by law and in which mercantile exchanges take place, as well as free bricolage of religious beliefs and is opposed to doctrines and dogmas. The layperson is the recognition of this presence in a non-central place<sup>26</sup> within the balanced order of the world. Decentralisation is what causes changes. The layperson however, is not ignorant, but is no longer institutionally identified, as he/she establishes a reflexive criticism in a free and equal way.

In our work, we have sought to investigate, on the one hand, the exhaustion of religious and secular metaphysics, which sought an unequivocal foundation for order. Such monistic beliefs found their limits in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in plural societies. On the other hand, models that favour democracy as a space for the recognition of plurality, secularism as a space for the recognition of freedom and equality and cosmopolitanism as the ethical space, as a confrontation of centrifugal forces in favour of a common sharing of the social sphere. For that, we take religion and the growing Brazilian religious pluralism, for example. At this moment, we turn to the non-religious who live on the peripheries of Brazilian cities as an example of a certain cosmopolitan and democratic secularity. To do so, let us take up statistics on religion in Brazil.

Individuals who call themselves non-religious are those who say they do not identify with established religions, but who profess to believe in God, spirits, or immaterial forces. The presence of non-religious people in the Brazilian urban peripheries has been noticed by researchers, whose works allow us to punctuate not only the self-professed secular, but also their choices based on a free and equal reflection, as well as their ethical determination.

<sup>24</sup> As Telmo Verdelho tells us, *klerós* and *laikós* refer in ancient Greek to heirs, to property owners, those who exercised economic and political power in the Greek city, while the layperson meant an unqualified person, “the zero degree on the social scales” (Verdelho, 2004, p. 24).

<sup>25</sup> Giorgio Agamben will call the people (2015) and Rancière (1996).

<sup>26</sup> Here, we can call this peripheral place non-central. According to Claudio Noronha, “the urban peripheries are characterised by being distant from urban centres. They have a great accumulation of deprivations and negative social indicators, caused, in large part, by the smaller presence of the State” (Noronha, 2012, p. 141).

Table 2

*Statistics on Religion in Brazil*

	1994	2000	2010 <sup>27</sup>	2016 <sup>28</sup>
Catholic	75.00%	73.57%	64.63%	50.00%
Evangelical	14.00%	15.42%	22.16%	29.00%
Others	6.00%	3.36%	5.56%	7.00%
No Religion	5.00%	7.35%	7.65%	14.00%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

We highlight the research conducted with a group of young people between 14 and 21 years of age, on the outskirts of the Municipality of Juiz de Fora, in the State of Minas Gerais, residents of the neighbourhood of Don Bosco, a place called Chapadão, who were self-professed non-religious. Such young people seek to confront identity fragmentation and collective instability through a common, collective project (Stepham, 2013, p. 90). Contrary to what we might suppose, that of a community experience that comes from belonging to social institutions, such as church and school, they search for common arrangements recognised by themselves, ways of self-identification, resisting identity through religious and scholastic membership (Stephan, 2013, p. 93). Such young people seek mutual cooperation through a common musical project.

One of them says he has turned away from religion “because he does not like what happens in churches in terms of the speeches of the priests and the demands of the evangelical churches that do not let him do what he wants” (Stephan, 2013, p. 104). Another will say that religion has lost its priority her life and that in times of need (she had been arrested) she has not been helped by religion (Stephan, 2013, p. 105). If on the one hand the institutions are not useful, some claim to turn to God again when they find themselves in trouble, or seek help from among close friends (p. 126). They are far from the interests of religion and they distance themselves from it, while turning to a certain sharing of the common good. Finally, according to the researcher, “...some adolescents even live without religions, others are indifferent, others do not speak of their religious leanings because they do not have religious language” (Stephan, 2013, p. 130). Moreover, to understand that in the absence of a language which accounts for these singular and shared heterogeneous experiences, perhaps “declaring oneself non-religious can be thought of as a protest and resistance” (Stephan, 2013, pp. 133-134).

Another work on the non-religious was produced in Baixada Fluminense, in the State of Rio de Janeiro. According to the research, we can say that to deny the self-declarations of these individuals is to deny them their own citizenship, i.e., it is to restrict their autonomy and authenticity, the freedom to compose their own biography, being hostage to heteronomically imposed identities. In addition, there would be two distinct groups of non-religious people: atheists and agnostics, unbelieving or doubtful of belief in the transcendent, and those non-religious people “with religious leanings”, those who are far removed from religious institutions but who retain some form of religious belief, who shift their religious leanings to the intimate sphere and detach themselves from institutional beliefs and practices (Rodrigues, 2012, pp. 1135-1136).

The striking feature of non-religious people is the distance from institutions. Atheists and agnostics reject or doubt some remaining belief, while others seek to maintain a certain religious leaning. What is configured here is a crisis of credibility of the institutions and an individual freedom to compose their beliefs (Rodrigues,

<sup>27</sup> The data corresponding to the years 2000 and 2010 were obtained from data from the IBGE and presented on page 1 of this work.

<sup>28</sup> The data corresponding to the years 1994 and 2016 were obtained from the São Paulo Datafolha Institute: extracted from <http://datafolha.folha.uol.com.br/opiniaopublica/2016/12/1845231-44-dos-evangelicos-sao-ex-catolicos.shtml> on 01/05/2017.

2012, p. 1142). Finally, it should be noted that, for Rodrigues:

In general, one who changes systems of meanings also changes social relations, redefining their identity according to the other, to a subculture. So, a specific context for approval of a particular lifestyle becomes indispensable, which can be referred to in the case of non-religious people, whose dynamic environment of high reflexivity makes their detachment from religious institutions possible. (Rodrigues, 2012, p. 1144)

Non-religious people, by means of a criticism of the religious institution, promote a movement out of the institution, without abandoning their religious leanings, thus turning to the community and to values that integrate and articulate those which may also be those of the religion. They criticise institutions, not only the religious ones, as they turn to the immediate community, articulating values that surpass it. A community that turns to the sharing of the common good.

To the south of the São Paulo Metropolitan Region, in the city of São Bernardo do Campo, we can also find individuals who call themselves non-religious. It is possible to verify, in these peripheries, “practices of reciprocity of material and symbolic goods of the residents (of favelas, or vulnerable communities)”. Such practices “find their effectiveness in kinship, neighbourhood, place of origin and migrant networks, as well as in social and religious networks” (Rivera, 2012, p. 25). Relationships in these social spaces are based on mutual credibility, on mutual trust. The research points to the fact that it is becoming increasingly common in these peripheries and communities, when faced with the question about religious belonging, to hear in response: “‘I have no religion at the moment’, ‘I do not go to any church’, ‘I would, but now I am quiet’, ‘I have never been a member of the church’, and ‘I believe in God, but I do not go to any church’” (p. 50). The relationship between belonging and believing dissolves in the face of authenticity as shared freedom.

To the north of the city of São Paulo, in the neighbourhoods of Cidade Tiradentes and José Bonifácio, in the East Zone, a periphery of São Paulo, other research does not allow recognition of non-religious people. For these, the belief in God allows them to say that “if not for God we do not live” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 487). Another will say that God is the one who hears prayers and prays in times of uncertainty (Nicolini, 2014, p. 491), or even that God is “a greater force [...], a creative force” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 492). For some, the community and the recognised presence of friends tells them that “God... this is it here! It is the air, God is love” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 502).

If on the one hand the beliefs in what they call God vary widely, without this creating doctrinal intensification around dogmas, it is the permanent conflict between religious people<sup>29</sup> and the lack of commitment among religious people, between the morals that they proclaim and the actions that do not always correspond, that determines the criticism and remoteness of the Church. These non-religious people appeal to religious and social tolerance as a counterpart of differences in beliefs. The criticism of religion still goes through the belief that “He is not in the Church, He is within me” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 490), while another youth tells us that going to church is “filling the sack [...] the people only talk, she prays” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 492).

There is a belief in God and a criticism of religion, and the overcoming of this contradiction takes place around an intimate identification as a child of God. But this belief is not a mystical faith, rather pragmatic, which allows them to identify each other with equal human dignity and the freedom to “put up a fight” (Nicolini, 2014, p. 503), i.e., to face one’s own difficulties of living in Brazilian urban peripheries. This

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<sup>29</sup> In the terms of our text, we would say that this clash takes the version of an ecclesial communitarianism, i.e., each community perceiving itself to be the bearer of truth and legitimates itself in the right to fight against lies, heresies and deviations.

movement of internalisation of human value and dignity from shared belief, cooperates, in the words of the non-religious, with a pragmatic movement to turn to action. However, it is not any action, because, according to their testimony, they turn against possessive individualism, the accumulation of the benefits of this divine inheritance for themselves. Non-religious people were unanimous in demonstrating their belief that evil is this closing in on oneself, this accumulation of goods for individual benefit.

It is in this sense that they turn against the churches, because the dogmatic defences go beyond strengthening the truth against the lies; rather, they seek to determine the exclusive truth for themselves, beyond which everything is a lie, and within which there is the exclusivity of salvation. The rich and the churches, which accumulate for themselves, are the expression of evil, while the good, those who practice being the children of God every day, the ones who go to the struggle, it is the sharing of resources and needs. Whether it is in participation in political-trade union movements, in social movements, or within communities and families, there is an ethic of the common good, which turns against the ethics of accumulation and individualism.

Non-religious people criticise the empowerment of truth, promoted by the institutions, the Church and the religion. However, they find the same human dignity in their divine affiliation that aids them in their ethics of sharing the common good. They transpose the ethical values on which they are founded beyond the local community. Their political, social and community (and family) struggles do not aim at a personal good, but refer to those values that they believe should be defended, many of which they inherit from their own religion. Values that permeate the community, but which are extrapolated within it.

### Conclusion

Based on the observation of the existing plurality in societies such as Brazil, evidenced by religious diversification, our work seeks to criticise the possible contiguity of religious metaphysics from the premise of secularisation, and to point to a secularism that is already interwoven into the diversity of societies and their local arrangements of general principles. In view of such plurality and the methods of arranging secularism, we therefore emphasise the democratic claim to freedom of conscience and expression, as well as equality. We aim for the ethical demand that such a society carries, which led us to cosmopolitanism. A secular, democratic, cosmopolitan society, as opposed to the secular nation State and founded on sovereign power.

In such secular, democratic and cosmopolitan societies, there would be no a priori exclusion of private discourses with a universalist claim, as is the case with certain religious and secular metaphysical beliefs, but rejection thereof when they do not form majorities. Dissent would be an inhibiting factor in the imposition of these discourses, while recognition of the demands would fuel the debates, broadening the perception of minorities. In democratic societies, secularism would not exclude religion from public debate, but this would require the formation of majorities.

Modern criticism of religion has enabled us to perceive the reflexive critique of modernity, and its fundamental discourses, its metaphysics of modern Reason. Reflective criticism is closely tied to the pluralism of societies like Brazil, while modern values such as freedom to believe and not to believe, as well as to express beliefs, or to keep them quiet, which ensure and establish formal equality, encourage and update the criticism. Such critical reflexivity, present in the ordinary individual, leads to self-production (we could say: autopoiesis) of beliefs.

Our last step was to move the sense of secularism closer to that of the periphery in order to exemplify this self-production of belief without identifying with religion. Maintaining reference in freedom and equality,



articulated with cosmopolitanism, we present research that points to this poetic religiosity of the non-religious in the Brazilian urban peripheries. Far from producing religions of individuals, the non-religious are seeking an equal dignity in divine affiliation and turning to the recognition of the other as the privileged place of social action.

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