

**SPIRITUALITY, ETHICS AND MORALITY IN PSYCHOLOGY: FOUNDATIONS
FOR AN INTEGRAL EDUCATION**

**ESPIRITUALIDADE, ÉTICA E MORAL NA PSICOLOGIA: FUNDAMENTOS
PARA UMA EDUCAÇÃO INTEGRAL**

**ESPIRITUALIDAD, ÉTICA Y MORAL EN LA PSICOLOGÍA: FUNDAMENTOS
PARA UNA EDUCACIÓN INTEGRAL**



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ABSTRACT

Spirituality, ethics, and morality have been recognized as essential dimensions for understanding human development and integral education. This article aims to analyze, from a psychological perspective, the interfaces between spirituality, morality, and ethics, discussing how these dimensions contribute to the construction of an integral education oriented toward humanization, critical consciousness, and transcendence. Initially, conceptual delimitations are presented that distinguish spirituality (search for meaning and transcendence), morality (social norms and customs), and ethics (critical reflection on action), articulating them as structuring dimensions of consciousness and integral formation. Subsequently, through a theoretical-reflective bibliographic review with a qualitative approach and exploratory character, the study examines an overview of the main psychological currents that address these themes. The analysis encompasses Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy, Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology (Maslow, Rogers, Grof), Existential Phenomenological Psychology (May, Yalom), Psychology of Religion (James, Allport), psychoanalytic perspectives of Freud and Jung, Cultural and Systemic Psychology (Bronfenbrenner, Bateson, Csikszentmihalyi), Positive Psychology and Neurosciences of Spirituality (Pargament, Koenig, Seligman, Emmons, Miller), Contemporary Moral Psychology (Haidt, Narvaez), Developmental Psychology (Kohlberg, Fowler, Oser and

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Gmünder), Historical-Cultural Psychology (Vygotsky, Leontiev), and Liberation Psychology (Martín-Baró). The results indicate that, although they start from distinct epistemological assumptions, the various psychological schools converge in recognizing spirituality as a dimension that shapes consciousness, promotes meaning, and guides moral action, demonstrating that it transcends the religious field and assumes a psychological, ethical, and pedagogical character. It is concluded that the integration of these dimensions in integral education, reinforced by the contributions of Ken Wilber's Integral Psychology and the spiritual strategies of Richards and Bergin, fosters self-knowledge, the development of values, and the capacity to attribute meaning to existence, contributing to the formation of emotionally balanced, socially responsible, and spiritually conscious subjects. The study reinforces the need for dialogue between psychology and education, promoting a human formation that integrates reason, emotion, and transcendence.

Keywords: Logotherapy. Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology. Psychology of Religion. Existential and Phenomenological Psychology. Historical-Cultural Theory.

RESUMO

A espiritualidade, a ética e a moral têm sido reconhecidas como dimensões essenciais para a compreensão do desenvolvimento humano e da formação integral. Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar, sob a perspectiva da psicologia, as interfaces entre espiritualidade, moral e ética, discutindo como essas dimensões contribuem para a construção de uma educação integral orientada pela humanização, pela consciência crítica e pela transcendência. Inicialmente, apresentam-se delimitações conceituais que distinguem espiritualidade (busca de sentido e transcendência), moral (normas e costumes sociais) e ética (reflexão crítica sobre o agir), articulando-as como dimensões estruturantes da consciência e da formação integral. Em seguida, por meio de uma revisão bibliográfica de natureza teórico-reflexiva, com abordagem qualitativa e caráter exploratório, o estudo examina um panorama das principais correntes psicológicas que abordam essas temáticas. A análise abrange a Logoterapia de Viktor Frankl, a Psicologia Humanista e Transpessoal (Maslow, Rogers, Grof), a Psicologia Existencial Fenomenológica (May, Yalom), a Psicologia da Religião (James, Allport, Ancona-Lopez), as perspectivas psicanalíticas de Freud e Jung, a Psicologia Cultural e Sistêmica (Bronfenbrenner, Bateson, Csikszentmihalyi), a Psicologia Positiva e as Neurociências da Espiritualidade (Pargament, Koenig, Seligman, Emmons, Miller), a Psicologia Moral Contemporânea (Haidt, Narvaez), a Psicologia do Desenvolvimento (Kohlberg, Fowler, Oser e Gmünder), a Psicologia Histórico-Cultural (Vygotsky, Leontiev) e a Psicologia da Libertação (Martín-Baró). Os resultados indicam que, embora partam de pressupostos epistemológicos distintos, as diversas escolas psicológicas convergem ao reconhecer a espiritualidade como dimensão formadora da consciência, promotora de sentido e orientadora do agir ético e moral, demonstrando que ela transcende o campo religioso e assume caráter psicológico, ético e pedagógico. Conclui-se que a integração dessas dimensões na educação integral, reforçada pelas contribuições da Psicologia Integral de Ken Wilber e pelas estratégias espirituais de Richards e Bergin, favorece o autoconhecimento, o desenvolvimento de valores e a capacidade de atribuir sentido à existência, contribuindo para a formação de sujeitos emocionalmente equilibrados, socialmente responsáveis e espiritualmente conscientes. O estudo reforça a necessidade de diálogo entre psicologia e educação, promovendo uma formação humana que integra razão, emoção e transcendência.

Palavras-chave: Logoterapia. Psicologia Humanista e Transpessoal. Psicologia da Religião. Psicologia Existencial e Fenomenológica. Teoria Histórico-Cultural.

RESUMEN

La espiritualidad, la ética y la moral han sido reconocidas como dimensiones esenciales para la comprensión del desarrollo humano y de la formación integral. Este artículo tiene por objetivo analizar, bajo la perspectiva de la psicología, las interfaces entre espiritualidad, moral y ética, discutiendo cómo estas dimensiones contribuyen a la construcción de una educación integral orientada por la humanización, por la conciencia crítica y por la trascendencia. Inicialmente, se presentan delimitaciones conceptuales que distinguen espiritualidad (búsqueda de sentido y trascendencia), moral (normas y costumbres sociales) y ética (reflexión crítica sobre el actuar), articulándolas como dimensiones estructurantes de la conciencia y de la formación integral. En seguida, por medio de una revisión bibliográfica de naturaleza teórico-reflexiva, con abordaje cualitativo y carácter exploratorio, el estudio examina un panorama de las principales corrientes psicológicas que abordan estas temáticas. El análisis abarca la Logoterapia de Viktor Frankl, la Psicología Humanista y Transpersonal (Maslow, Rogers, Grof), la Psicología Existencial Fenomenológica (May, Yalom), la Psicología de la Religión (James, Allport, y Ancona-Lopez), las perspectivas psicoanalíticas de Freud y Jung, la Psicología Cultural y Sistémica (Bronfenbrenner, Bateson, Csikszentmihalyi), la Psicología Positiva y las Neurociencias de la Espiritualidad (Pargament, Koenig, Seligman, Emmons, Miller), la Psicología Moral Contemporánea (Haidt, Narvaez), la Psicología del Desarrollo (Kohlberg, Fowler, Oser y Gmünder), la Psicología Histórico-Cultural (Vygotsky, Leontiev) y la Psicología de la Liberación (Martín-Baró). Los resultados indican que, aunque partan de presupuestos epistemológicos distintos, las diversas escuelas psicológicas convergen al reconocer la espiritualidad como dimensión formadora de la conciencia, promotora de sentido y orientadora del actuar ético y moral, demostrando que ella trasciende el campo religioso y asume carácter psicológico, ético y pedagógico. Se concluye que la integración de estas dimensiones en la educación integral, reforzada por las contribuciones de la Psicología Integral de Ken Wilber y por las estrategias espirituales de Richards y Bergin, favorece el autoconocimiento, el desarrollo de valores y la capacidad de atribuir sentido a la existencia, contribuyendo para la formación de sujetos emocionalmente equilibrados, socialmente responsables y espiritualmente conscientes. El estudio refuerza la necesidad de diálogo entre psicología y educación, promoviendo una formación humana que integra razón, emoción y trascendencia.

Palabras clave: Logoterapia. Psicología Humanista y Transpersonal. Psicología de la Religión. Psicología Existencial y Fenomenológica. Teoría Histórico-Cultural.

1 INTRODUCTION

Spirituality, morality, and ethics have emerged as fundamental dimensions for understanding human development in its entirety, especially in the fields of psychology and education. This discussion gains relevance in the contemporary context, marked by crises of meaning, the weakening of social bonds, and the growing medicalization of emotions. In the educational and psychological fields, these dimensions assume a significant role in promoting well-being and mental health, a connection widely documented by the epidemiology of religion and spirituality of Levin (2022), and of solidary coexistence of Gerone (2015).

The present research is based on the premise that understanding spirituality, morality, and ethics is indispensable for rethinking human formation and educational processes considering integrality. Integral formation requires not only the mastery of technical and cognitive knowledge but also the cultivation of ethical, affective, and spiritual dimensions that sustain coexistence and the meaning of life. In this context, spirituality is understood as an experience of self-transcendence and a search for meaning that guides the human being to act in a responsible and solidary manner, constituting the symbolic and emotional dimension where moral and ethical values are rooted.

In the field of psychology, spirituality, morality, and ethics have been studied under different theoretical approaches, which, although distinct in their foundations, converge in the understanding that these dimensions are essential to the constitution of human subjectivity. The main psychological approaches recognize spirituality as an integrating force, related to the search for meaning, the formation of consciousness, and moral development. The classic and contemporary authors of psychology analyzed in this study offer an overview of the relationship between spirituality, ethics, and morality. Although this relationship is not, in almost of all cases, the main focus of the psychological schools addressed, they emerge as correlative and interpretive themes, present transversally in reflections on subjectivity, behavior, and human development.

Thus, we seek to answer the following question: how can spirituality, morality, and ethics, understood in their psychological interrelationships, contribute to a conception of integral education that promotes the full and humanized development of the subject? To this end, this article aims to analyze, from a psychological perspective, the interfaces between spirituality, morality, and ethics, discussing how these dimensions contribute to the construction of an integral education oriented by humanization, critical consciousness, and transcendence.

Methodologically, the present study is characterized as a theoretical-reflective bibliographic review, with a qualitative approach and an exploratory character. The limitation of the study regarding the breadth of the theme and the multiplicity of possible references is recognized; however, the adopted scope allows for a comparative and integrative analysis between different psychological traditions, highlighting their convergences around the integral formation of the human being. The study is the result of the activities of GEPEES – Study and Research Group in Education, Ethics, and Society and CCDEB – Center for Science for the Development of Basic Education, which are dedicated to reflecting on integral education and its interfaces with morality, ethics, and spirituality.

2 SPIRITUALITY, MORALITY AND ETHICS: CONCEPTUAL DELIMITATIONS

In this article, spirituality is understood as the dimension of human experience that involves the search for the meaning of life, the feeling of belonging, empathy, joy, solidarity, and the cultivation of values that transcend the material. It is a condition inherent to human nature, prior to and independent of religion, but which can be expressed in it. Spirituality is, therefore, an experience of transcendence and integration, which enables the subject to understand themselves, the other, and the world, guiding life in an ethical and meaningful way.

Based on this foundation, the present analysis, grounded in Gerone (2025), articulates this understanding with the concepts of morality and ethics. Morality refers to the set of norms, laws, and social customs that guide human behavior, configured as the practice and cultural tradition of a community. Ethics is understood as a critical and conscious reflection on acting and living well, aimed at the search for a just life and dignity. Thus, while morality regulates coexistence and establishes limits, ethics guides the meaning and intentionality of actions, allowing the human being to reflect on the why and for what of their acts.

In this way, spirituality gives depth and meaning to human action; ethics offers reflective and valiant direction; and morality translates these principles into concrete practices of coexistence. These dimensions, analyzed here together, structure consciousness and guide the integral formation of the subject, the foundation on which an education committed to dignity, freedom, and humanization is built.

From this conceptual basis, it is understood that spirituality, morality, and ethics are intertwined as formative dimensions of consciousness and constitute the basis of an integral education. This approach is reinforced by Ken Wilber's Integral Psychology (2001), which

proposes a model that seeks to integrate the various dimensions of the human being, including the spiritual, into a single framework, and by authors such as P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin (1997), who advocate the integration of spiritual strategies in psychotherapy.

According to Moll et al. (2017), integral education proposes the full development of the human being in all its dimensions: intellectual, emotional, corporal, social, ethical, and spiritual, recognizing the subject in its totality and overcoming the fragmentation between reason and sensibility. To educate integrally, therefore, means to favor self-knowledge, the development of values, and the ability to attribute meaning to one's own existence, enabling learning to also become a process of inner formation and commitment to the other.

3 OVERVIEW OF SPIRITUALITY, ETHICS AND MORALITY IN PSYCHOLOGY

In Logotherapy, Viktor Frankl (1989) postulates spirituality as the expression of the will to meaning and self-transcendence, recognizing it as a healing and formative force of the human being. Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology, represented by Abraham Maslow (1962; 1964), Carl Rogers (1961), and Stanislav Grof (1988), presents spirituality as a dimension of psychological maturation, associated with self-actualization, authenticity, and the fullness of existence. Existential Phenomenological Psychology, inspired by Rollo May (1975) and Irvin Yalom (1980), conceives of spirituality as an existential experience that emerges from the confrontation with freedom, finitude, and the ethical commitment to life. The Psychology of Religion, a specific area for the study of spirituality, arises with the contributions of William James (1902), Gordon Allport (1950), and Ancona-Lopez (2002), who investigate the role of beliefs, symbols, and religious and spiritual practices in the constitution of subjectivity and morality, showing how faith and meaning influence ethical behavior and psychic balance. In the thought of Freud (1927) and Jung (1978), although in different ways, dialogues with religiosity emerge: the former interprets it as a projection of human needs for protection, while the latter recognizes it as a symbolic expression of the psyche and a path to individuation.

In other approaches, in Cultural and Systemic Psychology, represented by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), Gregory Bateson (1972), and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), spirituality emerges as an ecological and relational phenomenon, manifested in the interactions between individual, culture, and community. In Positive Psychology and the Neurosciences of Spirituality, a specific area of study on the topic, Kenneth Pargament (1997; 2007), Harold Koenig (2012), Martin Seligman (2011), and Lisa Miller (2021), empirically

reveal that spiritual experience is associated with emotional resilience, empathy, hope, and mental health, strengthening the ethical dimension and inner balance. Contemporary Moral Psychology, with Jonathan Haidt (2012) and Darcia Narvaez (2014), demonstrates that moral judgments result from the integration of emotion and cognition, indicating that morality is also an expression of empathy and spiritual consciousness.

Developmental Psychology, represented by Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), James Fowler (1992), Fritz Oser, and Paul Gmünder (1991), shows that faith, values, and spirituality evolve throughout life, contributing to the formation of ethical judgments and moral maturation. In Historical-Cultural Psychology, from Lev Vygotsky (1998) and Alexei Leontiev (1978), spirituality is associated with the symbolic and relational production of meanings, mediated by language, culture, and affectivity, a view deepened by contemporary authors such as Brandenburg (1998), Estep Jr. (2002), Olivares Rosado et al. (2022) y Borges & Zambrano (2023). Lastly, Liberation Psychology, as developed by Ignacio Martín-Baró (1986; 1998; 2011), proposes spirituality as ethics and social commitment, postulating a psychological framework oriented toward human liberation, solidarity, and the transformation of oppressive structures.

Despite their differing theoretical emphases, these perspectives find a common ground in recognizing that spirituality is a dimension that shapes consciousness, promotes meaning, guides ethics, and serves as the foundation of morality. This convergence strengthens the dialogue between psychology and education, which can share insights on the importance of the integral development of human beings. Psychology, by investigating the processes of self-knowledge, morality, and transcendence, offers scientific and humanistic foundations for understanding spirituality as an experience of meaning and psychic equilibrium. Integral education, in turn, translates these understandings into pedagogical practices oriented toward humanization, ethical coexistence, and emancipation. Thus, it is observed that, despite starting from distinct references, the various psychological currents align in understanding spirituality as an integrating force in human life, a dimension that unites reason, emotion, and transcendence, articulating knowledge and values in ethical and moral formation. This convergence supports the conception of integral education as a formative project that integrates knowledge and meaning, cognition and affectivity, freedom and responsibility, promoting the full and humanized development of the self.

If Frankl's Logotherapy focuses on the individual search for meaning as the driving force of existence, Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology expands this view by

postulating self-transcendence as a broader stage of psychological maturation. Developed by Viktor Frankl, Logotherapy is defined as a theoretical-practical system specifically concerning the search for the meaning of life. For Frankl (1989), self-transcendence exists in the human being, and this leads the individual to seek and possess a will to meaning. However, according to the author, this will be meaning is currently failing in society. Increasingly, people turn to us, psychiatrists, complaining of feelings of meaninglessness and emptiness, a sensation of futility and absurdity. They are victims of the mass neurosis of today (Frankl, 1989, p. 82). Frankl also points out that this existential void is due to the absence of the value of self-transcendence in society, thus causing neuroses and suffering. Therefore, it is the responsibility of mental health professionals—psychotherapists and psychiatrists—to help people heal through a relationship between the somatic dimension (bodily and physiological phenomena), the psychological dimension (instincts, conditioning, and cognitions), and the noetic dimension, which derives from the Greek *nous* and signifies spirit (Frankl, 1989).

From the perspective of integral education, this vision holds formative value when pedagogical practices recognize that the human being is driven by meaning. Educating, in this way, it's helping the subject find significance for their experiences, transforming suffering into learning, and recognize themselves as responsible and free. Frankl's Logotherapy thus inspires a pedagogy of meaning: an education that embraces the spiritual dimension of the human being, helping to integrate body, mind, and spirit. In this approach, knowledge is not an end in itself, but a means to promote dignity, self-knowledge, and transcendence. Integral education, by incorporating Franklian spirituality, becomes a space for humanization where learning is also about discovering the purpose of existence and acting with responsibility toward life and others.

The Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology, represented by Abraham Maslow (1962, 1964), Carl Rogers (1961), and Stanislav Grof (1988), established itself as the "third force" in modern psychology by proposing a vision of the human being centered on their self-actualization, freedom, and potential for transcendence. Maslow (1954; 1962) introduced the notion of self-transcendence, a stage that surpasses the ego and leads the individual to the search for meaning, altruism, and integration with something greater. Rogers (1961), in turn, highlighted the actualizing tendency, an innate drive toward growth and authenticity that flourishes in contexts of empathy, acceptance, and congruence.

Complementarily, Grof (1998) expanded these ideas by recognizing that psychological development can include transpersonal states of consciousness, in which the subject transcends their individual identity, fostering experiences of unity, responsibility, and care for life. In this perspective, spirituality emerges and can be understood as a dimension of psychological maturation, expressed in the capacity for empathy, openness, and inner integration. Self-actualization and self-knowledge are understood as forms of lived spirituality, where personal growth is articulated with ethics and morality as an expression of human fullness. This view, by emphasizing the flourishing of potential and the ethical commitment to the other, aligns closely with the proposal of integral education, which seeks to form individuals who are conscious of themselves, others, and the world.

While Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology focuses on the potential for self-realization, Existential-Phenomenological Psychology deepens the analysis of the fundamental conditions of existence. In this framework, spirituality emerges as a central dimension of human experience, intimately linked to the awareness of freedom, responsibility, and finitude according with May (1975) and Yalom (1980). In this view, the meaning of life is not automatically given but is constructed from the confrontation with the "givens" of existence: death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness. For May (1975; 1989), issues like anxiety, meaning, will, and the value of life are structural elements of the human being, and spirituality can be understood as the inner movement that emerges when the individual becomes aware of these existential dilemmas and chooses to act authentically.

3.1 ETHICS AND MATURITY IN THE EXISTENTIAL VIEW

Ethics and morality, from this perspective, cease to be external rules and become expressions of the inner coherence of what the subject chooses based on the value they attribute to their own life and the lives of others. Thus, spiritual development is not limited to the acquisition of beliefs or the explication of dogmas, but is translated into a movement of existential maturation: the subject perceives themselves as free, recognizes their responsibility, confronts the finitude of life, and adopts an ethical stance toward others and the world. This process of internalization and conscious choice of one's way of being in the world is articulated with educational proposals aimed at integral human formation, where learning is not reduced to technique or content, but to the construction of meaning, the cultivation of values, and the formation of conscience.

Starting from existential anxieties, the Psychology of Religion offers a specific field to investigate how belief systems and spiritual practices manifest in human behavior. This field constitutes a consolidated area of study on the relationship between behavior, beliefs, and religious and spiritual experiences. According to Ancona-Lopez (2002), this area investigates how religious and spiritual experience influences attitudes, values, personality, and mental health, understanding religiosity as a psychological, symbolic, and social phenomenon. The first systematic studies date back to the early 20th century with William James (1902), who analyzed religious and spiritual experiences as inner experiences of meaning and personal transformation. Subsequently, Gordon Allport (1950) distinguished between the intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of religiosity, showing that faith can both promote moral maturity and serve superficial social interests. In this way, the Psychology of Religion broadens the understanding of spirituality as a constitutive dimension of subjectivity and human development, offering support for reflection on ethical formation and integral education, by recognizing that the search for meaning and the cultivation of values are an essential part of the human experience.

The view of the positive contribution of religion is contrary to that of Sigmund Freud. In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud describes religion as causing neurotic and psychotic symptoms, and therefore being unhealthy (Krindges, 2016). The critique of religion is not based on discussions about the existence or non-existence of God; nor does it disqualify the importance of the religious phenomenon (that which is of the Spirit), but it focuses on the psychological value of religious ideas, which, in Freud's context, were associated with human anxieties and needs for protection. The neurotic and the believer (one who believes) both need to be saved—these are pertinent aspects of someone who needs to feel protected. Another association is that the neurotic saves themselves with obsessive rituals of repetition, which is often found in religious practices. To avoid this, it is necessary to seek the meaning of life in terms of the subject's responsibility for their own life and the meaning they give it, not simply through religious means. To Krindges (2016) his will have an ethical and moral unfolding when the subject assumes and adopts it based on conscience.

For Gomes and Famelli (2009), within a Jungian vision, countless neuroses are primarily linked to the fact that the religious needs of the soul are no longer taken seriously by psychology. Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) treats religion as an analytical psychological factor. It's important to point out that Jung was the son of a pastor, which is why he became sensitized to religious and symbolic manifestations and how they were represented in the

human mind. In this context, Jung (1978) considered religion to be associated with a force equivalent to an instinct, a genuine phenomenon in the subject's process of individuation.

In this regard, the phenomenon understood as something inherent to human nature is spirituality, which is expressed in symbols, such as religion. Aware of symbolic importance, Jung (1978) emphasizes that the human being develops a religious attitude, independent of creed, because this allows for self-knowledge. Furthermore, the Self can be associated with the idea of spirituality, as, for Jung (1978), it is something existential and belongs to the personality, the soul, and the human spirit. The ego, in turn, is formed throughout human development, especially in social relationships. This is related to the construction of religious creeds and dogmas, which occurs in religious cultural socialization or in the religious community. Thus, it is possible to understand that in Jung there is a connection between spirituality and religiosity with the growth and individuality of the person.

The Freudian and Jungian perspectives, although opposed in many aspects, converge on one essential point: both recognize that the spiritual dimension—whether understood as belief, symbolism, or the search for meaning—exerts influence on psychic balance and human development, sometimes through conflict, sometimes through integration. While Freud warns of the risks of alienation and the unconscious repetition of religious patterns, in Jung it is possible to elaborate an education aimed at the integration of the psyche, where the Self is recognized and cultivated. Integral education, inspired by these perspectives, proposes a pedagogy that recognizes interiority as a space for formation: a place where rational knowledge meets the symbolic, the emotional, and the spiritual. In this sense, spirituality becomes the foundation for ethical and moral development, leading the subject to an expanded consciousness of self, others, and life.

The contemporary approaches of Cultural and Systemic Psychology, represented by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), Gregory Bateson (1972), and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), understand human development as an interdependent process among the individual, the environment, and culture. In this perspective, spirituality emerges as an ecological and relational phenomenon, manifesting itself in the interactions and systems that structure social life.

Bronfenbrenner (1979), in proposing the Ecological Theory of Human Development, highlighted that personal growth is the result of the dynamic interaction between different contexts—family, school, community, and culture—which allows for the understanding of spirituality as an experience mediated by bonds and belonging. Bateson (1972), by

introducing the concept of the ecology of mind, reinforced the idea that mind and environment constitute an integrated system, in which symbolic and communicative processes are essential for balance and learning. Csikszentmihalyi (1990), in his studies on the state of flow, emphasized that human fulfillment and the sense of transcendence arise when the individual finds harmony between attention, purpose, and creative engagement with the world.

Thus, Cultural and Systemic Psychology broadens the understanding of spirituality and morality, situating them as collective and contextual constructions, shaped by relationships, practices, and shared values. This interpretation shows that ethical and spiritual development emerges in coexistence and cooperation, supporting the principles of integral education, which values dialogue, empathy, and the sense of belonging as foundations for human and social formation.

Positive Psychology and the Neurosciences of Spirituality have stood out for offering empirical bases for the study of the relationship between spirituality, well-being, and mental health. Researchers such as Kenneth Pargament (1997; 2007), Harold Koenig (2012), Martin Seligman (2011), and Lisa Miller (2021) demonstrate, through longitudinal studies and neuropsychological analyses, that spiritual experience is associated with emotional resilience, the strengthening of bonds, and the construction of life purpose.

Pargament (1997) was one of the first to propose theoretical models that explain how spiritual and religious practices aid in stress regulation and coping with adversity, while Koenig (2012) evidenced, in systematic reviews, that spirituality is positively correlated with indicators of mental health, quality of life, and ethical behavior. Seligman (2011), in developing Positive Psychology, included spirituality among the components of human flourishing, highlighting virtues such as hope and compassion. Gratitude, in particular, was extensively researched by Robert Emmons (2013), who positions it as a central element for well-being and spirituality, strengthening values and ethical engagement.

The work of Lisa Miller (2021), especially in *The Awakened Brain*, deepens the neuroscientific understanding of spirituality. Her studies, using functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI), demonstrate that spirituality is not just a psychological construct, but has distinct neural correlates. Individuals with an active spiritual life exhibit an increase in cortical thickness in regions of the brain associated with sensory perception and self-reflection, suggesting that spirituality can strengthen neural networks related to consciousness and perception. Miller argues that the human brain is innately prepared for

spirituality, and that nurturing this capacity can lead to greater resilience, well-being, and protection against depression.

These approaches, by integrating science and spirituality, reinforce that moral and ethical principles are not limited to the compliance with norms, but express a spiritual consciousness in action, oriented toward self-care and the care of others. This understanding offers important support to integral education, which, by valuing self-knowledge, empathy, and the cultivation of values, contributes to the formation of emotionally balanced, socially responsible, and spiritually conscious individuals.

In Psychology and Neuroscience, the geneticist Dean Hamer (*The God Gene: How Faith Is Hardwired Into Our Genes*, 2005) proposes that predispositions for spiritual experiences may have biological bases. Hamer identifies the VMAT2 gene as possibly related to self-transcendence, a phenomenon that manifests in the individual's tendency to transcend personal interests and seek connection with something greater. Although this hypothesis is still under investigation, it suggests that spiritual experiences may present universal components linked to human biology, reinforcing the notion that spirituality is a recurrent characteristic across different cultures.

Complementing this perspective, the cognitive anthropologist Pascal Boyer (*Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*, 2001) addresses religion as a byproduct of human cognitive evolution. For Boyer (2001), the mind possesses specialized cognitive modules that interpret natural and social phenomena by attributing agency, often supernatural. This mechanism, called agency detection, explains why religious beliefs are both familiar and counterintuitive, facilitating their memorization and dissemination. According to this author, religiosity emerges as an evolutionary adaptation, aiding in social cooperation and the understanding of complex events, while spirituality relates to the subjective experience of meaning and transcendence.

From a neuroscientific viewpoint, brain imaging studies demonstrate that spiritual practices and religious experiences involve regions such as the prefrontal cortex, the ventral striatum, and limbic structures—areas linked to decision-making, emotional regulation, and reward perception. These data indicate that spirituality and religiosity are processed in integrated brain circuits that combine cognitive evaluation, motivation, and subjective experience. Thus, these dimensions cannot be understood merely as cultural phenomena, but as interdependent bio-psycho-social experiences.

These perspectives indicate that spirituality is an intrinsic dimension of the human condition, present both in biological processes and in symbolic and cultural experiences. By recognizing this integration, integral education expands its formative horizon: it ceases to treat spirituality as a subjective belief or value and begins to understand it as an ontological and cognitive necessity, linked to the development of consciousness, empathy, and emotional self-regulation. Thus, integral education finds support in these contemporary discoveries by understanding that spirituality is a formative dimension of consciousness and learning. Educating spiritually is, therefore, favoring the full development of the human being, a being who thinks, feels, acts, and recognizes themselves as part of a greater whole.

3.2 CONTEMPORARY MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

Contemporary Moral Psychology, represented by authors like Jonathan Haidt (2012) and Darcia Narvaez (2014), has broadened the understanding of the psychological processes that sustain morality, showing that moral judgments involve both cognitive and emotional components. Haidt, in his research on the intuitive bases of morality, argues that ethical decisions are primarily guided by automatic moral emotions—such as compassion, indignation, and gratitude—that precede rational reflection. This model, known as the Social Intuitionist Theory, evidences that morality emerges from human interactions and the cultural and spiritual influences that shape the values of each society.

In a complementary manner, Narvaez (2014) highlights that moral formation is deeply linked to emotional and neurobiological development, being the result of affective experiences lived since childhood. The author proposes that empathy, care, and emotional self-regulation are fundamental for the construction of moral and ethical consciousness, reinforcing the importance of the social and educational environment in cultivating these capacities. These contributions indicate that ethics and morality are not reduced to logical reasoning or the compliance with norms, but constitute expressions of a spiritual and relational consciousness that develops through co-existence. In this sense, Contemporary Moral Psychology offers important foundations for an integral education aimed at forming subjects who are empathetic, autonomous, and ethically responsible, capable of acting with sensitivity and discernment in diverse social contexts.

In Developmental Psychology, Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), expanding upon Jean Piaget's studies on cognitive development, proposed a theory of moral development in stages, which describes how individuals evolve in their understanding of justice, rights, and

duties. For Kohlberg, morality is built progressively, and religion can act as a symbolic and reference context for the subject to interpret norms, values, and ethical dilemmas. He observed that faith and religious beliefs often provide cognitive structures that guide moral decisions, integrating normative and cognitive dimensions of development.

Complementing this approach, James Fowler (1992) developed the Theory of Stages of Faith, which describes how religious and spiritual understanding evolves throughout life, accompanying the individual's cognitive, affective, and social maturation. Fowler identifies stages ranging from intuitive and projective faith in childhood, passing through literal-concrete faith in adolescence, to more symbolic, reflective, and universalizing forms in adulthood. According to Fowler, faith—understood as a psychological structure of orientation and meaning—develops in interaction with social and cultural experiences, and not just through religious transmission, indicating that religiosity integrates cognitive and existential dimensions of human development. Subsequent investigations by Fritz Oser and Paul Gmünder (1991) deepened the relationship between moral development and religiosity, exploring how ethical values articulate with spiritual and cultural beliefs. These studies showed that morality is not constructed in isolation from the religious or spiritual context, but that the interaction between norms, cultural values, and faith contributes to the formation of more complex ethical judgments.

The theories of Kohlberg, Fowler, Oser, and Gmünder demonstrate that spirituality is a formative dimension of moral consciousness, as it guides the subject in the construction of meanings, empathy, and responsibility for their actions. Integral education, in light of these authors, has the task of favoring the path that involves autonomy, reflection, and the internalization of values. By recognizing that morality develops in dialogue with spirituality and faith experiences, education assumes the commitment to form subjects capable of understanding others, coexisting with difference, and acting ethically in plural contexts. Educating integrally is, therefore, to accompany the human being in their moral and spiritual growth, helping them develop critical thinking, compassionate consciousness, and ethical commitment to community life.

In Cultural-Historical Psychology, although Vygotsky (1896–1934) did not specifically dedicate himself to religion, his work evidences engagement with cultural and symbolic themes related to spirituality. Research by Brandenburg (1998) and Estep (2002) shows that Vygotskian concepts allow for the analysis of the construction of religious meaning as being socially and culturally mediated, evidencing that spirituality can be formed both from the

subject's concrete experience and from institutionalized doctrines, always considering symbolic mediation and the social context. The internalization of these experiences follows principles similar to the acquisition of language and the formation of higher mental functions, allowing the child to develop personal and subjective meaning. The studies (Olivares Rosado et al., 2022; Borges & Zambrano, 2023) highlight that spirituality must be considered as a symbolic, affective, and relational dimension of development, mediated by culture, language, and social bonds. Its inclusion in education contributes to the subject's integral formation, allowing students to connect experiences, emotions, and values, in line with a secular, plural, and democratic education.

In the context of integral education, by recognizing that the formation of spiritual meaning occurs in social interactions and affective experiences, the educator is called to promote pedagogical environments that stimulate curiosity, listening, empathy, and imagination. From this perspective, learning also becomes an act of transcendence, where the person reconstructs the world and themselves through language and symbolic experience. Valuing the symbolic, the emotional, and the relational means recognizing that learning is both acquiring knowledge and attributing meaning to existence and co-existence. Spirituality, in this horizon, manifests as a process of continuous humanization, a path of dialogue between culture, consciousness, and alterity, which makes education a space of fullness and meaning.

Ignacio Martín-Baró (1986; 1998), social psychologist, philosopher, and Jesuit priest, is one of the main exponents of Latin American thought committed to liberation and social justice. His work constitutes a landmark in the consolidation of Liberation Psychology, a current that proposes an ethical, spiritual, and community reading of the human being in their historical and social context. In his reflections, Martín-Baró articulates faith and political commitment, inspired by Liberation Theology and authors like Marx and Paulo Freire. He understands that human liberation is an integral process that involves both the transformation of social structures and the overcoming of subjective alienation. This spiritual dimension is, therefore, inseparable from ethics, hope, and social responsibility.

By bringing this perspective to the educational field, spirituality takes on a formative character, guiding education as a process of humanization and ethical engagement with collective life. Integral education, from this viewpoint, is not reduced to the accumulation of content or technical skills, but involves the cultivation of consciousness, empathy, and commitment to the common good. Martín-Baró understands that knowledge must emerge

from dialogue and social practice, constituting an act of liberation and transcendence. His proposal of a psychology and education oriented toward liberation highlights that true human formation occurs when the subject is able to unite reason and affection, critique and solidarity, faith and transformative action. This vision is amplified by theologians like Miroslav Volf (2011), who, in a dialogue with contemporary pluralism, argues that faith can serve as a resource for reconciliation and social justice, instead of a source of conflict, reinforcing the connection between spirituality and the common good.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The present investigation was guided by the question: How can spirituality, morality, and ethics, understood in their psychological interrelations, contribute to a conception of integral education that promotes the full and humanized development of the subject? The analysis conducted allowed us to recognize that spirituality, ethics, and morality occupy a central place across different schools of psychology and constitute indispensable foundations for human formation and integral education.

Although each psychological approach possesses its own epistemological assumptions, the analysis revealed significant convergences. Frankl's Logotherapy, Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology, Existential-Phenomenological Psychology, the Psychology of Religion, the psychoanalytic perspectives of Freud and Jung, Cultural and Systemic Psychology, Positive Psychology and the Neurosciences of Spirituality, Contemporary Moral Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Cultural-Historical Psychology, and Liberation Psychology converge in recognizing spirituality as a dimension that shapes consciousness, promotes meaning, and guides moral action. This convergence, identified across distinct theoretical traditions, reinforces the scientific and humanistic legitimacy of spirituality as an object of psychological study and a pedagogical foundation.

It is observed that spirituality transcends the religious sphere and assumes psychological, ethical, and pedagogical character. It is intrinsically related to the construction of meaning, self-knowledge, and the capacity to act morally toward others and the world. Thus, spirituality is also revealed as an educational process, in which the subject learns to recognize themselves as part of a totality, to cultivate empathy, to seek coherence between thought and action, and to exercise freedom with responsibility. The contemporary contributions of authors such as Ken Wilber, P. Scott Richards and Allen E. Bergin, Robert Emmons, Lisa Miller, Jeff Levin, and Miroslav Volf, incorporated into this study, reinforce the

timeliness and relevance of this discussion, evidencing that the integration between spirituality, mental health, and human formation is an expanding field in the psychological and educational sciences.

From this understanding, integral education emerges as a privileged space for the development of these human dimensions. Educating integrally means recognizing that knowledge is not restricted to the transmission of content, but involves the construction of meaning, the cultivation of sensibility, the exercise of ethics, and the experience of spirituality as a practice of humanization. In this context, spirituality ceases to be a peripheral aspect and becomes a formative principle: an axis that unifies reason, emotion, and transcendence in the pursuit of human fulfillment. Psychology, by revealing the processes of self-transcendence, empathy, and self-regulation, offers scientific and humanistic foundations to education; the latter, in turn, translates these foundations into pedagogical practices that promote ethical coexistence, respect for diversity, and the emancipation of subjects.

However, important limitations are recognized in this study. First, the breadth of the topic and the multiplicity of possible references required a scope that, although well-founded, does not exhaust the diversity of psychological and educational approaches to spirituality, ethics, and morality. Second, the selection of authors and currents, although representative, does not contemplate all relevant contributions, especially from non-Western traditions and emergent critical perspectives. Third, the theoretical-reflective nature of the study, although necessary for constructing a conceptual panorama, limits the discussion on the practical implications and concrete challenges of implementing spirituality in integral education, especially in secular and plural contexts.

In light of these limitations, we can suggest avenues for future research. First, conducting empirical studies that investigate how educators and psychologists understand and integrate spirituality into their practices, identifying challenges, strategies, and outcomes. Another possibility for in-depth study would be the analysis of concrete experiences of integral education that incorporate the spiritual dimension, evaluating their impact on students' cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical development. Finally, future studies could focus on the discussion regarding the ethical and political limits of including spirituality in public education, considering state secularism, religious pluralism, and the rights of families and students.

It is concluded, therefore, that spirituality and integral education are intertwined as complementary dimensions of the same project: to form human beings who are conscious,

supportive, and capable of integrating knowledge and wisdom, technique and sensibility, freedom and ethical commitment. Integrating spirituality into education is recognizing that the formation of the self is not exhausted in knowledge but is realized in the encounter between the human and the meaning of life. This study, by mapping the contributions of psychology to this discussion, seeks to contribute to strengthening the dialogue between science and humanization, between reason and transcendence, between education and human fulfillment.

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