



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: G  
LINGUISTICS & EDUCATION

Volume 25 Issue 7 Version 1.0 Year 2025

Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal

Publisher: Global Journals

Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

## Spirituality, Ethics, and Morality in Education: A Philosophical Perspective on Integral Formation

By Lucas Guilherme Tetzlaff de Gerone, Alonso Bezerra de Carvalho, Ricardo Francelino, Manuel João Mungulume, Adriano Marques Fernandes & Ana Júlia Barbosa Cremasco

*São Paulo State University*

**Abstract-** This theoretical and qualitative study addresses the central question of how spirituality, morality, and ethics articulate as essential dimensions of human formation and fundamental pillars of Integral Education. The research aims to demonstrate that spirituality can be conceptualized as a formative and integrating category of knowledge, morality, and ethics within the educational context. The methodology employed is a theoretical synthesis and narrative review of key philosophical and educational literature, focusing on the conceptual evolution of these dimensions. The analysis is structured around thematic clusters, beginning with the systemic perspective of Fritjof Capra, which frames spirituality as a unifying dimension of reason, ethics, and moral consciousness. The perspective expressed in the paradigm of wholeness and interconnection, a central theme for the thesis of Integral Education, finds in Capra a contemporary conceptual lens through which the historical development of this theme is interpreted. Subsequently, the study traces the historical-philosophical development from classical thought (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) to modern and contemporary perspectives (Kant, Nietzsche, Tillich, Bauman), culminating in the Latin American and territorial view of Rodolfo Kusch.

**Keywords:** spirituality, morality, ethics, philosophy, integral education.

**GJHSS-G Classification:** LCC Code: BJ1–BJ1725



*Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:*



# Spirituality, Ethics, and Morality in Education: A Philosophical Perspective on Integral Formation

Lucas Guilherme Tetzlaff de Gerone <sup>α</sup>, Alonso Bezerra de Carvalho <sup>σ</sup>, Ricardo Francelino <sup>ρ</sup>,  
Manuel João Mungulume <sup>ω</sup>, Adriano Marques Fernandes <sup>¥</sup> & Ana Júlia Barbosa Cremasco <sup>§</sup>

**Abstract-** This theoretical and qualitative study addresses the central question of how spirituality, morality, and ethics articulate as essential dimensions of human formation and fundamental pillars of Integral Education. The research aims to demonstrate that spirituality can be conceptualized as a formative and integrating category of knowledge, morality, and ethics within the educational context. The methodology employed is a theoretical synthesis and narrative review of key philosophical and educational literature, focusing on the conceptual evolution of these dimensions. The analysis is structured around thematic clusters, beginning with the systemic perspective of Fritjof Capra, which frames spirituality as a unifying dimension of reason, ethics, and moral consciousness. The perspective expressed in the paradigm of wholeness and interconnection, a central theme for the thesis of Integral Education, finds in Capra a contemporary conceptual lens through which the historical development of this theme is interpreted. Subsequently, the study traces the historical-philosophical development from classical thought (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) to modern and contemporary perspectives (Kant, Nietzsche, Tillich, Bauman), culminating in the Latin American and territorial view of Rodolfo Kusch. This approach allows for a critical synthesis of how these concepts have shaped the understanding of human formation. The main finding is that spirituality, understood in its philosophical and educational sense, constitutes an ontological and formative dimension of the human being, articulating reason, morality, and ethical sensibility. The study concludes that the integration of this dimension into Integral Education expands the horizon of formation, offering a specific framework for pedagogical practices that promote dialogue, critical consciousness, and humanization, thereby advancing the existing literature by providing a cohesive conceptual model for its application.

**Keywords:** spirituality, morality, ethics, philosophy, integral education.

**Author α:** PhD in Education from São Paulo State University (UNESP) – Marília/SP; Master in Theology from Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUC-PR); Degree in Philosophy and Pedagogy; Bachelor's Degree in Theology. Currently a Member of GEPEES (Study and Research Group on Education, Ethics, and Society). Coordinator of Axis 2 at the Science Center for the Development of Basic Education (CCDEB) - FAPESP, focusing on the theme: Coexistence and Learning in Basic Education: A Study of International Governmental Programs, Brazil, and Brazilian States. e-mail: lucas.gerone@unesp.br  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1433-1743>

**Author σ:** PhD in Education from the University of São Paulo (USP). Full Professor in Didactics, at UNESP, and currently is a professor in the Didactics Department

and in the Graduate Program in Education, at UNESP, Marília Campus. Leader of the Study and Research Group on Education, Ethics, and Society (GEPEES), registered with CNPq. Principal researcher and vice-coordinator of the Science Center for the Development of Basic Education (CCDEB), funded by FAPESP. e-mail: alonso.carvalho@unesp.br

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4091021554181403>

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5106-2517>

ResearcherID: AAW-4630-2021

**Author ρ:** PhD in Education - UNESP/Marília and Educational Sciences - Université Lumière Lyon 2/Lyon (2023), Master in Psychology from UNESP/Assis (2017), Degree in History (2008) and Pedagogy (2013) from São Paulo State University - UNESP/Assis; Specialist in Planning, Implementation, and Management of Distance Education from Fluminense Federal University UFF/Niterói (2013). Researcher at the Science Center for the Development of Basic Education: Learning and School Coexistence (CCDEB), supported by FAPESP. Member of the Study and Research Group on Education, Ethics, and Society- GEPEES, at UNESP/ Marília. Has experience in teacher training, in the areas of Education and Educational Psychology. Conducts research on the influences of affectivity on teaching and learning processes, teacher training, with an emphasis on interpersonal relationships in the educational context.

e-mail: ricardo.francelino@unesp.br

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/5351841080662957>

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5100-3856>

HAL: ricardo-francelino 1113775

Researcher ID: ABE-6500-2020

ROR: <https://ror.org/00987cb86>

**Author ω:** PhD in Education at Faculty of Philosophy and Sciences (FFC), UNESP, Marília/SP Campus (2025), Master in Education at UNESP/Marília (2020), Graduate Certificate at Virtual University of the State of São Paulo, UNIVESP (2023), Degree in Teaching of Philosophy with habilitation in Teaching of History at Pedagogical University of Mozambique (2016). Member of the Study and Research Group on Education, Ethics, and Society (GEPEES), led by Prof. Dr. Alonso Bezerra de Carvalho. Experienced in Philosophy and Philosophy of Education, with emphasis on the following areas: Education, Axiological Education, Intercultural Education, Teacher Training, Ethics and Environmental Education. e-mail: mjmungulume@gmail.com

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/9152713278723964>

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3996-3950>

**Author ¥:** PhD in Education at Faculty of Philosophy and Sciences (FFC), UNESP, Marília/SP Campus, Master in Education, area of concentration - Education, Language and Society at Mato Grosso do Sul State University (UEMS), Paranaíba Unit. Specialist in Bullying, Violence, Prejudice and School Discrimination at Federal University of São Paulo - UNIFESP (2021). Degree in Geography at Claretiano University Center (2023), in History at Araras University Center, Dr. Edmundo Ulson (2019) and in Philosophy at Claretiano University Center (2012). Specialist in School Management at ICESP University Center - UNICESP (2014). Member of the Study Group and Research Group on Education, Ethics and Society (GEPEES). Currently, is a teacher in the São Paulo state public school system. e-mail: adriano.fernandes@unesp.br

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/9609955841240628>

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1324-3735>

**Author §:** Master's student in Education at Faculty of Philosophy and Sciences (FFC), UNESP, Marília/SP Campus, Degree in Social Sciences (2022) and Bachelor's Degree in Sociology (2023) at UNESP/Marília. Member of the Study and Research Group on Education, Ethics, and Society (GEPEES). Researcher at the Science Center for the Development of Basic Education (CCDEB), supported by FAPESP. Has interest in the following areas of research: Disability, Inclusive Education, Special Education, Accessibility, Diversities, Decoloniality, Philosophy of Education, Sociology of Education, Queer Theory, Crip Theory, Institutional and Educational Policies and Human Rights. e-mail: aj.cremasco@unesp.br

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/5424179751467668>

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7366-4305>

## I. INTRODUCTION

Spirituality has aroused growing interest in the field of philosophy and education (Gerone, 2025), configuring itself as a dimension of self-knowledge, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of the other. It involves the search for meaning and purpose in life, the feeling of belonging, and the transmission of moral, ethical, cultural, and social values (Gerone, 2025). It is important to highlight that spirituality is not restricted to religion or religiosity but encompasses a philosophical-educational reflection on the totality of human experience. It is in this conception that it acquires relevance for the philosophy of education, particularly for what is called "Integral Education".

The present study aims to analyze the articulation among spirituality, morality, and ethics as essential dimensions of human formation, seeking to answer the following question: How can spirituality be understood as a formative and integrative category of knowledge, morality, and ethics within the context of Integral Education?

According to Moll et al. (2017), Integral Education can be understood as the full development of the human being, including all its dimensions in the educational process: intellectual, physical, emotional, social, cultural, political, and spiritual. This conception also involves a collective educational project, which integrates educators, students, managers, support networks, family members, and the local community (Gerone, 2025).

In this perspective, spirituality is understood as an integrating and self-knowledge dimension, capable of connecting individuals to meaningful learning (Moll et al., 2017). In this way, it attributes meaning to action and the search for knowledge through ethical and moral values. Although recognizing the complexity and conceptual ambiguities of spirituality, which are manifested in debates between secular and religious perspectives, to understand this dimension within the scope of human knowledge and values, it is essential to resort to Moral Philosophy, a branch that investigates ethics and morality as foundations of human action and the construction of consciousness.

From this epistemic perspective, ethics constitutes the philosophical thought that reflects on morality, while the latter expresses, in practice, the values and principles that guide human action (Cortina, 2005). Both represent complementary dimensions of integral formation, especially in education, where the construction of ethical and moral consciousness occurs through experiences of meaning, dialogue, and coexistence. The indispensability of Moral Philosophy lies in providing the theoretical framework for the critical analysis of the values and principles that spirituality, in its formative sense, mobilizes, ensuring that the search

for meaning is anchored in rational and autonomous reflection.

Spirituality manifests itself, for example, in the existential questions that students and teachers formulate, in the affective bonds that sustain school coexistence, in the ethical mobilization in the face of suffering, and in the construction of a life project with purpose. It is also revealed in the way educators relate to knowledge and their practice, seeking, even in the face of structural and personal challenges, to act with meaning, commitment, and hope (Gerone, 2025). This approach resonates with the proposals of educators who advocate for a holistic and humanizing education, such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire, whose pedagogies emphasize experience, dialogue, and care as central pillars of the educational process.

Methodologically, this study is characterized as a theoretical and qualitative reflection, based on a bibliographic review in the areas of philosophy and education. The impossibility of covering the totality of philosophers and systems of thought on the theme, as well as exhaustively deepening the complex inter-relationships between them, is recognized. Thus, the objective is to analyze the representative thinkers of classical, modern, and Latin American currents, whose contributions aid in understanding spirituality as a category that shapes ethics, morality, and integral education. It is, therefore, an investigation of a philosophical-reflective nature, which seeks dialogues and interpretive possibilities in the educational field.

Fritjof Capra (2014)'s thought is used to substantiate the notion of spirituality and its relationship with education. His philosophical perspective highlights that spirituality and education refer to perennial questions in the history of philosophy: the search for unity between thought and action, knowledge and virtue, reason and interiority, conceiving the human being in their rational, moral, and spiritual totality.

Capra's approach dialogues with the historical foundations of philosophy, in which spirituality and ethics were already understood as principles of human formation. It is in this continuity that this study is structured, proposing to analyze spirituality and ethics in classical, medieval, and modern philosophy, in order to demonstrate how such categories support reflection on education and the constitution of the human.

Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle introduced concepts such as "*paideia*" and "*eudaimonia*", relating human formation to virtue, happiness, and good living – notions that inspire what is today called Integral Education as a process of ethical, intellectual, and spiritual refinement. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas integrated faith and reason as complementary dimensions of development, while Kant highlighted moral autonomy as the principle of freedom and the formation of critical subjects. Nietzsche, in turn, questioned traditional moralities, proposing authenticity

and creativity as paths to an emancipatory education focused on the meaning of existence.

The philosophical-moral reflection on spirituality, from antiquity to modernity, reveals its connection with the search for meaning, virtue, and moral formation, assuming distinct meanings in different historical and cultural contexts. It is in this panorama that Latin American thought becomes essential, by expanding the Western tradition through the integration of ancestry, popular culture, and original worldviews, proposing a situated understanding of human formation. In this sense, the philosophy of Rodolfo Kusch stands out, which presents a territorial and symbolic spirituality, rooted in belonging and indigenous cosmologies. Thus, the Latin American context inserts spirituality into the Philosophy of Education as a formative and liberating force, oriented towards humanization and social justice.

Based on this philosophical journey, which articulates spirituality, morality, and ethics as foundations of the educational process, it is recognized that the contemporary challenge lies in integrating such dimensions into education. This study originates from the work of researchers from GEPEES – Study and Research Group on Education, Ethics, and Society –, from CCDEB – Science Center for the Development of Basic Education, funded by FAPESP, – and from a Senior Post-Doctoral Research Project, funded by CNPq, who are dedicated to understanding education in its integrality, including morality, ethics, and spirituality.

Finally, it is considered that spirituality and morality, understood from the perspective of philosophy and Integral Education, constitute inseparable dimensions of human formation, fundamental for rethinking education as part of the search for meaning, transcendence, and humanization.

## II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY, MORALITY, ETHICS, AND EDUCATION IN FRITJOF CAPRA'S PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although originating from the natural sciences, Fritjof Capra develops a systemic approach that involves profound philosophical and ethical implications. His thought emphasizes the interdependence between scientific knowledge, moral consciousness, and spirituality, criticizing the mechanistic paradigm and proposing an epistemology that integrates spirituality as a fundamental dimension of human experience – distinct from institutional religion, but articulated with ethics and knowledge. The relevance of Capra to this study lies in his ability to provide a conceptual framework that transcends the traditional dichotomy between science and spirituality, positioning the latter as an essential integrative principle for human development and Integral Education.

For Capra (1996), spirituality represents a human experience that is broader and more foundational than religion. In his perspective, the management of the complex and uncertain world cannot depend exclusively on empirical approaches, but must incorporate the spiritual dimension. The author retrieves the Greek term “*oikos*” (home, house) to emphasize the human reconnection with knowledge, proposing a paradigm shift that values cooperation and quality, integrating the human being as a constituent part – and not external – of the natural system. In this sense, spirituality permeates all human experience, as attested by ancestral ritualistic artifacts. The development of the self-identity would have accompanied physiological transformations, such as bipedalism, while supernatural concepts and religious rituals evolved along with human consciousness, strengthening community cohesion (Capra & Luisi, 2014).

In education, spirituality assumes a historical place, since humanity has developed various methods for acquiring knowledge, among which science and spirituality emerge as significant driving forces. While science drives material and technological progress, spirituality contributes to individual growth and moral behaviors related to resource consumption. According to the author: “contemporary crises such as climate change, wars, and inequality reveal the dangers of uncontrolled scientific progress without spiritual wisdom. The interaction between technological advancement and spiritual perception is crucial for the future of civilization” (Capra & Luisi, 2014, p. 342-343).

Spirituality, therefore, encompasses a broader experience than religion, and can manifest itself through ethics and community rituals. Religion, in turn, consists of the organized attempt to understand the spiritual experience, interpreting it through words and concepts, and extracting moral guidelines for the religious community from it (Capra & Luisi 2014, p. 347). Discussing the compatibility of spirituality with different scientific views and areas of knowledge implies recognizing significant spiritual experiences described transculturally, conceiving it as a way of being and existing founded on a certain experience of reality.

Thus, spirituality can occur independently of religious contexts, coexisting with philosophical understanding and promoting dialogues around morality and ethics, self-knowledge, knowledge of the world, others, and the cosmos, and the meaning of life. This view offers an integral formation and perspective of the human being, aligning with the proposal of integral education. The relationship between spirituality and ethics within Capra's framework is intrinsic to his systemic ontological presupposition: the perception of the fundamental interconnectedness of all phenomena (the web of life) necessarily entails a corresponding ethic of ecological and social responsibility (Capra,



1996). Spirituality, understood as an experience of unity with the whole, ceases to be a private or merely interior sphere and becomes the foundation of a relational ethic, in which every action is evaluated in light of its effects on the integrity of living systems. Moral decision-making, in this context, is informed by the recognition that harm inflicted upon any component of the system constitutes harm to the entirety—and consequently, to the self (Capra, 1996).

The spiritual dimension in education revitalizes intellectual understanding in academic spaces, awakening spiritual consciousness. However, current academic structures often limit interdisciplinary exploration. Spirituality fosters a critical and transformative approach in educational institutions, especially in the face of contemporary global challenges. If the first hominids already manifested a sense of spirituality, the central message is that this dimension and the areas of knowledge are not opposing forces; rather, they must balance each other to ensure the survival and well-being of humanity. As Capra and Luisi states: “with rapid advances in technology and science, spirituality offers guidance for ethical behaviors and inner growth, helping to navigate the existential threats we face.” (Capra & Luisi, 2014, p. 344).

The educational implications of this systemic and ethical perspective are clear and manifold. Firstly, it requires the construction of an interdisciplinary curriculum that integrates knowledge from the natural sciences, human sciences, philosophy, and spiritual traditions, thereby promoting an ecological understanding of reality and a consciousness of the interdependence among human beings, other living organisms, and the environment. Such a curriculum is not limited to merely adding content on the environment or spirituality, but rather reorganizes the mode of teaching and learning based on complex problems that demand a holistic view. Secondly, this vision calls for collaborative pedagogical practices that replace competitive and fragmented models with group learning experiences, collective projects, and dialogical processes, in which individuals recognize themselves as co-responsible for the knowledge produced and for the impact of their actions. Thirdly, the education inspired by Capra is oriented toward a formation that transcends the mere acquisition of technical competencies, emphasizing the development of practical wisdom and global responsibility—that is, the capacity to evaluate the ethical and ecological consequences of individual and institutional decisions, in alignment with a spirituality that recognizes the sacredness of life.

In this study, we seek to understand spirituality as an ontological, formative, and existential dimension of the human being, which integrates reason, sensibility, morality, and transcendence, guiding the search for meaning and ethical coexistence. It is expressed in values, attitudes, and ways of understanding life,

independently of instituted religious systems, constituting a driving force for self-knowledge and self-improvement.

Although Capra (1996) and Capra and Luisi (2014) emphasize the immanent dimension of spirituality, their proposal engages, albeit indirectly, with perspectives that underscore transcendence as the ultimate foundation of reality. From this perspective, spirituality encompasses both intellectual understanding and spiritual consciousness, articulating knowledge and being, reason and sensibility, knowledge and wisdom.

In the educational field, this dimension acts as an integrating force that gives meaning to learning and inspires the formative process towards self-transcendence – an inner movement of expanding consciousness and ethical commitment to life. However, contemporary academic structures still tend to restrict interdisciplinary dialogue, fragmenting knowledge and weakening the spiritual and ethical dimension of human formation.

Capra's perspective is thus grounded in a systemic ontological presupposition, according to which reality is constituted by networks of relations rather than isolated entities. Being is not understood as an autonomous substance, but as a node within a web of interdependencies—an alignment that brings his thought into proximity with relational ontologies found both in Eastern philosophical traditions and contemporary approaches within the philosophy of biology and ecology. From an epistemological standpoint, Capra rejects the positivist model of knowledge as mere neutral representation of an objective world, advocating instead for a contextual and participatory epistemology wherein the knowing subject is intrinsically implicated in the systems it describes. This position diverges significantly from, for instance, ethical approaches rooted in Kantian thought—centered on individual rational autonomy and the universalization of maxims—by shifting focus from isolated moral decisions toward the systemic consequences of actions within ecological and social networks. Simultaneously, his proposal has faced criticism for occasionally exhibiting undue optimism regarding the capacity of a scientific-spiritual paradigm shift to effect substantive structural transformations within economic and educational institutions. Furthermore, his emphasis on eminently immanent spirituality may generate tension with philosophical-theological traditions that prioritize radical transcendence, necessitating careful conceptual mediation when engaging diverse religious frameworks.

Overcoming this limitation requires promoting interdisciplinary educational approaches that integrate ethical reflection and spiritual consciousness, forming people in their intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual totality.

Therefore, Capra's reflection serves as a starting point to historically revisit the relationship between

spirituality, ethics, and morality, understanding how these notions have intertwined since the origins of philosophy until they became foundations for an integral education.

### III. SPIRITUALITY, MORALITY, AND ETHICS IN HISTORY: A REFLECTION FROM PHILOSOPHY

In our investigation, we start, as we will see below, from the reconstitution of the historical-conceptual path of the notions of spirituality, morality, and ethics, analyzing their transformations in different philosophical paradigms. We seek to understand how these categories constitute pillars of thought about humanity, virtue, and the meaning of life, fundamental elements for both philosophy and education. In our analysis, we identify that these concepts appear as integrated dimensions of the formative ideal, articulating reason and faith as complementary paths to knowledge and moral perfection.

In pre-Socratic philosophy (7th-5th centuries BC), we observe that good and evil were interpreted through a mythological perspective, where deities influenced people's behavior and way of being (Jaeger, 1991). According to Trabulsi (1993), Greek mythology occupied a relevant space in human and moral reflection precisely by attributing human characteristics to deities. In this period, although spirituality was not clearly distinguished from religiosity, it is possible to identify a symbolic and ethical understanding of life, mediated by mythical narratives that guided behavior and coexistence. This symbolic dimension proves essential for us to think about integral education, since myth, as a formative language, anticipates the cultural and educational function of spirituality.

In classical philosophy, with Socrates (469-399 BC), we witness the consolidation of a more evident ethical and spiritual character, focused on the inner formation of the human being. According to Jaeger (1991), he inaugurates a *paideia* of the soul, understanding education as a process of self-knowledge and self-care. The principle "know thyself" reveals this spiritual dimension, in which philosophical knowledge leads to moral refinement. The Socratic *daimonion*, an inner voice that guides action, symbolizes ethical consciousness and the discernment of good. In our interpretation, Socratic pedagogy, centered on dialogue and maieutics, expresses a rational and educational spirituality that awakens in the disciple the desire for wisdom and virtue.

In Plato (427-347 BC), *eudaimonia* is related to the harmony of the soul and the contemplation of the supreme good. For the philosopher, happiness derives from the wisdom that accesses the world of ideas, with virtue being fundamental for right judgment and action according to the good. As he himself states: "the soul,

when it is in itself and analyzes things by itself, without using the body, moves towards what is pure, eternal, immortal, immutable..." (Plato, 1999, p. 149).

In Aristotelian metaphysics (384-322 BC), existence is composed of four causes: material (body constituted of matter), formal (aspects that qualify us as human), efficient (origin of existence), and final (transcendent purpose). The purpose of being is to achieve *eudaimonia*, understood as a virtuous life (Jaeger, 1991). In our reading, morality in Aristotle is oriented towards happiness and the good life, accessible to the virtuous being who understands this divine metaphysical power.

On the other hand, as if making a synthesis, in the Middle Ages we observe the search for an integration between faith and reason, so that we note an important influence of Platonic thought on the formation of Christianity. In Augustine (354-430 AD), the human spirit is illuminated by God, who, through religious practices, directs the being towards the virtuous life, beatitude, and happiness (Augustine, 2000). The Platonic-Augustinian conception introduces the idea that human development is inseparable from the search for good and truth, anticipating the contemporary ideal of integral education with a spiritual dimension.

Similarly, Aristotelian thought found resonance in Christianity through Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who is based on Aristotelian metaphysics to relate human happiness to the divine. Divine law leads the being to the Christian life, guiding all other laws (Jaeger, 1991). In our perspective, this thought offers solid foundations for contemporary integral education, which seeks to form the human being in its totality: body, mind, and spirit.

#### a) *The Modern Turn: Autonomy and Interiorization*

With the advent of modernity, Kant (1724-1804) inaugurates a philosophical perspective by founding morality on autonomous reason, progressively detaching it from religion, but preserving its rational and universal dimension. The centrality of reason replaces the theocentric paradigm, shifting the axis of moral formation from faith to the autonomy of consciousness. According to Zanella (2008), in Kantian thought, morality and religion maintain a complex relationship: if morality reaches its fullness in the autonomy of practical reason, in religion, duties correspond to the will and divine commandments.

In our analysis, Kantian morality, although not founded on religious transcendence, expresses an ethical interiority close to what we understand as spirituality. In the educational sphere, this principle supports autonomous moral formation, essential for integral education, where spirituality manifests itself as the cultivation of consciousness and moral duty.

If in Kant morality emerges from autonomous reason, in Nietzsche (1844-1900), in turn, it shifts to

the creation of values from life. Both, however, share the defense of an internalized morality that places the human being as the foundation of ethical action. Nietzsche (1998; 2002; 2024) operates a rupture with universal moral philosophy, metaphysics, and Christianity, criticizing the "priestly caste" for fostering spiritual and social alienation. His declaration "God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him!" radically questions the foundations of traditional morality.

In our interpretation, Nietzsche does not discuss the existence of God in theological terms, but criticizes its moral and social function, especially when deity is used to dominate and alienate. His approach favors a humanist anthropocentrism, where the human being becomes the center of moral actions, autonomously constructing their history, consciousness, and values. In the educational field, this view enables an education based on freedom, forming beings capable of thinking critically and acting with authenticity.

In light of the above, we can conclude, considering Gerone (2015), that the increase in knowledge in modernity (17th-19th centuries), influenced by philosophies such as the Enlightenment and humanism, originated a new understanding of human experiences, including religiosity and spirituality. In our analysis, modernity promoted moral discussion beyond the religious and public context, making morality more autonomous in relation to religion (Duque, 2014). In this sense, we identify four fundamental dimensions of this transformation:

- a) *The Symbolic*: According to Tillich (2005), the symbolic represents what touches the human being unconditionally, needing expression through symbols. In modernity, the symbolic assumes new forms of expression of the unconditional, generating new spiritualities and religious experiences.
- b) *Language*: Modernity questions tradition aiming at new forms of knowledge. Through language, traditional beliefs, practices, and values are transformed and propagated (Locke, 1956). Reflection on language leads to secularism, opening space for free and critical spirituality.
- c) *Secularism*: Through the influence of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution (1789-1799), the separation between Church and State is consolidated. Religion becomes a particular option, and it is up to the State to ensure the right to belief (Name, 2004). Secularism does not mean a State without belief, but the protection of religious rights in a democratic society.
- d) *The Individual Dimension*: According to Bauman (2001), modernity focuses on individualism, with the "expansive autonomy" of the human being in relation to social institutions. Religiosity transcends the strictly religious aspect, synthesizing the moral

dimension and encompassing the state of the spirit as an internalized transcendental connection (Gil, 1999).

In the face of these transformations, spirituality ceases to be an exclusively religious experience, becoming an existential dimension that manifests itself in art, science, ethics, and, especially, in education. The symbolic, as Tillich (2005) points out, remains a means of access to the unconditional, but with a more plural and open character. Integral education thus assumes the role of recomposing the unity between knowledge and being, reason and sensibility, learning and life.

Language, in this new horizon, becomes the mediator of spiritual and educational experience. According to Locke (1956), it is through language that we share beliefs and build values. In the context of integral education, language connects knowledge to sensibility and learning to ethical reflection, transforming the educational act into an experience of meaning.

Secularism, according to Name (2004), consolidates space for non-institutional, ethical, and humanist plural spirituality. Education, in this perspective, must be secular but not neutral regarding the spiritual dimension, recognizing that knowledge involves values and meanings, requiring the cultivation of universal values such as respect, empathy, and solidarity.

Finally, we note that modernity, by secularizing life and pluralizing faith, did not extinguish the spiritual, but shifted it to the interior of human experience. Integral education is inscribed as a privileged way of recomposing the unity between knowledge and being, knowledge and wisdom, autonomy and solidarity, transforming learning into a path of humanization and spirituality into a vital force that sustains the meaning of existence.

#### b) *A Look at the Latin American Reality: A Situated Contribution to Integral Education*

Although we recognize that this interiorization of the spiritual has consolidated fundamental advances such as moral autonomy and the valorization of subjectivity and individual freedom, it constitutes a predominantly Western and modern perspective that presents significant limitations. By centering the meaning of existence on reason and the interiority of the autonomous subject, modern thought tends to detach spirituality from the communal, symbolic, and territorial dimensions of human life. What previously united the human to the cosmos, nature, and the other was progressively reduced to individual consciousness and abstract rationality.

This limitation opens space for the emergence of new philosophical perspectives that, without denying the Western heritage, seek a spirituality grounded in belonging, collectivity, and the concrete experience of

daily life, restoring to ethics and education their symbolic and human rooting.

It is precisely in this context that Latin American philosophical thought emerges not as a negation of the European tradition, but as its critical re-elaboration, proposing a territorial and relational spirituality that reconnects the human being to the collective dimensions of life. This philosophy shifts the axis from interiority to symbolic and cultural belonging, reinserting spirituality into daily life and coexistence as a force of resistance, identity, and formation. This perspective is clearly manifested in indigenous worldviews and community practices that articulate body, territory, and transcendence.

In this sense, Rodolfo Kusch (1922-1979), an Argentine philosopher, anthropologist, and educator, dedicated himself to understanding what he called "deep America," in contrast to the America influenced by European models. For Kusch, understanding the Latin American human being implies valuing indigenous worldviews, popular religiosity, and symbolic ways of being in the world, which express a spirituality rooted in the territory, the collective, and daily life (Kusch, 1962; 1976). The author formulates the distinction between "being" (*ser*), related to the rational and abstract Western tradition, and "being-in-a-place" (*estar*), which represents the situated, relational, and symbolic mode of existence. From this difference emerges the concept of "being-being-in-a-place" (*estar-sendo*), which translates a spirituality of connection and lived experience, in opposition to the search for a fixed and universal identity.

Kuschian philosophy thus proposes a territorial and symbolic spirituality, in which the sacred emerges from belonging and coexistence, and not from metaphysical abstraction. This conception offers solid foundations for rethinking integral education as a process rooted in culture and territory, where knowledge is constituted as an expression of life and identity. Kusch (1976) argues that knowledge must emerge from the ground of concrete experiences and collective narratives. Education, in this perspective, must connect knowledge and life, body and spirit, reason and myth, articulating the cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions of the human being.

Researchers such as Pinheiro (2016) and Santos (2021) point out that Kusch anticipates contemporary debates on intercultural and integral education by proposing a school linked to living culture, capable of incorporating the symbolic and the sacred as legitimate parts of human formation. His philosophy questions technocratic and universalist educational policies that disregard the identity and spiritual bonds of local communities. By valuing "being-in-a-place" (*estar*) as a form of knowledge and existence, Kusch's thought enables an education that promotes belonging,

meaning, and integrality, essential elements for human development and social justice.

#### IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The final considerations of this study revisit the essential question of human formation and the meaning of knowledge, synthesizing the integration between spirituality, morality, and ethics in the field of philosophy and education. The central objective was to demonstrate that these dimensions are complementary expressions of the human impulse to act ethically and coexist justly. The philosophical journey, which established a line of historical continuity (from Socratic *paideia* to territorial spirituality in Kusch), served as a backdrop for the analysis, allowing us to focus on how spirituality informs ethical formation and educational decisions, reconciling knowing and being, rationality and interiority.

The main theoretical contribution of this work lies in the proposition of a secular and formative spirituality that, by transcending the religious sphere, acts as an epistemological and ethical foundation for Integral Education. Differentiating itself from approaches that limit it to the mystical or psychological dimension, our interpretation defines it as an expanded form of knowledge that incorporates the intuitive, affective, and symbolic dimensions of human experience. This perspective fills a gap in the literature by offering a conceptual model that integrates spirituality as an active element in the epistemological and formative constitution of the human being, allowing education to rediscover its humanist and philosophical character, simultaneously rational and sensitive, cognitive and ethical, by recognizing knowledge as an integral process.

Our analysis shows that morality and ethics are articulated with this spirituality as foundations for coexistence and responsibility. Spirituality acts as an integrating dimension, giving meaning and purpose to human action, strengthening discernment, and enabling dialogue between different forms of knowledge and cultures.

The educational and practical implications of this integration are clear and can be translated into three axes of action for teacher training and pedagogical practice:

1. *Curricular Axis: Capra's Systemic Perspective.* Capra's systemic approach is revisited as the guiding principle for the curriculum. It demands the overcoming of disciplinary fragmentation and the adoption of an interdisciplinary curriculum that promotes ecological education and the consciousness of interdependence. This is the practical result for the organization of knowledge in schools.



2. *Teacher Training Axis*: Preparation for Human Complexity. Teacher training must be revised to contemplate the spiritual, moral, and ethical dimensions, preparing educators to welcome and mediate human complexity in the classroom. This is realized through the development of attentive presence and genuine listening (Spirituality as the foundation of the pedagogical relationship), which are essential for the quality of the pedagogical relationship.
3. *Pedagogical Practice Axis*: Ethical and Moral Principles. Pedagogical practice must be structured on clear principles:

*Morality as Daily Practice*: Focused on the collective construction of coexistence agreements and the dialogical resolution of conflicts, cultivating values such as empathy and cooperation.

*Ethics as a Formative Horizon*: Manifested in the stimulation of critical thinking and the problematization of contemporary moral dilemmas, reinforcing the importance of rational autonomy and ethical duty (Kant). *Contextualization and Authenticity*: The valuing of freedom and authenticity (Nietzsche) must be balanced with the rooting of practices in the cultural territory and the concrete experiences of students (Kusch), ensuring the relevance of the educational action.

In summary, integrating spirituality, morality, and ethics into educational reflection and practice means recovering the original role of philosophy and education: to form conscious, critical, and committed subjects for the common good. This integration enables significant pedagogical practices that connect academic learning with the construction of meaningful life projects, culminating in the formation not only of competent students but of full, ethical, and spiritually committed human beings for social transformation. The study, therefore, not only reiterates the relevance of these dimensions but offers a conceptual and practical model for their implementation in the context of Integral Education.

Finally, philosophical research on spirituality and morality proves to be a fertile ground for new investigations and pedagogical practices capable of articulating reason and sensibility, knowledge and wisdom, theory and life—forming not only competent and competitive students, but full, ethical, and spiritually committed human beings for social transformation.

## REFERENCES RÉFÉRENCES REFERENCIAS

1. Agostinho, S. (2000). *A cidade de Deus* (2nd ed.). Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
2. Bauman, Z. (2001). *Modernidade líquida*. Jorge Zahar Editor.
3. Capra, F. (1996). *The web of life: A new scientific understanding of living systems*. Anchor Books.
4. Capra, F., & Luisi, P. L. (2014). *The systems view of life: A unifying vision*. Cambridge University Press.
5. Cortina, A., & Martínez, E. (2005). *Ética*. Loyola.
6. Duque, M. (2014). *Mudanças culturais, mudanças religiosas: perfis e tendências da religiosidade em Portugal numa perspectiva comparada*. Edições Húmus. <https://hdl.handle.net/1822/75082>
7. Dutra, T., & Moll, J. (2017). Educação integral e espiritualidade: os benefícios dessa relação para uma formação integral do ser humano. *Revista Prática Docente*, 2(1), 97–111. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23926/rpd.v2i1.48>
8. Gerone, L. G. T. de. (2015). *Um olhar sobre a religiosidade/espiritualidade na prática do cuidado entre profissionais de saúde e pastoralistas* [Master's thesis, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná]. <https://arquivum.grupomarista.org.br/perg/amumweb/vinculos/tede/lucas.pdf>
9. Gerone, L. G. T. de. (2025). *Percepções docentes sobre espiritualidade, moralidade e educação: uma abordagem interdisciplinar a partir de Kohlberg e Weber* [Doctoral thesis, Universidade Estadual Paulista]. <https://hdl.handle.net/11449/310892>
10. Gil Filho, S. F. (1999). Espaço de representação e territorialidade do sagrado: notas para uma teoria do fato religioso. *RAEGA – O Espaço Geográfico Em Análise*, 3(3), 91–120. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5380/raega.v3i0.18226>
11. Jaeger, W. (2001). *Paideia: A formação do homem grego*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
12. Kant, I. (2004). *Fundamentação da metafísica dos costumes e outros escritos*. São Paulo: Martin Claret.
13. Kusch, R. (1962). *América profunda*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Hachette.
14. Kusch, R. (1976). *Geocultura del hombre americano*. Buenos Aires: Fernando García Cambeiro.
15. Locke, J. (1956). *An essay concerning human understanding*. Great Books of the Western World (Vol. 35). Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica.
16. Name, P. C. (2004). *A liberdade de crença religiosa na Constituição Federal de 1988* [Master's thesis, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo]. <https://tede2.pucsp.br/handle/handle/7881>
17. Nietzsche, F. (2002). *A gaia ciência*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
18. Nietzsche, F. (1998). *Genealogia da moral: Uma polêmica*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
19. Nietzsche, F. (2024). *O nascimento da tragédia*. Edições 70.
20. Pinheiro, B. (2016). O pensamento de Rodolfo Kusch: movimentos seminais na América profunda. *Revista Científica de Educação a Distância*, 16(35), 155–172.
21. Platão. (1999). *Diálogos*. São Paulo: Nova Cultural.

22. Santos, G. A. O. (2021). Contribuições de Kusch para a educação, cultura e vida escolar. *Revista Contemporânea de Educação, Ahead of Print*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20500/rce.v16i36.42924>
23. Tillich, P. (2005). *Teologia sistemática: Três volumes em um* (5th ed.). São Leopoldo: Sinodal.
24. Trabulsi, J. A. D. (1993). Religião e política na Grécia, das origens até a pólis aristocrática. *Classica – Revista Brasileira de Estudos Clássicos*, 5(1), 133–147. <https://doi.org/10.24277/classica.v5i1.550>
25. Zanella, D. C. (2008). Moral e religião em Kant. Porto Alegre: *Intuitio*, 1(2), 89–105. Recuperado de: <https://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/intuitio/article/view/3998>

