Chapter 4

Psychology of Religion and Religious Education in Schools

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Ultimately, however, man can actualize himself only by fulfilling a meaning out in the world, rather than within himself, and self-actualization is available only as an effect of self-transcendence.

Victor Frankl

Introduction

The classical definition of psychology is centered on the study of the human mind, conduct, and behavior. Nonetheless, since the beginning of 20th century, this discipline has begun to focus on the analysis of religion, which is certainly a surprising fact. Given that psychology is not homogeneous and there is no one single way of understanding the human mind, there are also different ways to approach and consider religion And religious experiences. Despite this, we cannot assume that psychology does not offer valuable elements for the understanding of this very particular topic.

Therefore, first of all, it is essential to refer to the object of study of the psychology of religion. Secondly, we will address the history of the psychology of religion, in order to highlight the specific perspectives of psychological theories that have arisen throughout time. Finally, we conclude with the contribution made by this study of religion to RES.

Object of Study of the Psychology of Religion

It is necessary to call attention to the fact that the contents of this section are not easy to handle, since, as stated above, throughout the historical development of psychology, one can find many different theories or paradigms. In fact, for some psychologists, the religious experience allows for control (Skinner). For others, it is a negative aspect that may result in manipulation (Freud). On certain occasions and in a benevolent way, it is considered as an adequate and valuable expression of the human essence (Frankl, James). However, the common element underlying all these psychological theories is that the religious experience leads to a specific, visible behavior. Thus, it is necessary to embark on a historical journey through the psychology of religion to see how its different versions deal with religion in human life.

Nonetheless, before going further, it is important to clarify that this text covers the psychology of religion but not religious psychology, which is the research concerning the representations of God and the religious experiences of Christians, and in which psychological knowledge serves catechesis, pastoral care, and evangelization (Fierro, 2010). In other words, the catechist is expected to explore some branches of psychology in order to be able to profess his faith to others, using valuable elements that psychology may provide. Moreover, those who convey the religious legacy must do so on the basis of theology. Thus, in this chapter, religion will be covered from a broad perspective, independently of any specific denomination given that it is not about religious psychology.

History of the Psychology of Religion and Its Elements

Approaching psychology from the perspective of different theories and paradigms will evidence concepts such as the meaning of life and transcendence, which are fundamental to the epistemological foundation of RES. Therefore, it is necessary to describe in detail each of those psychological models that prevailed in the 20th century and continue to do so today. Such is the case of objective psychology or experimental

behaviorism, psychoanalysis, genetic-structuralist psychology, phenomenology, positive psychology, and multiple intelligences.

Experimental, Objective, or Behavioral Psychology

Skinner, the great theorist of behaviorism, devotes a chapter to religion in his book *Science and Human Behavior*. According to this author, religion exerts control on human behavior. Skinner and his followers claim that religious phenomena should be approached exclusively as behavior, as objective and observable conduct. Based on this proposal for the analysis of religion, from psychology's viewpoint, it is difficult to extract elements that serve as a basis for Religious Education in Schools since behaviorists do not make a positive assessment of religion, so to speak.

Psychoanalytic Theory

It has been considered that this paradigm is the one that has most developed the topic of religion. There is much to say about Sigmund Freud's theories, especially that his perspective regarding the subject of religion is extremely negative. This is evident in texts such as *Totem and Taboo, The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, Moses and Monotheism*. Freud inserts religion in his general criticism of culture, since he considers it as an institution which is an enemy of rationality. Therefore, he studies it from a double perspective: the genetic viewpoint that deals with the origin of religion and, the economic perspective that researches its function in the individual psyche and in cultural processes.

In the book *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices,* Freud finds a similarity between religious rituals and neurotic ceremonials since both share characteristics such as thoroughness in execution, attention aimed at not forgetting anything, a tendency to execute the process, etc. However, the difference lies in that the religious element has a symbolic meaning, whereas neurotic people seem foolish and absurd. Yet in the study of psychoanalysis, the differences between religious and neurotic ceremonials have been blurred, so much so that Freud even

claimed that "one might venture to regard obsessional neurosis as the pathological counterpart of the formation of a religion, and to describe that neurosis as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis" (cited by Gomez 2002)

In his book *Totem and Taboo,* Freud sets forth the origin of religion. In order to understand what is involved in the birth of religion, we have to refer to the concept of taboo. Rather than associating it with something 'bad', it should be understood as something "to be wary of", since everything that is taboo proves to be fascinating and frightening at the same time. Cultures that have a totem, or an element they worship, consider it a taboo. That is to say, it produces a dual reaction: the desire to protect it and to adore it, but at the same time, to annihilate it. This situation is related to what the father of psychoanalysis proposed concerning parricide. According to Freud, the origin of humanity was permeated by parricide, in which children, jealous of their father, and due to the possession he had over women, decided to kill him. However, this crime led to the creation of a totem to replace the dead father and, thus, the various forms of religion are originated. All of this led to the establishment of a social contract, in which human beings avoided treating one another as they had treated the father. Finally, these terrible sons renounced sexual contact with the women of the group, and, in this way, the prohibition of incest was created. (Freud, 1912)

Having said that, it is worthwhile to think about the instances or situations that allow us to consider that the original crime was a real event. Freud's proposal is grounded in ideas that are difficult to verify. This event was strongly criticized, since he seemed to proceed in the manner of his patients who proposed fantasies that surpassed reality. Also, it should not be forgotten that the principal intention of the psychoanalyst was to provide scientific elements or foundations for psychology, so such a proposal is contradictory.

On the other hand, the economic perspective, from which religion is approached, is found in the book *The Future of an Illusion*. In this book, religion is presented not only in its moral and prohibitive aspect, but also as providing hope and consolation. Religion is not born out of fear, but from desire, and thus, it can be considered an illusion. It is important to say that although religion provides great products

to civilization by contributing to the domination of antisocial impulses, it is also, according to Freud, that neurotic phase that is already being abandoned. Nevertheless, religious beliefs are just illusions, although illusion should not be understood as something erroneous but rather as the impulse towards the satisfaction of a desire. In this point, Freud is difficult to understand, since, all of his works reveal his strong dispute with religion. However, in *The Future of an Illusion*, he states that religion is not assumed as an error, but rather as an expression of desire. As we can see, the father of psychoanalysis turns out to be very contradictory in his considerations concerning religion, as he seems to grant it the intention of expressing a deep human longing.

Genetic-structuralist Psychology

In this paradigm, Fritz Oser and Paul Gmünder discover various stages of religious development, but they do not mention any particular religion. They understand it as an explanation of the world, in which transcendence involves construction of meaning. Likewise, they consider that the religious structure has its own dynamics and relates to other areas, for example, morality. However, it is not reduced to these other areas, thus suggesting the universal character of religion.

Phenomenological Psychology

In order to refer to this theory, it is essential to mention some of Freud's proposals, since it was clearly demonstrated that certain considerations of his are reductionist and negative. This is why phenomenological psychology comes into being. This psychological paradigm proposes that the object of study should not be the unconscious, but rather the conscious and meaningful human experience. The phenomenological psychologists (Frankl and James) rescue the religious experience, since they consider it to be essential and something that has meaning for human beings. Furthermore, it is the space in which essential concepts are set forth for understanding the importance of human religiosity.

It is worth saying that this type of psychology finds its support in the phenomenological method, an approach greatly influenced by

the consequences of the great world wars. Phenomenology, especially Husserl's, is concerned mainly with consciousness. To say that consciousness has an intentionality leads to the affirmation that we are dealing with the consciousness of something, and that this something is what consciousness tends to. This allows Husserl to demonstrate that consciousness has contact with reality itself. Hence, for those who play a leading role in phenomenological psychology, the religious experience is valuable insofar as it comes from consciousness, which maintains a close relationship with reality.

In the field of phenomenological psychology, the author of reference is William James, who is considered the founding father of the psychology of religion. In his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* we find a study of religion viewed independently from theology, history, anthropology, or sociology. Likewise, he avoids focusing on the institutional aspects of religion. He states that the phenomena of religious experiences will be considered from the existentialist point of view, and that he will carry out an analysis that goes beyond organic provisions; his understanding of religion goes beyond simple neuroses, repressed sexual desires, or diseases. James' (1994) objective is to describe "[…] the *feelings*, *acts*, and *experiences* of *individual men* in *their solitude*, *so far* as *they* apprehend themselves to stand in relation to *whatever they may consider* the *divine*" (p. 18).

Religious experiences cannot be grouped into a unique type of mental entity, because numerous varieties exist. In fact, there are two visible types of personalities: the "once-born" and the "twice-born". The former are characterized by a grateful experience and they have an admiration for existence; they are enthusiastic and reject unhappiness; they view their lives optimistically and have a good attitude. On the contrary, the latter emphasize the awareness of sin, the vanity of the world, the negative. Therefore, the "twice-born" have a heterogeneous personality and a psychopathic temperament: in many cases, people who are pessimistic about life have psychopathological problems. However, they struggle to unify the inner self, because it is divided.

> The higher and the lower feelings, the useful and the erring impulses, begin by being a comparative chaos within us -- they must

> end by forming a stable system of functions in right subordination. Unhappiness is apt to characterize the period of order-making and struggle. If the individual be of tender conscience and religiously quickened, the unhappiness will take the form of moral remorse and compunction, of feeling inwardly vile and wrong, and of standing in false relations to the author of one's being and appointer of one's spiritual fate. (James, 1994, p. 82)

The process of unification of the self has particular characteristics that are worth mentioning: a) this unification can arrive gradually or abruptly; b) unification can come through ebullience, altered feelings, or mystical experiences; c) regardless of the path taken, what is achieved is solace. It is possible to find this tranquility in religion; however, it is not the only option, since the desire to resolve the inner incoherence is part of a general psychological process that is not necessarily satisfied by means of the journey through religion. Thus, one can be skeptical or morally scrupulous with regards to freedom and the license to find a new stimulus or passion (love, greed, etc.).

James, in one of his proposals, suggests that there is a bond between the human being and the beyond.

> Religiosity, despite its sick forms is basically found in a healthy mind in which, within our subconscious self, mediating between nature and the beyond, we feel united to this Beyond that is not opposed to us, but rather to the lower aspects of our divided self. (James, 1994, p.151-152)

Viktor Frankl's Proposal

The concept of the Beyond is approached in a different and broader way by the Viennese neuropsychiatrist Viktor Frankl. It is worth remembering that Frankl was a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, the Jewish physician describes the stages a prisoner lives through. The topic of religion is developed more thoroughly although not deeply, in the book *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*. In this book, he also deals with existential analysis and the spiritual consciousness of the human being.

Frankl's work provides an alternative to the two psychological schools of his time: Freudian psychoanalysis and Adlerian psychotherapy. The former argues that the desire for pleasure is what moves the individual, while the latter states that it is the desire for power. For Frankl, the true need of the person lies in the satisfaction of meaning. The anthropological vision of this author does not ignore that man has a biological and a psychological dimension, but he is more interested in the spiritual, existential or noological dimension. That is where the sense of responsibility lies, since, according to him, […] "Being human is being responsible—existentially responsible, responsible for one's own existence." (Frankl, 1999, p. 41). In this dimension we find what allows individuals to be what they are, since, despite having lost everything, even their dignity, the subject does not lose the possibility "*to choose* one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to *choose one's own way* (Frankl, 2004, p. 90). This leads to the consideration that the human being is not only body and mind, but also existence and spirituality, which is manifested in the possibility of choice and responsibility.

Regarding religion, Frankl claims that it forms part of the spiritual unconscious — understood as responsibility — and characterizes it as unconscious and transcendent. The term transcendence, according to this author, means that search for the superior, for what is beyond the human being. He also says that genuine religiosity does not come from impulsiveness, but rather from 'decisiveness'; that is, it is an extremely existential and lived experience. In this way, religion forms part of an experience, of a personal life experience, and it is arrived at insofar as human beings live and exist in a world with which they interacts. Another key element arises in this interaction: the meaning of life. The desire for meaning, that longing to find the purpose of life is evidenced in the adversities presented by the environment, in the crucial situations to which the world leads the individual. The basis of that desire is self-transcendence, understood as the human capacity to construct oneself on the basis of relating to others in this world.

> Being human always points, and is directed, to something, or so-meone, other than oneself—be it meaning to fulfill or another

human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. (Frankl, 2004, p. 133)

Thanks to the previous ideas, we can affirm that the individual does not act mechanically, as Freud claimed, when he proposed that satisfaction can only be found in pleasure. If the human being has the ability to choose, he will tend toward the search for meaning. And meaning does not lie in self-actualization, but rather in going beyond oneself. However, the only objects of meaning are not values or persons; so is the divine, given that persons are the only ones who can determine to whom or to what they feel responsible. For this reason, there are beings who consider it indispensible to be held accountable to God. (Frankl, 2004, p.132)

Before concluding, it must be admitted that Frankl's position concerning religion is somewhat diffuse, on the basis of what has been described so far. In the last part of this chapter, clarifications will be made in this regard.

Positive Psychology

In the field of positive psychology, Martin Seligman proposes that strengths and virtues improve the quality of life. He arrived at this conclusion after observing that psychology was only concerned with mental illnesses and negative emotions, and neglected the human capacities for improvement. This psychological approach came into existence is order to study those neglected aspects. It has been proven that Seligman's proposal draws from Frankl's writings and that the concept that links both theories is the meaning of life. What differentiates them, besides the historical circumstances and social contexts, is experimentation. Positive psychology aims at identifying, healthy people through more communitarian ways, in order to prevent factors that can cause disease. In fact, this psychological paradigm has admitted, in recent years, that the study of happiness is its general purpose, and that "[…] there are at least three routes to happiness:

a) positive emotions and pleasure (pleasurable life), b) commitment (committed life), and c) meaning (life with meaning)" (Mariñelarena-Dondena, 2012, p. 14). This leads to the conclusion that if one of the more recent psychological proposals considers the meaning of life important, it is because, in truth, this element forms a crucial part of the existence of a person.

Multiple Intelligences: Existential Intelligence

This theory considers it important to respond to the question concerning the meaning of life, by means of a type of intelligence. Thus, in Howard Gardner's proposal, intelligence is not only logical-mathematical and linguistic. He affirms that there are five more possibilities: musical, spatial, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences.

Taking into account that not everybody behaves in the same way, this definition of intelligence emerges: "the bio-psychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value for a culture". (Gardner, 2001, p. 45). In fact, this proposal broadens the understanding of intelligence: it is recognized as the potential that belongs to a particular culture and, therefore, to a particular individual. Hence, individuals have certain type of intelligence, not all of them. Based on this approach, it should not be considered that intelligence has to do exclusively with the development of the logical-mathematical and linguistic aspects, thus ignoring the various possibilities (corporal, spatial, musical intelligence etc.) individuals have for interacting with their environment. However, taking into account the purpose of this study, what is important about Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is his proposal concerning the existence of other types of intelligences that he added more recently.

In his work *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century*, Gardner formulates the possible existence of other intelligences, such as the naturalist, spiritual, and existential. He devotes various pages to the last two and examines whether it is possible to apply the eight criteria that define an intelligence to these types of intelligences. Neither the spiritual nor the existential intelligence

can be added to the existing list of multiple intelligences, since their characteristics cannot be covered based on the cognitive approach.

To speak about spirituality requires taking into account three meanings: a) spirituality, as a concern about cosmic and existentialists issues; b) the spiritual, as the achievement of a state of being and c) spiritual, as an effect on others. The first sense refers to the desire to have experiences and get to know cosmic entities. Therefore, organized systems have been constructed over time to address these issues that people can adopt either by their own volition or by obligation. However, there will be those who choose a traditional version of spiritual knowledge, and those who create a personal or idiosyncratic mixture. The second sense, (*the spiritual, as the achievement of a state of being)* makes clear who dominates the areas of spiritual experience: those capable of meditating, reaching trance states, or experiencing psychic phenomena. Lastly, *the spiritual, as an effect on others*, concerns the ability of some individuals to convey great spiritual strength, or to lead to an altered state of consciousness.

Now, determining whether spiritual intelligence forms part of the cognitive aspect of an individual is a bit problematic for various reasons: a) the limitations of its contents (organized systems, codes or sets of beliefs), b) its phenomenological and affective aspects), c) its assertions regarding the value of truth, given that it is reached by those who have followed a particular path, and d) the fact that the spiritual intelligence of certain people can influence others. Thus, it is better to consider this intelligence as a variety of another broader one, existential intelligence.

Existential intelligence is related to "the capacity to locate oneself with respect to the furthest reaches of the cosmos: the infinite and the infinitesimal […] the significance of life, the meaning of death, the ultimate fate of the physical and psychological worlds, and such profound experiences as love of another person or total immersion in a work of art". (Gardner, 2001, p. 68-69). This is the "species potential to engage in transcendental concerns" (Gardner, 2001, p. 69). Here there is an evident interest in cosmic issues as dealt with by famous people such as Gandhi and Einstein. There is also more evidence of the visibility of spiritual concerns. Nevertheless, as stated above, in the final analysis, neither existential nor spiritual intelligence has been added to the list

of multiple intelligences. This situation becomes contradictory when Gardner jokingly proposes that anyway, there would be eight and a half intelligences, with the last one being the existential.

The proposal of the theory of multiple intelligences is important insofar as it recognizes the presence of a spiritual and existential aspect in the human being, although Gardner decides not to commit himself to the development of that type of intelligence. Other scholars will do so. Therefore, before closing this section it is worth explaining what is meant by spiritual intelligence.

At the beginning of the 21st Century, Dahna Zohar and Ian Marshall published a text which referred to the existence of a third intelligence, besides the rational and emotional intelligences. This new intelligence is called spiritual intelligence (SQ), and it addresses the way people face and solve the problems related to meanings and values. This intelligence makes it possible to place acts and lives in broader, meaningful contexts. Thanks to this, it is possible to determine which life path is most valuable. Furthermore, this intelligence is considered the intelligence of wholeness, because with it, the brain and the entire human behavior can carry out processes of integration and in-depth analysis, together with a complete and holistic opening, a more open total alterity, that which goes beyond the countenance of the other. Thus, human beings do not perceive their daily existence based on fragmentation, but by means of the search for meaning. They give special meanings to everyday life. This is more notorious in religious systems, but not exclusive to them. In these religious systems, it is possible to speak of a concretion of this intelligence through spiritual competence. This is a way of being and living in the world, turning our sight towards spirituality, understood not as a religious denomination, but as a lifestyle. These things do not go against humanity; on the contrary, they go hand in hand with the humanization essential for comprehensive education.

Although the book authored by Dahna Zohar and Ian Marshall is broad and contemplates many characteristics of spiritual intelligence, it is worth taking into account that several of their ideas point to those that Viktor Frankl had already set forth. What is more, these writers do not ignore the meanings that the Jewish neuropsychiatrist

gives to concepts such as spiritual, quest (or desire) for meaning, and transcendence. Thus:

> To experience "the spiritual" means to be in touch with some larger, deeper, richer whole that puts our present limited situation into a new perspective. It is to have a sense of "something beyond", of "something else" that confers added meaning and value on where we are now. That spiritual "something more" may be a deeper social reality or social web of meaning. It may be an awareness of or attunement to the mythological, archetypal, or religious dimensions of our situation. It may be a sense of some more profound level of truth or beauty. And/or it may be an attunement to some deeper cosmic sense of wholeness, a sense that our actions are part of some greater universal process. (Zohar and Marshal, 2001, p. 31)

If observed closely, Zohar and Marshall's proposal includes both what is religious and what is not. What is more, knowing that their ideas were going to be questioned, they argue that spiritual intelligence does not refer to being religious, since religion is an imposed set of beliefs and rules; instead, SQ is an internal and innate capacity of the brain and the psyche. Therefore, SQ can be used to be spiritually intelligent concerning religion, to the extent that it connects with the meaning and the essential spirit beyond all great religions. "A person high in SQ might practice any religion, but without narrowness, exclusiveness, bigotry, or prejudice. Equally, a person high in SQ could have very spiritual qualities without being religious at all" (Zohar and Marshall, 2001, p. 28)

Now then, despite the existence of spiritual intelligence, Zohar and Marshall express their concern regarding how low it currently is. This impression is shared by Spanish theologian Francesc Torralba, who states, in one of his lectures, that young people neither know nor practice that kind of intelligence. Torralba clarifies that in the Anglo-Saxon world, the term spiritual intelligence does not have a negative connotation, but that it does in the Mediterranean. However, SQ has been described as an existential or transcendent intelligence; perhaps these concepts are more in line with its definition. Moreover, we must remember that Gardner decides to include this intelligence within the broader existential intelligence.

When observed closely, SQ is surrounded by other capacities, such as the question regarding the meaning of life and the world, the ability to 'step back and take distance', and the capacities of transcendence and wonder; therefore, spiritual intelligence and denominationalism are dissimilar. Thus, these recent analyses carried out in the field of psychology, focused on intelligences, show an openness to the appreciation of the most human manifestations that do not necessarily emanate from religiosity. Thus, after presenting some aspects of the history of the psychology of religion, it is important to discuss the relationship between the meaning of life and transcendence and religion, in order to highlight the contributions of psychology to teaching religion in the school context.

Contributions of the Psychology of Religion to RES

In the history of the psychology of religion, we were able to see that for some scholars, the human religious aspect is something negative. That is why those psychologists find, in religious experiences some anomalies in the mind of the individual. Moreover, they have come to consider those experiences as inventions implicitly aimed at manipulation. In this sense, Freud's proposal is reductionist and negative, since he proposes that religion is a collective neurosis which is supported by the necessity of reestablishing the authority lost through parricide. In this interpretation of religion, it is not possible to rescue any denomination in particular, since any religious experience would manifest the symptoms of a psychological disorder. This gives birth to the proposal of phenomenological psychology, more specifically that of James, in which the probable presence of these disorders in some religious manifestations is not ignored. But neither does it ignore the fact that what human beings are seeking is to reestablish their spiritual dimension, and religion is not the only way to achieve this.

At this point, it is essential to insist on the fact that human beings relate to their environment in various ways and, in turn, are composed of several dimensions that are difficult to ignore. The individual, more than a source of rationality and a primordially biological existence, is the expression of an emotionality and spirituality that must be

acknowledged. Herein lies the objective of establishing the relationship between the studies of religion and RES. Accepting that the nature and object of study RES are the treatment of the transcendent dimension allows for an integration with the theories contained in studies of religion. In fact, those theories make it possible to identify the common elements found in belonging or not belonging to some creed. That is to say, the development of their transcendent dimension is essential for human beings, taking into account the elements of the meaning of life and transcendence (presented by the psychology of religion). Thus, RES will be able to evolve as a discipline without ambiguities in its practice and without legal confusions. Thus, when the spiritual or transcendent dimension is recognized in the person, it is imperative to see it beyond a specific manifestation, or religion. Moreover, it rescues the fact that individual existence is the faithful expression of the being of humanity.

Now, referring once again to the considerations of the phenomenological psychologists, we will focus on the particular contributions of two of them (James and Frankl), in order to highlight their specific contribution to the nature and epistemological foundation of RES. The contributions made by James are the following:

1. The religious experience is not a necessary manifestation of mental disorders. Although sometimes psychopathologies occur in some people, the quest to reestablish the divided self is constant, in order to change the pessimistic perception of life.

2. This readjustment of the self can be achieved by other means aside from the religious one.

3. Regardless of whether you are "once-born" or "twice born", what is important in religiosity is the link established with the Beyond.

What these points suggest, in the field of RES, is that the religious experience has value since it derives from human feeling and action. This is also because there is a permanent search for transcendence, of that beyond that can be represented by the divine. Nevertheless,

(here we have another insightful element presented by James), the question of reuniting the self does not have to be resolved in religion, because there will be those who resort to another path. This element opens the door to understanding those girls and boys in the classrooms who say they do not believe in a divine being. This allows the teacher to establish an unbiased dialogue with those students who do not belong to any religious institution. Here the existence of that plurality of beliefs within the classroom becomes evident.

The concept of 'what lies beyond' is also taken up by another representative of phenomenological psychology. It is pertinent to go into that term a bit. An irrefutable proof of the religious is the trust in the existence and kindness of a 'beyond', of a being, or several beings, creators of the space we inhabit. That being or beings will not only grant an understanding of this world, but also provide the reason for being of the human. That is, the meaning of existence will be given by transcendence, by that which lies beyond the individual and possesses some special and unique characteristics. From this fact, it follows that myths are a good way of expressing that religious aspect mediated by transcendence. However, the question may arise: what happens to those who do not believe in divinities? That is to say, those who do not consider adhering to religious presuppositions. Here, it is necessary to consider the important contribution of the concepts of Frankl's logotherapy: the spiritual dimension, transcendence, and the meaning of life.

As stated above, Frankl is interested in distinguishing the biological and psychological dimensions of human beings from the spiritual one. With respect to the latter, it has to be said that even if the name suggests it, it actually does not refer to the religious aspect, but rather to the consideration of human existence on the basis of choice and responsibility. These elements are inherent to every person, regardless of whether or not they practice a religious creed. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that Frankl's considerations are based on the proposal of existential philosophy. Thus, keeping this in mind and as stated above, religiosity turns out to be an individual's personal choice, and, as such, not everyone necessarily makes such a choice, since there is the possibility of opting for another aspect.

On the other hand, two points should be taken into account regarding transcendence: a) human beings tend to go beyond themselves; that is, the meaning of life is found in a value, or in a person, so that some individuals do not orient their lives according to the divine. b) There is also another meaning of life that is rooted in the divine. Better yet, it is understood on the basis of faith, and it is called super-meaning.

When speaking of meaning of life, Frankl is aware that it is also possible to think about the problems concerning the purpose and objective of the world, or the meaning of fate. An answer to this aspect can be given through faith, centered on the belief in a Providence, in which all those concerns are placed. Nonetheless, this conception of religion, based on the ultimate concept of super-meaning, has nothing to do with the conception of some religions according to which the interest of God is to have a great number of believers. Moreover, today, there is a lack of permanence in any particular religious creed, due to the disputes that are generated among followers of one group or another. Despite what can be considered, we are not following the pathway to a universal religion, but rather towards a personal religiosity, in which the individual finds his own original language that allows him to address God (Frankl, 2010). For this reason, the teacher of religion encounters students who do not see themselves, by conviction, as belonging to any particular denomination, but are assumed to be non-practicing believers. And, on occasions, they make strong criticisms of traditional creeds.

The value of Frankl's proposals lies in inclusion, given that the concepts of spiritual dimension, transcendence, and meaning of life involve both believers and non-believers. All human beings have not only asked themselves about the beyond and the meaning of life, but also seek it through their acts, their creations, their formulations, their experience of living. Those who have been interested in experiencing life and the world around them do not necessarily belong to a religious creed, since the latter is not a requirement for the former. What we do have to admit is that those elements (spiritual dimension, transcendence and meaning of life) are a part of human beings. They are what makes them what they are; they are the representation of human existence itself. Therefore, it is possible to understand the thought and actions of those

who do not give any indication of believing in the divine. Therefore, it becomes the task of the RES teacher, to cultivate the transcendent dimension, without restricting it to a particular religious institution.

It is a fact that not only logotherapy gives importance to the meaning of life; positive psychology does so as well, by highlighting human strengths and making room for that individual who is not sick all the time. Likewise, the proposal of multiple intelligences and their further development is oriented towards a very important topic, namely, human interest, emphasizing questions of transcendence and of meaning. This situation cannot be assumed as merely a trend or a current boom. If these reflections have emerged, it is because the issue requires profound attention; in fact, it involves constant and permanent human events. The questions about meaning and the longing for transcendence involve human characteristics and have produced varied responses; therefore, they deserve to be taken into account, regardless of where they come from. Thus, for RES, those answers are imperative in order to cultivate the transcendent dimension granted to it.

Currently, in Colombia, it is not possible to close your eyes to the reality of religious pluralism, represented by students from different schools. Thus, it is necessary to offer a Religious Education that recognizes and includes the differences. Teachers of religion must assume a more open position towards the human, to considering the meaning of life and transcendence, since they are also involved with nonbelievers. Likewise, it is necessary for RES to cultivate the transcendent dimension by starting a dialogue with the myriad thoughts and feelings that are present in the classroom.

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