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A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SPIRITUALITY AT WORK

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A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SPIRITUALITY AT WORK

Antonio Argandoña[1]

Abstract

The literature on spirituality at work and in organizations is full of useful contributions and suggestions, but difficulties arise in applying it to firms due to the lack of a theoretical conceptual framework that integrates the different approaches. This paper seeks to provide such a framework, using a simple theory about human action that allows for integrating the different components of spirituality at work.

Keywords: Ethics; Firms; Leadership; Management; Religion; Spirituality; Work

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A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SPIRITUALITY AT WORK

Introduction[1]

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in spirituality at work and in the workplace. Many articles have been published on the subject in journals concerned with management, human resources, ethics, corporate social responsibility and related subjects. Consulting and counseling activities on these subjects have flourished and a wealth of research has been carried out in firms. Working parties have been created in scientific societies, such as the Academy of Management, and an international scientific journal has been created specifically for this subject: the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* (Biberman and Altman 2004; cf. also Neal 2013).

Interest in the subject is not a chance occurrence. It is probably related to a crisis over the meaning of work, caused by external developments such as technological progress or globalization but also by internal factors concerning the conception of work and the firm. The expectations created in recent decades about work as a means for self-realization, the hope for a comfortable long-term job as the means to provide an increasingly better standard of living, supported by a generous sustainable welfare state and the ideal of an affluent, relatively equal work-based society have been gradually eroded away. For many people, work no longer guarantees an adequate standard of living and quality of life. On the contrary, it is an alienating factor; it prevents people from leading a full personal, family and social life and it does not always respect individual dignity.

The situation is not much better from the firm's side. Technological and economic changes have disrupted the models for industrial relations. It no longer seems possible to offer long-term contracts with the promise of a stable job, steadily rising pay and a satisfactory retirement. The concept of loyalty is being lost because firms can no longer keep their implicit promises and also because workers now view themselves as holders of a series of assets whose return must be optimized (Dembinski 2009).

Ultimately, the work crisis is the outcome of the errors and malpractices of corporations, governments and trade unions. Underlying these policies and practices, one perceives deeper problems related to conceptions about the individual, work and the firm. Workplace spirituality

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is presented as an answer to those problems. However, literature and literature-based practice fall short of providing any clear guidance.

To start with, there is no broadly accepted definition of workplace spirituality,[2] which is logical given the complexity of the workplace reality and its main player, the person. There are also a variety of approaches from which the subject is addressed and a variety of goals pursued by those writing about it.[3] The literature approaches the issue mainly from two directions: the person who works and the organization that employs the worker. Some authors try to diagnose the problems, others propose solutions and there are yet others who explain, with some imaginativeness, what a future society produced by spiritualized work might be like. In most cases, these contributions highlight the positive aspects of spirituality: for example, they say that it makes work fun and uplifting; it encourages workers to give fully of themselves and open themselves up to their inner spirit. It is the person's inner domain; it is surprise, play, spontaneity, joy, celebration, grace, magic, miracle, etc. It develops a person's potential; it builds satisfying relationships; it enables positive self-assessment and self-esteem. It builds confidence, a belief in the sacrosanct, in unity and in the power of transformation. It creates favorable conditions for teamwork; it improves personal skills and productivity, and promotes a pleasant work atmosphere, innovation and creativity, etc., (Dent, Higgins and Wharff 2005, Mohamed, Wisnieski, Askar and Syed 2004), although there is no lack of critical analyses (Asforth and Pratt 2003, Gotsis and Kortezi 2008).

Some of these essays are subject to more or less explicit self-imposed limitations. For example, the often implicit hypothesis that the spirituality of work is a radically new idea that dates back – at the very earliest – to the 1980s in the United States (Hicks 2003).[4] Perhaps the reason lies in a lack of historical memory, in spite of the wealth of information about the many spiritual initiatives, particularly those that were religiously inspired, that have evolved over the centuries in all cultures, in personal, family and social life, and also in work and business.[5] Or perhaps the reason is a desire to exclude their religious roots and seek to develop a purely secular spirituality.

In short, workplace spirituality means different things for different authors, and it is built on different assumptions that are rarely stated explicitly, which in turn makes any consistent application more difficult. Our aim is to provide a conceptual framework within which it may be possible to accommodate some of these different conceptions. We will start with a brief outline of the theory of action, which may provide a basis for understanding work within the context of an organization that pursues goals of its own – the firm, where a number of individuals cooperate under the direction of a manager, executive or leader.

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[2] The definition that appears most often in the literature is the one given by Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003, 13): "Workplace spirituality is a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy."

[3] According to Mohamed, Hassan and Wisnieski (2001), there are more definitions of spirituality than there are authors or researchers writing about it.

[4] This also happens in other fields, such as business ethics or corporate social responsibility, whose historical origins are not always acknowledged (Argandoña and von Weltzien-Hoivik 2009).

[5] From very early times, at least in societies with generalized religious convictions and practices, it was a deeply held idea that a firm could not ignore the spiritual development of the people who worked in it. In our individualistic society, this may be seen as a stratagem for manipulating workers, but that was not how it was viewed in a society where concern for other people's welfare was felt much more strongly.

After introducing this conceptual framework, we will compare it with different contributions made by the literature on workplace spirituality. We will follow with some brief considerations on the role of the firm in the management of work, before moving on to the conclusions.

A Conceptual Framework for Workplace Spirituality

Schmidt-Wilk, Heaton and Steingard (2000, 582) talk about three streams or branches of literature on workplace spirituality: one presents "spirituality in terms of a personal inner experience" (for example, Mitroff and Denton 1999); another "focuses on principles, virtues, ethics, values, emotions, wisdom and intuition" (and they cite Dheler and Welsh 1994, among others); and the third "defines spirituality in terms of the relationship between a personal inner experience and its manifestations in outer behaviors, principles, and practices" (citing McCormick 1994, among others). Perhaps more simplistically, we could say that the first refers to personal spirituality and its "discovery" through inner experiences; the second anchors spirituality to an objectively described theory of human action; and the third relates inner experiences with outer behaviors. Ideally, our framework will take in all three approaches.

Our goal is to understand what it means to say that a person who works is a spiritual agent or that he or she feels, lives or practices a certain type of spirituality, why that spirituality is important for the organization where the person works and, consequently, how managers should act so that the spirituality practiced by their employees, and which the firm allows or encourages, can contribute to everyone's goals and, by extension, to the goals of society as a whole.

In the rest of the paper, we will consider the anthropology of the working person as given: his or her condition as a material and spiritual being, with needs in both spheres; able to set himself or herself ends and find the means to achieve them; rational, able to evaluate those ends (ethical rationality) and means (instrumental rationality); with the capability for self-reflection, self-awareness and transcendence; with a limited but real freedom; relational, who needs others to satisfy at least some of his or her material, psychological and affective needs; able to transcend his or her personal interest, but bound by it; endowed with dignity, which is intrinsic and not given by others or attained by the results of his or her action, etc.[6]

[6] These qualities are implicit in the literature, although certain authors highlight some more than others, or even reject some of them. They are often presented as outcomes of spirituality rather than as conditions of the person who is living it; cf. for example, Gotsis and Kortezi (2008): plenitude, achievement, connectedness, meaning, integration, open communication, commitment to personal growth, integrity, community building, fostering abilities and realizing one's full potential, expression of the self, etc.

Human Action

Anyone who acts may be seeking different types of outcomes:[7]

- Extrinsic outcomes: a response from the environment, the firm or the market (wages, for example).

- Intrinsic outcomes: the action's effects on the agent, such as satisfaction during performance of the task and the operational learning (knowledge, abilities, skills) gained from it.

- External outcomes: the action's effects on other people: customers, colleagues, future generations, etc. In turn, external outcomes have effects on the agent, which we will call evaluative learning because it consists of learning to evaluate the consequences of one's actions on others, that is, taking them into account.[8] This learning takes place even when the work does not entail any direct contact with other people or when one will never meet the person one is interacting with.

The existence of three types of outcomes makes it necessary to evaluate actions by applying three separate criteria, which we will call effectiveness (for the worker, this is the remuneration obtained with respect to the effort made), efficiency (the satisfaction obtained in work and the knowledge and skills provided by the operational learning) and consistency (the moral learning, which determines the ability to act in consideration of other people's needs and, in particular, to internalize the firm's goals and those of its stakeholders).

Some of these evaluations allow trade-offs (for example, accepting a more unpleasant job in exchange for a higher salary, or a lower salary in a job that develops new skills), but with limits (it is not possible to "buy" any job just by paying a higher salary). And, above all, there is no possible trade-off with the third criterion, consistency, because immoral behavior always destroys the individual's basic qualities.

The variety of outcomes implies that people may work for different motives: extrinsic or economic (salary, for example), intrinsic or psychological (satisfaction, learning new knowledge or skills) and transcendent or ethical (evaluative learning or developing virtues).[9]

As a consequence of its employees' work, the firm will also obtain extrinsic outcomes (sales, profits, market share), intrinsic outcomes (a more or less satisfactory work environment and a labor force who will develop new operational knowledge and skills) and external outcomes

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[7] In what follows, I have used many ideas from Pérez López (1991, 1993, 1998), which I have developed in Argandoña (2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2011a, 2014a).

[8] All of these outcomes may be positive or negative: for example, a salary that is above or below the agent's opportunity cost (what he or she could earn in another job), acquiring good or bad habits at work, or learning moral virtues or vices.

[9] In the literature on human action, it is common practice to use the term "intrinsic" to refer to motives termed both intrinsic and transcendent in this paper. But it is important to distinguish between them. The motives we call intrinsic do not lead to the development of moral virtues; they allow for trade-offs, albeit partial, with extrinsic motives and have clear limits (a firm whose workers maximize satisfaction may be chaotic). The motives we have called transcendent may produce an unlimited improvement of individuals' moral quality and they do not allow trade-offs with the other two, as we have already said.

(development of virtues among its staff), which it will have to evaluate in terms of effectiveness (economic results), efficiency (atmosphere, learning) and consistency (virtues, i.e., its employees' ability to take into account their own needs, those of the other employees and those of the other stakeholders, including the owners). The firm, or rather its managers, will also be motivated by a combination of extrinsic, intrinsic and transcendent motives, sometimes waiving a material benefit in exchange for improvements in the workplace environment, but always maintaining an appropriate level of ethicalness to prevent the deterioration of people's human qualities.

Obviously, the two parties' motives and evaluations will not always match. However, the firm must take into account all the outcomes received by employees from their work in the organization, their motives and how their work is evaluated, because a firm needs everyone's cooperation to develop its business, both in the present and in the future. Both, but particularly the future, will depend on the three evaluations made by its employees.

This brief explanation of human action provides a starting point for the framework of the theories on spirituality. Other elements, such as emotions, feelings and affections, will be presented at a later point. In the meantime, we will continue with our discussion.

Motives, Values and Virtues

A person who acts in pursuit of these outcomes, moved by these motives and toward the development of these evaluations, is a complete person. The emphasis on his or her actions' spirituality adds nothing new in these areas, although it may underscore certain outcomes, motives or values. And this is also true when what the agent is apparently seeking is limited to extrinsic outcomes (income), because what motivates him or her may perhaps be the desire to ensure his or her family's well-being. The other two motives, particularly the transcendent motives, may also be present – even to the extent of being the dominant motives – in an activity whose motivation is, apparently, purely economic. Spirituality does not add new dimensions to work but rather acknowledges all of them with their interrelations and complexities.

Spirituality is a property of human beings, not of firms. But firms, with their organization, structure, modus operandi and culture, create the framework within which the human beings who work there can develop their spirituality. Accordingly, within the firm, spirituality means that all the dimensions of work are taken into account, evaluating the results using the three criteria explained above.

If this is the case, this way of viewing spirituality includes, at least to some extent, much of what is said in the literature on the subject: for example, when it is suggested that employees are motivated by more than just economic motives; or when firms do not use purely monetary incentives; or when it is argued that work should enhance certain values and virtues, such as uprightness, trust, honesty, loyalty, etc., that are, in turn, manifested through acts of respect, attentiveness and concern, among many others.[10] Practicing virtues at work is another way of saying that work is a spiritual activity.

[10] For a summary of some of these approaches, see Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003).

This is particularly true of love (Argandoña 2011b, 2014b), understood not as a feeling but as a virtue that is practiced when an agent tries to take into account the consequence of his or her actions on other people: avoiding negative consequences and favoring positive ones; seeking the good of others. In other words, the agent treats people as ends in themselves, not as means for other ends. He or she is motivated by a transcendent motive because, when an act is performed out of love, even if it is imperfect, it is not the outcome that is important but the intention (Malo 2004).[11]

Identifying spirituality with actions motivated by love may perhaps seem too demanding but, in actual fact, it is not if one considers that love as a virtue ranges from "lesser" but no-less-important forms, such as affection, empathy, sympathy and comradeship, to friendship and the love of benevolence, which desires only the other person's good without expecting anything in return (Argandoña 2014b).

Acting in accordance with the three criteria explained above means being ethical. An action is ethically correct when the agent seeks both his or her own good and that of the other person, even if he or she does not know the other person, even though the other person does not exist, even though the agent is mistaken about what is good for the other person, and even though the other person's reaction is the opposite to what he or she expected. So the most important effect, if we can talk about it in such terms, of an action performed out of love is not the good produced in the other person but the transformation experienced by the agent, who acquires the ability to *view* the world in another light (Abbà 1992, 242, citing Hauerwas 1984 and Murdoch 1970), to *understand* what is happening from another perspective, to discover other *opportunities* for exercising his or her humanity (Argandoña 2011a, Rhonheimer 2001).[12] Love in the firm is important, not just because it creates a better human climate and makes it possible to achieve better results but because, in essence, it entails *another way* of managing and working. That is why love is a manifestation of the spiritual meaning of work.

Ethics – that is, the development of the agent's moral capacities, his or her virtues – is the outcome of evaluative learning (Argandoña 2011a, 2014a, Arjoon 2000, Koehn 1995). An action is ethical if it arises from the exercise of the agent's virtues and, therefore, contributes to these virtues' development. And that depends primarily, although not solely, on the action's motivation. Consequently, when ethics is practiced at the workplace, it is also spirituality that is being put into practice. But this is not true for all theories of ethics. For example, the application of laws or moral rules from outside the action may not favor the spiritual dimension of work, which may even become dehumanizing if such rules are viewed as impositions that curtail the agent's freedom and cause him or her to lose spontaneity. The same can be said of certain consequentialist ethics, which evaluate actions by adding and subtracting

[11] Love is a virtue that includes rational contents and motives: the agent does not act because he or she finds the action attractive but because he or she has rationally concluded that the action must be performed because that is what the other person (and the agent himself or herself) needs. Love, as a virtue, is a habit that makes decision making easier: it can be used to evaluate actions, to propose alternatives and evaluate them, to decide and use one's personal will to act in the best possible way, transcending preferences, feelings or wishes that are perhaps more attractive but not more important.

[12] On the relationship between love and leadership, cf. Caldwell and Dixon (2010), Fairholm (1996) and Fry (2003). This is also related to the theories on "positive organization"; cf. Cameron, Dutton and Quinn (2003).

purely economic outcomes: in other words, the motives are solely extrinsic. It is also the case when ethics is defined using sentimental or emotional criteria, where the action is performed for the immediate satisfaction it gives to the agent, that is, once again omitting the transcendent motives.

On occasion, spirituality is proposed as an alternative to certain forms of rationality (Losoncz 2004). Actions performed for extrinsic motives are governed by an instrumental rationality, which determines the means chosen to achieve the required ends. However, the evaluation of intrinsic outcomes and, in particular, of evaluative learning requires a practical rather than a consequentialist rationality, which also applies to the choice of ends. Spirituality does not annul instrumental rationality, which is necessary and useful, but rather complements it.

Interpersonal Relationships

Some conceptions of spirituality in the firm stress the dimensions that are directed toward others: openness, connectedness, sociability, giving, etc. Humans are social beings; they need other people, not only to satisfy their needs but to know themselves and achieve self-realization as people. The relational significance of work thus takes on considerable importance. The right-duty binomial in work arises precisely from this social function. Openness toward others provides the rationale for many of the ethical obligations related to work, starting with the duty to not be unnecessarily idle and continuing with the need for professional competence, proficiency, commitment, the spirit of service and attention to detail, to name just a few. It creates conditions conducive to "reasoning" work with others; it helps give work "meaning" and, as we have already said, it is an opportunity to acquire and practice virtues.

As we have already explained, these relationships may arise from extrinsic, intrinsic or transcendent motives. All of them are important, but on different levels: it is not the same to be open to others because it is in my own interest (extrinsic motivation) or because it gives me satisfaction (intrinsic motivation) as it is to be open to others as a service (transcendent motivation). It is likely that different motives will appear in each action: the person who works only for the salary he or she hopes to receive cannot rule out the purpose of doing something useful for his or her employer. Interpersonal relationships are not confined to the action-reaction binomial (the agent does something and the other person reacts), because the other person's reaction is also a call. It opens a window to new options and invites new reactions.

Meaning and Vocation of Work

The meaning of work is not something affixed from outside but a consequence of how work itself is understood – and of how a worker understands himself or herself. It is usually related to the variety of abilities that are brought to bear on work: to the task's identity; to the worker being able to understand the broader meaning of what he or she is doing, even though it is only a small part of a much larger process; to its impact on others, so that it does not have negative effect but rather a positive effect on other people; to the independence of the person performing the task (for example, the power of decision he or she has with respect to the task); to other people's recognition for who he or she is, not just for what he or she does or how much he or she earns; to the task's compatibility with a sufficiently complete life, etc.

The literature on the meaning of work refers to the variety of goals, evaluations and motivations mentioned earlier (Chalofsky 2003, Lips-Wiersma 2001). It is both a component and an outcome of spirituality in the workplace. Some authors have suggested that the fruit of

spirituality is the predominance of meaning and purpose over salary and security (Dehler and Welsh 1994), but it does not seem correct to approach the issue in terms of oppositions. It would be more correct to view it as a complement.

The firm does not "give" meaning to work, but it can provide the reasons why a worker should find meaning in it: the material means that he or she seeks with extrinsic motivation; a sufficiently satisfactory job in an agreeable climate; the possibility of acquiring operational learning, which the employee values for its contribution to his or her own personal ends and also to the firm's common goal; a climate in which human relationships can evolve normally; the opportunity to grow in virtues, because the firm does not force him or her to engage in immoral conduct and, whenever possible, it helps him or her develop positive evaluative learning – for example, understanding what service the firm's products provide to consumers, how the production processes fit into the value chain, how the firm interacts with the local communities where it operates, etc.

Sometimes, the argument about the meaning of work and its spiritual component is presented in terms of fostering the vocational sense of work (Thompson 2000). Although the concept of vocation is very rich, it does not seem to add anything new to what has already been said.

It has also been suggested sometimes that the person who works has the duty to acknowledge and respect his or her own dignity and that of others, and is entitled to have his or her dignity acknowledged.[13] This is a consequence of all that has been said earlier: awareness of personal dignity arises from the experience that no one can take away someone's inner freedom.[14] And this leads us, contrary to certain work cultures and management styles, to another proposition: spirituality requires that the individual act freely and responsibly at all times.

Emotions, Feelings, Affections

When a person performs an action, both its outcome and the process of performing it can elicit pleasant or unpleasant sensations.[15] These sensations will have the effect of increasing or decreasing his or her spontaneous motivation to perform that action again, just as the memory of the sweet taste of candy motivates a child to ask for another piece. However, sensations are not good guides for action, when all the effects are taken into account.

The experiential knowledge we have about the inner state of the person with whom we are interacting is accompanied by positive or negative feelings; the confirmation of these feelings are the emotions. For example, a father who asks his son to give him his toy "as a present" will experience a profound emotion if the child overcomes his egotism and gives it to him. What determines the father's emotion is knowing how hard it has been for the child to be generous (Pérez López 1991, 1993).

This way of explaining the emotional and sentimental dimension of human behavior leads to the same conclusions that we explained earlier, because the feelings' quality will depend on the

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[13] Meaning and dignity are not the same. Dignity is intrinsic to the person; meaning is given to work by the person.

[14] This would be ontological or fundamental dignity, which is different from the operational or acquired dignity given by others.

[15] The terms used in these paragraphs (sensations, satisfactions, emotions, feelings, affections, etc.) have very different definitions. Here, we use the definitions proposed by Pérez López (1991, 1993) which, in our opinion, considerably clarify their roles in the theory of action.

agent's motivation. When the agent is willing to make sacrifices for other people's sakes, he or she is developing his or her moral virtues and is offering others the possibility of being motivated by those same motivations. This is not contrary to rationality, although it does entail moving beyond instrumental or economic rationality. And it also moves away from sentimentalism, that is, allowing oneself to be swayed by superficial emotions in one's decisions and interactions.

For example, when faced with another person's urgent need, there is the option of refusing to acknowledge or respond to it. There is also the sentimental response of trying to solve it without taking into account the consequences arising from the means used for the giver himself or herself, for the needy person or for other people. Lastly, there is the action aimed at solving the present problem without creating future difficulties. For example, when alcoholics ask for money because they say they are hungry, one can react by ignoring them, arguing that their situation is their fault or that it is the authorities' responsibility to take care of the problem, or that the alcoholics will not use the money given to them for its proper purpose, etc. There is also the sentimental action: give the alcoholics money, without considering that they may use it to buy drink, which will make their situation worse. If the giver is moved by genuine concern for the other person, he or she will give the alcoholics food, for example, so that their current problem is solved without worsening the permanent problem. If possible, the giver will try to get the alcoholics to stop drinking and find a job.

In this example, the feelings of compassion and solidarity will be good if they induce the giver to act, but bad if they lead to an erroneous solution. For their part, the virtues of compassion and solidarity will help him or her identify all the relevant factors in the case; they will move him or her to act, that is, they will make him or her "feel" the situation's value (they will enhance his or her feelings) and they will help him or her look for the best solution and overcome the resistance to do what seems to be best at that time. Accordingly, true spirituality will foster these feelings, as early warning signs in the presence of other people's needs and as drivers for action, but it will not allow action to be guided solely by feelings but by reason and virtues.

The Unity of the Person

"If today's literature on spirituality in business is united about anything, it is the claim that there *is* 'something more' to the human person; namely, his or her human essence or spirit. Many see this claim as a brief for change – as a challenge to values of scientific materialism and selfish individualism and as a shift in thinking from modernity's exaltation of reason to an appreciation of feeling, emotion and experience and from dominance of masculinity and patriarchy to a celebration of femininity, in individuals and in society" (Sandelands 2003b, 1002).

Everything that has been said so far leads to spirituality at work being equated with the spirituality of the person who works. It is the same agent who eats, speaks, thinks, loves, rejoices, worries, etc., and also works. Acknowledgment of this unity implies consistency in a person's life, over time and in different circumstances, in his or her environment and in his or her relationships with others. And it not only affects his or her work but his or her entire existence (Hicks 2003).

So spirituality is not just something added to work: it is present at all times throughout the person's life, even in the most mechanical activities. All of human beings' dimensions –

material and spiritual – are part of the reality of work. A person presents himself or herself at his or her workplace with his or her bodily reality, the knowledge he or she has accumulated, his or her capabilities for knowing and doing; with his or her feelings and emotions; with his or her social condition that moves him or her to interrelate with others... At work, the agent knows what the firm expects from him or her and the goals assigned to his or her task. His or her motivations do not necessarily have to align with what the firm expects from him or her, but he or she understands that he or she must internalize and achieve those corporate goals so that, in the process, he or she also gets what he or she wants.

So the important thing is not to develop the spiritual dimension of work but to develop all the dimensions of life, harmoniously. A person is motivated by very different motives, and all of them can be valid. Rather than repressing the material dimension, it is better to develop the spiritual dimension to a balanced level. Neither is it desirable to stifle personal interest with altruistic behavior; personal interest is reasonable and good, so long as it is not the only interest.[16]

All of this can be condensed in the concept of "unity of life," of complete life or "good life" (Aristotle 2009), which, because it is valuable for the agent, is also valuable for the firm and for others.[17] Unity of life implies unity of end (the agent's different ends are duly ordered by hierarchy and matched for compatibility), unity of subject (there are no closed compartments in which the agent ceases to be "himself" or "herself" but rather unity is maintained between intelligence and will, between feelings and reason) and unity of means (they must be legitimate and consistent with the end). If the person is a single, inimitable being and not just another individual belonging to a qualified species, spirituality will establish itself in an inner core from which all of the person's actions – and his or her dignity – originate.

Unity of life is a dynamic concept; it is something that has to be achieved every day. It can never be considered achieved once and for all, and a range of situations is possible with greater or lesser degrees of unity. Spirituality is a means for attaining this, insofar as it leads to a reflection on the purpose of life and of each activity and to a reflection on the organization of these activities, the suitability of the means for achieving this purpose (excluding, for example, immoral means), the connection that is deliberately sought out between different spheres of life (family and career, for example), the coordination between duties and preferences, illusions and reality, mind and heart, etc.[18] It is also important to avoid deceiving oneself or making excuses for any errors that may have been made, to examine oneself at regular intervals, to avoid the "polytheism of values" – that is, accepting values that are not just different but even conflicting, generating a multiplicity of loyalties – and to practice the virtues that strengthen

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[16] In environments where egotism is highly developed, it could be necessary to foster specific, other-oriented behaviors aimed at transcending self-affirmation, but as a strategy for achieving this balance in motivations, not because spirituality consists solely of rendering a voluntary, selfless service to others.

[17] "Good life" does not mean heroic life; in actual fact, it is daily life, not because that is a model for good life but because it is the fulfillment of life choices that deserve to be lived. The ideal life does not have a separate existence; it is manifested in inner goods, which are the goods that are inherent in practice, in work, and which comprise the inner meaning of action (MacIntyre 1981).

[18] Tourish and Tourish (2010) propose three spheres for developing the spirituality of work: the person's inner state (reflection, study, meditation, prayer); the search for the meaning of work (as an activity capable of transforming both the person and the people around him or her); and the connection with the organization and the community (social relations, service). They seem to be compatible with what we have said earlier about goals, values and motivations.

intelligence so that one will know what has to be done and have the will to do it, transcending the various pressures that the agent will receive.

The external manifestations of the unity of life express its importance for social life and also for the firm: it lends consistency to the person's behavior as a whole; it exercises his or her virtues and values (loyalty, justice, joy, etc.); it induces him or her to perform his or her duties; it appreciates freedom and defends it in the agent and in others; it improves motivations and is probably a factor for unity in the firm, giving consistency to the firm's actions over time when the agent voluntarily and consciously aligns with the organization's mission and values (Pérez López 1993, Argandoña 2008a, 2008c).

The concept of unity of life may help us understand that the ethical dimension is a part (but only a part) of the spirituality of work (Garcia-Zamor 2003). The unity of life goes beyond fulfilling work-related ethical duties, although the ethical dimension can come to encompass all facets of the unity of life, at least insofar as ethics is the practical science that regulates all the activities that lead to a good life, which we have identified with the unity of life: ethics is an integral part of all human action. However, work is not at the service of ethics but, like ethics, at the service of humanity. To put it another way, "with the unfolding of an inner world within the person, and of a sense of responsibility towards others [...] [spirituality] converges in the formation of a profoundly ethical attitude to life" (Alvira 2000, 43).

Similar to the concept of unity of life are the notions that spirituality fosters the person's growth and happiness, or that it leads to a holistic view of the person who works (Sandelands 2003b). Balancing work with family duties (and also social activities, relaxation, etc.) is another manifestation of the unity of life.

Human Action and Spirituality

Humans are extraordinarily rich beings, with several levels of spirituality and materiality. Any conception of the person will highlight certain basic assumptions and reject or minimize others. And this will give rise to a range of spiritualities that can be either generic or applied to specific aspects such as work, family, politics, etc. Each of these spiritualities will be understood from a given conception of the person; all of them have some truth in them, but this does not mean that it does not matter which spirituality is followed, because each one accepts certain principles, values or experiences and rejects others and, therefore, fosters certain behaviors and discourages others and has certain consequences for the agent, the organization and other people. The respect owed to the person does not mean that we cannot judge the spirituality proposed or practiced based on its anthropological biases and foreseeable consequences.

In any case, many elements – although not all of them – of this broad range of spiritualities will probably be shared or at least not excluded by others. For example, humans may find the meaning of work in different places: the call of a personal God; a profound, immanent inner experience of what being a human being is, what he or she does and what he or she must do; the realization that work must be performed within a given social context, within a vocation of service to others; the need for that work to be subject to moral principles or values; the need to allow emotions and feelings, etc., to manifest themselves. Obviously, the feelings found will vary, as will also the feasibility of using them as a guide for full, meaningful work. Consequently, different people may propose developing the meaning of work, even though they may not be in full agreement as to what determines that meaning.

Practices of Spirituality

Some authors conceive workplace spirituality as: a series of practices that complement other dimensions (meditation, prayer, silence, retreat, spiritual accompaniment, yoga, mindfulness, relaxation techniques, eliminating rush, etc.); a series of practices that help take people's minds off their worries or help them relax; or the act of regularly devoting time to volunteer work, etc. Behind this conception there may be an implicit denial of the spiritual dimensions mentioned above or, perhaps more commonly, a pragmatic outlook that seeks to get results more quickly from humanized work by the expedient process of recommending certain practices.

These practices may be very useful: a short period of meditation, for example, may be used to reflect on the meaning of work and to find peace within oneself, and a retreat may be useful for improving our self-knowledge or developing skills that will be useful in our relationships with other people. However, human beings' spiritual dimension leads them to transcend the limitations and determinations of specific acts: an act may have a profound spiritual meaning without having to be preceded or accompanied by a specific "spiritual" activity.

Workplace spirituality is cultivated in work itself: work's prosocial motivation, for example, does not require a period of meditation, although this may help develop it; and the awareness of working for others needs nothing more than just that – working with the awareness that one is serving others, even if this is not supported by team meetings. Practices are tools that are sometimes necessary but they are not the most important aspect of workplace spirituality. And spirituality may become an avoidance mechanism when it becomes separated from the other dimensions of life and breaks the unity with them.

Spirituality and Religion

The relationship between spirituality and religion is a much-debated subject in the literature.[19] The different outlooks can be classified into three groups: 1) those that argue that spirituality's origin and content are to be found in religion, that reject the possibility of a purely secular spirituality and, when it does appear, look to the great religions for the ultimate source of secular values; 2) those that deny that the spirituality of work can have a religious origin; and 3) those that accept that there can be religious and non-religious spiritualities (Daniels, Franz and Wong 2000, Kennedy 2003, Mitroff 2003a, 2003b, Nash 2003, Reave 2005).

The debate about the supposed incompatibility between religion and workplace spirituality usually revolves around four arguments:

1. Religion is a private, subjective affair that cannot transcend into the public sphere – and, therefore, cannot manifest itself in the firm. This thesis probably dates back to the 17th century and was developed in the early 20th century (James 1902). It was part of the solution to the wars of religion, in that it relegated religion to individual conscience and subjectiveness and excluded it from politics, economics and social

[19] There is a very extensive body of literature on religion-based workplace spirituality; cf. for example, Goodpaster (1994), Herman (2004) and Sandelands (2003a, 2003b) for Christianity; Chakraborty (2004), Dhir (2003) and Sharma (2004) for Hinduism; Butts (1999) for Taoism, Confucianism and other Asian spiritualities; Epstein (2003) for Judaism; Bouma, Haidar, Nyland and Smith (2003) and Badawi (2003) for Islam; and Ali and Gibbs (1998), Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin and Kakabadse (2002) for the major religions in general.

science. Consequently, although it is perfectly possible for a religious spirituality to exist, there is no place for it in the world of politics, economics or business.

2. Religion cannot be allowed to enter public life or institutions such as the firm because it is dogmatic, intolerant and closed to dialogue, and because it fosters division and confrontation, or passive obedience to authority, or ingenuousness (Mohamed et al. 2001). This is a widely held stereotype. It may be true for certain inclinations in certain religions, but it is not true by any means of the main currents of most religions.[20]

3. Religion is hostile to the firm, contrary to the free market, profit and economic activity; there is no point in bringing in a spirituality that is contrary to the firm. This argument does not seem logical, when all the great religions say that they are compatible with a market economy. This does not mean that religions are not critical of certain aspects of the firm, but certain aspects are equally criticized by those who propose a non-religious spirituality in the workplace.

4. Accepting a religion-based spirituality, at least a spirituality based on one of the major religions, would be tantamount to admitting that human beings are dependent on an Other, that is, they are not autonomous. It would mean that humans have not given life to themselves nor do they originate from a neutral biological mechanism but that, ultimately they have received life from an Other; they cannot define truth either individually or democratically, with fellow citizens, but must look for it, find it and accept it; they cannot give purpose and meaning to their lives but rather must find it. This may be difficult to accept for those who do not object to a religion that is devoted to social service but do not accept a religion that is separate from secular anthropology.

Is a religion-based spirituality acceptable within the firm? As we have already said, a person's spiritual condition is related to his or her condition as a being endowed with corporeality and spirituality. Accordingly, any spirituality of work grounded on an anthropology that may or may not be explicit, but which has a rational basis, can be understood and judged. This includes the religious spiritualities: their rational content provides a basis for analysis and evaluation. So they need not be put in separate categories.

Respectful pluralism (Hicks 2002, 2003, Gotsis and Kortezi 2008) is a good starting point for approaching the study of workplace spirituality. Specifically, the values professed by a religious person, the virtues he or she manifests, his or her commitment to a task and the way he or she relates to others do not have to be any different from those of an atheist or agnostic, at least in principle. The driving force behind these values, motivations, level of commitment, etc. may vary, but this will happen in secular spiritualities as well. Values such as service, friendship,

[20] Related to this argument is the belief that religion consists of large, organized, bureaucratized churches, with their respective practices, ceremonies, rites and routines – perhaps because its advocates do not appreciate the spirituality, sometimes very deep, that underlies them. Others, on the contrary, argue that these practices and ceremonies may serve as instruments for acquiring spirituality (Bierly, Kessler and Christensen 2000).

commitment or compassion do not have content that is exclusively secular (liberals, socialists, conservatives, positivists, deontologists, Aristotelians, etc.) or religious (Buddhists, Christians, Jews, Muslims, etc.).

But this does not mean that all spiritualities are equally acceptable – although everyone deserves respect, independently of their spiritual convictions and practices. Relativism would say that all values and virtues, all motivations and, therefore, all outcomes are equally correct, and there is no rational basis for discriminating among them, an idea that we have already rejected. It also argues that there is no basis for creating a moral community of non-arbitrary convictions (Goodpaster 1994).[21]

The fact that it is possible to develop a secular spirituality (Dehler and Welsh 1994, Mitroff and Denton 1999) does not mean that its origin, religious or secular, is irrelevant, for several reasons.[22]

1. Religion can bring a new, richer rationale to spirituality. For example, the fact that a person believes that he or she comes from a God, who has given him or her being and has put him or her in the world to fulfill a particular purpose – in work too – may provide a broader and deeper explanation of what work is, why we work, what our duties are toward others, etc., without any of this detracting from what a non-believer understands and accepts about those same realities.

2. Furthermore, religion can contribute new motives and a greater commitment from the agent – motivated by his or her faith – to his or her duties and work, the firm, customers, colleagues and society.

3. Religion may also be a means for integrating the spirituality of work within the complete vision of the human person.

4. It may also offer additional means for putting this spirituality into practice. For example, many spiritualities suggest meditation, prayer or personal reflection, spiritual accompaniment or retreats as useful means. The religious origin or content of these means does not make them any less valid than those proposed by atheist or agnostic consultants.

In short, when considering the variety of workplace spiritualities, one should not draw a dividing line between religious and secular spiritualities; rather, they will tend to overlap, insofar as their values, ideals and motivations coincide. The great religions eventually create cultures that take on a life of their own and become places of refuge for believers and non-believers alike, sharing a meaning of life, society and the world based on categories that, in spite of their religious origin, are also totally secular. Not contemplating religious spirituality may mean that significant contributions are excluded from the analysis (Goodpaster 1994).

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[21] Neither does religion identify with spiritual experiences, "awakenings" or "epiphanies," which may or may not happen, and which are also found in non-religious spirituality (Delbecq 1999, 2000).

[22] Indeed, in recent decades, a "return to the sacred" has been observed (Otón 2012), which is also at the origin of the new spirituality, but separates the "sacred" from traditional religiousness (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf and Saunders 1988).

All of this is particularly applicable to anthropologies with Christian or Catholic roots (Argandoña 1995, 2004). For a Catholic, believing does not mean renouncing one's own personality and capabilities for knowledge but finding a new dimension that arises from the encounter with God, a personal God who loves humanity. A spirituality born from this conviction does not seem to be any less suitable for guiding work and life in the firm.

A Christian, by the mere fact of being a Christian, does not lose his or her knowledge and human capabilities; there is no reason why he or she cannot know and do what everyone else can know and do. The Christian nature of work does not guarantee human success – efficiency and profitability, the quality of the goods and services produced, the development of the agent's capabilities and values, etc. – but it does not undermine it either. Of course, the Christian cannot use immoral means, but this is not a constraint imposed by religion; it is a strength, if the aim is not to achieve an extrinsic outcome at any price but rather to perform work in such a manner that it not only achieves this outcome but also the individual's full human development and the good of others.

Likewise, the Christian will have the same motivations as the non-Christian, such as obtaining income, satisfaction in the task performed or gaining new knowledge and abilities, and both can seek the good of others, for example, by doing their utmost to render good service to a customer or help a colleague. But if the work also has a supernatural meaning, it gives the Christian additional motives, as "men are not deterred by the Christian message from building up the world, or impelled to neglect the welfare of their fellows, but [...] they are rather more stringently bound to do these very things" (Vatican Council II 1965, n. 34).[23]

To summarize, both secular and religious workplace spiritualities can exist; when judging and comparing them, what is important is their rational content, insofar as they are justifiable to others on the basis of their rational and foreseeable consequences. The fact that a given spirituality has a religious origin cannot be sufficient argument by itself to accept or reject it.[24]

Spirituality of Work and the Firm

What we have said so far applies to the people who take part in the firm's activities; people are the ones who have a spiritual dimension and who bring that dimension to their work. But that does not mean that spirituality is not important for organizations as well.

[23] Furthermore, while Christians have no advantage in natural knowledge, they do have an advantage on the supernatural plane. If the world is the work of God, if there is an eschatological reality that is beyond this world, if God acts on Earth through the work of his children, then reality is "something more" than what can be seen by someone who does not have faith. This provides a means for closing the gap between moral (rational and autonomous) knowledge of good and duty and the moral capability to do it (cf. Rhonheimer 1987; Argandoña 2014b).

[24] There are other additional reasons in favor of a religion-based spirituality, particularly Christian spirituality since it is a religion that encompasses a person's whole life. Thus, if workplace spirituality seeks to give consistency to work, within the unity of the agent's entire life, Christianity probably offers additional reasons for this consistency through faith in a God who created humans out of love, who calls them to love, who invites them to seek God in all activities of their lives and particularly in work, who proposes goals of human and supernatural (saintliness) excellence, and who urges them to love material realities and, most particularly, all fellow humans.

This is true, first of all, because organizations are run by people, who are also spiritual beings whose work is precisely to manage businesses, which means managing people. Therefore, everything that has been said about employees' spirituality of work and their unity of life is also applicable, and perhaps even more so, to managers.[25]

A second reason is that workers' spirituality will be influenced by the organization's mission, goals, rules, culture, policies and practices. The firm is not a spiritual being but it is a community of people – of spiritual beings – who work in it to achieve the ends that have been established. So the organization should not seek to repress its employees' spiritualities (unless they are a cause of conflict: for example, because they promote unethical behaviors), nor should it impose one spirituality in particular. It can – and must – create the intellectual and affective climate that allows its employees to develop their own spirituality, respecting their freedom at all times.[26]

A manager who does not take into consideration his or her own spiritual dimension and that of his or her employees cannot be a good manager, because he or she will not be attending to a part of that work, in particular, attention to workers' legitimate motivations, which may be a duty of justice toward them but is also necessary because a manager depends on them to achieve the firm's goals. Neglecting employees' spiritual dimension is not a minor oversight; it is being blind to a part of reality that should interest him or her enormously as a manager. Without spirituality, "it is not possible to truly work for the good of others. With a mere generic sympathy, a lot of good things can be done but, in the medium and long run, it is not possible to bring about people's improvement" (Alvira 2000, 42).

As a counterargument, one could say that many firms omit this spiritual dimension, and many employees and managers do not take it into consideration. Does this mean that workplace spirituality is a mere fad that is bound to disappear? Some of its specific practices will definitely disappear but, as we have said, these practices are not spirituality as a whole.

In any case, the spiritual dimension is not provided by the organization but by people, so a profound spiritual content may exist in an organization without it being visible from the outside. Spirituality in the firm is not something that one either has or does not have; it can exist with varying intensity over time or in different departments and functions. As we have already said, workplace spirituality is dynamic, changing and is never attained once and for all.

But again, this is an ideal. Faced with the urgency to give greater depth and self-knowledge to managerial tasks, firms often adopt the work spirituality practices we have mentioned earlier, with the hope that their employees will be more open and will identify more readily with the firm's goals, etc., and, as a result, productivity and job satisfaction will increase, absenteeism and employee turnover will fall, employee loyalty will be improved and, as a result, customer loyalty will as well (Karakhar 2010). But that is putting the cart before the horse: justifying spirituality on the basis of extrinsic outcomes, not on the improvement it brings to people.

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[25] There is an abundant literature on spirituality and leadership; cf., for example, Dent et al. (2005) and McCuddy and Pirie (2007).

[26] Of course, one should be beware of the danger of manipulating workplace spirituality, of turning it into a tool for economic profit, a self-glorification of narcissistic individualism or a commodity that seeks to offer facile solutions for the firm's problems. Cf. Porth, Steingard and McCall (2003) and Tourish and Tourish (2010).

Conclusions

What, then, is the role of spirituality in the firm? For some, it is interesting but impractical because what they perceive as the reality of the capitalist economy is not compatible with the virtues (or frivolities?) of the spirit. The firm is driven by competition, efficiency and profit; spirituality would undermine this key institution of the capitalist system.

For others, it is a means of correcting the defects of the economic paradigm which, by seeking efficiency and profit in a disordered way, elicits contrary reactions in people and negative consequences in society – and, in the long run, in income statements.

For others, lastly, spirituality is called on to change the firm's objectives, its role in society and the criteria applied in its management. But, if it is not built on a solid foundation, it may never go beyond a series of good intentions or relatively incoherent practices. This foundation is rooted in an anthropology that, while it is not new, is different in many ways from the anthropology that currently governs the conception and management of many – although not all – organizations. This is precisely the interpretation of spirituality proposed in this paper: the emphasis on the spiritual dimension of the working person seeks to direct attention toward goals and motivations and, through these, toward behaviors and outcomes.

In short, the shortcomings of work theories and practices are anthropological – affecting the conception of the person (and, consequently, of the organization and, ultimately, of society) – rather than practical. That is why we have shifted the problem from the action of working to action in general, and from the person who works to the person in general. The concept of the unity of life has provided a means for underscoring the importance of a correct conception of the person, of his or her ends, motivations and evaluations. Based on this concept, we have offered a broad interpretation that is capable of accommodating almost all the partial proposals regarding workplace spirituality.

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