

Philosophical Foundations of Workplace Spirituality: A Critical Approach

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ABSTRACT. It is an undeniable reality that workplace spirituality has received growing attention during the last decade. This fact is attributable to many factors, socio-economic, cultural and others [Hicks, D.A. 2003: *Religion and the Workplace. Pluralism, Sprtituality, Leadership* (Cambridge University press, Cambridge)]. However the field is full of obscurity and imprecision for the researcher, the practitioner, the organisational analyst and whoever attempts to systematically approach this relatively new inquiry field. This article attempts to provide a critical review of the literature on workplace spirituality by examining the underlying rationale of the main trends regarding spirit at Work and by negotiating their strengths and weaknesses. Current approaches to workplace spirituality are distinguished to the exploratory, contextual and the consequential, acontextual ones. Particular attention is given to 'Respectful Pluralism' proposed by Douglas Hicks, as it is suggested that this theoretical framework is the most well-founded, elaborated and systematic up to date. However, it is proposed that even 'Respectful Pluralism' fails to fully capture the complexity of such a multidimensional phenomenon as spirituality. Drawing on mainstream ethical and philosophical traditions (deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics) supporting alternative value-systems, it is suggested that a more inclusive and philosophically affluent framework needs to be developed. Finally, some propositions and thoughts are made towards this direction.

KEY WORDS: consequential approaches, contextual models, deontology, organisational positive outcomes,

respectful pluralism, workplace spirituality, utilitarianism, virtue ethics

Introduction

It is an undeniable reality that workplace spirituality is a construct widely discussed over the last few decades (Bell and Taylor, 2004; Casey, 2004; Driver, 2005; Duchon and Ashmos, 2005; Fry, 2003; Hicks, 2003; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Lips-Wiersma, 2003; Lips-Wiersma and Mills, 2002; Lund-Dean et al., 2003; Tischler, 1999), gaining the interest of both scholars and practitioners (Hicks, 2003; Kinjierski and Skrypnek, 2004; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002). Within the framework of this discourse, it has been attempted to relate workplace spirituality to a wide variety of organisational functions and practices. However, the emphasis was mainly placed on organisational management and effective organisational leadership, as it can be easily realised by the vast amount of articles examining these inquiry fields. According to Douglas Hicks (2003), the discovery of a spiritual dimension of work can be traced back to the late 1980s and this phenomenon can be referred to as a movement. Thus, there are good reasons to believe that workplace spirituality is more than an impermanent trend; on the contrary, the concept carries a much more substantial meaning and its potential contribution to a more rounded understanding of human work, of the workplace and of the organisational reality in general is worthy of examination.

As it has already been mentioned, the interest in workplace spirituality initiated in the late 1980s and is geographically detected in the U.S. (Hicks, 2003). Scholarly work indicates that there are multiple

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factors accounting for this phenomenon, including demographic and religious aspects of the U.S. social life, social and economic changes affecting everyday life and last, but not least, changes in the organisational functioning that affected working relations, the working conditions and consequently the everyday working life of employees (Hicks, 2003).¹ However, since the initiation of discussion about the spiritual dimension of human work and organisational reality in the late 1980s, the interest in workplace spirituality has been boosted and has been geographically expanded as well. Spirituality in organisations is currently a salient issue in both scientific and empirical inquiry. The growth of interest in this phenomenon is also due to the relevance of subjective factors in organisational settings, such as individual quest for higher purpose, personal meaning and transcendent values (Klenke, 2005). Besides, this fact is manifested through the vast amount of literature on the subject produced within the framework of discrete backgrounds and representing numerous traditions.

This development, that is the proliferation of interest in workplace spirituality as an inquiry field, can be mainly explained by and attributed to the expected positive impact of workplace spirituality to organisational reality (Benefiel, 2003; Brown, 2003; Neal and Biberman, 2004) through its positive effect to both management processes (Boozer, 1998; Lewis and Geroy, 2000; McCormick, 1994; Steingard, 2005) and to leadership practices (Fairholm, 1996; Fry, 2003; Hicks, 2002; Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2002; Reave, 2005). To be more specific, it is generally anticipated that workplace spirituality is positively associated with desirable organisational outcomes both at the qualitative and the quantitative level (Heaton et al., 2004; King and Crowther, 2004). What is more, workplace spirituality appears to provide an answer to the complicated contemporary organisational problems resulting from major organisational changes – downsizing, reengineering, layoffs etc. (Driver, 2005; Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004).

These changes, which result in the demoralisation and the spiritual disorientation of the employees (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004; Lee and Zemke, 1993; Leigh, 1997), can be counterbalanced by the positive impact of spirituality at the realm of organisational reality (Driver, 2005; Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004). Admittedly, the recent, rapid

organisational changes render the dominant organisational paradigm obsolete (Fry, 2003). By the dominant organisational paradigm it is meant the traditional centralised, standardised and formalised bureaucratic organisation that dominated the organisational scene since the beginning of the industrial revolution (Ancona et al., 1999; Moxley, 2000). Due to these changes there is an urgent need for a radical organisational transformation to a learning organisational paradigm (Fry, 2003). There is also a rationale for the consideration of *diversity* within organisational settings, based on alternative understandings of organisations that appear to significantly differ from their standard, socially constructed, normalised meanings by deeply affecting human motivation and commitment (Litvin, 2006). In addition, the ongoing organisational need to reduce employee cynicism and mistrust is central to recognising the meaning as well as the emotional aspects of work (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006). Spirituality is perceived as providing the impetus, the necessary driving force towards this change.

In addition to the aforementioned pragmatic expectations, it is anticipated that the concept of workplace spirituality will have an essential contribution to a better – that is deeper and more meaningful – understanding of human work and corporate reality. To be more specific, workplace spirituality is generally treated in the literature as the missing attribute of organisational life, in the absence of which our understanding of corporate reality remains limited and incomplete.

This paper aims to systematically explore the underlying assumptions as well as the rationale of the main trends regarding spirit at work by critically discussing their main strengths and weaknesses. After analysing the principal conceptual and analytical dimensions of workplace spirituality, a systematic framework for distinguishing two competing approaches to this construct – the exploratory, contextual and the consequential, acontextual ones – is developed. Particular emphasis is placed upon Douglas Hicks' "Respectful Pluralism" as the most elaborated and most well-defined framework for justifying workplace spirituality. However, Hicks considers religiosity as an integral dimension of spirituality, without which workplace spirituality cannot be examined. Nevertheless, this is a much-disputed methodological choice, and the authors of

this paper are opposed to it. Thus, the need to elaborate and defend a more inclusive framework that transcends the inadequacies of both the contextual and acontextual approaches to workplace spirituality is highlighted. For this reason, the authors resort to universalising ethical traditions that offer unique, albeit universally held viewpoints. Workplace spirituality may be properly founded on such universal conceptions, and not on a particular faith or a philosophical tradition. In this respect, three mainstream ethical positions are identified and discussed: utilitarianism fails, according to the authors, to capture the true essence of this phenomenon, insofar as this tradition appears limitative in advancing and fostering a set of spiritual values. On the contrary, Kantian deontology and virtue ethics approaches may effectively support spirit at work in ways that fulfil and enhance the deepest and highest human potentials. In particular, it is supported that virtue-ethics meets the main workplace spirituality exigencies – character education and well-being – and should claim more relevance in the attempt to develop a more inclusive framework for constructing and implementing spirit at work.

Workplace spirituality as a conceptual category

Defining workplace spirituality

It is an indisputable fact that for proceeding to a systematic and thorough scientific analysis of an inquiry field it is of vital importance to clearly define the core constructs. However, despite the vast amount of literature devoted to the concept of workplace spirituality, a little advancement has been made towards the establishment of a widely accepted definition of the term. The acknowledgment of the divergence of views concerning spirituality in the workplace and of the controversial nature of the construct itself is the closer we have got to an agreement regarding this matter. Thus, Brown (2003) underlines the fact that there is a plethora of terms, not all of them equally successful, for describing the same phenomenon: ‘organisational spirituality’, ‘workplace spirituality’, ‘spirituality in the workplace’, ‘spirit at work’, ‘spirituality in business’. Furthermore, Ashforth and Pratt (2003) point out that a universally accepted definition

of spirituality in the workplace does not exist. Freshman (1999), Konz and Ryan (1999), Kahnwiler and Otte (1997) and McGee (1998) make the same remark in regard to the existing definitions of workplace spirituality.² De Klerk (2005) contends that workplace spirituality could be further clarified by resorting to one of its key components, meaning in life, that in turn affects psychological well-being. He also explores work-wellness from a spiritual perspective, by focusing on the subjective meanings that are frequently employed to improve work-wellness or wellness in general. In Adams and Csiernik’s (2002) extended definition, workplace spirituality involves the positive valuation, acknowledgement and respect of employees’ innate abilities in a context of meaningful, goal-oriented behaviour that encourages creativeness, belongingness and personal fulfilment.

The variance of definitions can be mainly attributed to two factors: first, to the fact that “workplace spirituality is a complex and multi-faceted construct” (Milliman et al., 2003, p. 428) and second, to the fact that “the concept is highly personal and abstract (Milliman et al., 2003, p. 428). However, there is a recent interest in employing methodologies that seek to operate the transition from a ‘spirit at work’ advocacy to a scientific discipline of workplace spirituality (Giacalone et al., 2005). In their attempt to employ this term in a way that does not preclude generalisations or abstract theorising, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003a, p. 13) offer the following working definition of spirituality, of which we will make use in this paper:

“Workplace spirituality is a framework of organisational 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 provided feelings of completeness and joy”.

Spirituality and religion: a dichotomy?

Another prevailing issue of controversy is the relation between spirituality and religion (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004). Douglas Hicks (2003, 2002) takes the stance that religiosity is an integral aspect of spirituality, and that discussion about spirituality in the workplace unavoidably implies discussion about religiousness at work. However, Mitroff and Denton (1999a, b) strongly support that spirituality and

religion are two distinct constructs and that although spirituality in the workplace is a completely justified and appropriate issue of discussion, religion in the workplace is a divisive factor and ultimately out of bounds.

Current conceptions of spirituality place an emphasis on value-systems and community building, without reducing the experience of transcendence and connectedness to individual adherence to a given religious denomination. Arguably, spirituality does not necessarily imply any religious affiliation or religiousness in general. On the contrary, spirituality implies “the extent to which an individual is motivated to find sacred meaning and purpose to his or her existence” (Tepper, 2003, p. 183). Hill and Smith (2003) contend that religion and spirituality in the workplace are distinct from, yet similar to each other. They also draw on a distinction between a ‘dwelling’ and a ‘seeking’ orientation to spirituality and religion, arguing that, while institutionalised or traditional religions tend to favour a dwelling approach, spirituality stresses a seeking orientation. They admit that both forms may pertain to the workplace and both are more likely “to resist the pressures of materialism and commodification” (p. 240). However, a seeking spirituality involves a subjective determination of truth, exploring of the inner life and a quest for experiential freedom which may not be constrained by the precepts of a particular faith tradition (Hill and Smith, 2003).

From another point of view, a number of researchers on workplace spirituality seem to resort to both of these terms, that is, spirituality and religion, interchangeably, without employing criteria of analytical distinction between them. For instance, Duffy (2006) explores aspects of spirituality and religion as positively related to career decisions and efficacy, career values and job satisfaction, and assesses the potential link between these variables as not *unimportant* for workplace counselling. White (2003) considers spirituality rather as a generic concept that encompasses religious expression and strongly holds the view that “intolerance of an employee internal belief is illegal, immoral, fosters long term inefficacy, and is anathema in a democratic society” (p. 254). Accordingly, organisations should empower their employees to better envision and implement their spiritual values, while minimising or accommodating conflicts arising from strong religious commitments. In our own view, spirituality is less likely

to generate such conflicts than religious expression and one could raise any plausible and substantial claim for not being separated from his or her deeply held convictions and beliefs, when entering the workplace. In sum, spirituality is an all encompassing reality, inherent in our lives, that transcends individual involvement in a particular religion.

Dimensions of workplace spirituality

As argued in our analysis of the construct, it seems that spirituality in the workplace is a much-disputed inquiry field. Thus, some clarifications are regarded as necessary in order to carry on this discussion. First, throughout this paper the terms ‘workplace spirituality’, ‘spirituality in the workplace’ and ‘spirit at work’ are used interchangeably in order to denote a process of “achieving personal fulfilment or spiritual growth in the workplace” (Graber and Johnson, 2001, p. 39) as well as the “need to find meaning and purpose and develop our potential” (Howard, 2002, p. 231). Workplace spirituality also involves “feelings of wholeness and connectedness” (Driver, 2005, p. 1095) as well as “the integration of various parts of individuals’ professional and personal lives in authentic ways congruent with personal values” (Driver, 2005, p. 1095).

Another core element of spirituality in the workplace is the ability to bring one’s whole self to work (Hicks, 2002, 2003; Neal, 1999). Consequently, an organisation aspiring at engaging in spiritual practice should encourage a sense of community, within which authentic and meaningful interpersonal relationships can flourish (Neal, 2000). Gozdz (2000) underscores that same prerequisite by underlining that such an organisation should become a community of practice, wherein employees can engage in open communication. Kurth (2003) recapitulates the principal dimensions of workplace spirituality in her 4-fold model of a spiritually inspired service at work. First, the transcendental dimension involves the conscious awareness of one’s connection to the divine while at work. Second, the personal dimension consists of being committed to one’s spiritual growth as well as living with integrity at work. Third, the relational dimension integrates and sustains caring relationships with others at work. Finally, the communal dimension involves community building, harmony

and sharing within organisational contexts. As King and Nicol (1999) have pointed out, for an organisation to endorse spirituality in practice, it is important to promote the full utilisation of employees' capabilities. What is more, it is considered as necessary for the employees to be given the right and the opportunity to fully unfold and express their genuine self in the workplace.

In sum, workplace spirituality is an experience of transcendence, interconnectedness, personal completeness and joy, analysed in different theoretical frameworks. It is this diversity of approaches to workplace spirituality that it will be examined in the next section

The current discourse on workplace spirituality

As it has already been mentioned, workplace spirituality is a construct that nowadays vastly attracts the interest of both organisational practitioners and scholars (Hicks, 2003; Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002). As a result, the current discourse on this inquiry field is both intense and extensive. Despite this fact, there is not a dominant paradigm or a prevailing framework, within which the discussion on workplace spirituality is carried out. On the contrary, spirituality talk flourishes within the framework of many scientific fields, theoretical traditions and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, the current discourse on workplace spirituality is often discontinuous, in some instances unsystematic and it is mainly constituted (with few exceptions) of sporadic and spematic theoretical contributions. The fact that there is not a widely accepted definition of workplace spirituality (Ashforth and Pratt, 2003; Freshman, 1999; Kahnwiler and Otte, 1997; Konz and Ryan, 1999; McGee, 1998) can be to some extent accountable for this phenomenon, since the existence of an agreed-on definition provides the minimum prerequisite for the development of a broadly accepted framework for theoretical discourse and empirical examination. However, as it has already been underlined, both scholars and practitioners with different cultural and theoretical backgrounds, representing distinct disciplines and theoretical approaches engage in the widespread discussion on workplace spirituality.

Distinguishing between exploratory and consequential approaches to workplace spirituality

In an attempt to systematically and critically examine the current discourse on workplace spirituality we make a 2-fold distinction of the existing theoretical frameworks. Thus, we distinguish between exploratory and consequential models. This distinction is unique in the literature. However, it is regarded as sound and well-grounded. To be more specific, exploratory frameworks mainly aim at relating workplace spirituality to certain theoretical/philosophical models, cultural/religious traditions and scientific paradigms. The focus is placed on founding the rationale of workplace spirituality on the aforementioned frameworks and setting the conditions for discussion within the corresponding context. Overall, exploratory models lay the foundations for a contextual discussion of spirituality in the workplace. On the other hand, in consequential models priority is given to the prospected positive outcomes that spirituality in the workplace might have both at the organisational and the individual level. Within this context the rationale for spirituality in the workplace is not founded on a particular theoretical tradition or cultural background. On the contrary, the need for organisations to become spiritual places is justified merely on the beneficial effect of spiritual practice within organisational context. In this respect, the discussion on workplace spirituality in a consequential framework can be considered as non-contextual.

Undoubtedly, the distinction between exploratory and consequential frameworks that attempt to address workplace spirituality is not clear-cut. Rather, it is a matter of focus. That is, it is possible that within a consequential framework it is attempted to ground the rationale for discussion in a specific paradigm, however, the focal point remains the prospected positive organisational outcomes. Undeniably, the same applies to exploratory frameworks.

Exploratory approaches to workplace spirituality

Among the contextual approaches to workplace spirituality is the attempt to ground spiritual practice at work as well as the spiritual dimension of organisational life on a particular religious tradition. However, at this point it is important to underline

that this is a completely different discussion from negotiating religious practice in the workplace. To be more specific, the focus of discussion here is not whether employees are justified to freely and unconditionally express their religious beliefs and follow the commands of the religious doctrine they have faith in within workplace settings. On the contrary, what is examined is how the notion of spirit in the workplace is compatible with certain religious doctrines. What is more, it is also investigated how spirituality should be manifested within organisational settings, always in accordance with particular religious traditions. Scholars with different religious background have explored a number of organisational and human resources issues in relation to a religious-specific work ethic. Suggestively, we mention Arvind Sharma (2004), who investigates the relation between spirituality and management from a Hindu perspective, Stewart Herman (2004), who explores Christian approaches to business ethics and Bouma et al. (2003), who examine the relation between Islamic work ethic and modern workplace.

However, a religion-based framework for grounding workplace spirituality is not the only case of context-specific exploratory approaches to a spiritually oriented workplace. Spirituality in the workplace is also discussed within the context of theoretical frameworks, philosophical traditions and scientific paradigms. This fact is certainly indicative of the interest that workplace spirituality attracts and potentially of the importance this concept has for the modern workplace. An attempt to explore spiritual practice within business world from a philosophical-based perspective is that of Moses Pava. Moses Pava (2004) approaches workplace spirituality from an American pragmatic perspective. He uses the term 'intelligent spirituality' in order to denote a 'human-centred', unifying, 'not other-worldly' spirituality that is rooted in American pragmatism and especially in the work of the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. According to this perspective intelligent spirituality is 'a living option' regarding daily activities and has an apparent 'usefulness in the modern world' (Pava, 2004, p. 65), consequently in the modern corporate and business world.

Another contextual approach to spirituality in the workplace is that of Len Tischler, who attempts to explain the growing interest in workplace spirituality

through the theoretical model of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs applied at the social level. According to Tischler (1999), as people in modern societies become able to safeguard the fulfilment of their lower level needs, which concern survival and physical security, they are in position to pursue the satisfaction of their higher-order needs, which concern social belongingness, esteem and self-actualisation. So, the current tendency to seek more than material rewards from work and to explore the spiritual dimension of employment relationships and the spiritual dimension of the workplace in general is reflective of this focus on higher-order needs. Michaela Driver, on the other hand, approaches workplace spirituality from a psychoanalytic, in particular Lacanian perspective. Driver (2005) suggests that current definitions of spirituality should be abandoned, as they fail to capture the core dimensions of spirituality in organisations. On the contrary, conceptualisation of organisational spirituality should be enriched by a psychoanalytic Lacanian perspective, which allows a more accurate representation of the ego. Within this framework true subjectivity can emerge, enabling the personalisation of spiritual practises within organisational settings.

Consequential approaches to workplace spirituality

As it has already been mentioned, there is a large amount of articles in the literature that treat workplace spirituality from an instrumentalistic perspective. The focus in this category of articles is not primarily placed on the nature of spirituality at work. On the contrary, the focal point in this case is the beneficial effect of organisational spirituality on organisational outcomes and individual workers. In some instances the long list of prospective positive outcomes is supported by scientific evidence, whereas in some others the grounding is just anecdotal. The benefits to an organisation for becoming a spiritual place can be discerned into organisational- and individual-based. To begin with the organisational-based outcomes, in the literature it is suggested that there is a link between workplace spirituality and increased commitment to organisational goals (Delbecq, 1999; Fry, 2003; Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004; Leigh, 1997), increased honesty and trust within the organisation (Brown, 2003; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Wagner-Marsh

and Conely, 1999), greater kindness and fairness (Biberman and Whitty, 1997), increased creativity (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004), increased profits and improved morale (Benefiel, 2003), higher levels of organisational productivity (Eisler and Montouori, 2003; Fry, 2003; Sass, 2000), enhanced organisational performance (Fry, 2003), organisational development (Fry, 2003), reduced absenteeism and turnover (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a), and yet the list can not be regarded as complete. On the other hand, beneficial personal outcomes include increased individual creativity (Freshman, 1999; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002) enhanced sense of personal fulfilment of employees (Burack, 1999; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002), greater individual work success (Tischler et al., 2002), the experience of authentic self (Driver, 2005), increased joy, peace, serenity and job satisfaction (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a). According to Marques (2006), on the one hand, the spiritual worker will ultimately experience feelings of connectedness with his colleagues, enhancing in this way mutuality and reciprocity. On the other, spiritual employees' behaviour may be expressed through elevated trust and enhanced understanding, ultimately increasing both team and organisational performance: it may also generate increased job-satisfaction that in turn will further affect intrinsic motivation for engaging in spiritual practices. In sum, the implementation of workplace spirituality could have a positive impact on the workplace, which in turn may be conducive to beneficial outcomes for complex organisational settings.

Undoubtedly, there is some empirical research that attempts to provide scientific evidence for grounding the link between spirituality and positive organisational and individual outcomes. For example, in their exploratory empirical assessment Milliman et al. (2003) explore the positive association between workplace spirituality and employee job outcomes. They have found that there is a positive relationship between spirituality at work and organisational commitment, lower levels of intention to quit, intrinsic work satisfaction, job involvement and organisation-based self-esteem (OBSE). Markow and Klenke (2005) seek to empirically demonstrate the relationships between personal meaning, calling and organisational commitment in the context of spiritual leadership. Their findings gave support to a significant positive correlation between self-transcendent

personal meaning and calling, the latter mediating the relationship between personal meaning and organisational commitment. Moreover, Duchon and Ashmos Plowman (2005) examined the effect of work unit spirituality on work unit performance. They found that "there is a relationship between the spiritual climate of a work unit and its overall performance" (Duchon and Ashmos Plowman, 2005, p. 822). So, it seems that there is a need for, as well as a tendency towards empirical research that provides the much needed scientific evidence in support of the theoretical assumptions about organisational and individual benefits of a spiritually oriented workplace.

Limitations of the existing approaches to workplace spirituality

Limitations of the exploratory frameworks

In the previous section of this paper the current approaches to workplace spirituality were discussed. In this section, their limitations will be examined. To begin with, in the previous section we distinguished between the exploratory, contextual and the consequential, acontextual approaches to workplace spirituality. In regard to the former category, a major drawback seems to exist, which prohibits the development of an interdisciplinary, intersubjective discussion concerning a spiritually oriented workplace. It is the sole fact that these frameworks approach workplace spirituality from a number of different, but always very specific, backgrounds. As a result, these approaches are context-specific.

Two are the main consequences resulting from the context-specific nature of spirituality discourse taking place in an exploratory framework. To begin with, spirituality is conceived, and thus, theoretically constructed in a very specific way, always in accordance with the corresponding theoretical framework. Namely, spirituality is 'interpreted', and consequently, defined under the influence of the worldviews implied by specific religious, cultural and philosophical traditions, and in some instances, with the use of the analytical tools of a given scientific theory [as in the case of Driver (2005) and Tischler (1999) outlined earlier in this paper]. Thus, the attempt to discuss workplace spirituality within the context of a particular theoretical framework

leads to mere particularistic approaches. However, there is an inherent flaw when spirituality is theoretically conceived and constructed within the framework of a specific tradition: the concept is deprived of its universalistic nature, ceases to be an all encompassing reality, and it is no longer an 'abstract construct', a conceptual quality of the term pointed out by Milliman et al. (2003). Hence, when spirituality discourse is carried out within the context of a specific theoretical framework, it fails to capture the complexity and the conceptual richness of such a multi-faceted term. As a result, any context-specific approach to workplace spirituality leads to a relative conceptual interpretation of the term. Therefore, it is inherently limitative, and inhibits us from fully realising and understanding the true, all encompassing nature of the construct.

Nevertheless, the relative conceptual interpretation of the term is not the only limitation resulting from a context-specific approach to workplace spirituality. As it has already been mentioned, in exploratory frameworks spirituality is constructed on the basis of the core conceptions and guiding principles of specific systems of thought. That is, spirituality is 'shaped' by and 'viewed' through the core theoretical assumptions of a given theoretical tradition or through the main analytical tools of a given scientific paradigm. As a result, in order to engage in the spirituality discourse carried out within such a specific framework, one needs not only to be sufficiently informed, but also to have deep understanding of the concepts, ideas and principles forming this particular system of thought, for this is the background, on the basis of which the discussion takes place. For instance, from a psychoanalytic Lacanian perspective workplace spirituality is viewed in a particular way (cf. Driver, 2005), since the concept is enriched by the principles of this particular scientific framework. Undoubtedly, one needs to be adequately informed of the core principles of Lacanian psychoanalysis and have a sufficient understanding of it, in order to engage in spirituality discourse carried out within this framework. This prerequisite automatically restricts the number of people who can engage in such a discussion to those who have adequate knowledge and sufficient understanding of the theoretical framework within the context of which spirituality talk takes place.

Nevertheless, even in the case that the aforementioned prerequisite is met, there is yet another limitation to overcome for one not to simply participate, but also to constructively contribute to the advancement of spirituality discourse within a particular context. To be more specific, one needs to affirm and adopt the theoretical assumptions and guiding principles of a given system of thought, in order to make a unique contribution, and thus, advance the discussion on workplace spirituality within the given framework. Namely, in order to be committed to the advancement and progression of a discourse carried out within the context of a specific framework, one has to accept the background of the discussion, that is, the structural and fundamental conceptions of the theoretical framework.

At this point, it is important to point out a couple of remarks. To begin with, there seems to be a good explanation why the same subject matter becomes an issue of discussion within the framework of so many and so different cultural, religious, theoretical and scientific traditions. It is the fact that "spirituality is assumed to be a dimension of the human being that is shared by all persons" (Hicks, 2002, p. 382). Thus, spirituality is a universally-shared but also multi-faceted construct. Within different frameworks, different aspects of this concept are lightened and probably that's the reason of the number of different definitions we have for the same experience (that is, spirituality). Moreover, it is important to underline the fact that the reason for examining and acknowledging the limitations of the exploratory, context-specific approaches to workplace spirituality is neither to anathematise them nor to devalue their contribution to the workplace spirituality discourse. On the contrary, exploratory frameworks are acknowledged to having constructively contributed to the discussion on workplace spirituality by highlighting the different ways in which spirituality can be theoretically conceived and constructed, as well as experienced. In this way, the complexity and the conceptual richness of the term is fully realised. Nevertheless, the limitations resulting from an exploratory approach to workplace spirituality should be always taken into consideration.

To sum up, any attempt to approach workplace spirituality from a context-specific background leads to a fragmented discussion, in which only people

sharing the same cultural, religious, theoretical or scientific background can be involved. Thus, there is an apparent need for a more inclusive approach to workplace spirituality, which will embrace the most universally-held aspects of the concept. This development will allow an open discussion about spirit in the workplace and all the related issues; eventually, it would not be overly ambitious to support that it will result in an agreed-on definition of the term.

Limitations of the consequential approaches

In regard to the consequential approaches to workplace spirituality criticism is also strong. A very substantial point of criticism is based on the following underlying rationale: there is a need for thorough scientific evidence in order to establish with scientific certainty an association between workplace spirituality and positive outcomes both at the organisational and the individual level. Without scientific evidence any reported positive relation between a spiritually oriented workplace and organisational or employee benefits may remain just an unfounded assumption. However, in order to scientifically establish such a relation it is necessary to be able to 'measure' workplace spirituality. Nevertheless, as it has already been mentioned there is not an agreed-on definition of the term (Ashforth and Pratt, 2003; Freshman, 1999; Kahnwiler and Otte, 1997; Konz and Ryan, 1999; McGee 1998). Additionally, as Milliman et al. (2003, p. 428) point out "workplace spirituality is a complex and multi-faceted construct...the concept is highly personal and abstract". So, there is an apparent difficulty for measuring such an inadequately defined, multi-faceted and highly personal construct, for the researches have not entirely agreed on a set of core dimensions of spiritual expression and orientation. This challenge is often recognised by the researchers themselves, as in the case of Milliman et al. (2003) in their empirical assessment of the relationship between workplace spirituality and certain employee work attitudes. So, it seems that the absence of a widely accepted definition leaves space for obscurity and vagueness in this inquiry field. However, this fact should not inhibit the further examination of the spiritual dimension of work. After all, it is not implied that the current state of limited knowledge

and understanding of the field diminishes the importance of workplace spirituality.

Another related issue concerning consequential approaches to workplace spirituality is that spirit at work is very often "being put forward as a universal cure to the ills of modern management" (Brown, 2003, p. 396). That is, workplace spirituality is treated as the panacea to all organisational problems. However, this is not the case, neither is this an authentic angle to explore the spiritual dimension of human work, especially, in the cases that the relationship between a spiritually oriented workplace and any adjunctive organisational or individual positive outcomes is not based on thorough scientific evidence, a point that has been raised earlier in this section. Based on the same underlying rationale, workplace spirituality is often used as part of the organisational politics. As Milliman et al. (2003, p. 443) point out "organisations may attempt to manipulate or use the concept of spirituality at work as a tool to simply increase productivity". Brown (2003) shares this same concern by acknowledging the fact that it cannot be guaranteed that organisations will not abuse the trust that is a central element of spirituality. Polley et al. (2005) hold the view that there are certain limits to the effectiveness of spirituality in the workplace, despite the intrinsic human benefits as well as the potential organisational benefits of applying spiritual practices at work. A successful implementation of spirituality in the workplace, they argue, requires the elimination of inappropriate practices of workplace spirituality and a proper evaluation of the net economic cost of implementation. Furthermore, some workplaces will be less adaptive or just not susceptible toward spiritual transformation (Marques, 2006). It seems that all the aforementioned concerns result from an instrumentalist, utilitarian approach to workplace spirituality. It would be unfair to support that consequential approaches to workplace spirituality are exhausted to a utilitarian, instrumentalist perspective. However, it is true that consequential approaches should be enriched by a more unique viewpoint, which will be much more in accordance with the deeper essence of workplace spirituality.

Nevertheless, it seems that the more powerful criticism to a consequential perspective regarding workplace spirituality is the one that follows. It is an

undeniable reality that modern organisations are founded and function in accordance with the Cartesian-Newtonian orientation (Capra, 1982; Gull and Doh, 2004). Such a system of thought implies that priority is given to the empirical, the rational, that is the objective, the external, the material (Gull and Doh, 2004). Thus, everything is evaluated in terms of tangible and measurable outcomes. The current discourse on workplace spirituality is conducted within this prevailing framework of organisational functioning (the Cartesian-Newtonian system of thought). In regard to the consequential approaches in particular, the emphasis is placed on the impact that spirituality has on organisational and individual performance. Even the qualitative positive outcomes of a spiritually oriented workplace such as enhanced morale and communication are ultimately connected to improved organisational efficiency. It is this materialistic perspective which raises concerns. As Benefiel (2003, p. 384) very felicitously remarks, "If spirituality is ultimately about nonmaterialistic concerns, is it appropriate to focus on the material gains to be reaped by integrating spirituality into organisational life?". Is not in this way spirituality divested of its deeper essence? Is not it trivialised? Is not it just treated as a means to attain organisational profit and not as an end in itself? Is not the real meaning of spirituality lost? These seem to be rather troublesome questions. The need for a decisive and lucid answer is urgent for continuing the discussion on workplace spirituality on an honest basis.

Respectful pluralism

A case for spirituality in the workplace

Respectful pluralism, proposed by Douglas Hicks (2002, 2003), is a theoretical model concerning workplace spirituality that because of its consistency and coherence deserves separate consideration. To the writers' opinion respectful pluralism is probably the most well-defined, elaborated, systematic, well-founded, consistent and coherent model regarding workplace spirituality. Its theoretical foundations lie in moral arguments, "in a series of basic assertions about the employee as a *human person*" (Hicks, 2003, p. 166). Although Douglas Hicks acknowledges the fact that this set of moral values is not universally

held, we still believe that the proposed framework is the most inclusive and acontextual at researchers', scholars' and practitioners' disposal. In Hicks words "the moral argument of this book is not framed in the language of a particular religious or theological tradition" (Hicks, 2003, p. 164). We have to add that the framework proposed by Hicks does not draw upon a particular philosophical or scientific system of thinking, as in the case of the exploratory frameworks discussed earlier in this paper. Nor is the focus placed on the prospected positive organisational and individual job outcomes as in the case of the consequential approaches to workplace spirituality.

Constructing pluralism: the underlying principles of respectful pluralism.

Douglas Hicks criticises the framework of a secular workplace and believes that spirituality, as an integral part of human life and as a unique expression of human identity, must find its place in organisational, corporate life, culture and activity. A central argument is that of bringing the 'whole person' to work. Along with other analysts, Douglas Hicks takes the stance that human identity, what is called the self, cannot be fragmented. Spirituality, an integral part of human nature, cannot be left outside certain aspects of human life and activity, such as work. As a result, spirituality is already an existing dimension of human work. What is needed is this fact to be both realised and acknowledged at the organisational level, so that spirituality becomes a dimension not only of human work, but also of organisational culture, a quality that would be manifested in all aspects of organisational functioning. The moral features of respectful pluralism, the fundamental ideals underpinning this model are the following. First and foremost, all human beings are claimed to "possess an inviolable *human dignity*" (Hicks, 2003, p. 167). What is more, "every human being deserves to be accorded *respect*" (Hicks, 2003, p. 167). Indeed, human beings should not only be treated with respect due to the fact that they possess dignity. They should be treated as equals, since they "possess *equal* dignity and thus deserve *equal* respect" (Hicks, 2003, p. 167).

As already discussed, *dignity* and *equality* are two core concepts that permeate Hicks' entire anthropological narrative. These terms are also invested with specific ethical connotations. Hicks (2000) identifies a set of demands entailed by respect for human dignity by drawing on Sen's capability approach: equal dignity of every human person is substantiated before God, but it is hardly normatively meaningful without resorting to the empirical ways in which unequal distribution of capabilities between different persons ultimately shapes a sense of self. In this respect, significantly *unequal* capabilities tend to marginalise human persons, by preventing them from fully participating in society, in public life or in the workplace, thus, degrading human dignity. Respect for human dignity presupposes "some level of relative equality of economic power or at least the limitation of extreme inequalities" (Hicks, 2000, p. 186). Under these premises, equal access of the less advantaged people to benefits and basic rights requires a strong commitment to the common good, fact that guarantees respect for equal human dignity as an intrinsic value (cf. Hollenbach, 2002, pp. 190–200).

Such a conception may be central to overcoming patterns of discrimination and exclusion. Rather than developing a Christian account on equality, based on human dignity, Hicks (2003, p. 167) asserts the existence of various or alternative ways in which to ground claims about justification of human dignity, depending on the specific worldviews of a wide range of religious and moral traditions. In this respect, Hicks (2003, p. 169) affirms that "the basic human dignity of both employees and employers, by virtue of their status as human persons, constrains the profit-seeking activities of firms", given that criteria of justice should be employed to properly constrain the efficient operation of markets (p. 168). At some points, Hicks' analytical approach appears somewhat reminiscent of Rawlsian political liberalism and Hicks (2003, p. 166) seems to explicitly refer to this intellectual debt:

"Despite my own constructive critique of political liberalism, significant elements of that perspective inform respectful pluralism, and thus my framework is undoubtedly subject to some of the same criticisms directed against political liberalism."

At the societal level now, in order the above fundamental human rights to be safeguarded there is a

need for controlling mechanisms. This can be secured within the framework of a just society. Employment relationships in particular should be "framed by a fundamental commitment to dignity and respect in a just society" (Hicks, 2003, pp. 170–171). Employees should not be treated as simply another input to the production process. On the contrary, it should be both acknowledged and safeguarded that employers and employees must be granted equal respect. On this basis is founded workplace spirituality and not on the mere fact that it can deliver improved outputs at the organisational level. This is where respectful pluralism differs from other models of workplace spirituality. It treats the construct of spirit in the workplace as an end in itself that results from an inner need of human nature and not as a means to an organisational end, most often organisational productivity. And yet, workplace spirituality is founded on the moral ideas that are predominant in the modern democratic societies and not on a very specific, ultimately particularistic system of thought.

The moral premises, upon which respectful pluralism relies, need further elaboration. Hicks criticises political liberalism for not allowing religiously-based and other moral arguments to be expressed and articulated in public debates about economic issues (cf. Hicks, 2000, p.p. 85–113). In Rawls' view, equal citizens should address constitutional questions and issues of basic justice on grounds of public reason, thus, precluding beliefs in the truth of one's own comprehensive doctrines from being publicly discussed. However, Rawls (1999) provides an important exception to this precise requirement, as he argues that reasonable comprehensive doctrines may be introduced in public deliberation on the condition that they help securing free and equal citizenship for all. Arguments based on these doctrines should be supplemented by ones that do not pertain to any certain world-view (Rawls, 1999, pp. 152–155). Drawing on Rawls' framework, Moses Pava (1998) provides an analogy for the workplace context, arguing that, under appropriate and limited circumstances, religious world-views, albeit pertinent to one's life-world, might be plausibly evoked and defended in work environments.

Hicks (2003, p. 163) asserts that these positions impoverish moral discourse to the degree they do

not adequately address “challenging leadership questions, such as what role religion should play in the contemporary workplace” (p. 165). On the contrary, employees should uphold mutual respect “even as they practise their particularistic religious commitments in the workplace” (ibid). This does not imply the adoption of a “religiously particularistic language”, because Hicks’ approach is not construed in the language of a particular tradition. Respectful pluralism cannot be viewed as a “part of a community of discourse”, and it may be criticised even as “an attempt to universalise values that are not universally held” (p. 166). At this point, Hicks acknowledges his intellectual debt to the liberal tradition, despite the influences of Christian Ethics in the formulation of his argument (p. 165, n. 23). Undoubtedly, Hicks seeks to construct “an argument precisely in order to encourage pluralistic debate and the inclusion of multiple perspectives” in work environments (ibid.), but his universalising framework is not intended to replace religious or other moral traditions in the workplace.

Enabling respectful pluralism in real world.

Hicks (2003) does not simply examine the underlying rationale of spiritual expression and practice within working settings. He also provides us with a working framework for applying spirituality in management and leadership practices and processes, for incorporating spirituality in organisational structure and reality. Thus, he proposes a guiding principle along with three limiting norms. The guiding principle of the working framework Hicks suggests is the ‘presumption of inclusion’. The presumption of inclusion implies that all employees should be allowed to bring their whole self to work, that is, they should be allowed to manifest their genuine self at the workplace. Consequently, they should be able to “express their religious, spiritual, cultural, political and other commitments at work” (Hicks, 2003, p. 173).

However, Hicks acknowledges the fact that organisations are for-profit enterprises, thus he includes in his framework three limiting norms to safeguard and address reasonable organisational instrumental demands. What is more, the three limiting norms also preserve employees’ equal

dignity and respect. The limiting norms are the following: nondegradation, noncoercion and non-establishment. To be more specific, the limiting norm of nondegradation prohibits employees both as individuals and as groups to engage in any kind of ‘degrading’ or ‘seriously disrespectful’ behaviour towards other employees. Noncoercion restrains individual employees from using their institutional power (their position in the organisation or proximity to co-workers) for influencing or in any way imposing their individually held values and beliefs to their colleagues or subordinates. The third limiting norm, nonestablishment, is directed towards the employing organisation “as an institution” (Hicks, 2003, p. 174). According to nonestablishment, it is regarded as morally unacceptable for an organisation to “endorse, or in any way promote, any particular religious or spiritual worldview over others, even if that worldview is deemed as ‘generic’ or is intended to apply to all employees” (Hicks, 2003, p. 174).

The ‘religion-spirituality’ dichotomy in Douglas Hicks

It is an indisputable fact that in Douglas Hicks’ model of respectful pluralism religious expression in the workplace has a central role. According to Hicks (2002, 2003) the distinction between spirituality and religion is not valid. Consequently, and contrary to Mitroff and Denton (1999a, b), Hicks (2002, 2003) does not distinguish between spiritual and religious expression within workplace settings. He takes the stance that employees should be allowed not only to openly express, but also to communicate at work both their spiritual and religious beliefs. It should be noted here that the distinction between spirituality and religion seems to be existent and philosophically well-founded (see for example Rosenthal and Buchholz, 2004 and in particular p. 56, Mitroff and Denton, 1999a, b). However, it should be admitted that Hicks’ argument of fragmented self cannot be easily contradicted. The underlying rationale is that, since employees bring the whole self to work, employers are not justified to prevent them from expressing their religious beliefs. Apparently, Hicks indulges into religiosity in the workplace.³ However, since this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, we are restricted to the aspects of respectful pluralism that address spiritual expression in the

workplace. We shall now turn to examine alternative frameworks that may be important in accommodating workplace spirituality.

Philosophical frameworks of workplace spirituality

In this section, the possibility of constructing a more inclusive approach to workplace spirituality is discussed. This more inclusive approach is aspired to effectively encompass the most universally-held aspects of workplace spirituality in a way that the inadequacies of the contextual approaches are addressed. For this reason, three universalising ethical traditions are explored; by enriching the construct of workplace spirituality with more unique viewpoints, and without running the risk of being reduced to mere particularistic viewpoints, they may ultimately address the limitations of both the exploratory and the consequential approaches. This is what will be examined in the following sections.

The spiritual values

As already discussed, workplace spirituality denotes a system context of interwoven personal and cultural values permeating all levels of organisational life – the organisation, the team and the individual. Spirituality concerns create a sense of transcendence, or *vocation* through one's work and foster bonds of connectedness between employees experiencing completeness, fulfilment and self-actualisation in their work. In Giacalone and Jurkiewicz's definition of spirituality, the experience of transcendence, connectedness, completeness and joy is an integral part of workplace spirituality that, in turn, allows for a proper integration of spiritual values to organisational settings. Underlying this theoretical context is the construct of the spiritual employee, who demonstrates a higher degree of ethical sensitivity and commitment as well as beneficial personal attributes – increased joy, compassion, serenity and meaningfulness.

Yet, the relationship between spirituality and ethical reasoning is more complicated and not well-conceptualised in the literature. Though different in nature, spirituality encompasses character and

well-being, both central to ethics. Garcia-Zamor (2003, p. 325) observes that many spiritual practices draw on “prominent ethical theories and moral principles”, and asserts that “an individual's spirituality will be a determinant factor in that person's understanding and interpretation of ethical behaviour” (p. 326). Praveen-Partboteeah and Cullen (2003) suggest that ethical climates may create a work-context that facilitates the development of employees' spirituality. They also elaborate a set of theoretical links between ethical climates and workplace spirituality. By contrast to benevolent- or principled-individual work climates, egoistic-individual work climates make organisational members less likely to develop the main aspects of spirituality: the sense of community, the ability to share and belong, meaning at work and the emphasis to inner life. Egoistic-individual climates, they argue, “seem unlikely to promote hopefulness and awareness of personal values” (p. 140). In this respect, norms of maximising selfish interest seem inimical to establishing spirit at work. Hicks (2003, pp. 195–196) asserts this priority of morality over profitability and claims that for-profit enterprises “which yet fail to create conditions of equal respect for their workers are operating unethically” (p.195). Hicks believes that critical and creative thinking, motivation and morale as well as the encouragement of multiple perspectives can be cost-effective, and may also allow employees to better express their religious or spiritual commitments. A healthy, moral environment, Hicks admits, “facilitates employees' ability to express their religious convictions at work in a non coercive, non degrading way” (p. 191). However, apart from Hicks, these contributions do not employ ethical theories as possible foundations of workplace spirituality.

Yet, this perspective appears promising enough. Most importantly, spirituality is situated at the core of new paradigm thought that focusses on “inter-connectedness, interdependence and qualitative aspects of phenomena” (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003a, p.16) and involves a decrease in the importance of conventional modernist values. Spirituality oriented ideals emerge as a result of deep value changes, reflected in “the balancing of economic, quality of work life, and social responsibility concerns” (p. 16) that challenge materialistic pursuits and aspirations, both inside and outside the

workplace. Such spirituality concerns within an organisation address higher-order needs of employees, such as the pursuit of the ideal self, self-actualisation and fulfilment, or social needs that enhance the quality of work-life, which in turn influences spiritual well-being and overall life-satisfaction (Lee et al., 2003). Drawing on Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003a), Fry (2005, p. 56) identifies a set of core values reflecting a state of ethical and spiritual well-being experienced by a spiritual employee: honesty, forgiveness, hope, gratitude, humility, compassion and integrity. The scholarly field of workplace spirituality places an emphasis on personal qualities of this type. Fry (2005, pp. 57–58) posits:

“To the extent that the organization’s culture reflects the general global shift from materialistic to altruistic values that tend to be more idealistic and spiritual, the more the individual will have a sense of connection, joy and completeness”.

It can be easily inferred from the aforementioned analysis that defining the ethical qualities of one’s character or personality is of utmost importance for a spiritual employee, given that ethics is a necessary (though not a sufficient) condition for spirituality. Ethical values are enacted through individual actions and ethical conduct has to be motivated by widely shared principles that affect one’s attitudes and behaviour. Fry (2005, p. 61) identifies a set of universal core values that are supportive of the dignity and autonomy of each person and constitutes the quintessence of character education, namely trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, sharing and citizenship. Proper personality aspirations and intentions cannot be dissociated from such values and principles incorporated in spiritual practices that shape individual behaviour and determine the level of ethical and spiritual well-being. Not infrequently, these values and practices originate in established religious or philosophical traditions: for our analytical purposes, the focus in this paper has been placed on the latter. An analysis of the constituent parts of workplace spirituality may be promising if operated through the lens of at least three mainstream ethical traditions: deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics. We shall now turn to examine the underlying principles of these traditions as well as their potential in justifying workplace spirituality.

The mainstream ethical traditions

Deontology, in its many versions, is primarily an ethics of duties. Kantian deontology focusses on the respective duties we have towards ourselves and the others: such duties arise in a particular situation we are confronted with, and are identified through a process of rational exploration of distinct formulations of the categorical imperative. Thus, individual activities should conform to maxims elevated to universal principles that emerge in an ideal community of participants in which the humanity of each person has to be treated as an end, not merely as a means for achieving desirable ends. Equally importantly, the Kantian emphasis on the moral autonomy of the individual as an ultimate normative principle prevents moral agents from exercising any form of coercion within organisational settings (cf. Bowie, 1998, 2000). In diminishing the importance of individual interest and by focussing on proper moral intentions, business and organisational practices “under a Kantian regime have only one ultimate reason for being: to develop the humane, rational and moral capacities of people in and outside the organisation.” (Jones et al., 2005, p.45).

Rights-based deontological approaches place an emphasis on primary obligations to uphold and respect others’ rights, as well as on the *moral judgments* associated with a particular decision-making process, than on the choices perpetrated by individuals. In business environments *the reciprocity* of relationships between individual or collective agents, requires that any decision should afford equal respect to others and their rights, as if all participants’ interests were invested with intrinsic value. For instance, in stakeholder theory an organisation has certain obligations to its employees due to the dual quality of the latter as human beings and as employees of the organisation in issue. Conversely, employees have role – as well as moral obligations to the organisation that employs them as well as to other stakeholders. (cf. Freeman, 1994, 1999).

Different versions of justice theory place an emphasis on distinct aspects of *fairness* of outcomes, this depending on the definition adopted in each case. Drawing on Rawls’ theory of justice in view of a just allocation of limited societal resources, Phillips (1997) elaborates criteria of fairness as the normative

basis of organisational relationships: obligations of fairness are generated in conditions of corporate co-operation proportionately to the benefits enjoyed by each agent. Accordingly, corporate decisions must meet the minimum normative criteria of respect for individuals and fairness of procedures: this necessitates the adoption of proper moral standards for evaluating organisations as well as for assessing the moral quality of participants' decisions.

Utilitarianism is primarily concerned with consequences or outcomes and places an emphasis on courses of action that induce the greater net benefits to society, securing in this way the greatest good for the greatest possible number of individuals. Utilitarian approaches advocate the principle of utility maximisation insofar as the advantages of maximising behaviour transcend the limitations imposed by spiritual or religious traditions and by the concomitant sources of authority. *Rule-utilitarianism* introduced by J.S. Mill turns to adhering to a set of abstract rules which increase utility: the utility maximisation principle is then applied to the most appropriate rules that govern moral judgements of a certain action. Given that this viewpoint is deprived of ontological assumptions about the nature of "the greatest good", Jones et al. (2005, p. 38) attempt to revise this formulation as follows:

"The greatest good (taking into account reasonable personal preferences, based on commonly accepted time horizons, and judged by someone with the maximum degree of impartiality) of the greatest number (subject to the protection of the socially accepted rights of legitimate minorities) based on the information available at the current moment, and reasonable assumptions about what is likely to happen in the future"

Underlying this approach is the descriptive construct of *homo economicus*, of the rational economic man who is well-informed about the alternatives he faces, builds correct expectations about the consequences of his choices and acts in a logically consistent way. Economic decisions are then assumed to enjoy a high degree of rationality, as they are based on unlimited will power and are primarily governed by self-interest. In this respect, we conceive individuals in terms of pursuing their own interests and behaving in a selfish way.

This perspective has been increasingly criticised to the degree several individual activities are found to deviate from the principle of selfish behaviour.

First and foremost, individuals often comply with social norms, like fairness or reciprocity, and develop pro-social preferences that are central to shaping human behaviour. Second, not infrequently individuals are intrinsically motivated in areas such as work morale or civic virtue. Individuals act in conformity with their identities that significantly affect economic decisions or shape work relations and attitudes. Third, non selfish behaviour may be viewed as a precondition to overcome social dilemma situations through cooperation: if human beings are assumed to be rational maximisers, there is no support to the position that they are going to be social maximisers as well (Frey and Benz, 2004).

Virtue ethics is an ethical position that underscores the cultivation of virtuous traits of individual character as the primary function of moral life. In this respect, ethical stances and attitudes originate in an inward disposition to act fairly, a commitment to live a virtuous and good living, than to implement and strictly follow a set of pre-established rules or principles. Virtues are exemplified in and manifested through certain character traits: courage, wisdom, temperance, truthfulness and other qualities that facilitate a person to conduct a morally good life leading to self-realisation and happiness. Aristotle may be viewed as defending a universal conception of the good life, according to which personal happiness is primarily consisting in practising these virtues, both moral and intellectual. Bragues (2006) identifies a set of moral virtues pertinent to business environments, namely courage, self-control, generosity, magnificence, magnanimity, sociability and justice. Wisdom and prudence are two core intellectual virtues, not unimportant for many areas of organisational life, such as leadership or purely spiritual engagements. On the contrary, in Kantian deontology virtues are conceptualised in terms of moral autonomy of the subject i.e. of an inner disposition to abide by certain duties that are rationally comprehensible.

Conceivably, the realisation of Aristotle's vision of human excellence requires business environments more conducive to the practice of virtues, in which employees should be afforded the opportunity to thoroughly and thoughtfully participate in the management of company affairs, or engage in philosophical reflection through exploring the

ultimate meaning of business activities (Bragues, 2006, pp. 354–355). In a typically Aristotelian framework, business and organisational activities are considered as social practices, which, albeit motivated by self-interest, are based on the pursuit of shared goals that reflect trust, mutual concern and citizenship. The appropriateness of this position in organisational contexts might be identified in that it is the human flourishing and development, and not entirely profit-seeking, that is elevated to a primary legitimate concern of organisational politics (cf. Solomon, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2004). Albeit operating in contemporary market economies and, despite their rigid managerial structures, there is a rationale in this conception of organisations as communities of shared values and ends: organisational virtue may shape policies and affect decisions that respect the dignity and humanity of all organisational actors (Bright et al., 2006; Crockett, 2005; Moore and Beadle, 2006; Thomas-Whetstone, 2005; Wearer, 2006). We shall now explore the degree to which workplace spirituality may be founded on each of these distinct ethical traditions. In this respect, we are going to discuss the relevance of spiritual values to each distinct ethical framework.

Ethical justification of workplace spirituality

In their assessment of the need for and the potential benefits of spirituality in the workplace, Cavanagh and Bandsuch (2002, p. 10) argue that “*a spirituality that enables a person to develop good moral habits (or virtue) is appropriate for the workplace*” (Italics in the original). An organisational actor demonstrating a spirituality that results in virtuous attitudes is more likely to proceed to ethical decisions, exhibit honesty, trustworthiness and organisational citizenship behaviour and possess personal integrity (Cavanagh and Bandsuch, 2002, p. 110). As we have seen, spirituality reveals an inner experience based on connectedness and mutuality, governed by principles, values, virtues and accumulated wisdom and reflected in and manifested through concrete relationships, practices and behaviour (Harrington et al., 2001, p. 156). Gull and Doh (2004) support the view that organisations that deny their employees the opportunity for spiritual expression through meaningful work, remain devoid of the

potential benefits of a spiritually oriented workplace: ethical sensitivity as well as a belief in a deeper *connectedness* between employees and other organisational participants. A “transmutation” of the workplace, Gull and Doh contend, built on the foundation of proper spiritual ideals, should enable personality flourishing and prevent the unfolding of egoistically constructed individuals devoted to the pursuit of their narrow self-interest. The integration of spiritual values into work life is likely to make an organisation more profitable and competitive through creativity and innovation. There are also other reasons that justify a spiritually oriented workplace. Gull and Doh (2004, p. 136) advance the following position:

“The reason for the initiative is just as important to realising a spiritual workplace as is the change strategy employed. It is either irrational or exploitative to use spirituality as a strategy for the sole purpose of realising greater competitive advantage, higher and more efficient levels of productivity and greater profit. Even though these ends will likely be realised in the short term, implementing spiritual programmes and policies primarily for these reasons is dishonouring to humankind and counterproductive to the unfolding of spirit.”

One important reason for justifying workplace spirituality should be identified in the role of the latter in enhancing concerns of organisational ethicality. Using a network sample of 162 employees from across the US, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003b) made an assessment of the relationship between individual spirituality and perceptions of unethical business activities. Albeit in this study a relationship between ethics and personal spirituality was established, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003b, p. 93) posit that:

“Fundamental aspects of workplace spirituality, such as meaningful work that provides a feeling of purpose, a sense of connection and positive social relations with their co-workers, and their ability to live an integrated life in which the work role does not conflict with the essential nature of person as a human being (Pfeffer, 2003), may interact to create different perceptions of ethicality within the organisation”.

Yet, it is an undeniable reality that concerns about efficiency and performance remain central to organisations striving for viability and perpetuation. Organisations thrive in an external environment of

competitiveness and uncertainty, in a way that the multiple benefits of organisational cultures that evidence high levels of workplace spirituality, appear as one of the outmost importance. Spiritual values are expected to exert a positive effect on intrinsic employee motivation, commitment and adaptability i.e. the increased flexibility toward organisational change. Issues of instrumentality cannot undoubtedly be eliminated, but they could undergo a substantial transformation in the case of the adoption of an organisational structure reflective of spiritual values: unsurprisingly, insofar as these values enhance organisational performance, they claim more *relevance* as inextricable elements of organisational policies or strategies. Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004) elaborate such a Values-Framework for workplace spirituality, as they introduce a set of values which are supposed to affect organisational outcomes: benevolence, generativity, humanism, integrity, justice, mutuality, receptivity, respect, responsibility and trust. These values seem to fit well in both a deontological and virtue-ethics framework of assessing workplace spirituality (see Table I). Benevolence for instance denotes organisational kindness, “an orientation to promote the happiness and prosperity of employees and other stakeholders within the work context” (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004, p. 131). On the contrary, in a utilitarian framework happiness and prosperity are *individually*, not *relationally* assessed, as employees’ own concern, as we shall discuss later.

Equally importantly, generativity is long-term focussed, and highly respectful of future consequences, humanism asserts the essential dignity and worth of each employee and result in employees’ flourishing of their personality in conformity to organisational goals. Integrity implies an “uncompromising adherence to a code of conduct” (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004, p. 131), the latter perceived as integral to, or aligned with, organisational culture. Justice presupposes equal treatment of employees, fairness and impartiality in decision-making as well as in implementing procedures; mutuality arises in a context of interconnectedness, interdependence and shared tasks, goals and ideals. This value also hardly fits within a utilitarian framework, in which employees should be assessed as free economic agents maximising their expected utility irrespective of their co-workers’ efforts, the latter

TABLE I
Levels of incorporation of organisational values-system (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004) into diverse Ethical Models

Ethical Model	Values – Framework									
	Benevolence	Generativity	Humanism	Integrity	Justice	Mutuality	Receptivity	Respect	Responsibility	Trust
Deontological - Kantian	M	M	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H
Utilitarian	L	M	L	M	L	L	H	L	L	M
Rights-based or theory of justice	M	M	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H
Virtue Ethics	H	M	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H

(Levels: H = high, M = moderate, L = low)

being a part of social interactions dictated by mere necessity. Receptivity is another value tantamount to open-mindedness that facilitates innovation and creativity, while respect is an expression of esteem, an affirmation of employees' intrinsic worthiness. Responsibility underlies employees' stances and attitudes oriented toward goal attainment *independently* of any external controls or enforcement mechanisms: finally, trust culminates in a state of confidently depending on the organisation and is conducive to organisational citizenship and pro-social behaviour, greater cooperation and higher commitment. These values may also be effective in resolving ethical dilemmas or overcoming conflicts of goals and obligations. In addition, they could be conducive to developing ethical awareness, fostering accountability and enhancing individual responsibility. Again, in a purely utilitarian framework maintenance of promises and of other concomitant obligations would be binding for organisational actors, if primarily dictated by their personal gain, or in order to prevent the emergence of repeated prisoner's dilemma situations that substantially reduce individual as well as collective welfare. Accordingly, we conclude that, in sharp contrast to deontological or virtue ethics frameworks, a utilitarian framework for justifying and supporting workplace spirituality is far from being unproblematic, as we shall further discuss in the next section.

Discussion

Admittedly, a utilitarian approach to workplace spirituality raises some further problems, given that the integration of spiritual values to work contexts should not be confined to sustaining merely high performance or profitability, but should be extended to matters of increased physical and mental health, advanced and undistorted personal growth and a higher level of self-esteem, worth and overall life-satisfaction. Issues of ethical and spiritual well-being as reflected on the four principal dimensions of workplace spirituality – that is, transcendence, connectedness, completeness and joy – ought to be taken into consideration equally. Even in a rule-utilitarian framework, this endeavour hardly appears to be unproblematic. In the context of economic egoism, spiritual values are unlikely to apply to

economic agents who are expected to pursue their own self-interest, so as to rationally and effectively achieve their own goals. On the one hand, in a utilitarian framework, perceptions of completeness and joy arise in mostly hedonistic, and ultimately subjective, approaches to human nature (Diener and Lucas, 1999). On the other hand, impersonal economic interactions are expected to reflect individuals' perceived *distance* from the others, as well as from one's inner nature. Consequently, such a framework fails to meet the minimum presuppositions of workplace spirituality.

Conceivably, work should be viewed not only as a form of utility maximisation, but also as a source of meaning central to individual identities: people do not only aspire for money, but they also seek to build viable relations through which they shape a legitimate account of themselves to their co-workers, friends and to their family. These accounts reflect people's sense of self-identity and they are strongly affected by and mediated through the workplace: not infrequently, however, individual biographies or workplace selves emerge as, or appear to be *fragmented* selves, dissociated from values, beliefs and other deepest aspirations. In large corporations in particular, economic choices and decisions are not always consonant to one's own fulfilment or might not further the good of society in general. Nevertheless, work is embedded in a larger set of social and cultural meanings, through which people acquire feelings of self-worth: dignity in work may originate in such sources of self-worth like values and spirituality, not as a matter of private assessment, but as a constituent part of the social world in which personalities grow and evolve. This implies the framing of conditions under which work attitudes may not be oriented toward maximising economic interests, particularly when people engage in more altruistic pursuits. Pfeffer (2003, p. 42) is right to observe that:

"An individual's desire and right to be treated with dignity at work, to be able to grow and learn, to be connected to others and to be a whole, integrated person cannot simply be sacrificed for economic expediency. For once we start down that path, where do we stop in justifying the treatment of people for economic results?"

The weaknesses of hedonistic subjective views of well-being could be overcome in a eudemonic-objective framework, typical of virtue-ethics

approaches seeking to neutralise the Cartesian split between moral identities and actual behaviour. In such a framework, ethical and spiritual well-being arises in a context of interacting societal actors, who place primary emphasis on relational concerns and intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2001). Spirituality may be viewed as a key component of eudemonic well-being, the latter conceived in Aristotelian terms. Van Dierendonck and Mohan (2006) focus on spirituality as inner resources, or “the inner aspects of a person that produce an individualised awareness of one’s inner self and a sense of being part of a deeper spiritual dimension” (p. 234). Spirituality signifies an “inner attitude directly related to the sacred”, not restricted to religious participation, or to adherence to a certain denomination (p. 228). Most importantly, the beneficial effects of spirituality on eudemonic well-being may be seen in purposeful activities that offer the opportunity for personal growth and development achieved through interconnectedness (p. 233). Accordingly, the experience of connectedness and joy seems to be rooted in the actualisation of human potential and culminates in the fulfilment or realisation of one’s true nature. Under these premises, workplace processes appear as intrinsically related to the overall enterprise of living: the latter is not conceptualised in terms of achieving mere pleasure, but primarily as one embedded in this “striving for perfection that represents the realisation of one’s true potential” (Ryff, 1995, p. 100). In this respect, central emphasis is placed on the conditions that are conducive to human development or are appropriate to address the existential challenges of life (Keyes et al., 2002; Ryff and Singer, 1998, 2000).

This flourishing of human personality is unachievable in the absence of a proper context of interpersonal relations, given the civil or political dimensions of *eudemonia*: the latter is defined as the end of contemplative life, of *otium* (*vios theoreticos*), experienced amidst the bonds of friendship. Ethical well-being is inimical to a state of solitary life (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* ix9, 1169b) but akin to the true friendship, which is not a means, but an end in itself (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, viii1, 1155a). Undoubtedly, the most critical aspects of laudable living are realised in such interpersonal relationships. This state of psychological well-being

is the ultimate corollary of virtuous actions performed because of their intrinsic worthiness: the latter seems irreducible to mere instrumental means. Prosperity cannot be a legitimate human pursuit if not subordinated to the opportunity of beneficence exercised through friendship: as in the case of civic commitment, friendship is a constituent part of *eudemonia* and denotes a *relational* good enjoyed in a context of reciprocities governed by specific social norms. In this respect, all the principal components of workplace spirituality – transcendence, connectedness, completeness and joy – could be properly integrated in a virtue-ethics framework, in which various forms of reciprocal behaviour are irreducible to the mere pursuit of self-interest or to the emergence of attitudes oriented solely to outcomes (See Table II).

Spiritual values such as those discussed are not only expected to enhance ethical well-being, but also to affect issues of organisational justice, both in terms of distributive equity and of the intention to behave fairly. As demonstrated earlier, justice is the cornerstone in Douglas Hicks’ model of workplace spirituality (Hicks, 2003, pp. 168–171) that seems to draw on Rawls’ liberal framework. Rather than favouring any particularistic approach to workplace spirituality, such a view is derived from shared ideals that are operative in work environments and secure conditions of a reasonable value-pluralism: workplace is then conceived of as a fair system of cooperative relations, within which employees holding different worldviews should be treated as free and equal. Albeit its cultural diversity, a workplace thus understood could undoubtedly accommodate deep value differences on condition that it can affirm a common set of principles (like those discussed previously in this paper) revealing a sort of ‘overlapping consensus’, or providing those plausible arguments on a broader justification for spiritual values and on their respective ‘reasonable comprehensive doctrines’. These liberal stances allow for the necessary ethical accounts of moral autonomy in the workplace: there are also typical of Kantian deontological positions that ensure both self-respect and a sense of commitment to others. However, in a context of strict organisational hierarchies, such a ‘respectful pluralism’ could be applied in principal to participants of equal status, but could prove somewhat

TABLE II
Categorising workplace spirituality models

Ethical Model	Ethical / Moral Consideration	Implications for organisational functioning	Dimensions of workplace spirituality involved			
			Transcendence	Connectedness	Completeness	Joy
Deontological – Kantian Utilitarian	Moral Principles Outcomes	Conform to moral principles	+	+	+	+
		Focus on the desirability of useful over harmful results	–	–	+	–
Rights-based or theory of justice	FairnessJustice	Conducive to fair outcomes	+	+	+	–
Virtue Ethics	Character(Individual Level)	Stimulate personal ideals	+	+	+	+

ineffective in the case where the values of rights held by distinct people or groups appear dramatically *unequal*. Though inequalities of this type are hardly obliterated, they could be arranged to benefit the least well-off members of an organisation: avoiding gender, race or religious discrimination in the workplace could properly specify the conditions under which such a ‘principle of difference’ might be enacted.

Spiritual values lie at the core of workplace spirituality, but some of them are not likely to be entirely assimilated by a deontological framework (cf. Table III). Consider for instance humility (exemplified in servant leadership)⁴ or compassion and forgiveness that are not akin to rights-based or justice approaches. Undoubtedly, a Kantian deontological framework could incorporate such values as universalising principles through the categorical imperative, but it cannot allow for the experience of joy or happiness, given the *limited* relevance of the latter in such a framework. If the experience of happiness extends far beyond one’s proper intentions or moral control, there hardly exists any particular relationship between the rule of morality and a higher level of being happy: this deficiency concerning the inclusion of joy (or happiness) in deontological contexts is accountable for the somewhat limiting nature of a pure deontological assessment of workplace spirituality (cf. Ladkin, 2006). On the contrary, in a virtue ethics context the experience of happiness and completeness, as substantiated in human flourishing, could ultimately provide a rationale for a virtuous behaviour in work environments. Character education obtains the central priority in such a context and the value systems underlying character education (cf. Fry, 2005) are not less pertaining to organisational cultures supporting spirituality at the workplace. The adoption of this perspective is far from being uncompromising, due to the fact that modern organisations are not infrequently resisting to become a sort of ‘business communities’ or a particular type of reciprocating, caring associations. However, securing profitability or efficiency does not necessitate the elimination of values affirming human dignity: spiritual values can provide an impetus to that direction. On the one hand, workplace spirituality can hardly be elevated to an end in itself, *irrespective* of its ability

TABLE III
Ethical models and spiritual values (Fry, 2005) underlying workplace spirituality

Ethical model	Spiritual values						
	Honesty	Forgiveness	Hope	Gratitude	Humility	Compassion	Integrity
Deontological – Kantian	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Utilitarian	+	–	–	–	–	–	–
Rights-based or theory of justice	+	–	–	–	–	–	+
Virtue Ethics	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

to affect decisions or psychological well-being. On the other hand, spiritual values should not be reduced to mere *instrumentalities* principally and exclusively at the service of exogenous, desirable organisational ends. Virtue ethics frameworks of workplace spirituality undoubtedly favour such a conception.

Concluding comments

As discussed earlier in this paper, both contextual and acontextual approaches to workplace spirituality provide the researcher, the scholar and the organisational practitioner with a unique perspective for studying the phenomenon, having both their strengths and weaknesses. Albeit none of the theoretical constructs under consideration claims unequivocal support, they have undoubtedly contributed to a more rounded understanding of workplace spirituality. Contextual approaches in particular seem to more properly articulate shared beliefs, visions and ideals, as they better encompass the true essence of the phenomenon; on the contrary, acontextual approaches sometimes appear to be nothing more than a mere consequentialist assessment of the eventual utility of spiritual values for organisational environments.

Arguably, a philosophical framework of workplace spirituality can contribute to a better elaboration of the concept in terms of its relevance to the workplace. Furthermore, it can substantially enlarge our proper understanding of the term in the quest of its necessary methodological and ethical foundations and it is unique in raising specific issues that might be hardly discussed in the absence of such a framework. We demonstrated that all the principal components

of workplace spirituality may be elaborated as universally-held aspects of virtue ethics frameworks, and, excepting happiness (or joy), of a deontological framework. We also found that most spiritual values may be defended on a virtue ethics or a Kantian deontological basis. Consequently, workplace spirituality could be grounded on such frameworks: the latter are neither particularistic (so as to transcend the limitations of contextual approaches) nor consequential (so as to address the inadequacies of acontextual frameworks). A virtue-ethics approach to spiritual values, in particular, may offer new directives in the current discourse of workplace spirituality, as it seems to encompass character and well-being, two core elements that allow for a non-instrumentalist conception of the term, as well as of its appropriateness to and performance in organisational settings.

Notes

¹ For a well-presented and rounded account of the factors accounting for the phenomenon of workplace spirituality see Hicks (2003), Chapter 2, pp. 27–47.

² Ashmos and Duchon (2000, p. 137) for instance, define spirituality at work as “the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community”. In this respect, inner life, meaningful work and a feeling of belonging to a community are three integral parts of workplace spirituality.

³ Hicks (2005, pp. 49–51) examines the main alternatives to respectful pluralism, ranging from secularism as a hostile context for religious expression to ‘generic spirituality’, that encompasses quasi-religious ideas or shared values without no explicit reference to any particular religious tradition. Generic spirituality opposes to

'faith at work' in that the latter involves particular religious commitments *irreducible* to generic ones. In Hicks' view, ethical and religious convictions are central to employees' identities and can be reasonably and constructively negotiated in a framework of 'respectful pluralism' that allows for adversities of personal, social and cultural biographies. Michele Lamont (2000) advances a similar position in assessing religious belief and involvement as central to reinforcing moral claims of employees in low-status occupations.

⁴ Based on moral principles of this kind, servant leadership places an emphasis on leaders' qualities in serving followers. Pruzan and Miller (2006) defend the same line of argument in asserting that a spiritual-based perspective on responsible leadership and corporate responsibility seems to be mostly promising in addressing organisational and individual obstacles and in eliciting positive emotional and motivational responses from followers: by contrast to a rational or utilitarian perspective, spirituality "embraces the longest time frame and broadest distance, is the most proactive, has the most expanded and inclusive Identity, and is the least concerned with maximizing personal wealth as a top priority" (p.89).

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