

# The Neglected Ethical and Spiritual Motivations in the Workplace

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**Abstract** Understanding what motivates employees is essential to the success of organizational objectives. Therefore, properly capturing and explaining the full range of such motivations are important. However, the classical and most popular theories describing employee motives have neglected, if not omitted entirely, the importance of the ethical and spiritual dimensions of motivation. This has led to a model of a person as self-interested, amoral, and non-spiritual. In this paper, we attempt to expose this omission and offer a more complete taxonomy of motivations which include these dimensions. Although more work will need to be done to fully develop the ethical and spiritual dimensions of motivation, the expanded taxonomy will provide the foundations and serve as a guide for such further research. Furthermore, this new categorization of motivations brings out the full dimensions of being human, which promises to lead to improved management practices with regard to employees and foster greater human flourishing in the workplace.

**Keywords** Ethical motivations · Flourishing in the workplace · Human motivation taxonomy · Motivations in the workplace · Religious motivations and spiritual motivations

## Introduction

The real challenge for an executive is to determine how her company can pursue its objectives effectively and efficiently. But, at the same time, this task can be done ethically or unethically. In other words, executives may contribute, to a greater or lesser extent, to the ethical healthiness or unhealthiness of their organizations, contributing or not to the human enrichment of its members, and to the people involved in achieving its mission and affected by its activity. Therefore, “if a member of the organization ends up being selfish, bigheaded or a liar as a result of belonging to that organization, we can state that this is the case of an unhealthy organization; an organization that destroys or impoverishes the human quality of the people in the organization and those it serves” (Bañón et al. 2012, p. 72).

For some authors, the key to managing other people’s work, in ways that lead to the company’s financial performance, is how managers perceive their people (Pfeffer and Veiga 1999), and, most importantly, understand what motivates them. People have moral, or ethical,<sup>1</sup> and spiritual dimensions in their lives, and these realities may affect the work of individuals and their flourishing in the workplace (Argandoña 2011; Dukerich et al. 2000; King 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> Although some ethicists want to make a distinction between the terms ethical and moral, in this paper we are using them interchangeably.

As some have argued, when employees “have developed their sense of meaning in their work and their talents, they will be more effective in the workplace” (Fagley and Adler 2012, p. 170), and they see their organizations as better places to work for than their less spiritual counterparts (Mitroff and Denton 1999). Therefore, managers should be aware of the role of ethical and spiritual motivations in the workplace, in addition to other psychological and economic motives of conduct.

Unfortunately, although motivation is one of the most crucial concerns of modern organizational research (Ambrose and Kulik 1999), prevalent classifications of employee motives and needs have either minimized or neglected the importance of the ethical and spiritual dimensions of motivation. Such an omission seems odd, since a growing body of literature today advocates for ethical and spiritual principles guiding people’s lives (Fagley and Adler 2012; Folger and Salvador 2008; Mitroff and Denton 1999; Rubenstein 1987; Smith 2000).

In this article, we intend to overcome this omission by offering a more complete classification of employee motivations through an integration of the areas of psychology, ethics, and theology, offering an expanded taxonomy that explicitly includes morality and spirituality.<sup>2</sup> We believe that this expanded development may help to provide a better theoretical framework for future managers, and thereby improve management practices (Ghoshal 2005) that lead to flourishing in the workplace, fostering ethically healthier organizations.

### Classical Taxonomies on Motives and Needs

Despite the enormous effort that has been devoted to the study of motivation, there is no single theory of motivation that is universally accepted. Ambrose and Kulik, after an exhaustive revision of the motivation research in the 90s, pointed out seven main theories which they called “the old friends”: Motives and needs, Expectancy Theory, Equity Theory, Goal-Setting, Cognitive Evaluation Theory, Work Design, and Reinforcement Theory (1999, p. 232). Among the old friends regarding employee motives and needs, they highlighted four classical taxonomies: Maslow, McClelland, Alderfer, and Herzberg (1999, p. 233). Since the purpose of this work specifically involves the study of the motives leading employees to perform to the best of their ability, we will focus on the four classical taxonomies mentioned above, omitting the other theories, which attempt to explain the motivational mechanism by way of

changes in the process of satisfying human needs, and how individual behavior is encouraged, directed, and maintained with respect to desired goals (Skinner 1953; Adams 1963; Vroom 1964; Latham and Locke 1979). In spite of the shortcomings of any selection, we are confident that this decision captures the essence of the theories of motivation and needs.

Therefore, we will begin reviewing these taxonomies focused on the content of “what” motivates people in acting. Among them, the hierarchical description of needs proposed by Abraham Maslow in 1943 is paradigmatic.

Maslow describes motivations from basic or lower needs, the so-called physiological ones: food, water, safety, and security; ascending to higher needs, associated with social activities: esteem-building, self-actualization, or constant self-improvement (Maslow 1943). This hierarchy of motivations is a continuum of needs that must be satisfied, with each level invoking its own kind of motives (O’Connor and Yballe 2007). Notice that human needs are seen here as few, finite, classifiable, and constant through all human cultures and across historical time periods, recognizing changes over time and between cultures in the way these needs are satisfied (Max-Neef 1987). When these needs are satisfied, they cease to be motivators.

After Maslow’s description, different researchers proposed similar classifications with higher empirical support. In the early 60s, David McClelland identified three types of needs (achievement, power, and affiliation) which cause three different kinds of associated motivations. According to his theory, most people possess and portray a mixture of these needs: those with a high need for achievement have an attraction to situations offering personal accountability; individuals with a dominating need for authority and power have a desire to influence and to increase personal status and prestige; and finally, those with a great need for affiliation value building strong relationships and belonging to groups or organizations (McClelland 1962). Therefore, these three motivations do not necessarily follow a sequential process, as Maslow advocated.

A few years later, Clayton P. Alderfer (1969), published his Three Needs Theory—existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG). He argued that all of them can be pursued simultaneously. Alderfer’s ERG and McLellan’s theories improve upon Maslow’s theory by allowing more flexibility of movement between needs.

Another important representative describing or classifying human motivations is Herzberg (1968) who distinguished between what he called extrinsic and intrinsic factors. The former refers to doing something because it leads to a distinct outcome, something external you expect to receive, and the latter refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, an internal reward. The intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation have been

<sup>2</sup> As Beadle and Knight remark, the question of meaningful work has been debated within both social psychology and ethics, but largely in isolation from each other (2012, p. 434).

widely studied, and the distinction has shed important light on both developmental and educational practices (Ambrose and Kulik 1999). A more recent example of this is the description of motivations by Ryan and Deci (2000), which revisited the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to better understand its development. They identified the existence of three basic innate psychological needs—competence (feeling self-efficacious, having the relevant skills to succeed); autonomy (an internal perceived locus of causality, a self-determined behavior); and relatedness (a sense of belongingness and connectedness). The first two motives are intrinsic and the third is extrinsic (Ryan and Deci 2000).

In order to clarify and unify these classical taxonomies of employee motives and needs, we integrate all of them into a single table or grid (Table 1). The columns of this grid include extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, according to the Herzberg distinction, and the rows present higher and lower orders of needs, according to Maslow. Extrinsic motivation refers to an external benefit, utility, or advantage. We call these lower-order goals *support* motivations, denoting that they are suitable for practical purposes such as subsistence and physiological needs, safety, power, etc.; *relatedness* designates the higher-order goals, such as esteem, affiliation, recognition, social needs, etc.

On the other hand, intrinsic motivations refer to something received internally, while the agent is acting or doing

something, which causes them pleasure or satisfaction. We call these motivations *achievement* when the agent learns, improving his or her skills, thereby acquiring competence and *satisfaction* when the success or achievement causes the agent to be fulfilled.

As the synthesis in Table 1 shows, there is a strong consistency in these approaches. On the other hand, this summary also illustrates that little interest was paid to understanding the “moral content” of motivation.

More recent studies, after reviewing how psychological theories explain behaviors, conclude that these theories have been only concerned with extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. The former includes orientations toward money, recognition, competition, and the dictates of other people, and the latter includes challenge, enjoyment, personal enrichment, interest, and self-determination (Amabile et al. 1994). Ambrose and Kulik, in their review, conclude that “research continues to refine the models, and to suggest moderators and boundary conditions, but the basic tenets remain unchallenged” (Ambrose and Kulik 1999, p. 278). Therefore, we find it sadly shocking that *the most influential classical taxonomies describing employee motivations contain a limited implicit ethical assumption—namely, that human behavior is essentially amoral.*

One could claim that Maslow’s description of self-actualization is a meta-need understood as an expression of tendencies to fully develop your personal potentials, which

**Table 1** Synthesis of the classical taxonomies on employee motives and needs

	<b>Extrinsic motivation</b>	<b>Intrinsic motivation</b>
<b>Higher needs</b>	<p><b>RELATEDNESS</b></p> <p><b>Receive</b> good from outside</p> <p><i>Esteem and social needs (Maslow)</i> <i>Affiliation (McClelland)</i> <i>Recognition and Relatedness (Alderfer)</i> <i>Relatedness (Ryan and Deci)</i></p>	<p><b>SATISFACTION</b></p> <p><b>Acquire</b> good from inside oneself</p> <p><i>Self-actualization (Maslow)</i> <i>Autonomy (Ryan and Deci)</i></p>
<b>Lower needs</b>	<p><b>SUPPORT</b></p> <p><b>Receive</b> good from outside</p> <p><i>Safety and physiological needs (Maslow)</i> <i>Power (McClelland)</i> <i>Existence (Alderfer)</i></p>	<p><b>ACHIEVEMENT</b></p> <p><b>Acquire</b> good from inside oneself</p> <p><i>Growth (Alderfer)</i> <i>Achievement (McClelland)</i> <i>Competence (Ryan and Deci)</i></p>

may include justice understood as fairness (Coon and Mitterer 2012). But, in spite of this more humanistic, even spiritual or mystical vision in Maslow's work (Mitroff and Denton 1999), it seems to us that self-actualization was not fully understood as a moral concept. As Melé points out "self-fulfillment can have two different meanings: developing personal idiosyncrasy, whatever that can be, and developing the noblest potentialities of each human being. The former has only a psychological sense, while the latter has an ethical sense related to character. Unfortunately, Maslow, as the psychologist he was, only paid attention to the development of the idiosyncrasy of each one, without considering the ethical side of this development" (Melé 2003, p. 80).

For a more balanced discussion of this question, one should admit that Maslow was open to morality, although he did not insist on this in his early writings. Later on, Maslow's pyramid was expanded to include cognitive and esthetic needs which are analogous to those of achievement and satisfaction (Maslow 1970) and also self-transcendent needs (Maslow 1971), more related to moral and spiritual dimensions. Nevertheless, unfortunately, these expanded versions of Maslow's taxonomy have not been popularized even in widely used texts (Coon and Mitterer 2012). In part because of this, the ethical side of human growth, as well as the explicit mention of spirituality, has been absent in the most disseminated taxonomies of human motivation.

On the other hand, these proposals contain a mostly self-centered view of human beings. As shown in Table 1, the considered motivations refer to the need to *receive* support or relatedness, or *acquire* achievement or satisfaction.

The approaches seem to conclude that human behavior is basically based on self-interested motivations and not on other types of interest. These conclusions have strong implications in understanding how flourishing is attained in the workplace, because if this is so, how could we explain behaviors that focus on helping and serving others? Such behaviors would be always self-interested. It would mean that people always seek exclusively their own satisfaction. Or, to give a simple example, that people who donate money to those affected by natural disasters are always expecting something in return. Why should people gratuitously help other people?

As Folger and Salvador explain, they help because they are capable of empathizing with other people, placing themselves vicariously in the same position, feeling their pain, and wanting to minimize this pain (Folger and Salvador 2008). However, behaviors such as cooperation, help, or service to others are explained in the self-interested perspective as a desire of satisfying a personal self-gratification, self-satisfaction, or self-development, and not as a truly self-giving action toward others. The self-interest supposition, albeit subject to strong criticism by certain

trends in management and organizational literature (Azevedo and Akdere 2011), still continues to dominate the field. It is not surprising, therefore, that *the classical taxonomies of motivation make an implicit ethical assumption—namely, that human behavior is primarily self-interested*.

At this point, it would not be fair to say that every early classification of motivations forgot those motives "of giving" in human conduct. For example, Lersch (1938) described self-transcending drives as one of the groups of motives that characterize human development from infancy to adulthood, striving for cooperative, creative, or loving behaviors. Frankl (1966) argued some years later that there are two specifically human phenomena by which human existence is characterized: the capacity of self-detachment and of self-transcendence. Allport (1961) held a similar position seeing a human being as proactive and purposeful, whose personality is less a finished product than a transitive process. And, as mentioned before, in addition to these proposals, in a less well-known late work, Maslow (1971) introduced an "8th" need of self-transcendence. Nevertheless, the legacy of the primarily self-interested theoretical assumption is found in the majority of organizational behavior and business administration text books still today.

As Ghoshal stated, "if both common sense and empirical evidence suggest the contrary, why does the pessimistic model of people as purely self-interested beings still so dominate management-related theories?" (2005, p. 83). Human behavior in the workplace cannot be reduced to an exclusive search for self-interest, as if this motivation was sufficient to explain human behavior or as being more important than other values. This assumption is inadequate. Social concerns, other-oriented motives, can be just as basic or elementary as self-interest (Folger and Salvador 2008; Grant 2012; Grant and Berg 2012; Grant and Dutton 2012; Sen 1997).

The purpose of the next part of this work is to take a step forward in overcoming these limitations. Aiming to achieve a richer understanding of motivations beyond the aforementioned classifications, it is essential, on the one hand, to explicitly include the "ethical" dimension of human beings and, on the other, explicitly consider the dimension of "giving."

### Including Morality and Giving in Motivation Taxonomies

Human beings act because they have reasons, motives, or goals. Many times they seek justice, integrity, benevolence, or goodness. Therefore, moral goals or motives as well as motives of giving should be part of the content of motivation. Regarding the workplace specifically, there is

growing evidence that moral virtues and some habits are quite relevant for business performance (Folger and Salvador 2008; Melé 2003), and this presupposes moral motivation and others' interests. In fact, while these motives were absent in the majority of early content motivation taxonomies (see Table 1), moral judgments and social interests are present today in many modern theories of motivation.

During the last few decades, different comprehensive approaches to motivation have been developed in order to provide integrated motivation models and most of them include justice and social behavior as explicit components of motivation. In 2005, in the first *Annual Review of Psychology* chapter since 1977 devoted exclusively to work motivation, the conclusion was that the three most important approaches to work motivation to appear in the last 30 years are goal-setting, social cognitive, and organizational justice theories (Latham and Pinder 2005). It is clear that justice, as a moral aspect of motivation, is considered as a reason for human conduct. Other motivational theories (e.g., self-efficacy, moral disengagement) have been applied directly to an understanding of why individuals engage in unethical behavior or fail to engage in ethical behavior (Bandura et al. 1996; Mitchell and Palmer 2010).

In addition, regarding the motivation of giving, important research documents the role of social factors in motivating behavior. De Waal (2008) reviewed in a *chapter of the Annual Review of Psychology* the accumulated research on altruistic motivation, showing also the incompleteness of understanding motivation in exclusively self-interested terms. Grant studies on pro-social motivation to illuminate when, why, and how employees' thoughts, feelings, and actions are often driven by a concern for benefiting others answer calls to explain the motivations underlying individual and organizational behavior through perspectives other than rational self-interest (2008, 2011, 2012; Grant and Berg 2012; Grant and Dutton 2012).

To sum up, we think, as other authors do, that classical taxonomies of motives and needs had deficient explanatory power because they stopped short of including particular ethical and pro-social considerations. The purpose now is to revisit the synthesis of motives described in Table 1, in order to explicitly include "moral" and "giving" motivations as components of a more accurate taxonomy of human needs.

Aristotle's distinction of human goods written twenty-five centuries ago may help us to rethink the classification of motives of human actions. He explained the different kinds of friendship distinguishing three kinds of goods as the goals or ends pursued in human relationships. "The kinds of friendship may perhaps be cleared up if we first come to know the object of love. For not everything seems to be loved but only the lovable, and this is *good, pleasant, or useful*" (Aristotle 1934, p. 1155b). Therefore, following

the Aristotelian tradition, there are three kinds of lovable things or human goods: one kind is intended for the sake of something else—the useful good—and the other two are aimed for their own sake. Among these latter goods are the pleasant good and the moral good.<sup>3</sup>

If we look at the lower level of the grid in Table 1, the needs described by Maslow, including safety and physiological basic needs, the need of existence by Alderfer, power and achievement by McClelland, and competence by Ryan and Deci all can fit Aristotle's concept of useful good. These are goods that human beings need for practical reasons, in order to attain other goods, for the sake of some other goods, and not for their own sake, e.g., air, food, drink, warmth, shelter, sleep, and money, working conditions, security, protection, or law. It may be said that these kinds of goods cover practical needs or needs for useful goods. Therefore, following the Aristotelian distinction, we advocate using the term "useful good" or "practical good" instead of Maslow's lower needs.

The second type of good, the "pleasant good," attracts us because it satisfies us without the mediation of any other good, causing a sense of enjoyment. These goods are related to the upper needs—esteem and social interpersonal relationships (Maslow); recognition and relatedness (Alderfer); affiliation (McClelland); and relatedness (Ryan and Deci)—as well as to those needs directly related to satisfaction, like self-actualization (Maslow); growth (Alderfer); and autonomy (Ryan and Deci). The pleasant goods are sought for their own sake because they are nice, enjoyable, fun, or pleasant.

Like the pleasant, *the moral good* is chosen for its own sake. The moral good consists of everything that is right and worthy of cultivation (McCullough and Snyder 2001), contributing to the flourishing of the human being and his moral character (Doherty 1995; Ryff and Singer 1998), such as the human virtues of justice, sincerity, truthfulness, honesty, and peace. Kreeft (1990) summarized this Aristotelian classification, saying that "there are only three reasons why anyone should ever do anything: because it is morally virtuous, practically necessary, or fun."

We argue that if motivation taxonomies intend to be really human, they should include the consideration of the moral motives. For this reason, we propose an expansion of the categorization of motivation to include the ethical, as suggested by more recent works previously mentioned (Bandura et al. 1996; Latham and Pinder 2005; Mitchell and Palmer 2010). Therefore, we introduce two new sub-categories of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations referring to

<sup>3</sup> Most of the English versions of the *Nicomachean Ethics* do not use the term "moral" good, but they label it as "noble" good, or in some cases as "honest" or "honorable," terms that probably fit better with the original Greek one (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, II.3, 1104b.30–32).



**Table 2** The expanded grid of human motivations, including moral and transitive motives

	Extrinsic motives	Intrinsic motives	Transitive motives
Moral good	<p><b>RESPECT</b> Receive moral good from outside</p> <p><i>Legitimacy and justice</i></p>	<p><b>FLOURISHING</b> Acquire moral good from inside</p> <p><i>Virtuousness and excellence</i></p>	<p><b>BENEVOLENCE</b> Give moral good to others</p> <p><i>Friendship and beneficence</i></p>
Pleasant good	<p><b>RELATEDNESS</b> Receive pleasant good from outside</p> <p><i>Affection and participation</i></p>	<p><b>SATISFACTION</b> Acquire pleasant good from inside</p> <p><i>Auto-realization and autonomy</i></p>	<p><b>PLEASANTNESS</b> Give pleasant good to others</p> <p><i>Kindness and amiability</i></p>
Useful good	<p><b>SUPPORT</b> Receive useful good from outside</p> <p><i>Subsistence and protection</i></p>	<p><b>ACHIEVEMENT</b> Acquire useful good from inside</p> <p><i>Competence and understanding</i></p>	<p><b>SERVICE</b> Give useful good to others</p> <p><i>Help and collaboration</i></p>

the moral good. The *moral extrinsic motivation* can be defined as *the desire to receive moral good from the outside*. Here, we do not denote an external psychological reward or affection, but the reception of an external moral good, such as justice, truth, or goodness—e.g., the willingness to be treated morally well, to receive *respect* as human beings, to receive appropriate recognition, moral reputation, approval, or legitimacy from others, when we fulfill our moral duties, norms, or obligations.

On the other hand, the *moral intrinsic motivation* may be defined as *the desire to acquire moral good while acting*, a good inside the agent. It is an internal moral ability or acquired disposition that results from the realization of such action, or what Aristotle would call a moral *virtue*. This is the trait of character that enables a person to achieve human flourishing, a form of self-actualization or well-being, which goes beyond Maslow's early narrower conception of self-fulfillment (Melé 2003).

In addition to the explicit consideration of moral good, when describing motivations, we also suggest the inclusion of those motives “of giving” that were previously described by less celebrated authors like Lersch (1938), Allport (1961), Frankl (1966), and more recently Grant (2008, 2012), Grant and Berg (2012), and Grant and Dutton

(2012). Although not all these authors fully agree on their approaches and ideas, they all recognize the importance of this dimension “of giving.” The same occurs with Pérez-López (1993), who claimed that human beings have both kinds of motivations: those of self-interest (extrinsic and intrinsic motives) and those of others-interest (transcendent motives).

As Faldetta explains when describing the logic of gift-giving in business relationships, “giving comes from the awareness of having received something (from another person, from a social group, from society as a whole or even from God), and the inevitable responsibility of answering this gift (Arnsperger 2000)” (Faldetta 2011, p. 71). In fact, other authors contend that “giving for its own sake with ‘no strings attached’ presents an opportunity to provide deeper and more enduring meaning to a wide range of social and business relations” (Frémeaux and Michelson 2011, p. 73).

We label the giving motivation, following the terminology used by Melé (2003), as *transitive motivation*, moving from the self-perspective to the other's perspective (The Merriam-Webster Unabridged Dictionary). This will allow us to transcend the individual domain and to consider the impact that our actions have on others. We offer

Table 2 as a graphic illustration of these additions to the description of motivations.

This expanded taxonomy of motivations now includes a new third column for the transitive motives, which points outside the agent. Adding this new column, three new categories of motivation for giving come to light, reflecting the three kinds of human good described by Aristotle (useful, pleasant, and moral) and the three kinds of motivations proposed by Pérez-López (1993) and Melé (2003) (extrinsic, intrinsic, and transitive).

Starting from the bottom of the grid, the first new category is the *useful or practical transitive motivation*, understood as *the desire to give useful good to others*. This eagerness to help others, to be useful to others, may be labeled as *service*: assistance, provision, aid, solidarity, cooperation, or collaboration. These are certainly the motives of many people in many circumstances (i.e., parents, teachers, doctors, nurses, public service agents, and other professionals).

Insofar as this collaboration, service, or help can be provided with affection or kindness, the good at stake can be pleasant as well as useful. Therefore, we can also describe the *pleasant transitive motivation* as *the desire to give pleasant good to others*. It is the eagerness to help others to satisfy their needs for affection and pleasantness. These are internal and subjective needs, related to but different from the practical and objective needs satisfied through the act of helping.

Finally, when the moral good is considered, we arrive at a higher level of motivation: the *moral transitive motivation*. It may be described as *the desire to give moral good to others*. In the Aristotelian tradition, this kind of motivation is called *benevolence* (from Latin *bene-volere*, willing the good), understood as the desire to do or give that which is good to another. When a mother or a father wakes up in the middle of the night to care for a child, most probably, the reason or motive of this action is neither personal future support, relatedness, or self-respect (extrinsic motives), nor achieving, satisfaction, or personal virtue (intrinsic motives), but it is related to service, tenderness, and benevolence (transitive motives). When parents correct their children, they do so most frequently out of benevolence, out of personal moral care or love. In fact, these three columns could also be understood as three kinds of human motives of conduct out of love: love from others (extrinsic motives), self-love (intrinsic motives), and love for others (transitive motives).

We want to highlight that the verbs in Table 2 are “to receive” when referring to extrinsic motives; “to acquire” when denoting intrinsic motives; and “to give” describing transitive motives. In other words, extrinsic motives refer to something from outside (received); intrinsic motives refer to something from inside (acquired); and transitive motives refer to the act of giving to another person (given).

Transitive motives have a “purpose” that transcends the individual person.

Although all these motivations can be considered in a hierarchical order, they are complementary and can be achieved simultaneously, at least not always sequentially (Deci and Ryan 1985; MacIntyre 1985). In fact, all of them can occur in the same person, at the same time, and presumably in the same action, although probably in different proportions.

Consider, for example, a manager implementing a new safety program for his employees in a factory. The motives of his action can be related to extrinsic motives, such as favorable monetary compensation (useful or practical extrinsic motivation), achieving social prestige (pleasant extrinsic motivation), and attaining the moral reputation of being a good person (moral extrinsic motivation). In addition, there may also be intrinsic motives such as learning a new technique (useful or practical intrinsic motivation), having personal satisfaction for the success of this implementation (pleasant intrinsic motivation), and striving to be a good person who fulfills his duties with integrity: trying to be honest, industrious, and generous in his job (moral intrinsic motivation).

If we also consider transitive motives, we may see that this manager may have other motives such as providing employees a safer workplace without a direct link to increased productivity (useful or practical transitive motivation), giving his employees pleasantness and affection (pleasant transitive motivation), and also trying to improve their welfare for the sake of themselves, as a kind of benevolence (moral transitive motivation). Different motives may vary in the presence and intensity precisely because human beings are free to decide the reasons for their choices. This same example can be applied to any activity.

This new proposed grid allows a deeper reflection on the relationships between psychological and moral motivations in the workplace. Recent research suggests that many employees define themselves as giving and caring individuals who hold pro-social identities (Aquino and Reed 2002). In fact, a lot of research effort has been done in evolutionary biology, psychology, sociology, political science, and experimental economics suggesting that people behave far less selfishly than most assume (Benkler 2011). Studies of individuals helping others suggest that the act of giving to a recipient can increase the giver’s commitment to that recipient (Aronson 1999; Flynn and Brockner 2003). Moreover, a recent study proposes that “the act of giving to support programs strengthens employees’ affective commitment to their organization by enabling them to see themselves and the organization in more pro-social, caring terms” (Grant et al. 2008).

After widening the narrow assumptions of the classical taxonomies on motives and needs, one dimension of motivation is still absent from this taxonomy (see Table 2).

Where are the drives related to spirituality? Millions of human beings through history have been driven by spiritual motives in their conduct.

### Including Spirituality and Religion as Human Motivations

As we mentioned above, there is a growing body of literature suggesting that there is a spiritual reality as well as a moral one to people's lives, and that this reality affects individuals in a variety of ways (Argandoña 2011; Dukerich et al. 2000; Fagley and Adler 2012; Karakas 2010; King 2006; Li 2012; Mitroff and Denton 1999; Rubenstein 1987; Smith 2000). In his literature review on spirituality at work, Karakas (2010) highlights the shift in management from an economic focus to a balance of profits, quality of life, spirituality, and social responsibility concerns, a shift from a self-centeredness to interconnectedness, a shift from self-interest to service and stewardship, and a change from a materialistic to a spiritual orientation. This new paradigm has been called "the spirituality movement."

It is undeniable that the role of spirituality in the workplace has widely gained the interest of scholars and practitioners over the last few decades (Cavanagh and Bandsuch 2002; Gotsis and Kortezi 2008; Kahn and Sheikh 2012; Weaver and Agle 2002), but it is still missing in most motivation taxonomies. Spiritual motives of conduct belong to the area of beliefs and may be present in some individuals and not in others. However, it seems that there is a "major transformation" in organizations making room for the spiritual dimension, searching for meaning, purpose, and a sense of community (Ashmos and Duchon 2000). This act of finding positive value and meaning in work is a form of spirituality (Fagley and Adler 2012). Therefore, this is an area of human behavior that demands dialog and mutual understanding between psychology and theology.

What do we understand by spiritual? Spirituality has been defined in many different ways and there is little consensus about it (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Karakas 2010). Petchsawang and Duchon (2012) state that although the definitions of spirituality at work vary depending on different traditions, five themes are common: connection, compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, and transcendence. In a similar way, Karakas defines spirituality "as the journey to find a sustainable, authentic, meaningful, holistic and profound understanding of the existential self and its relationship/interconnectedness with the sacred and the transcendent" (Karakas 2010, p. 91). One could say that the spiritual good refers to any intangible human good regarding transcendence and a deep sense of meaning that requires some sort of faith in its origin, given that it goes

beyond human rationality. Some may call it supernatural good, given that it goes beyond nature. However one defines it, the spiritual good motivates human conduct and is worthy of recognition and respect.

In spite of spirituality being characterized as a private, inclusive, non-denominational, and a universal human feeling, distinguishing it from the adherence to the beliefs, rituals, or practices of a specific organized religion (Karakas 2010), most people explicitly include the presence of God as an integral part of spirituality, overlapping spirituality and religion in terms of transcendence and a sense of meaning (Mitroff and Denton 1999).

Therefore, a clearer distinction is required here. Depending on the tradition considered, spirituality may be understood as (1) something open to nature and the cosmos, as (2) something exclusively internal, or as (3) something open to a divine realm or the sacred (Pargament and Mahoney 2002). In the first case, the basic path to access spiritual reality would be the experience of human relatedness and the esthetic contemplation of nature and the cosmos. A number of pantheistic approaches to spirituality would be included in this group.

In the second case, where spirituality is considered as exclusively internal, it helps to find a path toward a higher state of awareness, wisdom, or perfection of one's own being, developing an individual's inner life. This spirituality is centered on the individual, focused on oneself and on the search for an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of his or her being. Transcendental meditation and the search for positive mental health are clear examples of this kind of spirituality. These two conceptions of spirituality do not necessarily imply any religious affiliation (Fagley and Adler 2012; Gotsis and Kortezi 2008).

Finally, a third way to understand spirituality is as a belief in the transcendent quality of a Higher Being, such as God (Pargament and Mahoney 2002). Some polytheist and every monotheist religion are among this third kind of spirituality. In fact, notice that the word religion (from the Latin *religare*) means precisely a kind of spiritual relation or linkage with an Otherness or God. In this perspective, religion is a kind of spiritual good or motive, and the way to get access to this spiritual reality is through prayer or personal dialog with God.

Of course, religious spirituality can be seen very differently from a Judeo-Christian point of view, from a Buddhist or Taoist perspective (Li 2012), or from an Islamic one (Kahn and Sheikh 2012). Nevertheless, religion is a phenomenon essentially and exclusively human. It is present in every single civilization and in the majority of societies. Therefore, it is worthy of universal recognition and protection. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized in its article 18, "Everyone has the right



**Table 3** The expanded grid of human motivations, including moral and spiritual dimensions

	<b>Extrinsic Motives</b>	<b>Intrinsic Motives</b>	<b>Transitive motives</b>	<b>Religious Motives</b>
<b>Spiritual level (Spiritual good)</b>	<b>GIFTS</b> Receive spiritual good from outside <i>Assistance and grace</i>	<b>HOLINESS</b> Acquire spiritual good from inside <i>Holiness and godlikeness</i>	<b>CHARITY</b> Give spiritual good to others <i>Contribution and self-giving</i>	<b>GLORIFY</b> Give spiritual good to the Other (God) <i>Praise and tribute</i>
<b>Moral level (Moral good)</b>	<b>RESPECT</b> Receive moral good from outside <i>Legitimacy and justice</i>	<b>FLOURISHING</b> Acquire moral good from inside <i>Virtuousness and excellence</i>	<b>BENEVOLENCE</b> Give moral good to others <i>Friendship and beneficence</i>	<b>WORSHIP</b> Give moral good to the Other (God) <i>Reverence and adoration</i>
<b>Psycho-affective level (Pleasant good)</b>	<b>RELATEDNESS</b> Receive pleasant good from outside <i>Affection and participation</i>	<b>SATISFACTION</b> Acquire pleasant good from inside <i>Auto-realization and autonomy</i>	<b>PLEASANTNESS</b> Give pleasant good to others <i>Kindness and amiability</i>	<b>GRATITUDE</b> Give pleasant good to the Other (God) <i>Thanksgiving and reparation</i>
<b>Practical level (Useful good)</b>	<b>SUPPORT</b> Receive useful good from outside <i>Subsistence and protection</i>	<b>ACHIEVEMENT</b> Acquire useful good from inside <i>Competence and understanding</i>	<b>SERVICE</b> Give useful good to others <i>Help and collaboration</i>	<b>SUBMISSION</b> Give useful good to the Other (God) <i>Service and compliance</i>

to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

In this sense, spiritual motivation in general and religious motivation in particular can be understood as a kind of human need or a good at the highest level, given that it includes the “deepest values and meanings by which people live” (Sheldrake 2007, pp. 1–2). Both spiritual and religious realities, where the latter demand the existence of a God, are often experienced as a source of inspiration or orientation in life reflecting “the extent to which an individual is motivated to find sacred meaning and purpose to

his or her existence” (Tepper 2003). It has to do with the search for meaning and values that includes some experience of transcendence (Bruce 1999; Fagley and Adler 2012).

There are recent models describing “executives” in a closer manner to the one proposed here. For instance, Margaret Benefiel “describes the profound role that awareness of soul, or spirituality, can play in leadership and organization life” (Benefiel 2005, p. 9). This work presents several cases of managers whose first priority is the growth and development of their employees, looking for the right thing to do, considering the effects of their decisions on people, and obtaining as a result high levels of profitability and a strong esprit de corps. A similar case

described by Andre Delbecq depicts business leadership as a call to service, not merely a job or a career (Delbecq 1999). On the other hand, the work of Fry and Nisiewicz (2013) is an even more recent example of models fitting with the consideration of moral and spiritual motivations in the workplace. It presents four positive experiences on spiritual leadership, improving the life of the employees and the community, including a discussion about implementing this model for motivating others. All these are just a few examples that much more closely resemble the definition of the executive we gave at the beginning of this work—one who is aware of the importance of considering ethical and spiritual motivations in the workplace as basic ingredients to contribute to the ethical healthiness of the organization and consequently to the human enrichment of its members.

Recognizing spirituality as a legitimate category of human needs and desires, we include it in Table 3 to create a wider taxonomy of motivations. To explicitly consider spiritual motivations, we suggest the addition of the category of “transcendental” or “spiritual good,” in the top row of the motivational grid, in addition to those categories of “useful,” “pleasant,” and “moral” goods. Notice that these four levels of the grid refer to four basic dimensions of human life (physical, socio-psychological, moral, and spiritual) and therefore to four anthropological dimensions that may be considered in any attempt to explain flourishing in the workplace. Moreover, a new fourth column should be added, in order to consider those conceptions of spirituality that are open to a divine realm, to a Higher Being, or to God. We label these motivations as “religious” motivations, given that they refer, for those who believe in the Divinity, to a plausible relationship with God, with whom the human being could have a personal relationship. One could say that the fourth column is a particular case of the transitive motives when “the other” is “the Other,” and that this “Subject” is so special that it deserves a proper column. This is understood in many monotheist religions, and more specifically in the Judeo-Christian tradition described in the Bible. Consider that these four columns of the grid refer to four elemental kinds of human relationships (intrinsic, extrinsic, transitive, and religious), regarding relationships with oneself, with others, and with the Other.

Therefore, the *spiritual extrinsic motivation* can be defined as *the desire to receive spiritual good from the outside*. Contemplation, understood as the openness to receive spiritual good, is a concept that does not require the acceptance of a divinity, but refers to the openness to transcendence, to an external spiritual good or grace, something holy, a spiritual gift or support, such as human life itself, wisdom, joy, or peace of spirit. This would be the motivation of those who are atheists, but who still self-

identify as spiritual, or those who reject “religion,” but who are deeply “spiritual” in some of their motives of conduct. In the Christian tradition, every gift received (from God) would be included here as a spiritual or supernatural motive of human conduct (Isaiah 11: 2-3), such as heaven or the fruits of charity (Gal 5: 22-23).

The *spiritual intrinsic motivation* may be described as *the desire to acquire spiritual good while doing human actions*. It refers to an internal spiritual improvement that results from the realization of such action, or what may be considered as spiritual flourishing, the increase of the spirituality or blessedness of the person. Once again, strictly speaking, this motivation does not demand the recognition of the existence of a Divinity, but is open to such a presence. For a Christian believer, such a human motivation would be godliness or sanctity, understood as becoming saint as God is saint (Rom 8: 28-30). It could also mean being spiritually good or perfect: “be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5: 48). But, for a non-religious person, this would be labeled as *holiness* or spiritual goodness.

The *spiritual transitive motivation* may be defined as *the desire to give spiritual good to others*. This motivation includes all the reasons that make a person act to provide spiritual good to other people. Somehow, this is the noblest meaning of benevolence, to share the spiritual good with others, to share holiness. In the Christian tradition, this kind of motivation has to do with one of the meanings of *charity*, or *agape*, which upholds and purifies human benevolence, and “which is ultimately unselfish not because it focuses on the good of the recipient, but because it comes from God through the giver and is directed toward all: giver, receiver...” (Clough 2006, p. 25).

As we said before, Table 3 adds not only a new fourth row to the grid, regarding the “object” of the holy or spiritual, in addition to the useful, pleasant, and moral good, but also a new column for a new “subject” in order to consider the openness to a divine realm. This column refers to the human relation with a Transcendent Being, which we have labeled explicitly as religious motivation, which demands a religious faith. Although atheism does not fit within this kind of motivation, even atheists would agree that this is a motive for many.

Starting from the bottom of this new column of the grid, it is possible to distinguish four kinds of religious motives of conduct. The first one may be labeled as *useful or practical religious motivation*, or *the desire to give useful good to the Other*. This eagerness to be useful to God or to Divinity, to cooperate with Him, may be labeled also as service to God, *submission*, or obedience to His will. This is an attitude proper to someone who believes in God’s power and authority. Moreover, we can also describe a *pleasant religious motivation* as *the desire to give pleasant good to the Other*. It is the inclination to be affectionate

with Him, with the One who is not only perceived as the creator, the almighty God, but also the One who (in the Christian tradition) wants to be called Father. The movement of the human heart before God as Father is one of piety, appreciation, reparation, *gratitude*, and thanksgiving. In addition, it is also possible to talk about a *moral religious motivation*, a *desire to give the appropriate moral good to God*, to give Him what He deserves in justice, which in fact is reverence, veneration, adoration, or *worship*, as the highest good and source of every good.

Finally, *spiritual religious motivation* may be considered as the highest possible human motivation for those who have faith in one God, the one consisting of a *desire to give the spiritual good to the One* who is Himself the Spirit. Human beings are unique in this possibility of voluntarily giving glory to the One who is the Glory itself, the One who, for those who believe in God, deserves praise, tribute, and honor. To do everything for the glory of God, to glorify Him, can be described then as the noblest human motivation of a religious person, giving back spiritual love to the one considered as Love itself.

Referring to the workplace, we can go back to the previous example of the manager implementing a new safety program for his employees in a factory; the motives of his action can be related not only to natural motives (see Table 2) but also to higher spiritual motivations. He may do his job thinking about a spiritual reward because of his good conduct as peace or joy (spiritual extrinsic motivation); looking for holiness while doing appropriate work (spiritual intrinsic motivation); helping to sanctify others through his example in the workplace (spiritual transitive motivation); trying to do the will of God (if he has faith in God) throughout his professional vocation (useful or practical religious motivation); giving thanks to God for and through his job (pleasant religious motivation); considering the job as an opportunity to offer back something good to God (moral religious motivation); and fulfilling the glory of God as the highest intention of his daily tasks (spiritual religious motivation).

Obviously, we are not saying that these religious motivations are necessarily present in every human being. However, for those who have faith in the existence of God, these motivations are plausible, as well as the spiritual non-religious motivations, and if the purpose is to understand employee motivations, then they should be recognized as reasonable motives of human conduct, justifying their inclusion in this grid.

## Discussion and Conclusions

A brief synthesis of the most popular classifications describing employee motives and needs has been presented

in this article (Table 1), underlining their limited implicit self-interested, amoral, and non-spiritual assumptions. In an attempt to overcome these incomplete models of motivations (Folger and Salvador 2008), an expanded taxonomy, based on the Aristotelian distinction of human goods, including morality as well as transitive motives or motives “of giving” (Table 2), has been offered. In a second step, this taxonomy was expanded to a wider classification open to spirituality and religion (Table 3).

It is our contention that this effort is a worthwhile step toward articulating a more complete and accurate description of motivation in general and in the workplace in particular, bringing out the full dimensions of being human. We are not assuming that people are never motivated by self-interest or by amoral or non-spiritual drivers. Of course, sometimes they are. However, it is also true that many times people have someone else’s interest among their priorities, as well as moral and spiritual desires. Therefore, the motivation model based on the classical theories, “the old friends,” is incomplete and misleading.

We began the article by highlighting that the real challenge for executives is to pursue the company goals effectively, efficiently, and ethically, trying to enrich the employees as much as all the stakeholders. To achieve these important objectives, understanding motivation is essential. Accordingly, with increasing studies advocating the importance of moral and spiritual motives as guides for employees’ behavior, the integration of these domains in the motivation taxonomy is crucial.

While respecting and synthesizing previous classical taxonomies on motives and needs, the framework that we propose provides an understanding of their diversity and interrelationship, facilitating dialog between different approaches on motivation in a more holistic way.

The expanded grid proposed can serve also as a pedagogical instrument, fostering reflection in the classroom. Lecturers in business schools and universities may offer a more critical explanation of early descriptions of employee motivation and their limitations. At this point, one should say that culture matters. Evidently, you could expect to find a higher number of spiritual motives of conduct in higher spiritual cultures as well as more material motivations in organizations belonging to more materialistic cultures. It is also clear that the cultural origin of the motivation taxonomies previously discussed may explain its limitations. The self-interested, amoral, and non-spiritual narrow assumptions described before are precisely the features of American motivation theories (Hofstede 1980) and elements of most Western workplaces.

The expanded grid should also help to introduce the concept of personal and organizational human flourishing through the discussion of motivations in the workplace. It seems plausible to think that moral and spiritual drivers in

the workplace, including the motivations of giving, will improve human flourishing in the organization, foster better relationships, and lead to a more ethical and spiritual culture (Cavanagh and Bandsuch 2002; Weaver and Agle 2002).

After discussing this model in the classroom with international MBA students, the grid was found to be an extremely practical tool for diagnosing incentive systems in real organizations, for developing better compensation plans, and for discussing the moral responsibility of managers when building motivation policies. The new framework can serve as a practical self-evaluation tool regarding personal motivations in the workplace. Each person can easily identify his or her motivations at work by using the model for personal reflection. Human flourishing requires a frequent examination of individual motives of conduct in order to develop the noblest potentialities of each. The workplace is indeed the “place” where motivations (material, psychological, moral, and spiritual), through actions, have the ability to transform “work” into a noble human activity, even the most dreary task. This shift starts with the acknowledgment that employees do not bring only their bodies and minds to work but also their hearts, souls, creativity, talents, and unique spirits (Karakas 2010).

In addition, the practical and managerial implications of this approach, besides the pedagogical, are many. It offers a tool for future managers to understand the different levels of employee motivation in the workplace, which could help to improve diverse practices aside from those provided by the mainstream of management theory (Ghoshal 2005).

Given that it brings conceptual instruments that facilitate a better understanding of the roles of morality and spirituality in the workplace, it may help the implementation of more holistic leadership models (Benefiel 2005; Fry and Nisiewicz 2013). Some of the promoted actions of these models had positive effects in their organizations, by introducing such motivating elements as silence rooms, one-on-one conversation opportunities, charitable activities in hospitals or nursing homes, and so on. The moral and spiritual motivations capture people’s need and desire to go beyond mere self-interest. In this context, altruistic benevolence is promoted because of its implications for the spiritual well-being and personal flourishing of the employees, and by encouraging leaders to respect everyone’s spirituality, helping them to develop it, but never imposing it (Fry and Nisiewicz, 2013).

Providing a deeper sense, meaning, and purpose enables workers to perform better and to be more productive and creative at work (Karakas, 2010), and fostering workplace spirituality helps them to realize more deeply the connections they have to themselves, others, their environment, and the larger world while they are working in profitable firms (Fagley and Adler 2012).

It seems evident that the area of moral and spiritual motivation deserves further theoretical attention because there are good reasons to think that these motivations do influence behavior in organizations (Weaver and Agle 2002). Although we do think that our expanded taxonomy is a significant contribution to motivation theory in the workplace, more theoretical work should be done through the review of the process and internal dynamics of these motivations. The thrust of this effort represents an opportunity for further reflection on the role of spirituality in the workplace, as well as the reasonable dialog between faith and reason.

One could say that both dimensions, ethical and spiritual, could have been presented separately, given that they are important enough by themselves, but with this work we want to lay the foundations for such extended collaborative research and introduce the new taxonomy of motivations as a guide for more study. Furthermore, much empirical and interdisciplinary research remains to be done in order to better understand the relationship between these ethical and spiritual motivations and their impact on the performance of employees in the workplace.

First, we suggest developing a new scale to measure in an integrative and broader manner the different dimensions of motivation in the workplace. Given the short definitions provided for each motive of conduct in this work, the development of the scale would not be a complex task. Therefore, in order to empirically validate the classifications we propose, the scale should be developed and tested. Then, some concerns could be satisfied, specifically the applicability of this model to any cultural and religious environment. For instance, discussing this model with MBA students in Kenya, they suggested including superstition into the model because it is a driver of the conduct of many people in their culture. Although such superstitions would be included as spiritual extrinsic motives, it could be important to make them more explicit in such specific cases. Another interesting venue of research is the applicability of the taxonomy to different sectors because, for example, the motivation of giving in the care services sector seems to be radically different and stronger than in the manufacturing industry.

There are many stimulating questions that remain to be answered when not only money but also aspects such as care, respect, flourishing, or even holiness are motives of conduct in the workplace, which may affect employees’ behavior and performance. In order to better contribute to the human flourishing of employees and managers, companies should recognize and respect these moral and spiritual values and drivers in the workplace. We hope this new taxonomy may help researchers and practitioners face this enormous and necessary challenge.

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