Handling Spiritual Resources at Work: An Autoethnographic Inquiry

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Abstract

This study draws upon some particular dimensions of spirituality in the workplace such as insight, intuition, wisdom, respect, love, humility, courage, ethics, optimism, the other, and sense of purpose. Through an autoethnographic inquiry it describes my personal spiritual journey at work, that is, my own experiences, reflections, understanding, viewpoints, and memories regarding those constructs as a framework. In hindsight, I explore a certain period of my professional life when I was very young and working for a multinational company, which was under permanent change in order to adapt and survive in the hypercompetitive and turbulent Brazilian market. By drawing on a researcher that is researched approach, I can see the transcendental meaning (nexus) of those episodes in my career. Hence, I further developed resilience, patience, leadership, spirituality, self-reflection and self-introspection capabilities. I could better understand the other perspective, particularly the human sins, vices, emotions, and virtues. I also argue that religious faith and spirituality knowledge dovetails perfectly well in the workplace. Further, this study provides consistent evidence of suitable usage of these resources.

Keywords

Insight, Intuition, Wisdom, Respect, Love, Humility, Courage, Ethics, Optimism, Other, Sense of Purpose

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Introduction

Research suggests that a precarious emotional health affects the vitality of relations and people performance (Frost, 2003). Nonetheless, people have to deal with a range of emotions everyday – oftentimes they are highly negative - in the workplace. Nowadays, workers are increasingly forced to deliver good results, work hard, display goodwill and sense of cooperation in complex tasks, show great capability of learning new things, propose new ideas, concepts and solutions, be creative, regulate their emotions, exhibit strong resilience skills, among other things, in order to keep the job. The modern corporate life also requires that workers show a permanent smile in their faces and good humor as well as feeling joy in practically all situations. Admittedly, such landscape demands strong effort on the part of individuals to be appropriately managed.

As a result, the search for spirituality may help individuals to deal with this era of ongoing disruptions and uncertainties. In fact, it is suggested that the spiritual search goes beyond the struggle to survive. Rather, it encompasses the effort toward living a fuller, more abundant, and more meaningful human life (King, 2008, pp. 178-179). Similarly, King and Nicol (1999) argued that the journey toward spirituality involves integrating one's inner and outer world, as well as finding meaning and purpose in life. To Emmons (1999), "A spiritual search involves the attempt to identify what is sacred and worthy of being committed to. The sacred refers to God, or related names for God, such as divine power, Supreme Being, Ultimate Reality, or Ultimate Truth" (p. 94). In essence, spirituality is seen as the very core of the human beings and thus it usually affects the way people perceive the world around them, their feelings about the world, and the choices individuals make based on their perceptions and sensations

(Ronel, 2008, p. 105). Importantly, spirituality represents a motivating force or resource for many people that live in this world (Emmons, 1999, p. 91).

It is worth pointing out that spirituality is not a new idea in the workplace or elsewhere in human experience (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Nur, 2003). At work, however, it appears that spirituality may transform negative workplace relationships into more positive situations (James, Miles, & Mullins, 2011). With this notion in mind, workplace spirituality is associated with a range of elements such as broadmindedness, acceptance, understanding, openness to change, and thinking outside the box (Marques, 2007). At the individual level, therefore, "one would indeed assume that an employee with an elevated spiritual approach toward life would be more attuned into doing the right things for the right reasons" (Marques, Dhiman, & King, 2007, p. 25). In other words, "Spirituality provides an extra justification for reasoning and acting based on the highest levels of ethical theorizing, and for serving the broader purpose of becoming a better person and making organizations and the world a better place" (Collins, 2010a, p. 97).

Yet this sort of statement makes sense, it requires otherwise more substantive empirical evidence, particularly focusing on personal spiritual experiences. Researchers from different religious and non-religious streams have examined a myriad of constructs and dimensions related to spirituality and their supposed manifestations and implications on corporate life (Vasconcelos, 2010a). This study draws upon some particular dimensions of spirituality in the workplace such as insight, intuition, wisdom, respect, love, humility, courage, ethics, optimism, the other, and sense of purpose (Heaton, Schmidt-Wilk, & Travis, 2004; McKnight, 2005). Through an autoethnographic inquiry it describes my personal spiritual journey at work, that is, my own experiences, reflections, understanding, viewpoints, and memories regarding those constructs as a framework. In hindsight, I explore a certain period of my professional life when I was very young and working for a multinational company, which was under permanent change in order to adapt and survive in the hypercompetitive and turbulent Brazilian market.

Autoethnography has been employed in many fields such as anthropology, sociology, education, and management. To the best of my knowledge, Cullen (2011) conducted a rare investigation related to workplace spirituality (i.e., spiritualization initiative in an organizational culture). Thus, this study contributes to the workplace spirituality theory by depicting the reflections of a former marketing professional (i.e., the own researcher) and the challenge of displaying in a coherent manner spiritual tenets/applied spirituality in some sensitive situations that generally shape the corporate life. Furthermore, it this work elicits important insights and spiritual lessons particularly useful to workplace spirituality and/or management, spirituality, and religions researchers as well as for management development. After this introduction, I briefly review the extant literature, particularly focusing on definitions and meaning of spirituality, workplace spirituality, and the benefits derived from it. Second, I examine the nuances and particularities of autoethnographic approach. Third, I depict the results of this inquiry. Fourth, I discuss the results, the limits of the study and present a conceptual synthesis. Finally, I suggest some paths for future studies and offer my concluding remarks. This study intends to point out the relevance of the spirituality topic and how such knowledge may help us to deal with the ups and downs of work life.

Theoretical Background

Although the workplace spirituality theory has been around for more than two decades, a consensual view has not been reached among scholars about what it means (Bouckaert & Zsolnai, 2012). As a consequence, there are distinguished and idiosyncratic opinions about what it encompasses. In this regard, some researchers have proposed that spirituality at work is essentially constituted of the inner life, meaningful work, and community (Ashmos &

Duchon, 2000; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Harrington, Preziosi, & Gooden, 2001; Kale, 2004). At a most fundamental level, it is also associated with "*the search for meaning in the ordinary business of life*" (King, Biberman, Robbins, & Nicol, 2000, p. 281, italics in the original). Such a perception leads to many possibilities of theoretical conceptualization. Hence, it may involve our basic philosophy towards life, values, conduct, and practice. Seen in this way, it is expressed by truth, love, service, wisdom, joy, peace, wholeness, self-awareness, and unit with others (Howard, 2002). Moreover, it appears to energize and provide the enthusiasm to the individual to pursue work life goals with others (Harrington et al., 2001). In a similar manner, by drawing on our inner depths, one can yield "new power, energy, meaning, and knowing that can enhance life in the workplace" (Williams, 2003, p. 1). Pava (2007), in turn, argues that spirituality "is a heightened state of awareness and aliveness. And, it is a deeper kind of consciousness that is both self-aware and nearly perfectly attuned to the environment at one and the same time" (p. 288).

In a more complex view, spirituality is theorized in terms of embracing different stances, namely, pure spirituality, applied spirituality, and spiritual development (Heaton et al., 2004). But the notion of spirit at work also embraces physical, affective, cognitive, interpersonal, spiritual, and mystical dimensions. Keep it in mind, the physical sensation yields a positive state of arousal or energy; positive affect leads to a profound feeling of well-being and joy; cognitive dimension is conducive to a sense of being authentic, an awareness of alignment between one's values and beliefs and one's work, as well as engagement in meaningful work that has a higher purpose; an interpersonal dimension enables a sense of connection to others and a common purpose; the spiritual aspect derives from a sense of connection to something larger than self, such as a higher power, the Universe, nature or humanity; and the mystical dimension embraces a sense of perfection, transcendence and experiences that were awe-inspiring, mysterious, or seen as sacred (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004, p. 37).

Relatedly, spirituality at work is linked to employee perceptions and feelings of wholeness, of connection to others, of transcendence and of happiness (Hudson, 2014). Furthermore, spirituality has been defined as a process that activates the universal strengths, which rests inside all of us ready to be put into action. In the context of work, it implies employing all virtues and intellectual skills that we have ever developed in ourselves in order to build richer and more fulfilling experiences for us and for the people who live around us or rely on our efforts (Vasconcelos, 2008).

But it is also associated with encouraging the spiritual development of organizational members, servant leadership, socially responsible business practices, team spirit, humane and holistic workplace initiatives (Kaufman, 2008). To Nandram (2010) workplace spirituality combines one's activities (personal and professional) in such a way that they are aligned with the authentic self. Taken together, it consists of four main processes: *psychic process* – it implies in exploring the authentic self through a variety of tools such as meditation, yoga, prayer, learning, reflection, and contemplation, etc.; *mental process* – it involves a cognitive evaluation of the facilities and sources needed to fulfill the needs of the authentic self; *vital process* – it refers to bringing balance and a continuous connection between the authentic self and the needs of the environment toward getting a meaningful interpersonal relationship in one's central life domains such as the workplace; *strategy or physical process* – it consists of behaviors and values to implement and align thought, and action to the authentic self. Simply put, "A spiritual worker is a person who simply maintains good human values, such as respect, tolerance, goodwill, support, and an effort to establish more meaning in his or her workplace" (Marques, 2010, p. 13). In other words, it is believed that individuals engaged on a spiritual path tend to incorporate more compassion and benevolence features (Steingard, 2005).

On the other hand, the workplace is a suitable place to manifest our own spirituality regarding the time we usually spend there. In light of it, researchers include the work environments in this equation. More specifically, "Work units that can be characterized by a high degree of workplace spirituality are ones where workers are aligned with the climate. When this happens, we contend the work unit will experience greater performance outcomes" (Duchon & Plowman, 2005, p. 816). In a related vein, workplace spirituality is characterized as the held organizational values usually embedded in the culture that "promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy" (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003, p. 13).Admittedly, it demands a range of actions such as doing the right thing (right livelihood) at the micro-level (interactive) as well as the macro-level (ecology/sustainability); expanding awareness by embracing diversity and by working more consciously, effectively, honestly, and genuine; and seeking gratification in what one does (Allevato & Marques, 2011).

Building on this logic, spirit at work refers to care, compassion, integrity, and held values at the workplace. Fundamentally, it involves employees who feel passion and are energized by their work, find meaning and purpose, pursue excellence in their work, and feel that they can express their complete selves at work. It embraces individuals and organizations that see work as an opportunity to contribute to society in a meaningful way (Srirangarajan & Bhaskar, 2011, p. 93). Furthermore, it is entwined with harmony with self, social, natural environment, and transcendence as well (Pandey, Gupta, & Arora, 2008). Researchers posit that workplace spirituality is manifested through a set of values such as respect, humanism, integrity, and ethical organizational climate (e.g., Lee, Lovelace, & Manz, 2014). In addition, it helps to enlarge one's business horizons, trigger creativity and relieve stress (Cavanagh, 2003). Interestingly, scholars suggest that spirituality can enable people's lucidity, particularly when they seek to analyze their real behavior and practices (Lozano & Ribera, 2004). Overall, research indicates that some themes are closely linked to workplace spirituality such as ethics, truth, belief in God or in a higher power, respect, understanding, openness, honesty, being self-motivated, encouraging creativity, giving to others, trust, kindness (bonding, conviviality, compassion), team orientation, few organizational barriers, a sense of peace and harmony, aesthetically pleasing workplace, interconnectedness, encouraging diversity, and acceptance (Marques et al., 2005). Further, Vasconcelos (2013) found some complementary themes, namely fun, love, well-being, a sense of religiosity, serenity, social responsibility, tolerance, sincerity, meaning of work, higher values, human valuing, coherent attitudes, common interests and objectives, politeness, willing to offer guidance and be an example, stimulating environment, listening to and be listened, praying habit, patience, positive energies and thoughts, concerns with other's well-being, and the spirit of solidarity.

Organizations that foster people's spirit in the workplace clarify about what is expected from them and how they can contribute to the organization; nevertheless, organizations allow the individuals to contribute in their own way to the collective effort (Pfeffer, 2003). As a consequence, "Spirituality organizations also benefit because they have employees that are more satisfied and happy with their work, which can potentially enhance organizational performance" (Parboteeah & Cullen, 2003, p. 138). Additionally, it seems that workplace spirituality leads to well-being of individuals, organizations, society, and the entire ecosystem (Thaker, 2009). Therefore, as noted above, spirituality encompasses sizable benefits. In light of it, I offer the following research question: can spiritual resources help the individuals to cope with the difficulties and problems of organizational life? As a researcher, I think that spirituality is a topic that deserves more attention given its relevance regardless of one's religious belief or not. As a result, my intention here is to point out some of its positive aspects and share my own experience in dealing with it in a very sensitive moment of my career.

Research Design

One of the most exciting features of the postmodern era is the possibility to create critical theories that enable access to a range of research strategies. Indeed, "The essence of postmodernism is that many ways of knowing and inquiring are legitimate and that no one way should be privileged" (Wall, 2008, p. 147). In this sense, the autoethnographic approach allows the researchers to express their voices, feelings, perceptions, and self-introspections or self-ethnographies. In other words, the personal experience constitutes a rich research data whereby the researcher will hunker down toward finding meaning and consistency. According to Patton (2002), what really distinguishes autoethnography from ethnography is the possibility to enable self-awareness of "one's own experience and introspections as a primary data source" (p. 86).

By building self-narratives and by analyzing the self, the research tries to draw the essence of the experience and thus engender knowledge. Scholars have defined autoethnography as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Therefore, in autoethnography inquiries the profound engagement with the self is seen as a vital procedure (Haynes, 2011). In other words, the research has indeed to be willing to go deeper inside in order to find answers and understanding. Otherwise, their self-narratives may serve as mere justifications or apologies to specific acts or omissions. Also noteworthy is the fact that it is:

> Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear a variety of forms – short stories, poetry, fiction, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured… (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739)

Interestingly, autoethnography inquiry allows for layers of reflexivity. As such, an individual may draw upon memories and incidents through which his/her identity emerges - consciously or unconsciously - and interpret them. In doing so, the understanding may shift and develop toward another direction during the act of interpretation (Haynes, 2011). Put another way, the process of self-reflexivity may change our understanding or construal of previous experiences and facts. By searching for episodes related to, for example, corporate life, we may see a different picture or come to another conclusion. In light of such possibilities, I explored some critical moments of my professional career through the lens of autoethnography method because it seems to be the more suitable means to better understand ourselves (i.e., our motivations, capabilities, strengths, but also our weaknesses and shadows). In a nutshell, authethnography inquiry allows us to go deep in our spirits. However, Doloriert and Sambrook (2012, p. 89) remind that there is some criticism toward narrative reconstructed from memory suggesting that it is not valid or rigorous, whereas other researchers counter-argue by offering the argument that any form of interpretative research should be open to reconstruction. If the later thought prevails, then autoethnographers should also be able to contribute by reflecting back on critical moments within their career in other organizations. In essence, personal narratives may provide useful knowledge for others to read and learn from. As a result, personal experience methods (i.e., autoethnography) can be applied to a variety of topics in order to expand knowledge (Hamdan, 2012).

At last, it is advocated that in the researcher-*is*-researched autoethnography approach, the investigation focuses on an introspective narrative, given that the researcher is the only participant within the study. Seen in this perspective, the researcher is at the center of the research. On the basis of it, s/he is the intellectual idea and his/her voice speaks as the cultural

framework and his/her lived-experience is co-constructed through multiple reflections (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2009, p. 30). Therefore, I adopted here the perspective above described by going deeper in my recollections related to a multinational organization and how I faced some sensitive situations and challenges when I worked there. As a researcher that is researched, I explored some episodes of my career and analyzed them as real opportunities to my personal spiritual development.

The Context of Investigation

I worked 8 years and a half (from 1984 to 1992) for a branch of a multinational company which manufactured forms in the major state of Brazil. Throughout this period, I was designated to work at one of its business units (BU) and being responsible for several marketing key functions - at the support and managerial level - related to product management and development, marketing intelligence, sales and customer support, internal marketing programs, advertising, quality, master marketing and strategic plan, among others. That BU operated in the retail market of PCs, software, electric equipment, office supplies, furniture services, etc. Our portfolio of products was made of more than 450 items. At the time, the company headcount was composed of nearly 1,100 employees and the BU where I worked had 150 employees in its best phase. I have to remark that it was a glorious moment for us at least until the middle 1980s when the Brazilian economy started to show severe signals of stagflation. We were proud to take part of a team that was helping to implant the digital era in the country. In this sense, we were considered as pioneers – the larger retail company of the country – and we were truly respected for that achievement.

However, the company faced many difficulties, crises, and constant restructuring processes. Some of them occurred, as noted above, because of the country economic downturn (i.e., high inflation rate, closed economy, excessive government interference in the economy, high competition, etc.), but others were originated from the own company weaknesses, namely internal difficulties, inability to adapt to ongoing fast-paced change scenario, and lack of autonomy and flexibility of the Brazilian operation. Actually, we were heavily pressed by the head office in Canada to present higher profitability, which was absolutely incompatible with the features of our volatile and instable market. My fellows and I used to describe, metaphorically speaking, the company as a low pachyderm. After all, we could not act or react appropriately taking into account the fierce competition and the way our competitors run their businesses (e.g., they usually evaded to pay the appropriate tax). In addition, we had no autonomy to manage the operation as it should be, regardless of a lot of organizational politics that harmed the company as a whole. In fact, research indicates that internal politics is seen as one the major causes that avoids that the job gets done appropriately. In general, the presence of large amounts of "politicking" usually takes people to feel less energized and willing "to get anything done at all" (Deal, 2007, p. 88).

The CEOs, in turn, were not prepared to run such a complex operation like ours and it appears that, to some degree, they nurtured politics as well. Regarding this issue, Kolodinsky, Bowen, and Ferris (2003) argued that leaders that are best equipped in both servant-oriented and politic capabilities may enable spiritually-rich workplaces and simultaneously diminish the perceptions of organizational politics. Notwithstanding, they tried very often to implant new ideas and concepts out of the reality and those initiatives only made things harder for us. My BU directors were also affected by this climate of constant insecurity, excessive organizational politics, and lack of empowerment. Finally, in the first semester of 1992, the board made a decision to get rid of all business divisions that were not fitted in the core business. As a result, a management buyout operation was carried out and some of my fellows led by the BU director acquired our BU. By the early 2000s, a merger between this company and an American one

took place and as usually happens in these processes its traditional and centenary corporate brand just disappeared.

My Reflections

As previously highlighted, I intend to depict here some episodes related to the early stages of my professional career, particularly linked to a certain multinational corporation where I had to handle some intense emotional and spiritually-based experiences. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the cultural framework explored here is essentially the organizational one and, as such, it works like a backdrop where my "lived-experienced" is carefully reexamined through intense reflection exercises. More specifically, this endeavor unfolds around the following constructs: insight, intuition, wisdom, respect, love, humility, courage, ethics, optimism, the other, and sense of purpose.

Results (Handling Spiritual Resources)

In terms of spiritual resources, scholars suggest that a range of spiritual practices have been used such as meditations, prayers, dancing, chanting, learning, rituals, and so on. Some companies have set aside time for prayer at the beginning of meetings (Biberman & Tischler, 2008) certainly in search for more inspiration and wise decisions. Illustrative of this initiative is the case of *Reell Precision Manufacturing* whose leaders needed to decide what to do about 1974 layoffs. Through prayer and discussion, the co-founders "sought God's will" and reached a unanimous agreement. What became this business case so interesting was that "Instead of laying anyone off, the co-founders agreed to ask all employees to take a 10% cut in salary or hours worked, while they themselves took a much larger cut" (Benefiel, 2005, p. 738). Meanwhile, other organizations provide meditation training and meditation rooms, create opportunities for employees to meet with others of similar spiritual or religious faith (Biberman & Tischler, 2008). I completely agree that "Discernment demands calm, reflection and prayer" (Cavanagh & Hazen, 2008, p. 36). Most importantly, prayer is a spiritual resource that can be integrated into our lives as a permanent coping mechanism, including our work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Delbecq, 2000; Pargament & Mahoney, 2005; Vasconcelos, 2009, 2010b). Similarly, McGee and Delbecq (2003) stated that:

> …many of the executives mentioned the importance of prayer and contemplative practice. They believe that prayer positively affects their business enterprises by keeping their mental and emotional facilities optimal and their decision-making acumen sharp. (p. 100)

I used to employ a mix of tools. After lunch time I used to take a quick walk, do breathing exercises, and prayed to God asking strengths and patience in order to tackle the rest of the day. Furthermore, I used to read on a daily basis a little book entitled *Minutos de Sabedoria* (Minutes of Wisdom) by C. Torres Pastorino replenished of short wisdom messages and the content was usually suited for the moment that I was living. At home, I read a bunch of books which addressed spirituality development themes, particularly from the Spiritism Doctrine literature and magazines[1]. Further, I also used to pray several times a day asking God for

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[1]Spiritism or Spiritist Doctrine is a relatively new religion given that that it has recently celebrated 155 years of its existence (Vasconcelos, 2012). Its tenets and principles have been widespread worldwide, especially in Latin and North America as well as in Europe. This doctrine is strongly associated with the faith in the hereafter; the phenomenon of the spirits' messages and teachings through mediums; the Jesus Christ's teachings (the Gospel) and his behavior as a paradigm of perfection to be followed by all human beings; and the practice of charity.

strength, patience, and wisdom as so to find balance for that moment. Overall, I felt an inner peace and renewed strength.

An Episode of Insight

We were facing considerable difficulties to surpass the price policies put into practice by our competitors. To a large extent, our business was underscored by an ongoing and stressful price war. In effect, we were faring badly in virtually all product categories in terms of price performance. Such an outcome was derived from the fact that we did not get to implement a well-organized or synergetic effort. Moreover, our overhead and profit margin target were generally higher than our competitors. As a result, our performance remained below the goal. In light of this scenario, I had the insight to ask the support of a telemarketing manager in order to set up a new program aiming at systematically collecting the prices of products charged by our competitors.

Hence, I developed a marketing intelligence reporting system based on scores of each product and competitor that gave us the precise measure of how competitive we were. It is worth pointing out that this marketing program helped us to adjust, in general, our offerings in certain product categories on an ongoing fashion. In doing so, I got to be congruent with my beliefs by putting into practice an important teaching of a spiritual message by the spirit Emmanuel whose title is Management: "*In essence, each person is a servant because of his or her endeavor in the work of the Supreme Father, and at the same time a manager because he or she is the holder of enormous potential in the sphere in which he or she toils*" (Xavier, 2012, p. 163, italics added). I must emphasize that this message is grounded, in turn, on a Jesus Christ's teaching: *"Given an account of your management"* (Luke, 16:2). Admittedly, I felt enormous personal satisfaction by carrying out this task.

An Episode of Intuition

I believe that anyone who seeks to find meaning at work is accomplishing a spiritual mission. Thus, I always give considerable importance to the task of keeping me updated. That time, I used to invest a good portion of my leisure time to read the most relevant marketing and management magazines and books, not to mention courses I attended regularly before such effort become a mantra. One day I was reading the book *Winning Decisions* by Profs. J. Edward Russo and Paul J. H. Shoemaker upon the process of business decisions and particularly the Chapter 6, which outlined the decision-weighting model method, took my attention. Indeed, I had the intuition at that moment – I believe that God always provides a gut-feeling for those who strive to do better and excel - that I could develop something important in my work in relation to that knowledge and I did so.

Indeed, research indicates that intuition is characterized as a feeling (Herriot, Schmidt-Wilk, & Heaton, 2009). Employing it in an intelligent manner helps hone "executive judgment and decision-making" (Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004, p. 87). Furthermore, Sadler-Smith and Shefy (2004) suggested that intuition and rationality are complementary capabilities and executives need to learn how to use each in order to fit the demands of a particular decision-making situation. Nonetheless, it is argued that expertise and intuition should not be seen as synonymous, yet intuition is generally derived from expertise (Salas, Rosen, & DiazGranados, 2010). All intuition work out at a mental sphere or, in other words, it is a function of the mind.

Interested readers may find useful information about its tenets and teachings by reading, for example, *The Book's Spirit*, *The Mediums' Book, The Gospel According to Spiritism, Heavens and Hell, and Genesis* by Allan Kardec, which is considered the its codifier.

In this regard, intuition on the mental level is associated with those aspects of intuition strongly related to thinking and thus it is often expressed through tasks related to problem solving, mathematics, and scientific inquiry, yet other possibilities are envisioned. To a large extent, successful executives usually use intuitive skills on a mental level (Vaughan, 1989). In a related vein, intuition is considered as a process strongly ingrained on one's developed reasoning, experience, and learning, i.e., garnered facts, patterns, concepts, procedures, and abstractions stored in his/her mind (Matzler, Bailom, & Mooradian, 2007; Hodgkinson, Sadler-Smith, Sinclair, & Ashkanasy, 2009) "that exerts a strong and often compelling influence on decision making and other aspects of individual managerial cognition and behavior" (Sadler-Smith, 2008, p. 500). Finally, it is also proposed that prayer, as a transcendent coping mechanism, may help executives to refine their intuition flux (Vasconcelos, 2009).

Thus, I talked with my assistant and from that moment on I determined the adoption of specific weights for each variable that we would judge as relevant in the selection of our suppliers (again, I remember that we were a PC and office suppliers retail division). Therefore, at the end of the selection process, we would be able to make a deal with the supplier of a certain product line that got the highest score, that is, the one that provides us with the best offer. Thus, the system began to be adopted in all business negotiations related to products and services and whether a supplier felt harmed, we presented the analysis report in a very transparent way in order to clarify the doubts. I also felt enormous personal satisfaction by carrying out this task. Importantly, keep in mind that all narratives and vignettes of this study are derived from a pure reflexive work, as suggested by Haynes (2011).

An Episode of Wisdom

The development of one's wisdom is a task for all life. One's step, thought and decision should be encouraged by the wisdom repertoire. As wisely noted by Beyer and Niño (1998), "Wise persons evaluate objectives according to their ideals and in terms of the cumulative learning derived from the trials and errors of life. Wisdom presumes self-direction" (p. 68). Taken as a whole, wisdom is a very sensitive issue for us human beings. We need to improve our wisdom skills in order make the right things and accordingly reduce our mistakes. It is worth reminding that Aristotle believed in a close relationship between wisdom and moral virtue. In his view, wisdom was a part of virtue and the one's effort of being wise would make him happy (Small, 2011). I understand that such association is highly pertinent. It is less likely that an individual may behave wisely (i.e., build and use a practical wisdom toolkit) without a moral virtue frame or compass, particularly in corporate life. Hence, theory suggests that:

> Practical wisdom involves attending to the concrete particularities of each case, recognizing instances in which no exact technique or policy applies. In this sense, the person of practical wisdom, having developed a storehouse of knowledge that comes about through experience, is attuned to the relevant concrete particularities in each situation. (Beabout, 2012, p. 420)

I remember that organizational climate was extremely negative in the last times. In some moments, I felt that it was even stifling. Taken together, the pressure to deliver better results, the prospect of closing the doors, and the internal struggles contributed to such a perception, among other things. When things reached such a state, I used to go to the bathroom for a few minutes and, in isolation, I prayed for strength and spiritual protection to surpass that moment. As a result, I felt an inner well-being. To some degree, it revitalized me to face the rest of the day. As a Christian, those episodes remind me one of Jesus Christ's teachings: *"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple"* (Luke, 14:27)

An Episode of Respect toward My Fellows

My BU did not have a sales force fully dedicated to sell our products, that is, which was really committed to our goals. The overall company sales force had to sell products and services of all BUs. Such an arrangement was unsuitable for us because it made us to be weakened in relation to our competitors. But it had been the solution adopted by the company directors in order to not increase the sales expenses since the beginning of BU. On one occasion, we were asked to give some explanations in a sales meeting. We had to talk about our business, margin, market potential, etc. Out of respect for our internal customers, we (i.e., my divisional director and me) attended the meeting. Respect is one of the most salient issues in the organizational environments and it is likely that the organizational leaderships that do not take it into account only get low levels of employees' commitment and engagement. In effect, it is considered as a vital dimension for employee self-esteem. Respect is defined as "the treatment of people as unique and important. […]. She is not just being tolerated (as in a "necessary cost"), but she is made to feel welcome and genuinely included […]. *Feeling welcome is a tremendous morale booster for every person*" (Sirota, Mischkind, & Meltzer, 2005, p. 120, italics in the original). Following this line of reasoning, by treating others fairly is the result of viewing them with respect (Reave, 2005). Put another way, it also involves a person's attitude towards other people in which one justifies a degree of attention and, in doing so, it tends to engender in return in that individual a feeling of being appreciated as a person (Van Quaquebeke & Eckloff, 2010, p. 344). In essence, "Respect in organizations can have important consequences" (Ramarajan & Barsade, 2006, p. 5).

That episode above mentioned was an extremely stressful situation and the vibrations addressed to us were absolutely unfriendly at the meeting room. By and large, the salesmen were not happy to sell our products at all. In fact, they could earn more money selling the traditional forms, yet we have already predicted that those products would not be the company's future. In the end, my boss made a brilliant speech in which he showed the harsh reality emanated from the figures of our business, particularly the profitability item. In fact, it was lower than other enterprises of the company, which were heavily based on manufacturing processes. Such features gave BUs directors more flexibility to manage their operations when specifically likened to our BU particularities (retail business). On the other hand, my approach was grounded on the results of a survey that I made with them at that meeting. While my boss made his presentation, I submitted a questionnaire and some open question to them aiming at identifying their opinions about key topics. Thus, I quickly collected the data and interpreted the results. When he turned to me, I started to discuss topic by topic and no issue went unanswered. Overall, we showed our sincere respect to our colleagues by telling them the truth of our business and what could be done. Once again, I felt a strong sense of accomplishment and inner well-being.

An Episode of Love

Talking about love in the workplace may be an unpalatable topic for many people. Notwithstanding it is portrayed as a powerful concept and "the mere description of a business characterized by love provokes strong reactions" (McKnight, 2005, p. 174). It requires some courage to tell our colleagues how much we love their work, how much we love being part of a particular team or organization (Secretan, 2009). Nonetheless, love is a strong feeling and it is the foundation for other spiritual values and for character. Actually, love-related values can be entwined with great business success (Miller, 2004). In other words, love may lay the foundation of great human relationships and achievements. Exploring one of its ramifications, theorists note: "Brotherly love is disposed to being helpful and deliberately knowing others'

needs" (Dyck & Schroeder, 2005, p. 724). Overall, love is important within workplaces because it gives rise to a better human climate, organizational outcomes, and fundamentally it enables that "a different way" of managing, working, and living takes place. It appears that theory of the firm does neglect it or at best treats it in an inappropriate manner. Regardless of it, love for others is noticeable "in all facets of people's lives, including in economic organizations" (Argandoña, 2011, p. 82).

Taking it into account, in a certain moment of my trajectory, I worked with a much older person. He was a senior manager practically sidelined by the company and other colleagues. One day, I felt an impulse to approach him and start a conversation. I must add that our offices were nearby. We began a friendly relationship and he told me how the operation had started in the country. In fact, he was there from the beginning. Not surprisingly, he was a living memory of actual events that took place over the years. As an engineer he had great technical expertise and gave me relevant information that helped me in my work later. We talked in English sometimes given that he had full command of it. Frankly, it helped a lot in my learning of the language. He was also a great storyteller – actually, one of the best that I have known - and the opportunity of hearing him made me feel good as well as helping me better understand the company culture. To some degree, he became a sort of mentor to me during that phase of my life. Furthermore, I have to admit that his case served me as an alert about the hypocrisy within the corporate environment. Our friendship - strongly criticized by some younger colleagues - made me see the harsh reality of corporate life, that is, how unstable, insecure, and discriminatory a career in organizations may be. I felt inner well-being for having enjoyed the friendship of a person so wise in my life.

An Episode of Humility

The direction of my division wished to launch a certain product line. He displayed great enthusiasm toward that project. As a consequence, I made an accurate financial analysis and the results were unfortunately all unfavorable to this product line (according to my analysis, it simply drained the profitability). Obviously, I had to depict a report with my conclusions to my boss. Regarding that he did not say any word about that I felt that something unusual was happening. In fact, a few weeks later there was another restructuration and I was completely sidelined without any assignment, comment or talking. I thought that I was going to be fired. In some way, my task conclusion had bothered my boss (the BU general manager). So, I humbly waited for a meeting with him and my ordeal lasted more than six months, yet I continued to earn my salary.

Scholars argue that humility capability is essential to a leader. It evolves from a thorough understanding about who we really are, regardless of our title, education, wealth or status. It is believed that humility triggers the impulse to make others do better (Bakke, 2005). Such a characteristic helps leaders to diminish their excessive self-focus and enable them to really understand themselves and, as a consequence, develop a better perspective in their relationships with followers (Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay, 2010). In a related vein, Tangney (2005) suggests that "Humility represents wisdom. It is knowing you were created with special talents and abilities to share with the world; but it can also be and understanding that you are one of many souls created by God, and each has an important role to play in life" (p. 412). The relationship between humility and effectiveness presupposes the ability to accept negative feedback (Delbecq, 2008; Reave, 2005). Further, along with a leader willingness to listen others, humility tends to improve the communication in a company (Gunther & Neal, 2008). Hence, Johnson (2009) posits, "Humble leaders have a realistic view of their own contributions and demonstrate appreciation for others. They serve others, build supportive relationships, and are open to input from followers" (p. 79). As an important virtue, humility has many

implications that are not duly addressed, tested or theoretically elaborated. For example, it has been suggested that humility is as a feature more expected of followers rather than leaders (Owens, Rowatt, & Wilkins, 2012). In this sense, there is room to theorists to better conceptualize such group views and experiences. To a large degree, my personal narrative fits into this theoretical perspective.

During that very tough period of my career, I was approached by a potential supplier who presented to me his product line. At first glance, I appreciated his products (electronic devices) and I carried out a careful study, field research, and finally I wrote a marketing plan and sent that to my boss. Taken as a whole, that task, the occasion, and the business circumstances helped me to get out from ostracism. I consider that my humbleness and resilience capabilities led me to overcome an extremely adverse and unfair situation. After all, I was only doing my job, regardless of depicting unfavorable financial forecasts. In the end, I felt relief to overcome such an unpleasant episode.

Two Episodes of Courage

Courage construct has been theorized through different domains, but it has particularly been approached by the positive scholarship concept. In this sense, theorists have been insightful by exploring distinguished courage aspects. Stated differently, it is a polysemic concept (Harbour & Kisfalvi, 2014). For instance, Sekerka, Bagozzi, and Charnigo (2009) propose that professional moral courage is a managerial competency exercised in the workplace when managers have to face ethical challenges with a moral response. It encompasses a range of issues such as values-driven achievement, doing good for others, aspiring to moral ideal and promoting orientation. On the other hand, it is associated with four personal governance practices, competencies, namely, emotional signaling, reflective pause, self-regulation, and moral preparation (Sekerka, 2010). More noteworthy, however, courage is also seen as "a pattern of constructive opposition, in which an individual stands against social forces in order to remedy duress in the organization" (Worline, 2012, pp. 306-307).

On one occasion, I shifted the distribution system of channels sales quotas to judge it unjustifiable and without technical criteria. In doing so, I almost lost my job for my "daring" in wanting to do the right thing. The divisional director used to delay informing sales goals to the channel managers, as well as he used to handle with it in a political fashion. Obviously, we had a strong argument. Despite the risk I took, at least I had the sense of accomplishment by exposing his authoritative way of running it. In another situation, when the division where I worked was on the verge to be closed, a general meeting took place at which the divisional director proposed a management buyout operation. To some degree, we came to that point thanks to his unsuited decisions. He just neglected the reports warning the consequences of his (bad) decisions. In hindsight, I think that he consciously did everything possible to avoid that our BU could recovery from bad results and thus he could make a better deal with the company board. Keeping it in mind, I was the first to clearly expose a disagreement position without fearing the consequences or possible harm to my career outside company. I felt very relieved to have done that as well as a huge inner well-being.

An Episode of Ethics

Ethics concern became a very salient issue inside organizations to deal with. In fact, the effort required to an organization becomes, for example, a spiritually-friend company may be scrutinized from an ethical lens (Cunha, Rego, & D'Oliveira, 2006). Furthermore, we are subject to face many complex situations in the workplace in which it is expected that we behave ethically. That is, it implies to understand that the capability to exert self-control is deemed as

crucial so as to enact ethical behavior (Gailliot & Baumeister, 2005). In light of it, it is clear that organizations somewhat offer the opportunity for humans to become better people (Collins, 2010b, p. 4). Nonetheless, one must also consider that:

> Business has always had the ability to bring out the worst in people. In particular, the acquisitive and competitive aspects of it may tempt or encourage even the most disciplined person or group of people into one or more of the seven deadly sins—greed, envy, lust, pride, gluttony, anger and sloth. (Ciulla, 2011, p. 338)

I expected to be promoted, but paradoxically I ended up gaining a new boss (general manager of sales and marketing). He was a good friend of the general director and, from my standpoint, the decision was not based on professional merits. Despite of my disappointment, I quickly realized that he was not guilty of anything. Therefore, I painstakingly taught him the critical indicators of the business operation and the tools we usually used to manage the BU. I must confess that I did it with great respect, ethics, and loyalty toward him. In a way, I trained him on how to manage properly those business variables. Sincerely, I felt enormous inner peace for my professional conduct in that episode. I still sensed that he would not have enough time to make many changes and fix the wrong things. In fact, after a few months of his hiring, as noted earlier, the BU was bought by the employees through a management buyout operation. As a consequence, he kindly offered to help me to find a new job out of respect or professional recognition.

An Episode of Optimism

It is surprising that workplace spirituality theory has almost silence about the optimism capability effects within organizations. Regarding the goals, challenges, and difficulties that underscore the corporate life, it is natural that a professional must be able to cultivate optimistic abilities. According to Peterson and Chang (2002), "Optimism may influence not only the settings that people choose but also what they do in these settings. Just as important, settings differ in the degree to which they allow positive characteristics to develop and be deployed" (p. 58). Optimism urges the individual to work devotedly toward reaching a goal, while pessimism drains his/her energy and will. To Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007) the employee with greater capacity for optimism is inspired by positive perspective and when it is coupled with self-efficacy and hope s/he will possess the necessary confidence and persistence to pursue alternative pathways when necessary to attain optimistic goals.

My BU had a very serious and lingering problem concerning the lack of punctual provision of certain products (i.e., especially forms). My predecessors were unsuccessful in handling this issue for many reasons. When I assumed the product coordinator role, I had to talk to virtually every channel managers and I found that the supplying process of the major line of products, which was manufactured by another division of the company, still did not work out appropriately. That was a very complex situation that damaged substantially our overall performance. However, I was fairly optimistic to solve the problem. Thus, I met with the plant manager responsible for manufacturing that line of products and we successfully reached an agreement in order to take advantage of the synergy between the two divisions. In sum, the result was that the sales revenue of this group of products increased 35%, despite the fact that the country was facing an economic fall (2° term of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso). Also, I felt in this episode a strong sense of accomplishment and inner well-being.

An Episode Focused on the "Other"

It appears that "othering" concept occupies an important place in contemporary philosophical, gender, postcolonial discourses, yet its nuances are scarcely investigated. It is suggested as a process that transcends scapegoating and denigration acts (Stokes & Gabriel, 2010). In fact, most spiritual teachings advocate the importance of appreciation toward others. More specifically, the teachings posit others as fellow creations of God and, as such, they deserve respect and praise from us (Johnson, 2009; Reave, 2005). On the basis of it, spirituality "forces people fundamentally to be concerned not just about themselves but about others; it causes them to respect and promote the full flourishing of other humans" (Porth, Steingard, & McCall, 2003, p. 254). Nonetheless, as rightly noted by Dussel and Ibarra-Colado (2006), "If we acknowledge that the system in which we live today is imperfect then we should also be able to understand that it is a product of human activity from which negative effects inevitably result" (p. 503).

I remember of an episode related to a certain product manager, which I had to deal with on a daily basis. He was a very confused fellow and, in general, his actions and decisions were inaccurate as well as ending up generating many communication problems. Over time, it was evident that he was not - to put it mildly - a great professional. One day, I stared at him in a meeting with full of compassionate feeling. In that moment I just saw him as someone who tried to survive. Unfortunately, he presented a number of flaws simply because he was not fit for that job. The biggest mistake was made by those who hired him.

An episode related to the sense of purpose

Having a sense of purpose in life is essential to achieve some valuable goal. As wisely argued by Mcknight (2005), "*Purpose is catalyst for our conduct*" (p. 166, italics added). In effect, a life without a sense of purpose tends to be only a meaningless existence. Otherwise, "A life centered around a clear purpose is totally integrated. What goes on inside – feelings, attitudes, plans, hopes – is reflected in our behavior" (Mcknight, 2005, p. 167). To Keyes (2011), a sense of purpose provides us with intention and a cognitive sense of life. Thus, the simple act of finding positive value and meaning in our work expresses in a way a form of appreciation, as well as spirituality (Fagley & Adler, 2012).

With great joy, I was promoted by my superior to a supervisory position, but for some reason it had not been confirmed. For politic reasons, my boss was fired sometime later. In an appropriate moment, I informed my new boss of what had happened, and he told me that he could do nothing at that moment. The time went by and a lot of things happened. Nevertheless, I kept working hard, with dedication, responsibility, and maintaining my hope. Despite the undesirable organizational politics that prevailed in the workplace, I understood that I should not give up of my career goals. So, I was promoted to be the division director assistant just a few months later. I think that my patience, dedication, and fundamentally my sense of purpose, were essential to me to get that position. And that achievement made me feel and inner well-being.

Discussion

Religion is one the major sources to address people spiritual needs (Kale, 2004), perhaps it constitutes the most equipped alternative for it. Indeed, spirituality is strongly grounded on religion teachings (Cavanagh, 2003; Vasconcelos, 2010a). Interestingly, both constructs emphasize the sacred or the search for it (e.g., Duffy, Reid, & Dik, 2010; Exline & Bright, 2011). Furthermore, the majority of religions provide pathways to develop spiritual

resources. Although, "Spirituality is not religion, but there are lessons in the religious traditions that can inform the development of a contemporary understanding of work related spirituality" (Delbecq, 2009, p. 8). Also, it has been admitted that both religiousness and spirituality are closely intertwined with human history (Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005). It appears that human beings have resorted to these mechanisms throughout this journey on this planet seeking to strength, relief, and insights. In my case, I was well-succeeded to elicit the necessary benefits to cope with that experience. I believe that my personal narratives corroborate it. Obviously, I also thank God for having helped me to overcome such painful moments as well as having provided me with the necessary guidance and sensitivity to grasp the lessons embedded on those experiences.

By drawing on a researcher that is researched approach, I can see the transcendental meaning (nexus) of those episodes in my career. Hence, I further developed resilience, patience, leadership, spirituality, self-reflection, and self-introspection capabilities. I could better understand the other perspective, particularly the human sins, vices, emotions, and virtues. After all, I had to cope with a harsh test that was permeated, given the circumstances, by an insecure and dispirited organizational context where I spent important part of my work life. But I won the battle by becoming a wiser person. Taken as a whole, I believe that this autoethographic research reiterates such a perception.

The results of this investigation are exclusively grounded on a person experience and given its characteristics do not allow any sort of generalization. For the same reasons, the questions of truth and validity are out of context of autoethnographical studies regarding that "autoethnographical researchers are responsible for selecting, representing and interpreting experiences to inform meanings and shared understandings" (Haynes, 2011, p. 142). Nonetheless, it is feasible to provide a conceptual synthesis that may urge future studies (see Figure1).

As one can note, the intersection of distinct factors is clearly identified. In terms of implications, this study provides evidence that the spiritual literacy (King, 2008, 2010; Vasconcelos, 2017) may help the individuals to elicit inner resources in order to cope with the harsh experience of today's workplaces. Furthermore, this potentiality should be explored for anyone really interested in enjoying a richer work life, as well as encouraged by organizations.

On the basis of it, workplace spirituality theory and religion qualitative researchers could expand and refine it by perusing larger samples of individuals as well as applying other methods. In addition, there are many issues related to corporate life that may be explored through autoethnography involving, for example, leader-follower relationship, relationships at work, organizational failures and conquers, creative processes, organizational wrongdoing episodes, exerting leadership role, the threat of technological change, diversity issues just to name a few. Fundamentally, personal experiences on corporate life in dealing with, for example, these issues offer rich opportunities to be explored by means of authethnography approach.
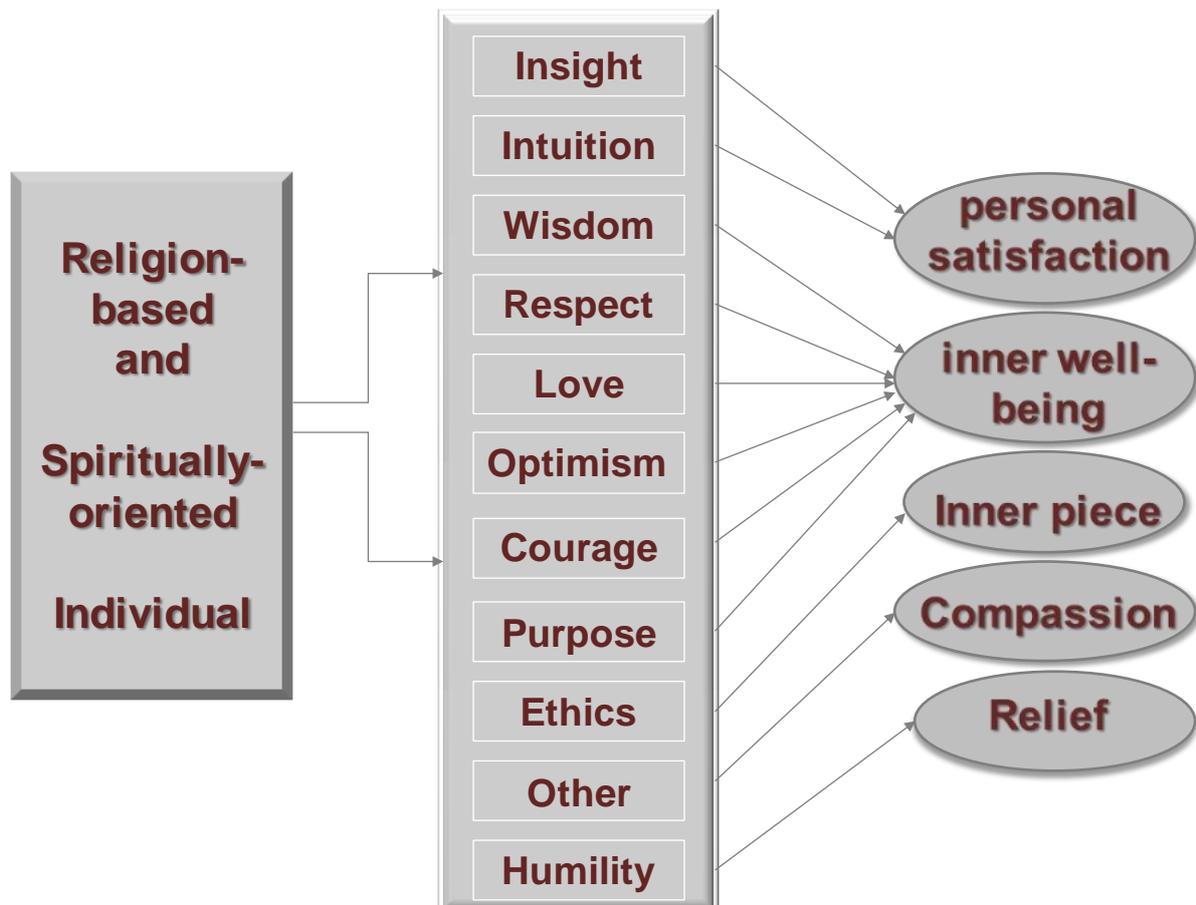
Figure 1- Handling spiritual resources at work

Conclusion

I also must admit that I have handled spiritual resources usually supported by my religious belief practically all my life. At some point of my trajectory I understood that the ups and downs of work life needed to be tackled through a clever way. In this regard, religious teachings along with spiritually-based knowledge represented simultaneously health and wise alternatives particularly to me instead of, for example, alcohol or drugs "therapies" that always lead to deleterious effects and self-destruction. By drawing on an autoethnographic inquiry, I also argue that religious faith and spirituality knowledge (literacy) dovetails perfectly well in the workplace. Further, this study provides consistent evidence of suitable usage of these resources.

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