

TECHNICAL SPIRITUALITY AT WORK: JACQUES ELLUL ON WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

ABSTRACT

We assess the current state of workplace spirituality from the philosophical perspective of Jacques Ellul and show how the workplace spirituality movement has not escaped the infiltration and pervasiveness of technique. First, we describe Ellul's notion of technique, that the technical processes created to serve a limited form of economic rationality predominate western thinking, and his critique that technique has become dominant, becoming an end in itself and subsuming all other ends as means in support of technique. We then demonstrate how the workplace spirituality movement presently displays the hallmarks of technique in its quest for results and facts, in its use of experts, and in the broadening and hence dissolution of the notion of spirituality. However, the dominance of technique has not gone unnoticed in the workplace spirituality movement. We highlight several scholars who have raised concerns and critiques of the movement in its technical form. Having noted the predominance of technique as well as its critique from some quarters, we suggest some possibilities for moving toward an authentic spirituality at work followed by some implications for undertaking scholarly research on workplace spirituality that explicitly recognizes technical dominance in spirituality. In conclusion we note that the logic of technique is firmly in place, and that it represents a formidable opponent to the practice of authentic spirituality in the workplace. It is incumbent upon those of us involved in workplace spirituality to resist its domination and find ways of fostering authenticity in spirituality at work.

Keywords: Jacques Ellul, Workplace Spirituality, Technique