

Andrew J. Hoffman. *From Heresy to Dogma: An Institutional History of Corporate Environmentalism*. San Francisco: New Lexington Press, 1997.

How did environmentalism in corporations go from being heresy—"religious opinion or doctrine at variance with orthodox or accepted belief"—to dogma—"a system of principles or tenets, as of a church" (Stein, 1979, as cited in Hoffman, 1997, p. xvii)? Using neo-institutional theory to assess archival and case data that he collected on the oil and chemical industries and drawing on his broad knowledge of environmental economics and politics, Professor Hoffman offers an abstract and a concrete answer to his main question. Theoretically speaking,

The institutional history of corporate environmentalism is a product of the co-evolution of *institutions* outside of the firm and *the structures and strategies* inside of the firm. Both have been continually evolving as new events or crises call attention to the need for new forms of broadly accepted values and practices. The status of corporate environmental management is explained as the historical product of this external examination, the result of what is described as a negotiation among the internal members of the firm and external members of the organizational field: primarily the government, other firms sharing similar technological and political constraints, and external environmental interests. (p. 170)

More concrete, the transformation of corporate environmentalism within the United States has occurred in four phases: phase one (1960 to 1970) was "industrial environmentalism," which relied on technological approaches to solving environmental problems; phase two (1970 to 1982) was "regulatory environmentalism," which followed the EPA's creation and was based on the heavy enforcement of new environmental legislation; phase three (1982 to 1988) was "environmentalism as social responsibility," which was relied on public recognition of several diverse environmental interests; and phase four, (1988 to 1993) was "strategic environmentalism," in which environmental concerns become incorporated into organizational strategies.

A chapter of Hoffman's book is devoted to each of these phases of corporate environmentalism. By using the same structure for each chapter, *From Heresy to Dogma* helps the reader to compare and contrast the phases with one another. Take the most recent phase, strategic environmentalism, as an example. Chernobyl, Bhopal, deforestation of the Amazon, oil spills, and Superfund failures were the important physical events that highlighted our impact on the natural environment in spite of the large volume of environmental legislation and enforcement attempts in the 1970s. At the same time, the public became concerned with the continuing efforts of the Reagan administration to dismantle environmental protection and the inability of philanthropically or community-minded firms to curb habitat degradation. Finally, insurance companies and shareholders began to recognize the enormous long-term liability faced by firms with environmental problems, and they forced corporate managers to include environmental concerns more directly in the firm's forecasts and strategies. Industry and specific firms responded, but not in a uniform manner as they had, say, under the pressures of regulation during phase two. In the chemical industry, Responsible Care was developed to coordinate the environ-

mental activities of firms. In the oil industry, there was a more defensive stance in the face of Exxon Valdez (1991), and individual firms scrambled to buffer operations, decentralize environmental management and protect directors from liability. For instance, AMOCO added a crisis management subunit, had the vice president of the environment report directly to the board, and had the board develop an environmental ethic and public relations arm to handle multiple external pressures. The environmental group numbered 220 staff members compared to the dozen or so cross-listed environmental types to be found in AMOCO during phase one.

In the last two chapters of the book, Professor Hoffman discusses the implications of the historical transformation for environmental management theory, for institutional theory, and for future management of the environment. First, it is quite clear that environmental management is affected by events outside of the firm's boundaries and by much more than rational/economic forces (p. 146). This means that environmental management theory must include these forces in its models and recognize that much of environmental management is an evolving, negotiated process involving a great deal of symbolism. Second, if the four phases of corporate environmentalism are assessed from an institutional perspective, it appears that environmental management has moved from a primarily cognitive frame in the first phase, to a regulative, then normative, and now back to a cognitive frame with strategic environmentalism (p. 157). Because corporate environmentalism is back in the cognitive frame, the issue of symbolic versus substantive change is again a very relevant debate. However, the next phase is not that predictable: "New institutional arrangements will either take the form of an evolutionary alteration of the cognitive institutions through negotiated compromise, or they will take the form of a revolutionary alteration of the regulative and normative institutions through confrontation" (p. 196). Third, the lack of stability and predictability in the phases of corporate environmentalism as well as their dependence on social movements and individual entrepreneurs means that institutional theory needs to become more dynamic and actor based if it is to help us understand the evolution of corporate approaches to the natural environment.

Finally, although academics try to build better theory by incorporating these points, policy makers, environmentalists, and managers must rely on their own informed judgement on what to do. As *From Heresy to Dogma* makes clear, policy makers should avoid simple economic solutions or incentives as an approach to environmental management; the optimal mix of social/political/economic tools is very context specific. Activists can continue to force change in corporate behavior but only if they resist the increasing institutionalization of the environmental field—or, alternatively, join the firm as consultants who can interpret the pressure of the field. Managers have to recognize the complex set of loosely-coupled activities that now are involved in good environmental management (from engineering to public relations) and the need to develop their own strategic vision for the firm's environmental choices.

In *From Heresy to Dogma*, Andrew Hoffman paints what I found to be a complex and compelling picture of corporate environmentalism. In part, the author does this by pursuing many implicit objectives at once while detailing the transformation of corporate environmentalism from the institutional perspective. As one would expect, Hoffman applies and broadens institutional theory—a behavioral view, but he also demonstrates the need of analysts to understand and apply standard industrial ecology and environmental management theory—more scientific approaches. Hoffman documents macro changes over time and across the organizational field

for environmental management, but he also captures some of the meaning of these changes on a more micro scale within the firm. Hoffman constructs models and explanations of environmental transformations, but he also fleshes out policy guidelines and possible practices for corporate action. A particularly important consequence of pursuing so many objectives at once is that the complete argument of the book can only be understood by reading all of the book's parts. I did not find that any one chapter or any section, theoretical or historical, could be read as a quick but representative synopsis of the work.

Apart from the complex, compelling picture of corporate environmentalism that it offers, the biggest contributions of the book are, in my mind, in the field of institutional theory and institutional approaches to the natural environment. Like work from Fligstein (1991), Meyer and Scott (1983), and Powell and DiMaggio (1991), *From Heresy to Dogma* shows that institutional theory can easily be extended to explain the evolution of technical domains, such as environmental management. This book uses the latest theoretical work in institutional theory, particularly from Scott (1995), to show neo-institutional theory has added value beyond institutional theory by focusing the analyst on the construction of meaning and the symbolic side of management. At the same time, the book joins other work (e.g., DiMaggio, 1988; Christensen, Karnoe, Pederson, & Dobbin, 1997) that has attempted to broaden institutional theory by offering a role for the individual actor and the individual firm in broad changes. But, unlike some of this other work, *From Heresy to Dogma* does not reframe what practitioners in the field would recognize as the field's history, but it relies on the commonly held conceptions of how environmental management has evolved and builds from these conceptions, using journal entries and personal experience, to show how they fit in an institutional frame. I have done research in the intersection between institutional theory and environmentalism for the past several years, and I can honestly say that I wish I had written this book.

But, because the book is so sweeping and tries to contribute to both the academic and practitioner audience, it has an obvious drawback: *From Heresy to Dogma* may only partially satisfy readers who are interested in a single issue or specific question. I know that some readers will want to know "What is the next phase of environmental management?" or "What should the firm do to go green?" or, looking backward, "What forces were responsible in the delegitimization of technology as an environmental solution?" and "What role did the oil and chemical industries play in the evolution of the environmental management field?" The book offers answers but not complete, in-depth ones. Perhaps the biggest question or issue not addressed, particularly for readers of *Organization and Environment*, is "How has the spirit—the ethos—behind environmental management become transformed over the past 30 years?" and "Will that spirit survive and make a difference?" Professor Hoffman says that there is still hope for substantive changes in the health of the natural environment and that there is still a role for the activist, but I did not feel that optimistic when I finished his book. Perhaps, this feeling is an indirect product of the author's own background, which has seeped into the book's tone as an undercurrent. Professor Hoffman was originally trained in the sciences and worked in the chemical industry, and he has more recently become a student of behavioral science and an environmental writer. In a sense, the author himself has made the journey across the four phases. Is it any wonder that instead of singing forth with one clear voice, he has chosen to compose with the several, offering no simple score for the future?

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