



Society Against Itself: Political Correctness and Organizational Self-Destruction

Howard S. Schwartz

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"Political correctness" involves much more than a restriction of speech. It represents a broad cultural transformation, a shift in the way people understand things and organize their lives; a change in the way meaning is made. The problem addressed in this book is that, for reasons the author explores, some ways of making "meaning" support the creation and maintenance of organization, while others do not. Organizations are cultural products and rely upon psychological roots that go very deep. The basic premise of this book is that organizations are made up of the rules, common understandings, and obligations that "the father" represents, and which are given meaning in the oedipal dynamic. In anti-oedipal psychology, however, they are seen as locuses of deprivation and structures of oppression. Anti-oedipal meaning, then, is geared toward the destruction of organization. This is done in the name of a higher morality, which demands compensatory love for those who have been deprived of love in the past by the father and his organizations, who should be hated and destroyed. The author looks at how anti-oedipal dynamics have played out in various organizational failures to which political correctness has led. These include the Jayson Blair scandal at the New York Times, the destruction of employee morale at the Ford Motor Company and the Cincinnati Police Department, the self-destruction of Antioch College, and the forcing out of Larry Summers at Harvard University. He concludes with some reflections on the shift from oedipal to anti-oedipal meaning that is represented by Princess Diana supplanting Queen Elizabeth as the national symbol of the United Kingdom.

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