

**The Revolt of the Primitive: An Inquiry into the Roots of Political Correctness**, by Howard S. Schwartz. Praeger Publishers. Westport, CT, 2001. 234 pages, hardcover, ISBN 0-275-96577-5

*Review by David Shackleton.*

I have been waiting for this book. (Actually, I have been wanting to write something similar to this book.) In *The Revolt of the Primitive*, Howard S. Schwartz, Professor of Organizational Behaviour in the School of Business Administration at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, has given us the first serious investigation into *why* feminism is so powerful. How can it be that the ideologues of political correctness, under a banner of powerless victimhood, are able to overturn and subvert the social structures of generations? Many authors have described the distortions of our institutions and our society that have been wrought by the modern forces of political correctness, but none that I am aware of has developed a serious, detailed thesis to explain how and why these irrational ideas have been able to trump both rationality and tradition.

Schwartz's thesis is built on Freudian foundations. He argues that the image of the primordial mother, the infant's fantasy of the ideal mother who makes the child the centre of her world is the primitive, archetypal motivation behind political correctness, and explains its psychic power. Rather than deal with the mature trade-offs that male/female relationships require, proponents of ideological victimhood have found that they can compel society to attempt to take on this role of primordial mother, and men, including powerful men, dependent on women for psychic validation and

admiration of their accomplishments in the world, are reduced to infantile dependence, doing what 'Mom' says, and thus unable to oppose the irrationality.

I think that Schwartz is on to something. I am not a fan or follower of Freudian psychology, but Schwartz makes a solid and detailed case for his conclusions, and demonstrates an extraordinarily good fit with the facts. He supports his argument with extensive analysis and examples from the feminist ideological takeover of the universities and the military. Ironically, it is men's very success in dealing with the real world, in conquering major issues of daily survival through technology and social organization, that has prepared the ground for this problem. For, as he says in his conclusion,

“I referred earlier to the tremendous wealth and power that postwar civilization has developed. These have seemed to make the very idea of reality obsolete, but it is not obsolete, it is only distant. .. How did we get to this? How did it happen that Western civilization, at the height of its greatest achievements, would give its best minds over to the task of taking itself apart? The answer, of course is an old one. ... this turns out to be the classic material of tragedy. It is *hubris*. We pushed reality back so far that its existence became only a rumour. Then we suppressed the rumour, We said it was politically incorrect. It interfered with our grandiosity, and we chose our grandiosity.” [p.212-213]

*The Revolt of the Primitive* is not an easy read. It is written in an academic style that at times I found too difficult to follow, For instance. Schwartz's detailed explanation of Freud's and Chasseguet-Smirgel's psychoanalytic theories of childhood had me skipping pages - despite the fact that I am passionately interested in the subject of this book and probably more academically inclined than most. This is not a book that an average reader will take in at one reading, Yet, the depth of analysis and extraordinary originality of this work is worth the effort. Schwartz may have given us, and I say this with awareness of the extent of the claim. The first foundation stone in our desperate need to understand what is happening to us today, and which threatens to bring our society to its knees.

You may purchase *The Revolt of the Primitive* from Praeger, Greenwood Publishing Group Inc. 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881-5007, USA Phone (203) 226-357) [www.greenwood.com](http://www.greenwood.com)

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David's review of '*The Revolt of the Primitive An Inquiry into the Roots of Political Correctness*' was first published in the 50<sup>th</sup> issue of *Everyman, A Men's Journal*, (p.60) Aug./Sept. 2001. Copies of the *Everyman Journal* may be ordered on this website.

