

## The Moon Hung on a Navelstring from the Dark: The Metaphor of Mother As Placenta and Its Effect on Parenting Concepts

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**Abstract:** None available.

**Full Text:** Headnote ABSTRACT: A psychosocial analysis explores some fantasies underpinning sexual asymmetry with emphasis on female childrearing and denial of maternal subjectivity. It is suggested that whereas in the past gender-role distinction between the sexes was rooted in procreativity, recent technological innovations have liberalized definitions in the West, offering greater choice and self-determination as we now can discriminate between sexuality, reproduction and childrearing. Nevertheless, underlying unconscious paradigms (such as the mother as postnatal placenta, the baby as benign or parasitic dependent fetal being and idealized interuterine 'fusion'), continue to inform and restrict parenting modes. A model composed of four prevalent parental orientations is presented-Facilitator and Regulator mothers; Participator and Renouncer fathers with an alternative orientation based on intersubjective acknowledgement of self, partner and baby as separate, different yet emotionally similar individuals. The latter approach, upholds multiple cross-gender identifications and adult interdependence rather than the ethos of independence. Intersubjectivity is seen to be capable of diminishing conceptual distance in intrapsychic and interpersonal configurations, both between infant and adult, and between male and female parents as discrete categories. The moon as mother has always been a central theme in mythologies, uniting as she does the lunar cycle with the monthly menstrual one of procreativity. Created on the fourth Biblical day to separate day and night and hold dominion over the dark, in other narratives she also symbolizes the darkness of the eternal womb, [the Great Round 'world-containing world-creating uterus' (Neumann, 1963)], as well as the ever-ripening milky breast, waxing, waning, perpetually self-renewing. Nightly emotional regulator, she governs by her mysterious gravitational pull the forces of tide, time, romance, fate and mortality, as well as processes of fertility, growth and transformation and the lunatic changes of madness . . . My title is a phrase plucked out of an uncanny story by Dylan Thomas called 'The Vistor,' in which a dying man experientially relives his beginnings. I have chosen it to underscore a panhuman idea that the origins of adult sensibilities are anchored in preverbal passions of infancy. In the space allocated, I will endeavor to use the crowbar of language to lever beneath linguistic confines and reveal a cleavage between conscious perception of our gendered selves and the fleeting, vague, unnameable primal images underpinning our unconscious concepts of self as mingled infiltration of child and adult, masculine and feminine. Biologically, human male and female distinction may be pared down to several discrete seemingly irreducible features: 1. differentiation of gonads into ovaries or their 'masculinization' into testes and closure of genitalia to produce penis in hitherto anatomically 'female' embryo. 2. mature female ripening of ova and periodic menstrual bleeding 3. male sperm production and erectile ejaculating penis 4. placental maintenance of baby in containing uterus 5. expulsion of (altricial) baby from female inter-uterine interior 6. lactation by female pendant breasts Out of these few sexual differences spring all the fantasies and myths which provide the basis for universal psychosocial definitions of masculinity and femininity. Yet, even as we write them, these seemingly eternal universal facts of life are liable to alteration (e.g. hemaphroditic mutation; in vitro fertilization; gamete implantation; hormonally induced lactation in males, etc.). What I wish to address in this paper is the question of sexual asymmetry-why, given the sparcity of these six reproductive differences, do we continually discriminate between the sexes in all spheres of life, and why is it invariably the female who is deemed the 'Dark continent' and socially demoted, in myth and in reality, by women as well as men? To begin to answer this crucial question we must examine our data-frames on various levels-socio-cultural, psychosexual and intrapsychic. At the end of

each, I shall highlight a conclusion. ETHNOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE OF ASYMMETRY Despite rich cross-cultural variations of conduct, all known societies organize around a societal division into two genders with woman defined by her biological role of reproduction of the species. Survival of the group is dependent on pregnancy. Should its women cease to conceive, a society would die out. Therefore, all cultures develop traditional means to ensure that women will continue to reproduce. Furthermore, while mother-infant blood connection is unquestionably demonstrated by pregnancy and childbirth, fatherhood remains a social construct: paternity is based on trust. Patriarchal societies thus grapple with 'Father Law'-the problem of male genetic immortalityelaborating a morality of sexual possessiveness before, during or immediately after pregnancy and a system of rituals, such as that of couvade and naming, for social affirmation of fatherhood in the public sphere. Likewise, rules and regulations are evolved by means of which male elders proscribe, restrict and organize female sexuality and procreation. Nevertheless, to be effective, these strictures must be internalized by acquiescent women. Two anthropological facts are pertinent here: \* In virtually all societies women not only give birth. They become the primary caregivers of infants. \* The second fact is the almost invariable disparity between woman's work and their access to power and recognition. If we link these two simple but startling facts, we get a glimpse of what underlies this unequal relationship between the sexes: it is the archaic Mother-powerful bearer and rearer of both male and female children denied both subjectivity and worldly power. In recent years, feminists exploring sexual asymmetry have pieced together fragments of the gender-jigsaw, attributing the universality of female devaluation to male dependence on, yet envy and fear of the primacy of female generative powers. Recognition of the male contribution to procreation necessitates a leap of faith and an effort of abstraction (deemed by Freud to be a 'triumph of intellectuality over sensuality' 1939, p. 114) on which spirituality, cosmology and civilization are founded. Various theories hold that over the generations, women, symbolically equated with 'Nature' and the natural functions of reproduction (de Beauvoir, 1953; Ortner, 1974) have been excluded from male 'Culture.' Transcendence of cultural 'enlightenment' over the forces of 'darkness' is partly maintained through institutionalized control over female procreativity. Male superiority is asserted by legitimizing the gendered stratification of a morality of power that controls the socioeconomic means of control [money, status, legal rights, education (French, 1986)]. By these definitions, even bread-earning women lack civic authority. Relegated to childbearing and homemaking in the domestic realm, they are debarred from 'masculine' achievements within the public sphere (Rosaldo, 1974). Furthermore, in a circularity that is binding, the social expectation that females shall fulfill an 'expressive' role of nurturing-socializing (Parsons & Bales, 1955; LeviStrauss, 1969) confines girls and women to the home, limiting their personal expectations and exposure to cultural institutions, thereby actually restricting development of the 'instrumental' qualities allocated to authority figures in society. In parallel, on an intro-familial level, female mothering is perpetuated by same-sex gender identification (girls with their mothers, boys with their fathers), necessitating male 'dis-identification' with mother (Greenson, 1968). This societal inhibition in men of relational capacities that underpin maternal roles is seen to exacerbate masculine conflicts and intensify striving for distinct boundaries (Chodorow, 1978). Independence, autonomy and instrumental self-sufficiency become ideals of adult masculine achievement denied to women. REMEDIAL MEASURES IN WESTERN SOCIETIES In their attempt to challenge patriarchally defined constraints, reformers within the Women's Movement therefore began by demanding access to the prerogatives, privileges and rewards of the 'male' world, claiming the right to be included in the power structure. Commensurate with their success, gender roles in the West have become more fluid-a correlative of broadening opportunities for women in the public sphere has been greater male involvement in domesticity and childrearing. Nevertheless, we tend to under-appreciate the far-reaching implications of such role equalization: given psychological bisexuality, barring the actual biological functions of reproductivity, both men and women could be potentially freed to engage in all activities hitherto reserved for one or other sex. Unfortunately, in recent years, in counterpoint to machismatic antifeminist propaganda, the pendulum often appears to be swinging towards an attempt to 'feminize' society, or to celebrate a separatist

'womanist' reality, thereby inverting the ascribed status of female as Other. Some writers depict a female-centered vision of the world, cherishing women as 'natural,' good and nurturing while denigrating or ignoring all things male. Others assert that men and women operate different systems of morality, with women evolving an ethic of 'care and response' based on relationships of intimacy and nurturing while men define themselves through separation and self-fulfillment, based on an impersonal hierarchical ethic of 'justice and rights' (Gilligan, 1982). Yet others, psychoanalytic theoreticians amongst them, glorify pregnancy, birth and mothering while diminishing the importance of early paternal contribution. As I shall demonstrate, neither sex has a monopoly over nurturing and responsiveness, and each has their share of parents who define themselves through separation. It is my contention that the danger inherent in idealized revalorization of 'female' qualities is that of engendering a new set of restricting normative criteria of feminine virtues and maternal perfection, merely defined in contrast to 'masculine' principles. By claiming nurturance as a female prerogative, far from eradicating delimiting gender ideologies, we actually reinforce gender stereotypes of women as caregivers, thereby tacitly endorsing the limits of women's sphere of activity. I would argue here that if we wish to avoid the recurrent danger of social self-definition in terms of sexual stereotypes, we have to expose the underlying, often unconscious paradigms informing these. Only by making unconscious structures accessible can we hope to ultimately replace them with new representations. One metaphor that seems to underlie both patriarchal devaluation of women and feminist reification of nurturing is that of the 'Moon-mother' hung by her placental cord in the dark. I suggest that despite evidence to the contrary, we continue to construe nurturing as a female function because of an unconscious confusion of postnatal nurturing with prenatal nourishing of a fetus in the darkness of the womb. DARK DYADIC OSMOSIS Each of us has lived through the primal experiences of a singular birth and the unrestrained emotions of babyhood. Each of us has resolved to a lesser or greater degree, the poignant issues of dependency and separateness. Much of this early poetic embarkation-phase consists of pre-verbal impressionable states of mind and images undefined in words, rooted in a predispositional understanding that has been termed the 'unthought known' (Bollas, 1987). These impressions consist, not only of the rapturous experiences of ecstatic bliss usually attributed to infancy, but other traumatic experiences of frustration, painful humiliations and emotional injuries ensuing from crucial birth events, from inevitable failures of parental care, and a myriad infantile occurrences of hurting and fearing, hating and raging, wanting and waiting . . . Kept psychically encapsulated in undigested form, elusive losses and raging passions of babyhood remain alive inside us, alongside deep experiences of sweet surrender, to erupt in dreams, myths, fantasies and enactments at times of greater permeability. The western mother, isolated in exclusive care of her new infant in the nuclear family, is particularly susceptible to revival of these intense unprocessed residues-due to being left alone with her own rearoused vulnerability and because of continuous exposure to the raw primitive emotions of her baby. During the early weeks after the birth, the primary caregiver is plunged into a state of inner disequilibrium and external upheaval quite unlike any other encountered in adult life. The new mother is condemned to emotional and physical caregiving at a time when she herself is hypersensitive and in need of care. Mothering skills and responses must be developed on the job under highly exacting yet confusing conditions, at a time when she herself is subject to mood fluctuation, hormonal turbulence and bodily tenderness following the birth. (She may also be troubled by a sense of failure, mutilation, recurrence of physical anxieties and memories of abuse or violation revived by experience of this birth and her relived own). Alongside warm breaths of nursling fragrance permeating satin-smooth downiness, she continuously encounters bodily fundamentals-feces, urine, mucus, spit, tears, gunge, vomit-oozing out of all her baby's orifices, while she herself excretes milk and lochia. As primary caregiver trapped in an ambivalent emotional exchange which reawakens her own infantile preverbal memories, she also absorbs the infant's unbearable fantasies, resonating inside her with her own unnamed impenetrable experiences of early identifications, both with her newborn and her own birth-giving mother. To cap it all, she lacks opportunity to recuperate as she suffers from disturbed sleep patterns and insufficient dreaming (well known from interrogations to constitute a

threat to rational control). Two further conclusions are possible: \* In compounding the biological mother as caregiver with the woman who nourished her fetus, we construct a paradigm of 'mother as container' (in Bion's terms) which proscribes that the postnatal mother function as an external placenta-nourishing, receiving excretions and metabolizing these for the infant (Raphael-Leff, 1989). Overlooking her own personal needs and vulnerabilities, we unrealistically expect her to give as unreservedly and automatically as did her placenta. \* By designating the isolated parturient as the one to negotiate this intense early exchange continuously on her own, we involve both mother and baby in heightened ambivalent emotional tensions focussed around issues of fusion and confusion, separateness and separation. Rather than fostering shared delight and reciprocal recognition of each other's capacity for self-assertion, by enforcing exclusive female primary care without choice, we force altruistic mothers into self-effacing devotion, and resentful mothers into battles of will over who is in control.

**THE MYTH OF FEMALE MATERNALITY** However, nothing about mothering is automatic. If fatherhood is recognizably a cultural phenomenon dependent on social declaration of paternity, we tend to overlook the fact that motherhood too, is culturally determined. There is no evidence of an 'instinctual' basis to mothering. Heterogeneity of maternal style clearly reflects the psycho-social origins of nurturing, as revealed variously by-historical changes in ideologies of childcare throughout the generations; differing crosscultural and ethnocentric patterns of childrearing; contemporaneous variation of mothering practices between and within social classes in one society, or variations even in the same woman mothering different babies. Nevertheless, men and women alike persist in a conceptual equation of women, nurturing and maternal altruism coupled with a belief that mothering skills are innate and exclusively female (Raphael-Leff, 1984, 1988). Recent technological developments in Western culture have exposed the ambivalent nature of female procreative compliance. We in the West live in a time of unique and rapid change of fundamental reproductive assumption. What were taken for granted as eternal conditions are being altered in ways the world has never seen: \* Whereas previously sex, pregnancy and mothering were inextricably linked, efficient contraception and free access to abortion have liberated female sexuality from reproduction; \* artificial insemination has uncoupled maternity from paternity; \* in vitro fertilization has reversed the curse of barrenness, and enabled conception without copulation \*feeding bottles and milk-formulae mean baby-feeding is no longer the prerogative of a lactating woman; \*inclusion of fathers in the birth process has facilitated paternal bonding.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, technological innovations and relaxation of institutionalized constraints have combined to create a new climate in which both childbearing and childrearing are optional and may be unhitched from the social institutions of marriage, and childcare is released from restrictions of gender. Throughout the world, each culture defines ways in which the fluidity of gender is crystalized into fixed sex-role identities. These differ by utilizing more or less of the flexible potentialities for what Freud termed psychic 'bisexuality' (Freud, 1925) [or 'psychological androgyny' as it has since been called (Bern, 1987)]. At the current time in the western world, we are at the fulcrum of reintegrative change, allowing us a freedom we have never had before-to distinguish between sexuality, gender, reproduction and parenting. Nevertheless, I am suggesting that this liberalization of sex roles continues to be hampered by unconscious determinants of our core gender conceptualization, still related to that old Moon-Mother strung up by her navel string in the dark.

**UNCONSCIOUS DETERMINANTS** As noted, traditional division of labor over the ages all over the world, has allocated childrearing to females. This means that throughout time, women have been associated with those very early experiences of human infancy, when the helpless baby cannot survive without care. In our unconscious minds therefore, we carry an association of woman and dependency, which is superimposed on the primal equation of mother and womb. The mother is she in whose dark inner recesses we have grown, nourished by the mysterious placental process which brings nutrients and removes waste. Source of our very lives, her dreaded orifices are mysterious openings to the secret uterine interior wherein we were kept while being made. It is she who squeezed out of her body and brought forth a fully fashioned human baby still attached by a cord. She who sensually nourished the helpless infant on magical juices from her body. Yet we have decided that she also become the one who lovingly wipes away the child's excretions, and later

controls their timing and location. She who sponges away fevers, pain and sticky dirt, caresses aches and licks away tears. She who soothingly rocks terror out of fear and puts a gurgle into laughter, providing the experiential boundaries of sensory reality and the limits of fun. She who is appointed not only nurturer and lawgiver, but also judge and jury, jailer and alibi, testifying to the infant's powerless dependence as she frustrates and humiliates in her omnipotent capacity to withhold. First erotic love object, in birth she has provided her child with a gateway to the world; later, as mother, she becomes sole witness to the shaming frailty of his incontinent flesh. Thus, deep in the unconscious recesses of male minds Mother is not merely the devalued castrated being she is made out to be but life's original magic powerhouse, omnipotent source of resources and powerful purveyor of reality. The austere dependent 'Man-in-the-Moon' is a tantalizing illusory invention intended to obscure the alluring beacon of moon-mother's shining smile. Patriarchal culture defines emotional development as moving from infantile dependence to adult independence (rather than the concept of 'mature dependence' as suggested by Fairbairn, 1964). Strangely, despite our inherent capacities, we women, too, collude, as we look back in awe at the archaic mother's might power and in shame at our own dependence on that (female) primary caretaker. Societal emphasis on the virtues of independence and self-sufficiency encourages renunciation of interrelatedness as we vindictively demote the mother/ woman on whose ministrations we were so dependent, in order to prove that as rule-making rational adults we have outgrown her numinous hold. Thus, we persist in our fallacious beliefs that women alone can nurture because of their biological capacity to grow a fetus, and hence, envisage postnatal nurturing, like placental nourishing, as a symbiotic process of dyadic merger-two people, tethered together as one. Such confusion of infancy and gestation leads us retrospectively to superimpose our adult cravings onto babyhood as a time of glorified dual osmosis. Conceptualizing the newborn as a helpless (benign or parasitic) fetus we become unable to conceive either of mother or newborn as a separate person in her/his own right. Paradoxically, alongside this idealization, we treat the human yearning for intimate union as a shameful regressive desire to return to the womb and infancy, which in turn colors our ambivalent attitude towards women who come to signify desired/abhorred closeness, nurturance and subjection in contrast to cultural ideals of independence and control.

**MALE/FEMALE - FEMININE/MASCULINE** The foundations of both gender differentiation and stereotypy must already be sought in perinatal symbolization: In the time before thought-images, stemming from the dual sources of bodily sensations and intimate human interactions, coalesce, pulsating in and out of consciousness as the baby gradually forms a sense of an emergent self. The parents' emotional orientation (constructed within a particular socio-historical/cultural milieu) and each baby's unique endowment, together form the matrix within which the child's psychic configuration of body schema and the gendered self occur. My psychoanalytic studies reveal that on an unconscious level, there is a vast difference for the pregnant and parturient mother in relating to her son as opposed to a daughter, who Russian-doll fashion, already contains within her ovaries the eggs of her own future fetus and the womb in which her baby will reside. A daisy-chain of successive navelstrings connect the baby girl backwards to her mother and through her to maternal grand and great grandmother, and forwards, if she is to have a daughter, to her female descendants. The female infant denotes for the mother an interiority and an umbilical lineage which stops short at the male. A lesbian may have difficulty with the idea of fetal maleness impregnating her womb in which he resides; a heterosexual woman may cherish the male fetus, not only as a tangible 'internalized' part of her partner but as materialization of a male form of herself. The little girl's body is a miniature copy of the mother's female body which has just given birth, whereas a newborn son thrusts his male differentness at his mother. The former touches off identificatory sensations, the latter a frisson of erotic attachment. How each mother reacts to son or daughter is embedded deep in her own sense of sexual identity, her affirming or negating internal relationship to her own early mother and father, and the satisfaction she finds in her bodily and emotional relationship with her sexual partner. It is also influenced by her recent gratifying or traumatic experience of having given birth. Similarly, the baby's father imbues the male or female newborn with his own unconscious gender connotations. Thus, the baby's core gender identity is determined by

gradual accretion of his/her own sexed bodily experience and is influenced by parental physical care, attributions and fantasies. In addition, gender role identity also builds upon early identifications with primary caregivers. Our common biological substrata and 'androgynous' psychological capacity to identify with both parents, allow for a great degree of flexibility and overlap between the sexes. In the wake of Freud's 'neat parallelism between male and female sexual development' (Freud, 1931, p. 226) and his opponents' concept of innate femininity or masculinity, we now postulate an early undifferentiated stage when both boys and girls wish to be both male and female, to have both a penis and breasts, to impregnate and give birth as well. As reality dawns with realization of fixed gender capacities, both little boy and girl have to relinquish the desire to be unlimited leading to a recategorization of their relation to the parents in gender terms (Fast, 1979). Recognizing anatomical finiteness must threaten narcissism as each of us discover we can belong only to one sex despite our psychic bisexuality (Chiland, 1980). However, recognizing difference between the genders and generations enables the child to come to terms with reality restrictions and to consolidate his or her sexually differentiated body image, by renouncing the future procreational role of the other sex. [A feat which also necessitates recognition and acceptance of indefinite postponement of full genital functioning until adulthood (Edgecombe & Burgner, 1975)]. Thus, gradually, through active biopsychic experience of the gendered physical body<sup>2</sup> a male or female body-ego is established by the second year of life (see Galenson & Roiphe, 1977). In addition to gender-identity and sexual-partner orientation (see Tyson, 1982), other emotional identifications take place for both boy and girl with mother, father, siblings and others. These identifications do not necessarily carry a 'sex tag' and many can exist simultaneously. I envisage them not as distinct or discrete categories but as symbolic attributes of the self which fluctuate and vary at each childhood developmental stage and transitional phase in adulthood, are repeatedly lost, refound or reformulated and reintegrated or discarded with growth. Thus, in a non-sexist society which recognizes people rather than genders, the finiteness of being male or female could apply to mental representations of body-image [as receptive enclosed inner space vs. external erectable penis (see Erikson, 1964 and Kestenberg, 1968)] and reproductive capacities alone. However, as noted earlier, when women are primary caregivers for both males and females in a society which promotes gender role splitting and devalues women, little boys have to 'dis-identify' (Greenson, 1968) from their mothers in order to become separate and 'superior', and little girls feel guilty regarding paternal phallic identification (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964) and unentitled to their 'masculine' aspirations. As one of my female patients poignantly said: 'I have a person inside without a voice-an autistic boy, alert, excited but unable to speak ... I have difficulty keeping inner and outer in touch. The voice from the deep is always under threat of sinking back, getting lost and swallowed up inside. There's a battle going on, something wants to keep me a little girl yet I'm also nauseous, pregnant with feelings. At the same time, I'm afraid I'll get lost and unable to get out of a trap deep inside that is trying to shut part of me down so I'll just be like my mother and never be able to achieve.' I am suggesting that the very same psychic capacity to identify with the other sex, which in the past has usually been socially curbed and eroded by masculine/feminine expectations attached to traditional sex-role identity, today can be therapeutically recaptured and revitalized as a source of creative strength for members of both sexes.<sup>3</sup> Cultural permission' for sons and daughters of mothers to utilize a broader acceptable range of identifications and capacities is predicated by social recognition of women (mothers) as subjects in their own right rather than nurturing/digesting placental objects. Granting that, we could examine the fascinating idea that the placenta is a conjoint creation, not a product of the mother's body but a potentiality 'bought' by the fetus, as it is formed by the cells of the trophoblast, burrowing into the endometrial lining of the uterus. The fetus creates the means for interchange. By locating the mother as object, placenta rather than person, metabolizing container and sole source of enviable goodies, we disavow our own capacities to provide creative containment for ourselves: 'I have no inner space to digest my thoughts because I've always felt I belonged to my mother and needed to be like her, looking after others and at the disposal of friends and clients. I'm all full of secrets and other people's deposits. My empty mother had no life except through me-she invaded me and took over my meagre space,

wiping me out with her version of me while she fed me her pap. All my life I've had a gap in me. not a space but a lonely area of non-being that turned into a hole whenever my mother disappeared. I wanted to have a baby to fill my hole like my mother had done. But now I feel I want to wait until I can turn the gap into a space for me, inside me, in which I can be the essence of myself and respect who I am for myself.' (The same patient speaking). We live in exciting times of unprecedented change-not only has feminist consciousness been raised and femaleness celebrated in women, but in parallel, a change has occurred in men's concepts of the legitimacy of their own nurturing capacities and maternal identifications, giving women access to 'masculine' enterprise hitherto restricted to men and allowing non-macho men to feel feminine without being effeminate.

PARENTING ORIENTATIONS I would like therefore, to end with a model depicting the range of parental orientations defined not by biological gender but by psychological conceptions. Whereas traditionally the male-female based division of childcare roles of mother and father were strictly defined by culture and anatomy, in these times of increasing recognition of unconscious forces and greater liberalization of gender-identity, a variety of choices are open to the western parent which in turn, influence the nature of the child's gender construction and early experience. Elsewhere, I have elaborated conscious and unconscious aspects of this model describing various parental orientations (Raphael-Leff, 1985a, 1985b) which parallel psychoanalytical theoretical positions (Raphael-Leff, 1986) based on differing maternal and paternal identifications and concepts of neonatal endowment. These include: The Facilitator mother, who identified with an idealized concept of a mother's maternity, regards pregnancy as the culmination of her own feminine identity. The birth brings a long awaited prize, realization of the postponed childhood wish to have a baby of her own. She believes that the baby will initiate labour when s/he is ready to emerge and wishes to have as 'Natural' a birth as possible to facilitate their reunion. The Facilitator believes her baby is in communion with her even in the womb. She experiences herself and the baby fused in blissful symbiotic unity, and makes the unconscious equation: As her placenta functions to bring nutrients and remove toxins and waste products for the fetus, so will she serve in her maternal capacity as 'container,' as medium for his/her gratification. Therefore, postnatally, she jealously guards her exclusive intimacy with the newborn, believing that only she, the biological mother possesses the intuitive awareness to decipher the infant's subtle non-verbal communications familiar to her from breastfeeding and their synchronized rhythms and communion during pregnancy. She wishes to dedicate herself to the infant, submerging herself in his/her patterns and spontaneously meeting needs as they arise. This constant attentiveness necessitates proximity to her helpless baby day and night, to ensure her immediate response to crying, which for the Facilitator always expresses a whole range of potential appeals. The Regulator mother sees pregnancy as a rather tedious means to the end of 'getting' a baby. She wishes to have a swift and 'Civilized' birth, utilizing medical technology to minimize discomfort. By contrast to the Facilitator, she distinguishes between what she regards as 'real' (legitimate) crying and 'grizzling' or fussing' which like noise can be ignored. She regards mothering as an institutionalized form of primary child-care perpetuated through ideology, female powerlessness and gullibility. Resolving to avoid the trap of denigrated motherhood she aims to resume her 'real life' and personal identity as soon as possible after the birth. Determined to preserve her own personal space, she introduces co-carers early on, believing that the baby does not discriminate between caregivers and that security lies not in unbroken maternal care but continuity of routine. The Regulator hopes to present her child with the model of a mother who is a fulfilled person rather than a devoted but self-denying downtrodden full-time mother. Whereas the Facilitator adapts to her baby, the Regulator expects the baby to adapt. She regards her own task as socializing the asocial infant, and upon her return from hospital reinstates the hospital regime or establishes a routine of her own which is designed to regulate the baby and minimize the unpredictability of his/her demands. The existence of the routine also simplifies changeover of carers. It clarifies the ambiguity of the baby's needs (without reverting to empathic intuition) and rationally controls the seemingly insatiable demands and primitive impulses of the pre-social baby, thereby granting the mother some distance from the threat of engulfment by the whirlpool of infantile emotions. For the Regulator, a boy baby, differentiated

from the start, is less threatening than risk of boundary slippage with a girl baby. Conversely, the Facilitator welcomes the little girl's similarity to herself, promoting greater mutual-identification and permeable boundaries. Similarly, fathers may be delineated into Participators, who have access to early identification with the nurturing mother, and wish to be actively involved in pregnancy, birth and child-care and Renouncers, who have dis-identified with mother and all things feminine, and prefer to maintain a traditional division of labour. Where the female Regulator has a Participator partner who is willing to mother the baby on a non-sexist basis, child-care is shared between them. To free herself to engage meaningfully in the adult world of socializing or employment, the Regulator must either be supported by her Renouncer spouse or earn sufficiently to employ someone, usually a Facilitator, to help her out or else she relies on a friend or relative. Failing this, she may succumb to postnatal depression due to enforced full-time togetherness with her baby. By contrast, the Facilitator married to a Participator, may find him intrusive and competitive over her exclusive maternal role. He in turn may be so envious of her containment of the fetus in her womb, so awed by her capacity to give birth and suckle the infant, that he unconsciously spoils her intimate connection with the newborn, intruding, taking over possessively or separating her from the infant. The Facilitator who is forced to spend time away from her baby, either due to other emotional commitments, medical intervention or economic necessity will succumb to postnatal depression, feeling that the perfect mothering she wishes to provide for her child is ruined beyond repair. What she needs is to be mothered by her spouse or mother so that she in turn can mother her baby. If her Participator partner can sublimate his mothering ability into protectively caring for her during pregnancy and neonatal days, or if she has a Renouncer husband who can adequately provide for her, the Facilitator will realize her fantasy of bountifully nurturing her infant like a primordial Moon Goddess or Earth-Mother. However such immersion in mothering is often at the expense of her own wider 'selfhood' and may involve martyred dedication. A single mother on her own can be either Facilitator or Regulator given adequate social and emotional support. Without some backing, guilt-ridden and anguished, she too, like the frustrated Facilitator or Regulator, will succumb to postnatal depression as she fails to achieve her own her own standards of mothering (Raphael-Leff, 1985b). In twoparent families (heterosexual or same-sexed), various permutations occur, ranging from the traditional 'mother-expressive fatherinstrumental' roles, through role reversal of domestic father and public sphere-working mother, to egalitarian shared childcare by two homebased 'mothering figures' or by two working-fathers' and a childminder. In each of these four extreme variants, what we find are individuals who stress identification with one or other parent in their own families of origin, unable to comfortably integrate and simultaneously express both so-called masculine and feminine ideals. However, increasingly we are seeing another form of parenting based on coexisting multiple personal identifications and recognition of the subjectivity of self and other. We may call these parents "Reciprocators." As they regard each other as partners and themselves as free agents, they are also more likely to treat the baby as a lively reciprocal contributor to their interaction rather than undifferentiated blob, a demanding task-master or an indulged beneficiary. If facilitation is rooted in a fear of hating and regulation in a fear of loving, intersubjectivity involves recognition of each member of a relationship as separate yet sharing the same admixtures of inevitably ambivalent emotions. Such affirmation forms the matrix for a family-two or more interdependent, connected yet separate individuals who can enjoy real exchanges together, tolerating difference and acknowledging similarities. Clearly, while all infants share some universal early experiences, specific assumptions underpinning parental orientations will determine the emotional quality of interrelationships in addition to particular emphasis in baby-care. Thus divergences occur in psychological as well as physical handling of their babies resulting in subtle differences in each infant's ongoing experience of being emotionally held. CONCLUSIONS My central thesis has been that childcare is determined by the parents' cultural and psychosocial gender and sex-role identifications and their specific conscious and unconscious beliefs about a baby's capacities and needs, how these shall be met and by whom. Whereas in the past these were defined by reproductive role stereotypes and traditional baby care patterns, non-sexist liberalization of potentialities has opened up new opportunities both in the public sphere and in



childrearing. Recent neonatal research has introduced a fascinating new dimension: we are rapidly gaining more understanding of the newborn, who, when in a state of inactive alertness, is found to be neither passively indiscriminating or undifferentiated as seen by the Regulator mother (and Ego Psychologists) nor rapturously fused in mother-baby merger as seen by the Facilitator mother (and Object Relations theorists) but is capable of being a sentient, active partner in human interaction. Far from helplessly and humiliatingly dependent, recent research reveals the infant as a person with what Daniel Stern calls formidable capacities' (1985, p. 67) to distill and organize, abstract, global qualities of experience. Similarly, far from being strong and independent, as adults, we too continue to share some frailties and dependent needs. This revelation and its influence on developmental theorists and primary caretakers alike, coupled with feminist-propelled shared nurturing by parents of both sexes, must affect future unconscious concepts of infantile helplessness, the numinous power of the omnipotent archaic female mother and the need to envy, debase and disenfranchise her later in life in the name of adult Independence and Self-Sufficiency. In recent years, neonatal research has advanced dramatically due to new split screen and slow motion video observation techniques. As findings filter through the media to young people of both sexes, babies are increasingly reframed as active partners in an exciting relationship rather than passive recipients or greedy demanders of care. Faced with neonatal skills and interactive capacities, our own infantile dependency appears less shameful, and independence less virtuous. Correspondingly, nurturing, released from its placental origins, no longer need remain the domain of female mothers. As a new generation of babies grows up in interdependent dual-sex primary-care households, will these boys and girls realize that given our psychic capacities for fantasy and for simultaneous identification with both parents, bodily confinement to a single sex-be it male or female-need define no more than our physical limitations? Undoubtedly, that old moon-mother strung up by her navelstring will continue to wax and wane in our unconscious metaphors of prenatal interuterine life and birth. However in conscious appraisal, (given shared child-care and respect for the sentient baby), is it utopic to believe that grievances of helpless surrender to postnatal frustrations might be directed equally towards male and female co-parents? Freed from guilt of being the exclusive placental target and seat of archaic anxieties, mothers thus released, could become self-respecting subjective agents. REFERENCES REFERENCE NOTES 1. Most societies have excluded men from the birthchamber (Mead &Newton, 1967). However, ethological studies have shown that exposure to newborns creates maternal behavior in virgin female and male rats (Shaw &Darling, 1984). Since Western fathers have been welcomed in delivery rooms, and mothers have been offered early contact with their newborns, a change has been seen to occur in their bonding patterns with their infants. Paternal 'engrossment' is a recognized phenomenon (Greenberg, 1984) heightened by early exclusive contact, such as that following caesarean birth. In a triadic situation, fathers with early extensive exposure hold their infant twice as much as the mother, vocalize and touch the infant more, but smile less than the mother (Parke, 1979). Mothers and fathers show distinctive 'species specific' sequences of first tactile contact with their newborn [finger-tip touch of extremities to stroking palm-contact with trunk] (Klaus &Kennell, 1983), maintain eye contact, pitch their voices high and are equally proficient at discriminating crying and responding to infant cues, although differing somewhat in the specific response. Clearly, as these two paediatric experts suggest, a 'fail safe' overdetermined 'cascade of interactions' operate in unison to ensure mother-baby bonding, [all of which can be seen to equally apply to fathers] including cutaneous and proprioceptive olfactory, visual, vocal stimulation, and increased secretion of maternal hormones, oxytocin and prolactin (Klaus &Kennell, 1983). The later, prolactin, appears in high concentrations during pregnancy, increases dramatically with early postpartum nipple stimulation and decreases rapidly after breastfeeding begins. Through prolactin, milk production can be induced in non-pregnant women and adoptive mothers. However, it also circulates in low levels in males and can be inadvertently activated by some interventions, such as administration of phenothiazines, a high dose of which can induce lactation in men. It is not too difficult to make the imaginative leap to futuristic paternal nursing. This flight of fancy pales beside the remarkable statement made by J.Z. Young, Emeritus Professor of Anatomy at

University College London, that 'the differentiation of mankind into physically and psychologically different groups with specialized functions is becoming less marked. Even the secondary sex characteristics are minimized (men with long hair, women with small breasts). One can imagine that if extogenesis ever became practicable mankind might cease to differentiate into two sexes at all' (Young, 1971, p. 575, my italics). 2. Recent neurological research cites organizing influences on the brain exerted by sex-specific hormones and/or neurotransmitters influencing structural variation (Dorner, 1989), and psychosocial research into expressive actions of neonates suggests that early characteristic differences are apparent between the sexes, with male babies being 'more vigorous and assertive' and females 'more observant of the mother and making more prespeech and more delicate gestures' (Trevorthen, 1979, p. 551). 3. Located in the norm of the times, namely mother-dominated families within a patriarchal society, early psychoanalytic theories stressed achievement of same-sex gender identification (related to hetero/homosexual choice of partner) while neglecting the wealth of possible dual or multiple same or cross-sex identifications with capacities. Nevertheless, all are consistent with an assumption that initially, inherent bisexuality enables both little girls and little boys to form a symbiotic-identification with their primary-care person, invariably a woman (Freud, 1925; Jacobson, 1964; Mahler, 1975). Thus both sexes identify with and wish to emulate the 'omnipotent' nurturing mother on whom they are dependent. With growing differentiation, both boys and girls are seen to try to detach themselves from the archaic mother and the fearful attraction of relapsing back into primary identification and fusion with her. The Patriarchal boy separates off through increasing awareness of his phallic difference. Granted ideological supremacy both in the family and in public because of the very elusiveness of his role, father's unavailability means that until recently, the boy has defined and constructed his masculinity in negative terms, by denigrating all things feminine (Chodorow, 1978). Thus, the patriarchal son repudiates his core of feminine creativity, emphatic relatedness and capacity to nurture. This closing off of early female experience may be envisaged as analogous to the 'masculinization' of the gonads in the female embryo and closing of the penile tract. Under optimal conditions, although acquiring his masculinity the boy need not lose his feminine nurturing/empathic capacities. To put it another way, if he is able to retain a sense of containing an internalized image of his mother's good breast as well as the good penis of his father, through identification, his own penis may acquire 'reparative and creative qualities' (Klein, 1945, p. 412). However, where the father is himself unconsciously dissatisfied with maleness, cruelly competitive or exaggeratedly 'masculine,' or where the enveloping mother is contemptuous of or unable to facilitate the boy's identification with the father, primitive envy of female fecundity and primary identification with mother may prevail undiluted within the learned masculine identity of social ascription of sex beginning at birth. Conversely, the little girl, who also has to differentiate from her first love object the pre-oedipal all-embracing moon-mother, has nothing intrinsically different with which to liberate herself from dependency and boundary confusion (at times fostered by the mother for her own emotional needs). Ideally, if she has been valued as a unique individual by a fulfilled mother confident in her own female 'personhood,' has access to a caring father-figure, and has a sense of her own inner creativity, she may have the secure base from which to develop her own female identity from within. However, generally, the little girl in patriarchal society has been faced with a daunting task: socially, she has been expected to identify with her domestically powerful yet publicly demeaned self-effacing mother, whom she senses is subtly despised for her very gender. Her own gender often exposes her to double threats of devaluation and sexualization from males even within the 'emotional hothouse' (Homey, 1939) of the family circle. Her father, a mother's son grown up, may impose on her his own expectations, the 'nurturing imperative' of his own male belief in entitlement to her unconditional devotion (Westkott, 1986). Physically, she has no external organs to indicate her future female capacity to bear and suckle a baby. Psychologically she may be plagued by having no evidence that her mother, retaliating for spoiling envy (Klein, 1945), has not robbed her daughter's body of its good contents and future fertility. Finally, the girl is also aware of lacking the psychosocially idealized organ that will enable her to placate or restore the avenging mother' (Heimann, 1951, p. 31) arouse her erotic interest or to be the phallus

her mother desires (Lacan, 1958). Little wonder then, that penis envy was found to prevail. Many girls resolve the conflict by splitting—either growing into women who disavowed identification with their early mother's awesome/denigrated maternity, while accepting identification with her active agency and/or basic female sexuality or vice versa.

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