Modern Individuality and the Social Isolation of Mother and Child

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In recent sociological and psychological theories the mother-child relationship often functions as a fundamental context and explanation of the ontogenetic development of individuality. It has, however, been virtually ignored by cultural and social historians most notably historians of individualism. Cultural-historical research on transformations of the modes of human interaction in early modern western Europe usually focus on three elements: individuality, the printed word and literacy, and the nuclear family. Because the individualism which emerged between the 12th and the 16th centuries corresponded to changes in forms of social interaction and to the psychological sources out of which individuality was to be developed, the new individualism decisively influenced the role of woman as mother and the attitude of society toward the child. In the following pages, I shall extend the discussion of "modernity" as characterized by individuality to include the changes in the idea of mother and child and their significance for family and society as it is manifested in the writings of the Humanists. The mother-child relation although not the prime cause of the development of individuality, nevertheless greatly influenced it, just as emergent it reshaped the relation of mother and child.

Language and Writing as Subjective and Social Power

The mother-child dyad as a focus of human relationships and affection was a conscious product of society and was already reflected in the literature of the late Middle Ages, the period in which western European individuality was born. In The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200, Colin Morris argues that the individuality familiar to the contemporary West is far from being a universal human condition and experience. On the contrary:
"Taking a world view, one might almost regard it as an eccentricity among cultures." Benjamin Nelson and Charles Trinkaus write: "Western man has irrevocably been cast out—has cast himself out—of a childlike world of enchantment and undividedness. Since the days of his exile (or was it withdrawal?) he has been wandering the world. Wherever he goes he is readily recognized since he bears a burden for everyone to see—the burden of selfhood. The ego is at once his sign of Cain and his crown of glory."

In The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, which first appeared in 1860, Burckhardt characterizes the individual in the Renaissance by the great power of his other subjectivity: "an objective treatment and consideration of the State and of all things of this world became possible. The subjective side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis; man became a spiritual individual, and recognized himself as such." According to Burckhardt, Man in the Middle Ages "was conscious of himself only as member of a race, people, party, family or corporation—only through some general category." Although Morris and Southern, who also studied early Humanism, present texts from the twelfth century which reveal early manifestations of individualism "this impulse to the highest individual development" is only developed and stabilized in the 15th and early 16th centuries. Morris characterizes individuality as the development of "self-awareness and self-expression [of] . . . the freedom of a man to declare himself without paying excessive attention to the demands of convention or the dictates of authority." If we employ this criterion for distinguishing 'individualism,' "then we may well find that the twelfth century was in this respect a peculiarly creative age. It is in this sense that Bolgar discerns in it 'for the first time the lineaments of modern man.' "

One condition for this form of personal differentiation is believed to be writing. Language "should have the capacity to explain most aptly," says Vives, what man thinks and "by its means much power of judgment should be developed" since without it "our intellect is enveloped by too dense a darkness for it to see through." The vernacular languages of western Europe were not sufficient for the accurate expression of complex "inner states" and refined feelings and sentiments, so that the individual did not have available the means accurately to represent them.
In both the Renaissance of the twelfth century and the Renaissance of the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries the languages in which it became possible to "express oneself" in a subjective manner were foreign to the authors themselves. Transmitted into Latin, man's experiences, feelings, and thoughts became abstract and alien and it was perhaps just this which permitted their elaboration.

The "discovery of the individual" was inseparable from an ability to make flexible use of written language. Vives characterizes language as "the instrument of human society, for not otherwise could the mind be revealed, so shut in is it by the grossness and density of the body." The twelfth-century Renaissance would have been unthinkable, says Morris, without Latin. Erasmus recognized Greek as the language without which the thinking of his period would have been nothing.

What distinguishes the "first" from the "second" Renaissance is the latter's conscious, principled emphasis on the individual's uniqueness, his autonomy and personal freedom, his will to power, and his desire to be distinguished, to be respected and famous.

Vives describes the contemporary man:

Man's mind, freed from anxiety for the needs of the present, began to live again, and to contemplate leisurely, as it were, this theatre, in which man was placed by God; to examine separate objects, which were in the heavens and in the elements, earth and water: namely constellations, living beings, plants, gems, metals, stones, and the contents of his own mind. Curiosity led him forward, and when the beginning of a thread is secured, it is found to be connected with another set of things quite different from those which were being examined. Then, in showing his inventions as if they were children born from himself, he derived pleasure by no means small in imparting them to others. From the admiration of others for him, he felt at first great joy, but when all eyes were turned towards him, an idea of superiority and pride grew in him. A violent desire for display exciting greater admiration, increased to such a degree, that some persons neglected all the duties of life, so as to devote and give up themselves entirely to investigation; and then if anyone contradicted them, there arose strife, factions and sects. This desire impelled others to know what no one else knew.

For the Humanists and later bourgeois world the spoken and written word become an important dimension of the power in society. Vives says language "is the treasury of culture." In both Renaissances it was not the aristocracy who selected the languages
of the educated, Latin assured the possession of languages that were not the languages of the rulers nor of the general population.

Language, however, also becomes an instrument of control in the relations between child and adult. Vives writes:

Like as we have the mind by the gift of God, so we have this or that language, by the gift of art. And so, both at home by parents, and in school by teachers, it is a necessary task to give boys facility in good enunciation, as far as their age permits. In which task parents will be a great help, if for the sake of their children they take care to express the feelings of their minds in chaste words and in sound and apt oration; and secure that nurses and governesses do the like, and those amongst whom they dwell, so that they do not speak perplexingly, absurdly, barbarously, and do not manifest those faults of pronunciation, which, if imitated by those of tender age will cling to them. Chrysippus, on this account, even wished to have educated women chosen as nurses. It is of great importance, says Cicero, what each one hears every day at home, and with whom the boy speaks, for he will speak in the manner that the father, pedagogues, mother, speak. This has no slight influence on the learning of those languages which are acquired by art, in its effects both upon the understanding of the thoughts of others and upon the expression of our own.17

The capacity for "objective treatment and consideration"18 which is to become so characteristic for the sixteenth and following centuries, is closely connected to the possibility of writing, which "enabled man clearly to separate words, to manipulate their order and to develop syllogistic forms of reasoning."19 The written word records the flow of oral conversation, enables the comparison of various statements made at various times and in different places; it becomes much easier to recognize and to detect contradictions.20 Through writing people become spatially and temporally independent of each other. The written word, however, is also a precondition for the development of mental reflexivity and abstract thought, which can put past, present, and future in a new, linear context. Thus written language also shapes man's understanding. Vives writes:

MAN has received from God a great gift, viz. a mind, and the power of inquiring into things; with which power he can behold not only the present, but also cast his gaze over the past and the future. In all this, man considered the chief use of so great an instrument to be to examine all things, to collect, to compare, and to roam through the universe of nature as if it were his own possession.21
At the same time written language increases the difference between the private and the public spheres. Vives considers language as "the shrine of erudition, and as it were a storeroom for what should be concealed, and what should be made public." I believe that one function of the nuclear family (with its center of "mother and child") is to bridge this gap. Language as a criterion for distinguishing social groups becomes an explicit object of reflection for the Humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and provides as well an important argument for the isolation of mother and child. Language and writing become a central aspect of the successful attempt of the bourgeois to emancipate themselves, and at the same time exclude both women and lower social strata from the centers of power.

The Rationalization of the Relation of Mother and Child

Like the "individual," the independent, nuclear family, which lives in its own separated and separating household, is a distinctive characteristic of the Modern European Period. Whiting writes that "the independent nuclear family living in a single household is by no means the only or even the common pattern. Various forms of extended and polygynous households are more common among the societies of the world that retain their traditional culture." As Marc Bloch points out, from the thirteenth century onwards a contraction of family size was in process. "The vast kindreds of not so long before were slowly being replaced by groups much more like our small families of today." For the reform movements with their representatives, Luther and Calvin, for the Renaissance Humanists as well as for the Italy of the Quattrocento, the "family," "marriage," and "child-rearing," become very important subjects. The Humanists in particular emphasized the importance of the nuclear family, with particularly stressing the relation of mother and child. For Erasmus, no force for good can surpass the child's home atmosphere. During their early years children also need a great deal of care. In these matters, what the mother does is of chief importance. For Betty S. Travitsky, one of the few authors who have studied women and mothers in the Renaissance, the Renaissance distances itself from "the misogynist thinking of the Middle Ages, which recognized the humanity of women only insofar as they doffed their feminin-
ity and adopted the celibate life." Burckhardt had argued that both the women and the men of the Italian Renaissance participated in the world of intellect, the world of public affairs, and the world of sexual freedom. In her view, "a related development of increased respect for the mother as the nurturer of young children" has not yet been accorded similar recognition. The historical process which brought about the ideology of motherhood, however, had an ambiguous meaning for women and children. The call for the domestication of mother and child was built upon their social isolation.

The Social and the Biological Human Unit

In the Humanist sources discussing early child-rearing the most prominent demand is for the social isolation and intimate attachment of the biological mother and child. The two elements are linked in the Humanists' minds: only the exclusive togetherness of mother and child guarantees the mutual emotional attachment of this pair. Some, like Erasmus and Vives, link this exclusive relationship to the mental development of the child. They were also quite conscious, particularly Erasmus, of the function of maternal and parental love as a disciplinary method in the educational process. This aspect of "love" was later seen by Freud to be an essential part of the child-rearing practice of the bourgeoisie.

One of the first writers who discuss this love between parent and child is Philipp of Novara (about 1260). He assumes, as Freud does later on, a close link between maternal breastfeeding and the development of attachment, especially the child's attachment to its mother or to those persons who care for it. The close relation between mother and child is, however, not just a result of nature but is based on mutual and shared experience and is closely related to the child's need for love, social contact, attachment, and food. He writes:

Our Lord, who knows everything, has given little children three types of natural love. Two of those types are found in themselves. The third type is found in those who rear the child and care for it. The first type of love is related to the woman who first feeds the child with her milk. The child will love this woman and recognize her. This could be the mother or the wet-nurse. It very often happens that the child will only drink milk from a woman it is used to. The second type of love is related to those people
who greet the child with love and joy, who play with it, who carry it from natural causes, sympathy and from the process of feeding. Novara stresses the infant's ability to attach itself. This attachment, however, is not concentrated only on one person. The same non-exclusive view of a child's attachment can be seen in Batholomaeus Anglicus's definition of "mother" and "wet-nurse," written about 1250. The function of the mother and of the wet-nurse resemble each other without putting into question maternal love and mutual attachment:

The mother has her name—according to Isidor—because she gives the breast to the child (mamma). She cares for the infant: as long as it is in the womb it receives nourishment from her blood. After the delivery this blood turns into milk and runs into the breast. This milk then nourishes the child. Therefore it is most appropriate when the mother feeds her own child. The mother's milk should always be preferred to the milk of another woman. The mother conceives with pleasure but she delivers with pain and anxiety. She loves her child, she cuddles and kisses it, she cares and feeds it with great attention. . . . The greater the pain the more a mother loves her child and the more she cares for its education. . . .

The wet-nurse is so called because she nourishes the child (nutrix a nutriendo est dicta); according to Isidor, the wet-nurse rejoices as much as the mother, when the child is happy; and is sad when the child is miserable; she picks it up when it falls, she suckles it when it cries, covers it with kisses, puts on its nappies and covers it up when it has thrown off its bedding, washes and dries it, tickles the squirming child with her fingers, teaches it to speak by making funny noises—in tongue-twisting ways. She gives the child medicine to cure its illnesses. She carries in on hands, shoulders and knees, and holds it when it cries. She chews its food, so that the toothless child can swallow it more easily, and in this way stills its hunger. With singing and whistling she rocks it to sleep, binds its limbs in swaddling and blankets, but in such a way that the child's limbs will not be bent. With baths and salves she refreshes its tired and exhausted body.

Although the wet-nurse is still being mentioned in the fourteenth and following centuries, she is mostly referred to in the context of the belief that the mother should look after, care, and comfort the child herself. Intimacy built on a one-to-one relationship is a much cherished thought of the time. Around 1433 Konrad Bitschin condemns women who do not want "to care for the children which they have born themselves," a custom he says has "become widespread amongst" mothers. The reason for this, in his opinion, can be put down "entirely to their lack of sexual chastity . . . it is only because they know no moderation that they
don't want to comfort their own children." He relies on the traditional belief that breastfeeding and sexual intercourse are incompatible. Sexual intercourse stops the production of milk by transforming it back into menstrual blood where it is thought to have originated. Women are reproached for their sexuality; this is the source of the impurities of inhumanity. Bitschin and other writers suppose that the decision to breastfeed one's child depends solely on the mother's interests. He himself qualifies his demands for maternal nuturance on hygienic grounds, which equally concern both mother and child.

In earlier writings men accept the practical knowledge of wet-nurses and mothers because of the long experience behind it, but in the writings of the Renaissance, a male authoritarianism surfaces which grants no power to female knowledge. The assumption of full male control over both mother and child is implied in the demand for the exclusivity of the relationship between mother and child. At first, this is manifested only in subtle ways. Konrad von Megenburg writes about 1352:

A woman and indeed every mother who refused to suckle her child is like a raven; for they often throw their young out of the nest because they don't want to feed them. . . . And even more ungrateful is the human who in order to have a comfortable life gives away its own, yea even God's image and leaves the child in the care of strangers, where it is abandoned to careless tendance and therefore an uncertain fate, even though it is in fact the future to its father's name.

In the writings of previous centuries, a concern for the welfare of both mother and child are major considerations in the arguments in favour of wet-nurses. Here, women are accused of "idleness" if they refuse to nurse their children themselves or if they want to share it with other women. In a fictitious conversation written by Leon Battista Alberti in 1432, two men speak at length on the subject of the love for one's children and the pleasure and anguish to be had from them:

So you must admit that its own mother definitely will provide the child with the most suitable and healthy nourishment, because she is much more modest and pure than other women. I do not wish to waste time discussing who will care for the little ones with more love, fidelity, faithfulness, good sense, and devotion—a wet-nurse who receives pay or the real mother. It is equally unnecessary to recount how much the mother's love of her child is sustained and strengthened when she suckles it at her breast and sees it grow.
The emphasis placed by society on the maternal role as the most important function for a woman becomes more and more prominent in the writings of the time. Maternal love and the bonding process between mother and child are central themes. This is not to say that the importance of personal care in the development of a child had hitherto remained unrecognized: Salimbene von Parma records in his chronicle (c. 1285) the experiment made by Emperor Frederick II, who attempted to discover what kind of language children would develop if left to grow up in isolation. This "insane notion" failed, Salimbene wrote, since "without the attention and physical contact, without the smiles and cares on the part of the nurses and guardians," children "could not live at all."

With a new ideal of man, however, a new concern with the role of the mother, who is seen as essential in creating the ideal man, emerges. "Men can do all things if they will," says Alberti, but the determination of cause and effect, the association of maternal love with the social and mental development of the child, with the power of his will, become a strong and deciding factor in male thinking about women in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Women must constantly be made aware of the unique and irreversible significance they have for their children.

**Biological and Physiological Individualism**

In his educational writings (1444), Mepheus Vegius illustrates the common belief in a linkage between biology, human interaction, and human development. He writes:

For the composition of milk exerts as much influence on the development of physical and mental qualities as inherited characteristics.... Nothing could therefore be more wrong than for a mother to reject immediately her child and to delegate the task of feeding it to a stranger; examples taken from the world of animals and plants can serve as a warning in this context. It is completely erroneous to believe that nature endowed women with breasts more for reasons of beauty and adornment than for the purpose of nurturing their children. Let us put an end to such vanity, perhaps more accurately described as inhumanity, something not to be found even amongst she-wolves and lionesses; a trait which leads a woman to thrust her child from her breast in disdain and disgust—at least, such is the impression which one gains—merely in order to parade her beauty and lasting youthful freshness before all.... Is it not completely unnatural for a mother, who has born her child beneath her heart and nourished it with her blood before she ever set
eyes upon it, to deny this same child the gift of her own milk at the same moment as it sees the light of day, when she looks it in the eyes, smiles at the child and responds to its childish spluttering requests with her care-

ses? The result of this denial is that the child transfers its love of its mother, a love which is innate in every creature, to another person, so that mother and child become alienated from each other and that the latter develops a far greater attachment to the woman who grants it this nourishment than to its mother who denies the child it. In the case of all creatures, the love which springs from living together is the most perma-


In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it is the women who are most often accused of inhumanity towards their children. In his Handbook on the Upbringing of Children (1508), Aelius Antonius Nebrissensi appeals directly to mothers: It is not only the “po-
tency and composition of the sperm,” which “is capable of de-
veloping similar physical and mental characteristic,” for there is now no doubt that “the milk also has this effect.” He gives equal signifi-
cance to the biological contribution of father and mother. His conclusion has been reached partly through the observation of the similarity of individuals to each other in the child-parent dyad in which the behavior, gestures and characteristics of the child come to resemble most strongly those of the person with whom it is most closely associated in infancy. “Infants savour of the nature of the person by whom they are suckled” and “when fed upon a stranger’s milk love the wet-nurse more than the mother,” writes Omnibonus Ferrarius (1577).

Only a few decades later one finds the equation of a mother not breastfeeding her infant with killing it, as in Jaques Guillemeau’s The Nursing of Children. The normative call for the isolated mother-child relationship is indicative of an increasing emotional and social differentiation associated with a more intensive per-
ception of the self. The belief in physiological individualism—the biological ties which link mother and child—is part of this process. Guillemeau tells a story in which the importance of the self, the perception of the physiological individuality, and the relation between a woman and her child are all present and linked:

And to conclude, I would have you imitate Blanche of Castile sometime Queene of France, who nurs’d the King, Sr Lewes her sonne, her owne selfe, and on a time as she was out of the way, her child being froward, a great Ladie of the Court gave him sucke to still him and make him quiet, which coming to the Queenes eare she presently took the child and thrust
her finger so far downe into his throat that she made him vomit up all the milk he had suckt of the said Ladie, being very angry that any woman should give her child suke but her self.41

In this example, the physiological needs of the infant are of secondary interest. Maternal breast-feeding turns into a principle.42

In *On the Feeding and Management of Children from their Birth* (1565), Simon de Vallambert, who wrote the first paediatric work in French, attacks the practice of nurses who chew food thoroughly in their own mouthes and than spit or put it with their fingers into the infant’s mouth. His arguments include these: the saliva of a person may be poisonous to the infant. Food chewed by another may give rise to worms. The saliva of the individual has properties which make it suitable to him but not to another. Physiological individualism is also expressed in his condemnation of drinking out of the same glass or cup as another person.42a

*Maternal Personality and the Perfectibility of the Child*

Far more decisive, however, is the idea that a child's early experiences an only have a positive outcome if they are determined by the mother herself. Responsibility for later cognitive development rests, ideally, with the father. The significance and salience of the parents for their children is associated with a new awareness of the mental development. The instinctive love of a mother for her children does require some degree of reinforcement and enhancement. Separation of mother and child can indeed cause its fundamental disruption, as Erasmus of Rotterdam has Eutrapelus say in his private conversations of 1519.43 Mutual love is the precondition of educational influence, and since it is assumed that educational and environmental influences become effective immediately after birth, a situation which furthers a close relationship between mother and child must be created. “For the mother’s influence in the early years of upbringing in particular is no small one, since she is dealing with an extremely and malleable material,” writes Erasmus.44

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the mother’s importance for the child has become subject of almost every discussion on the raising of children. Nebressensi’s *Handbook on the upbringing of children* (1508), Erasmus’ *Colloquia* with a detailed section on
"the contented mother" (about 1519), Juan Vives' *On the raising of children* (1523), as well as Erasmus' *On an early scientific education of children* (1529), all discuss the significance of the mother’s influence on the child’s personality, well-being, and further mental development. Inter-psychical and intra-psychical behavior patterns are now seen as completely deducible from a mother’s interactions with her child. Vives writes:

For the babe first heareth her mother and first beginneth to inform her speech after hers. For that age can do nothing itself, but counterfeit and follow others, and is cunning in this thing only. She taketh her first conditions and information of mind by such as she heareth or seeth by her mother. Therefore it lieth more in the mother than men ween to make the conditions of the children. For she may make them whether she will, very good or very bad.

The verbal behavior of mother and child is an essential aspect for the educational process:

Let her give her diligence, at least wise because of her children, that she use no rude and blunt speech lest that manner of speaking take such root in the tender minds of the children, and so grow and increase together with their age, that they cannot forget it. Children will learn no speech better, nor more plainly express, than they will their mother's.

The mother shall rehearse unto them the lauds of virtue, and the dispraise of vice, and repeat oftentimes, to drive them into the children's remembrance. I would she should have some holy sayings and precepts of living commonly in use, which heard divers times, shall at the last abide in the children's remembrance, though they give no head unto them. For children run unto their mothers, and ask her advice in all things. They inquire everything of her; whatsoever she answereth, they believe and regard, and take it even for the Gospel. O mothers, what an occasion for you unto your children, to make them whether you will, good or bad!

**Maternal Love as a Means to an Educational End**

In the writings of Vives, as desirable as love between mother and child may be it is not an end in itself; intimacy must be harnessed for educational purposes:

Let the mother never laugh at any word or deed of the child when done lewdly, shamefully, naughtily, wantonly, or pertly or kiss it therefor. For children will lightly use themselves unto such things as they see be pleasant and delectable unto their father and mother, and will not love them after they be come to man's or woman's state. Therefore the
mother shall correct the child for such doings, and let it know that it
neither doth well, nor she is not content therewith. And again, on the
other side, let her embrace and kiss it, whensoever it doeth anything that
is a sign of goodness.\textsuperscript{47}

Man recognizes himself to be influential and able to shape
nature and the course of future events. A close and exclusive
relation between mother and child is the condition for moulding
the child's mental, moral and social development. His power to
mould depends on this. Shared affection and shared responsibility
for the child are seen as endangering the educative power of
the mother.

Instrumental love is the new dimension of the modern Euro-
pean period out of which emerges the bourgeois psyche. Love as a
disciplinary method can only be effective if the child cannot turn
elsewhere to receive it.\textsuperscript{48}

\textit{Disciplined Affection and Individualism}

Multiple mothering leads to radical consequences for mother
and child. It is no longer desired; now it is dangerous. Erasmus
writes:

Do you really believe that a wet-nurse can make as little fuss about the
unpleasantness of infant care as the natural mother; that she can show
the same care and concern when the nappies are full, when the child has
to pee, when it screams or is ill? Only when she loves the infant as much as
the mother, will she concern herself with all that. But then it may happen
that your own child will love you less; it has to divide its love between two
mothers. And you too will not be drawn with the same love to your child,
the moment you see that your growing child doesn't feel it has to obey
your commands. And you may become cooler in your affection when you
are forced to realise how your child is taking after its wet-nurse. For the
prime condition of all learning is the reciprocal love between teacher and
taught.\textsuperscript{49}

The parent must also be able to control its own behavior towards
the child. Too much externally manifested maternal love, Eras-
mus feared, might have undesirable consequences; therefore
mothers should not display their love to too great an extent. The
spontaneous expression of affection and the relative absence of
planning and strategic use of it represent a danger to the goals of
child-raising. It is always, however, the limitless, sensitive, exag-
generated understanding of love and care with which women and mothers are reproached, and not the failings of maternal love itself.

Historically, maternal love has hardly ever been questioned in its effect for the well-being of the child. What, however, seems to be a new aspect in the writings of Renaissance Humanists is that it is like no other love and must be the only love on which the child depends in his or her early years. It must, however, be restricted to its real function: the formation of the child’s mind and will. “Kisses,” “playing around with the child,” and “endless cuddling,” as Erasmus explains, go against to this purpose.50

We cannot stress and emphasis enough that the first few years of life are of utmost importance for the whole future life of the child. A soft and loose education and child rearing practice spoils the child and the teacher later on will have no influence on the child. Women are too indulgent and patient with their children. But what is called indulgence is in reality seduction. Those mothers should be accused of cruelty and ill-treatment.51

The withdrawal of love as a means of punishment or the showing of affection as a means of approval is an essential element of bourgeois primary family socialization and of the internalization of parental values, as Freud saw it.52 It requires, in turn, the constant control of one’s own behavior.53 This strategic use of affection requires a “self” which is able to hide its inner feelings and thoughts. The ability to have a hidden, “inner,” life becomes one of the essential differences between a young child and an adult and is at the same time one of the primary conditions for the child’s growth. Emotions are both the condition for and the danger to the development of man of reason, the “ideal” modern man. Woman serves his purpose.

NOTES

This is a version of “Moderne Individualität und gesellschaftliche Isolierung von Mutter und Kind,” Feministische Studien, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1985, pp. 34-45. Special thanks are due to Simon Srebrny for his help in translating the present text into English.


3. The term ‘dyad’ in relation to mother and child was probably used first by the genetic psychologist Edward Simmel.


5. Nelson, B. and Trinkaus C., Introduction to the Torchbook Edition. In Burckhardt, J., The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy. New York 1958, pp. 18 and 19. It needs to be added that Nelson and Trinkaus warn the reader against an idealising view of the Middle Ages. “To seek to put off this burden by whatever device is to wish to reverse the irreversible. Everyman must stumble forward through unending labyrinths without ever finding a quiet haven or journey’s end. So to devise as not to be convulsed from within or from without by the fateful heritage of self-hood: so to invest the ambiguous legacy as not to engender spiritual chaos or ‘mechanical petrification’—these are the grim mandates which were once laid upon the men of the Renaissance and which are now laid upon us who are their heirs” (p. 19).


10. Morris, C., p. 7. “If we seek for genuinely individual description from the life, we must look to men who were able to write down fluently and naturally what they saw... The same is true of the art of self-expression. The meditations of Anselm or Aelred of Rievaulx, who are able to express their affections and longings in a practised way, moving from one idea to another, would have been literally unthinkable a century before.” Morris, p. 8. See also ‘St. Anselm,’ in: Southern, R.W., Medieval Humanism and other Studies. Oxford, 1970, pp. 9-18.

am grateful to Dorinda Outram and Alex G. Keller for their helpful comments.


33. This conflict is also recognised by Bitschin, p. 104. For a more detailed discussion see Shahar, S., “Mittelalterliche Einstellungen zur Mutterschaft: eine Studie über Ambivalenz.” (Medieval Attitudes toward motherhood: a study about its ambivalence.) To appear in *Tel Aviv Jahrbuch für Deutsche Geschichte*.


42. We still seem to know little about the cultural aspects of breast-feeding. Zulu women I knew were always ready to help out a mother and breast-feed a child, for example, in cases where the mother had died. In a Tswana community in Botswana, however, it was highly unusual to breast-feed a child from another woman even in emergencies. These differences are probably grounded on opposed beliefs about children,
milk, and the female body.


In earlier sources about child-rearing practice there seems to be no indication of an emphasis or even mentioning of the mental and cognitive development in relation to the mother-child relationship. Shulamith Shahar, who is currently completing a book on child-rearing in the Middle Ages discusses sources in which the mother is often mentioned as being responsible for the child’s survival and well-being. The fifteen and sixteen Centuries indeed seem to offer a re-interpretation of the meaning and function of the mother-child relationship.


48. See Whiting, p. 34.


52. “The role, which the superego undertakes later in life, is at first played by an external power, by parental authority. The influence of the parents dominates the child by granting proofs of affections and by threats of punishment, which, to the child, mean loss of love, and which must also be feared on their own account. This objective anxiety is the forerunner of the later moral anxiety.” Freud, S., *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.* New York, 1933, pp. 89-90.