

Review of: "Biological Parenthood and Reproductive Technologies"

Simona CORSO¹

¹ Third University of Rome

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I agreed to review this article because I was intrigued by the abstract. I agree, at least in part, with one of the arguments in the article, that assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), despite their unquestionable merits, run the risk of fetishizing the biological-genetic bond, making it the most important, and inescapable, aspect of the parent-child relationship. In my experience of life, as well as a reader and scholar of literature, I have come to the conclusion that in the parent-child relationship what really matters is the social bond that the adult establishes with the child in his or her care. The biological bond often reinforces the child-carer's narcissistic investment, but it cannot alone form the basis of the relationship of affection and love. This was already intuited by the Latins, among whom it was not enough to be born within a family to be considered a legitimate child. As soon as the child was born, the father lifted the child into the air and in so doing recognized him or her; or rather, recognized himself as the father. One needed to be lifted up, one needed the ritual, which bridged the gap between conception (which occurred nine months earlier and was uncertain by definition) and paternity.

I read this article as a rhetorical exercise and a provocation - both very useful genres for debate, because they inevitably stir up ideas, as evidenced by the passion some of the reviewers so far put into criticizing it. However paradoxical (probably in the author's own intentions), I found interesting the logical steps the author uses to slow down the rush to ARTs: 1) patriarchy has produced much harm; 2) patriarchy has always leveraged the biological bond; 3) ARTs leverage the biological bond and therefore perpetuate patriarchy. I agree with point 1), but it seems to me that point 2) is too vague. What exactly does it mean that patriarchy has used biological bonds for its own purposes? Patriarchy informs societies that practice monogamy and societies that practice polygamy, or, again, it may be the ideology of social groups that revere money and efficiency and perhaps regard biological reproduction as a hindrance. Of biology, that is, one can make very different uses: one can fetishize the nuclear family where all children have biological ties to both parents; one can fetishize blood lineage that passes only through the father (as in the case of polygamous families); or one can promote a selfishly hedonistic lifestyle that eschews reproduction tout court and aims to abolish one of the basic biological functions of human beings.

In conclusion, it seems to me that the article has the merit of reminding us of two things: 1) biology is not a neutral dimension, but always deeply cultural. 2) let us use ARTs to soothe the suffering of so many, but let us not fetishize the biological bond, and let us strive to imagine new forms of love, community and coexistence between human beings in need of care and human beings capable of giving care.

