

HENRIETTA L. MOORE

THE SUBJECT OF ANTHROPOLOGY



The Subject of Anthropology

The Subject of Anthropology

Gender, Symbolism and Psychoanalysis

Henrietta L. Moore

polity

Copyright © Henrietta L. Moore 2007

The right of Henrietta L. Moore to be identified as Author of this Work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in 2007 by Polity Press

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN-10: 0-7456-0808-6
ISBN-13: 978-07456-0808-2
ISBN-10: 0-7456-0809-4 (pb)
ISBN-13: 978-07456-0809-9 (pb)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset in 10.5 on 12 pt Palatino
by SNP Best-set Typesetter Ltd, Hong Kong
Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall

The publisher has used its best endeavours to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this book are correct and active at the time of going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites and can make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or will remain appropriate.

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers will be pleased to include any necessary credits in any subsequent reprint or edition.

For further information on Polity, visit our website: www.polity.co.uk

For
Marilyn Strathern

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
1 Body, Mind and World	1
2 A Genealogy of the Anthropological Subject	23
3 Culture, Power and Desire	43
4 Objects and Relations with (M)others	63
5 The Problem of the Phallus	95
6 Being and Having	115
7 Kinship and Sexuality	137
8 Mothers and Men	165
9 Social Transformations	193
<i>Notes</i>	212
<i>References</i>	235
<i>Index</i>	259

Acknowledgements

The Economic and Research Council of the UK generously funded the project on which this book is based, 'Gender and Symbolism: New Theoretical Approaches', from 1 January 1998 to 31 December 2000, grant number R000237794. I am very grateful for their support.

This book has been a long time in the making, perhaps because I have always envisioned it as the third and last in a series of works on gender beginning with *Feminism and Anthropology* and continuing with *A Passion for Difference*. In consequence, my intellectual and personal debts are many and of a very profound and deep-seated character. I can only apologize in advance to friends and colleagues who recognize their thoughts in mine and yet feel that I have not traced our mutual genealogies in ways that reflect the depth and length of our exchanges. They know how much I owe them. I would like to thank also Nicholas Casarini and François Gemenne for their help with library research and sources, and Geraldine Miric for the kind of practical support that is itself a gift.

My thinking, as it has evolved over many years, owes a particular debt to the writings of Melford Spiro, Bernard Juilliat and Marilyn Strathern. The influences of their brilliant, measured, yet incisive intellects may not be evinced here as much as they should, but I nonetheless offer my sincere appreciation. They opened the doors through which I have been able to walk.

My understanding of psychoanalytic theory has developed out of long conversations and interactions with two outstanding practitioners of this art, Renata Salecl and Darian Leader. My

disagreements with them have always proved tremendously productive and enjoyable. I have been fortunate to have had the friendship and intellectual support of David Held, Kriti Kapila, Nicholas Thomas, Christina Toren, Todd Sanders and Megan Vaughan during the time this book was being conceived and written. They have always set the pace, and I do my best to keep step. It would probably never have been written at all without the encouragement and unstinting support of John Thompson.

1

Body, Mind and World

Symbolism must make its appearance with the earliest appearance of human culture. It is in essence that modification of the human organism which allows it to transform the physiological drive into a cultural value.

Malinowski, 1939: 955

Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him 'by flesh and blood'; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny; so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he *is* not yet and even beyond his death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgement, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it.

Lacan, 1977: 68

This book is about how we come to be sexed beings, and how in that process we also become makers and users of symbols. The crux of this enquiry is the complex relationship between body, mind and world. Anthropology and psychoanalysis address themselves to the complexity of this relation, and while they have often proceeded in parallel rather than in concert, they share an abiding concern with culture and with symbolism. The puzzle for both is how does the social come about? – how do humans acquire culture? The idea that civilization depends on the control of instincts was an old one even

in Freud's day, but he developed it into a theory which linked the psyche to the social, arguing that human social life is only possible if individuals restrict their possibilities of satisfaction, relinquish something (1985a [1929/30]; 1985b [1927]). Freud made extensive use of anthropological data in his writings, and his interest began a process of borrowing and lending that has continued to this day (Wallace, 1983).

Relations between anthropology and psychoanalysis are frequently portrayed as turbulent, but the image of dislike and suspicion that pervades their relations is belied by the huge volume of psychoanalytically inspired work in anthropology,¹ and the great number of psychoanalysts intrigued by anthropological data. What seduced earlier generations of anthropologists was Freud's insight that culture was the product of the repression of incestuous sexuality. In the first decades of the twentieth century, evolutionary thinking was giving way to questions about the relationship between instinct and social rule, between the repressed passions and the forces of law and morality. Freud's view of the relationship between ontogeny and phylogeny via a primal parricide intrigued a generation of anthropologists in Europe and the USA who were fascinated by the origins of culture and of cultural difference. Durkheim's influential work on collective representations found a particular connection with Freud's interpretation of religion as the outcome of oedipal conflict, of the relinquishing of desire and identification with the father. What these two theories shared in their different ways was a concern with the relationship of the individual psyche to the 'collective mind', as well as a question about how to account for continuity in the mental life of successive generations: in other words, how does culture get reproduced?² A generation of anthropologists built on these ideas and formulated a view of culture as a collective fantasy projected into the external world in response to each person's need to control their anxieties (e.g. Devereux, 1967; 1978; 1980; La Barre, 1954; 1978; Roheim, 1950a; 1971). In accounts of this kind, myth, ritual, religion, joking, folktales and other aspects of culture are treated as defence mechanisms against anxieties (e.g. Kilborne, 1981; Levine, 1992; Spiro, 1987). Many anthropologists have sought ways to link cultural symbolism to unconscious fantasy, arguing that while culture is the product of individual unconscious fantasy, it is also the means through which individuals organize their own fantasies and internal worlds (e.g. Crapanzano, 1980; Hook, 1979b; Obeyesekere, 1981; Turner, 1967; Spiro, 1982; 1987). The idea that individuals

use cultural symbols, myths and rituals to convey and manage their personal symbols and psychic processes is a dominant feature of much contemporary work in psychoanalytic anthropology (e.g. Blum et al. 1988; Hook, 1979b; Kracke, 1987a; Obeyesekere, 1990; Paul, 1982).

While psychoanalytic anthropology has never been a term of great specificity, living in an ill-defined cognate relation with, among other things, cultural psychology, ethnopsychanalysis, ethnopsychiatry and cross-cultural psychology, it has, as a sub-field within anthropology, treated a number of recurrent subjects and themes. These have included the study of dreams, ego and personality formation, child-rearing practices, trauma and cultural symbolism, theories of mind, the origins of religion, interpretation and the value of psychoanalysis for fieldwork, sexuality and sexual behaviour, and psychodynamic understandings of social behaviour.³ Underlying all this work is a strong and abiding interest in cross-cultural comparison: the perennial question of what it is that all cultures share. This question is most evident in the work on sexuality and kinship, on how incestuous desires are socialized. The main discussion in this context continues to focus on the significance of the Oedipus complex, and the broader question that lies behind it of the role of fathers as opposed to mothers, and the significance of wider kin networks (see chapter 7). Most psychoanalytically inspired analyses of anthropological data continue to draw directly on Freud, object relations theory and/or ego psychology, and there is curiously still very little work that is inspired by Lacan's re-reading of Freud.⁴ In this book, I set out to develop a new model for the relationship between anthropology and psychoanalysis which draws to varying degrees on different aspects of these psychoanalytic traditions. It takes as its starting point the question of how we become sexed beings and the consequence this has for an understanding of self, culture and power. In consequence, I do not embrace one or other psychoanalytic school to the exclusion of all others. My aim is to subject their theoretical formulations to a series of 'ethnographic' readings, as a way of driving forward theoretical advancements in the analysis of gender (see below).

In the last ten years, a new trend has emerged of anthropologists and psychoanalysts working closely together on interpreting anthropological materials. This builds on an older tradition of anthropologists, psychoanalysts, psychologists and psychiatrists working together in the field, of which perhaps the work done under the leadership of Henri Collomb at the Fann Hospital in

Dakar, Senegal is the most famous (Collignon, 1978). These new forms of sustained intellectual engagements have produced breakthroughs in thinking because they have introduced anthropologists to recent developments in psychoanalytic thinking which have allowed some of the old antinomies in the debate to be disassembled or transcended.⁵ This does not, however, mean that anthropologists and psychoanalysts are in agreement; the evidence from these encounters suggest that they are often painfully divided over key issues, and what produces the most difficulty is the tension between the schematizing tendencies of psychoanalytic theorizing and the mass of cultural complexity to which the anthropologists feel deeply committed.

This harks back to older disagreements, since the main difficulty with psychoanalysis for many anthropologists has been the application of a universal model for the relationship between psychosexual structures and social organization, coupled with an insensitivity to cultural variation (Juillerat, 2001: ch. 1).⁶ The commitment to cultural variability in a discipline dedicated to studying cultural differences is a very particular one. Interestingly, this debate is reprised in a very similar form in the discussions between feminism and psychoanalysis (see chapters 4, 5 and 6), where critics find it hard to square a universal and invariant model of sexual difference with the lived realities of gendered lives. Feminism has criticized psychoanalysis for providing a theoretical model that describes and reinforces patriarchy and heterosexuality rather than providing alternative accounts of the construction of femininity (e.g. Braidotti, 1997; 2002; Braidotti and Butler, 1984; Butler, 2004; 1995a; Cornell, 1997; Felski, 1997; Frye, 1996). I address this problem in the chapters that follow in two different ways. First, I critique the way psychoanalysis treats mothers and fathers as self-evident, natural entities. This tendency is anyway quite at odds with the insistence in psychoanalytic theorizing on the fact that sexual difference cannot be reduced to biology, and that the relationship of the child to parental figures is one set up in representation, and thus imaginary in some very important aspects. In this process, I suggest the invariant psychosexual structures of psychoanalysis cannot be treated as if they were contentless, and we therefore need to rethink the relationship between culture and the process of how we become sexed beings (see chapter 7). Secondly, I resituate the problem of universalism as one about the more general dilemma of how to handle history – that is, how to explain the development of the individual in the context of an ongoing

social/cultural system which itself changes over time and is subject to the workings of power. I suggest that the question 'Is the Oedipus complex universal?' is no longer one to which we should be seeking an answer, but rather we need to ask, 'How do we become sexed beings?' The difference between these questions may not at first sight seem very great, but it produces a seismic shift in thinking that allows new questions to be addressed in anthropology. In addition, psychoanalytic theory has now refigured its understanding of oedipal conflict in such a way (see chapter 4) that we can move outside the straitjacket provided by the older formulation of the Oedipus complex to ask new questions about the relationship between gendered selves and social relationships.

The anthropological commitment to cultural variation takes an additional form in relation to psychoanalysis and that is the worry that psychoanalytic models are culturally specific, and thus interpretation and analysis which use them must be inappropriately applying a western model to other cultures (e.g. Ingham, 1992; Kirschner, 1992; Spain, 1992). Moving away from an invariant oedipal model towards a specific enquiry about how individuals become sexed beings in a particular cultural context answers part of the problem. Once again, feminist theorists have raised a similar set of concerns, arguing that Freud and Lacan employed unexamined pre-theoretical assumptions in their theorizing, particularly in regard to the relationship between sexed identity and object (love) choice, the determination of heterosexuality as normal sexuality, the role of the father, the characterization of the mother as passive and the assumption that femininity is constructed around the lack of the male organ. All of these assumptions have been rigorously challenged and in chapters 4, 5 and 6 I explore how developments in feminist theorizing have cleared the way for a reworking of psychoanalytic theory for anthropological purposes.

The argument in this book does not rest on the validity or non-validity of imposing a universal model onto all the cultures of the world. Rather, it develops a specific ethics of engagement by placing psychoanalytic, anthropological and feminist theories alongside other cultural theories of the origins of society, the nature of sexuality and gender identity, and the relationship between the social and the symbolic. In laying anthropological, psychoanalytic and feminist theories of gender, subjectivity, representation and power alongside ethnographic material I approach the anxiety about applying a western model to other cultures from a different perspective, attempting from the outset to provide an 'ethnographic'

reading of anthropological, psychoanalytic and feminist theories alongside readings of specific ethnographic materials. The basis for this 'dual set' of ethnographic readings is that both the so-called 'western' theories and the ethnographic materials I discuss are concerned with particular ways of imagining and delineating a cartography of the relation of self to society. In the process, they work over a series of themes about the nature of representation, the way bodies are marked by sexual difference, the problems and specifics of gender identity and the way individuals are connected to each other and to social laws and institutions. My aim is to treat all these accounts as 'theories', and to view them as a set of ruminations on the interconnected problems of bodies, genders, power and agency. My purpose is to develop a new ethics of engagement for the analysis of cross-cultural material and to use the fruits of that engagement to drive thinking forward with regard to the relationship between culture and gender. Paradoxically, the inspiration for this strategy is derived in part from Lévi-Strauss. He refers to *The Jealous Potter* as 'a book in which I am trying to show that certain notions credited to psychoanalysis . . . were already inherent in mythic thought', arguing in relation to his analysis of North and South American myths that 'they were far ahead of us when it comes to a good many of the notions that did not find expression in the western world until Freud' (Lévi-Strauss, 1988: 131). Lévi-Strauss does not mean that these notions did not exist in the West prior to Freud, but that they did not find systematic expression in the form of a theory.⁷ My intention in this book is to read various 'theories' against each other, examining their differences and similarities, tracing the effects of their differing assumptions about the relationships of self to society, and of psyche to culture. My ultimate aim is to develop a theory of how we become sexed beings, and to show how this is at the core of our capacity for representation and symbolism.

The reproduction of culture

In the first stages of its life, an infant lives in close symbiotic relationship with its mother or primary carer, and has no experiential divisions between self and other, self and external reality, subject and object.⁸ It is now generally agreed that from their earliest days – prior to the acquisition of language and the cultural conceptions of the world it makes possible – children develop representations,

fantasies, as a result of their experiences of their bodies and their needs, as well as their interactions with parents and significant others. In this process, instincts and needs become attached to images and representations, and through this set of dynamic interactions the unconscious is formed. Children have an active mental life from birth, but one that has to work in concert with developing neurological competences. These early experiences all happen prior to object constancy, language competence and reality testing, and they are often accompanied by intense affect. Freud's insight was to see that even the unconscious had to be formed out of the child's fantasized relation to its own body, to its parents and significant others, and to the world. The result is that the child actively constructs objects (including other people) and symbols through engagement with the world, and thereby develops psychological capacities but in relation to a specific social and physical environment. The formation of the unconscious is the condition for subjectivity, for consciousness and for social relations through the mechanism of representations. It is through the capacity for representation that the child becomes anchored in and attached to a social world, and slowly begins to recognize that it is separate from the mother. Separation is a condition of selfhood, but this is a process that takes place in and through social interaction. Over time, the child is able to make a firmer distinction between internal and external worlds, and to engage in social relations with others, but the very young child's fantasies of parents and others are reified, and can be experienced as objects and/or agents. Since the boundary between inner and outer worlds is porous, these objects can be experienced both as internal to the child and/or as external – that is, existing in the world. As the child develops physically and neurologically, it acquires the capacity to recognize objects (including other people) in a stable way, to link language to representations and to distinguish its internal world from the external world (reality testing). As object constancy, language competence and reality testing develop, the child's earliest fantasies are relinquished, in the sense that they become repressed and form part of the unconscious. Repression is what opens children to the wider world; without it they would be caught in their own fantasized internal world.

The relationships young children have to their parents and others are set up in representation and in that sense are fantasized. Contemporary views of psychoanalysis emphasize the importance of both parents in the development of a sense of self: both parents are

sources of identification from the earliest stages in life and both provide support and encouragement for differentiation (see chapter 4). Children are born anatomically sexed, but from the time of birth, caregivers encourage development in ways they think appropriate to the child's gender, so that anatomy and social relations, along with physiology and neurological development, provide the matrix for the earliest representations of gender. Clinical data shows that between 18 and 24 months children become aware of the differences between the sexes, but both boys and girls believe at this stage that they and others have both masculine and feminine attributes and capacities. The recognition of differences between the sexes is in tension with this 'over-inclusive position', and entails the child recognizing and accepting the loss of certain masculine and feminine attributes/capacities they had assumed were theirs. These lost aspects of masculinity and femininity are ascribed meanings which become attached to body parts. But the meanings do not follow from the body parts themselves (penis, vagina); they are not based on the physical sex, but rather are meanings that the child attaches to her/his body and that of others. Thus, the body is shaped by ideas about masculinity and femininity and not the other way around (see chapters 4 and 5).

What many theorists now emphasize in different ways – neurologists, psychoanalysts, philosophers – is that for humans the world is a libidinal object, because part of being human is involved in taking an interest in the world, assigning it value, interacting with it and all that it contains.⁹ This has consequences for how we develop as biological and as cultural beings. Psychoanalysis develops this perspective in relation to the body ego, the idea that the ego only emerges in the world as embodied. As the child develops, the map the ego forms of the body allows for no distinction between material and representation, between the physical and the psychical body, because there is no lived phenomenological body prior to a psychic investment in the parts and surfaces of the body. The body ego which provides the grounds for an emerging sense of self is produced by, and only grows in relation to, its interactions with the external world, and these take place via the perceptual surface of the body and in the brain. There is an ongoing discussion about whether Freud's body ego is supported by recent developments in neurological science (e.g. Morin and Thibierge, 2004). Obviously, Freud did not have access to what scientists now know, but the available evidence suggests that consciousness is related to the development of an integrated representation of the body.¹⁰ What

Freud and many subsequent psychoanalytic theorists have emphasized is that for any body part to come into psychic experience, the ego must form a fantasy relation to it, that is one set up in representation.

The way we develop our capacity for representation, and the fact that we do so only as a psychosomatic organism, has consequences for the way we think about the relationship between culture and individuals. Recent work in anthropology has provided a formidable critique of the old socialization thesis, the idea that culture is either learned by or somehow imposed on an undifferentiated and pre-existing biological organism – the idea that cultural meanings are somehow ‘dumped into the minds of children’ (Robertson, 1996: 599). The contemporary view is much more in keeping with recent work in neurobiology, and argues that rather than seeing culture as something added to a biological entity or viewing that entity as having pre-given (often neural) modular properties, we should see culture and biology as ontogenetically related (Ingold, 1991). From this perspective, humans are not biological entities with the capacity to acquire culture, but biologically cultural beings who develop as individuals through intersubjective relations with cultural others in a specific environment (Toren, 1999; Roberston, 1996). Biology and culture develop as an ensemble. The human mind and body develop as each new child enters the world, but they do so in the context of a socially constituted, interactive world.

This is part of the answer to the question of how culture gets reproduced across the generations. But, it also signals a shift in the way anthropologists are beginning to think about culture. We can demonstrate this argument by asking how the subject comes to know, understand and operate the cultural system he or she is part of. This is an area in which anthropology has been borrowing from developmental psychologists and from cognitive scientists (Bloch, 1989; 1998; Toren, 1983; 1990; 1999). Traditionally, anthropologists have seen cultural systems of cognition as forms of collective representation that precede the individual in historical time and into which the individual is born. In this sense, they must be non-individual, and when allied to a series of positions that see culture as determining, they become all-encompassing. The result is a kind of merging of the notions of culture, cognition, symbolism and ideology, and the solidification of the idea that culture and the ability to think about culture are inherited from history (Bloch, 1989: ch. 5). Anthropologists drawing on the work of modern developmental psychology, on the other hand, have

emphasized that the child forms concepts as a consequence of a pre-linguistic interaction with their environment which includes their body, other humans and the physical environment. These concepts later come to be associated with words as the child develops, but the important point is that words are matched to concepts rather than the child acquiring concepts by learning words (*ibid.*: 114). Culture is built up through engagement with a world of objects (things and people), but this environment is not neutral, it is culturally constructed.

Work of this kind stresses that language is not essential for conceptual thought, at least as far as the developing child is concerned. However, we have to acknowledge that while the acquisition of cultural concepts can be pre-linguistic, they are transformed to a significant extent as they enter language, as they become linguistic (Bloch, 1998: ch. 1). Non-linguistic knowledge is an important part of the acquisition of culture, and anthropologists working on knowledge transmission have argued that 'knowing, thinking and understanding are generated in practice' (Lave, 1990: 310). In addition, much of the knowledge we require to act as competent members of a cultural community is non-conscious and generated within a culturally constructed environment (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Moore, 1986; 1994: ch. 4). This knowledge is not organized in a linear form as a set of propositions and ideas, but is organized into highly complex integrated networks, the elements of which are connected to each other in a large number of ways, and they are characterized by simultaneous interconnections operating at many different levels. They are partly linguistic, but also integrate visual imagery, other sensory cognition, memories, evaluations, intentions, things learned. The information in them can be accessed simultaneously from many different parts of the model (Bloch, 1998: 24–5). These models allow for very rapid responses to situations in social life, and provide a mechanism through which individuals continue to develop in and through interaction with their environment in the broadest sense over time.

In this discussion of the development of the young child and the acquisition of culture from a variety of different perspectives, I have tried to show that from the earliest days of its life, and before language, the child enters the world only through the capacity for representation on which the development of the ego depends. This ego is a body ego in which physical and cultural development are an ensemble. The psychoanalytic theories underlying this position are discussed further in chapter 6. The ways in which a child learns lan-

guage and acquires culture follow this early basic pattern of engagement with the world. Culture does not come from without, and we cannot imagine it as being either simply learned or imposed, although in specific situations in social life both those things can and do happen. What anthropological theories ignore – except of course for those drawn from psychoanalysis – is the role of fantasy. Because of the biological dependency of the child and because of their developing neurological and perceptual abilities, needs and affect become attached to their earliest images and representations. These representations primarily concern their body, and the bodies and body parts of their carers. They are therefore bound up from birth with the sensations, experiences and emotions of interacting with a world peopled by parents and others who already have a fantasized, intellectualized and practical relation to their own bodies, and to the bodies of others, including the child. These representations of bodies and body parts are not, as the clinical data shows, gendered by the child themselves at this early stage – that is, in the sense of conforming to an existing cultural model of gender. But, neither are they a matter of a straightforward relation to a pre-existing biological sex, because there is no sexed body outside the representations within which it emerges. The body is experienced and shaped by masculinity and femininity, and not the other way round. Gender then is at the very root of our capacity for representation because it is inextricably tied to the basis for the emergence of the body ego and subsequently the self.

Symbolism, fantasy and culture

So what do we do with these very early representations of bodies and body parts? What role do they play in later life, and how do they connect with the models of gender that anthropologists habitually study? To answer these questions, we need to return initially to discussions in anthropology about the relationship between fantasies and cultural symbols, or, as they are sometimes termed, private and public symbols. Much of the work in anthropology in this area focuses on myth and religion, and it has long been held that whatever the public understanding of the symbols involved might be, individuals invest them with private, often unconscious meanings (e.g. Hook, 1979b; Spiro, 1982b; Obeyesekere, 1981; 1990). Thus, we cannot understand symbolism unless we attend to its

affective and motivational properties, both conscious and unconscious. Melford Spiro has argued that dreams, fantasies and other linked material are of a type where ideas and thoughts are typically represented by visual signs, whose logic is that of condensation, substitution, combination, part for whole. This he links to Freud's primary process, while other realms of life, such as the technological and the economic, are characterized by secondary process thinking which employs verbal signs operating under conventional rules (Spiro, 1982b: 52–3). Spiro's position is one used by many anthropologists. It does not imply that primary process thinking should be exclusively equated with unconscious mental activity or that symbolization does not occur in conscious thinking; it clearly does (Hook, 1979b: 278). What it does imply is that secondary process thinking draws on and is dependent on primary process. Spiro argues that prior to the acquisition of language children develop what he calls 'socially-constituted conceptions' as a result of transactions with parents and carers, and that these images of powerful beings from the family world are 'highly similar' to the 'culturally-constituted' images individuals later form of the powerful beings inhabiting the mythico-religious world (1982b: 59–61). One does not have to agree with Spiro's claim that 'religious figures' are modelled on 'family figures' to recognize the deeper import of his argument, which is that one cannot have culture without a capacity for representation, and that anthropology needs to give an account of how representation arises.¹¹

Bernard Juillerat clarifies this further by pointing out that as the child moves into the world his or her fantasies undergo a transformation as a consequence, as noted earlier, of improved reality testing and repression, but when the child encounters the evolved symbols, cosmologies and narratives of culture, he or she 'finds there (like a sort of reminiscence), reworked and multiplied, certain of his [*sic*] own unconscious representations which he in turn adds into the culture as if by a process of sedimentation' (Juillerat, 2001: 68). Citing Guy Rosolato (1992), Juillerat argues that there is an exchange of representations between the subject and culture, where cultural images work back to structure our internal worlds. But, Juillerat thinks this account has limitations because it does not address those cases, like the Melanesian material he is familiar with, where cultural systems make evident use of representations concerning sexuality, reproduction, descent and death. In these situations, public symbols are closely linked to private fantasies, but we cannot understand how this works if we focus at the level of the

individual. Juillerat's point is that the fantasies that are worked over in cultural productions often relate to a kind of 'generic subject', and these fantasies are accepted and well understood by society at large. He cites the case of oedipal conflicts which appear in myth and ritual in a cultural form relating to the emergence of the male subject, and clearly these representations must have an impact on the subject because the primary mechanisms organizing his subjectivity are reflected at the collective level (Juillerat, 2001: 69). But he argues that it is necessary to distinguish between the oedipal conflicts as they are experienced by particular individuals in the context of their own family, and the way in which they are elaborated in cultural symbols and cultural productions, such as myth and ritual (*ibid.*: 72). These two things should not be collapsed into each other, and in the following chapters I am concerned with the latter rather than the former.

The intellectual position I develop in this book owes much both to Spiro and Juillerat. I agree with Spiro that the very earliest representations within which the body ego emerges are social; that is, they are produced through and in consequence of interaction with a culturally constituted environment inhabited by social actors. These fantasies are thus both individual and social from the beginning. These ideas are in concert with those of relational psychoanalysts, and, drawing on the work of Irene Fast and others, I go on in chapters 5 and 6 to argue that we become sexed beings in a social context and environment which is already gendered. Thus, contrary to the major tenets of psychoanalysis, gender is the ground for the emergence of sexual difference. There may be universal conditions for subjecthood, involving identification and differentiation, but these conditions only have purchase, only become effective in the context of an engagement with a social/cultural world. They cannot be effective if they are contentless. To become a sexed being is to be marked by sexual difference, to recognize the limits of sexual difference, to struggle with the fact that masculinity and femininity do not map easily onto male and female bodies. No one becomes a sexed being in a vacuum.

However, what both Spiro and Juillerat suggest is that we cannot simply see cultural products as a reflection of infantile fantasies, nor can they be simplistically analysed as the return of the repressed. Something far more interesting is going on, because cultures take these earliest images and use them to create through multiplication, elaboration, reflection and analysis the kind of beautiful, awesome and sometimes terrifying cultural products which anthropologists

variously label as myth, ritual, cosmology, and symbolism. This process of production is a complex one because, as these images enter language, become subject to rationalization, are enacted and performed in ritual, dance, song and myth, they undergo a profound transformation. Not all this transformation is intended: some of it is unconscious, some of it arises in praxis and does not enter language, some of it is the product of highly developed ratiocination. We cannot predict how this process of transformation will proceed, but as social scientists we can trace it and its effects. One important point to note is that cultures and societies vary with regard to the degree that they engage in cultural elaboration and reflection of this kind, as well as the degree to which they make explicit or non-explicit, conscious or unconscious, use of fantasy material (Obeyesekere, 1990: ch. 3; Bidou et al. 1999: 19–20). What is evident is that these images form part of, and are organized into, the kind of highly complex integrated networks mentioned earlier, where elements are connected to each other simultaneously in a large number of ways, and where fantasy is integrated with visual imagery, language, sensory forms of cognition, comportment, bodily praxis, experience, memories, evaluations, intentions, things learned. Since all this information can be accessed simultaneously from many different parts of the network, it provides a dynamic, highly energetic matrix in which creation and innovation, as well as over-determined sedimentation, can take place.

Juillerat argues that the deployment and sharing of early fantasy material in a cultural context favours the multiplication, development and elaboration of cultural representations (Juillerat, 2001: 108). This is congruent with the arguments made by relational psychoanalytic theorists that the early 'over-inclusive' fantasies of masculinity and femininity provide the basis for creative thinking throughout life. These arguments are discussed further in chapter 4. It is helpful here to make a distinction between imagination and the imaginary. Drawing on Lacan and Castoriadis, I make the case throughout the following chapters that anthropology needs to take the imaginary seriously if it is to provide an account of the relationship of individuals to cultural orders, and if it is to locate that account within the workings of power. Humans have imaginations, they can draw on all their experience, history, sensations, sounds, colours, words and knowledge, etc. to be creative, to produce works of the imagination. Imagination is an ability, a capacity, an orientation in the world. The imaginary,

however, is a different notion focusing on fantasy and the workings of the unconscious, and it is connected both to the self's ability to create an internal world and to its capacity for agency. For Lacan, the imaginary is a general term corresponding to a time before the child enters the symbolic order, and becomes marked by sexual difference. A time when the child is in a relationship of symbiotic plenitude with the mother. It also refers to the imaginary relationship the emerging ego/subject has with itself. It is connected to the process whereby the child aged between 6 and 18 months is able to recognize and respond to its image in a mirror. This process provides the child with an illusory sense of wholeness. It is only by identifying and incorporating the image of itself that is already an image of another – either the specular image in the mirror or the image the (m)other has of the child – that the child begins to represent itself to itself. But, the image of a stable subject or 'I' is necessarily illusory because the subject is always other to itself, and identity is ceaselessly disrupted by the workings of the unconscious. This split between the unconscious and the social is, for Lacan, the very condition of subjectivity and of identity. The strengths and weaknesses of this argument for anthropology are discussed further in chapter 3.

The idea that the subject cannot be isomorphic with the social is also central to Castoriadis's account of the imaginary. His concern is to link the unconscious to the self's capacity for agency. He stresses that what he calls the 'radical imaginary' has the capacity to ceaselessly produce images, representations, desires and intentions through its desire for engagement with the world. This originary capacity for figuration, for making representations, is essential to the formation of the psyche, and it is associated with the earliest stages of a child's life. As the individual becomes part of the social world, becomes a social being, they are taken up by the 'social imaginary', that is by the terms and values through which a society represents itself to itself. It is only through acceding to the social imaginary that the subject is brought out of its world of fantasy, but the 'constitution of the social individual does not and cannot abolish the psyche's creativity, its perpetual alteration, the representative flux as the continuous emergence of other representations' (Castoriadis, 1987: 320–1). The continued existence of the radical imaginary, just like the unconscious for Lacan, means that some part of the individual always escapes the dictates of social identity, guarantees that the psyche is never completely captured by the social.

Gender and the post-oedipal

The proposition I am making is that anthropology needs to take account of the imaginary, of the human capacity to produce images, representations and fantasies, if it is to understand how and why culture (as myth, ritual, incantation, symbols, etc.) is produced. Anthropology has for too long assumed that because it has a theory of symbolism, it does not need a theory of the imaginary. Developing a concept of the imaginary requires us to take psychoanalytic theorizing seriously as a way of understanding how the imaginary and the symbolic (culture) are interconnected. Key to this is the issue of gender and its relationship to sexual difference. Both Freud and Lacan saw the Oedipus complex as central to an account of how the psyche is formed, and of how the subject is fashioned through entry into the world of culture. In the traditional model, what the subject has to relinquish is desire for the mother, and through the imposition of the incest taboo, social laws are instituted. This makes the Oedipus complex the defining moment for the imposition of sexual difference and the acquisition of a sexed identity. I discuss the failings of this model, as well as its strengths, in the following chapters, but this very narrow account produces two major difficulties for anthropologists and feminists. First, Freud and Lacan insist that it is the relation to the phallus that determines sexual difference. Lacan goes further, arguing that the phallus is the privileged signifier of the symbolic order. Within this model, the feminine is always configured in terms of the masculine, having or not having the penis (see chapter 5). In response to this, I develop a theory based on my reading of ethnography which argues that while the insertion of the subject into the symbolic order is a necessary one for all subjects, there is no reason to suppose that the process itself is invariant, or that the symbolic order is invariant, or indeed that the process always constitutes sexual difference in a fixed way. In chapters 6 and 8, I provide ethnographic material to demonstrate that the phallus is not always the privileged signifier of the symbolic order, and that even when it is, it is not always the male phallus.¹² I argue that while the processes of representation, separation, identification, differentiation and signification are essential for the emergence and the development of the ego/subject, there are clear reasons to develop a theory that allows for cultural variation both in the formation of the body ego and in the nature of

the symbolic order. In short, I argue that while becoming a sexed being is a condition for subjecthood, this is not a culturally invariant process.

Second, I tackle the problem of the impossibility of accounting for the multiple discourses on gender that coexist in all contexts, and the multiple ways in which individuals identify with being a woman or a man, by referring them to an invariant model of sexual difference. Here, I draw on recent work in anthropology to argue that the self is constituted through multiple subject positions. This involves a detailed discussion of the history of the person/self/subject in anthropology (see chapter 2), and the differences and similarities between these conceptions. Recent discussions of the self have relied on the development of a non-unitary theory of the subject, coupled with a dual focus both on the discursive determination of the self and on the self-styled aspects of subjectivity in any particular context. It is no longer enough to talk loosely about cultural variation in the concept of the self and thereby to imply that the self is somehow simply determined by culture. Following this, I further develop a theory of the subject outlined in my earlier work (Moore, 1994), and argue that anthropology needs a theory of the subject rather than a theory of the self because this allows us to focus on the multiple constitution of subjectivity, and on the agency of the subject in that process. Within this framework, a single subject cannot be equated with a single individual. Individuals are multiply constituted subjects who take up multiple subject positions within a range of discourses and social practices. Some of these subject positions will be contradictory and conflicting, and individuals constitute their sense of self through several, often mutually contradictory, positions rather than through one singular position (Ewing, 1998; Mahmood, 2005; Moore, 1994).

This opens up the process of subjectification to power and ideology which, although they may work to produce these subject positions, cannot determine how individuals will identify with and take up different subject positions at different times. In order to do this, the anthropological subject has to be reunited with the subject of psychoanalysis so as to account for how individuals both identify with and resist subject positions. The key to this problematic is the issue of desire. What a focus on desire does is to draw attention both to what motivates the subject to identify with certain subject positions, and to what escapes discursive formations and hegemonic orders. Ultimately, the self cannot be reduced to a