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Feelings of Gender

Three points are important to understand the concept of feelings as I use it in this book: first, feelings are understood as a kind of personal and embodied *meaning* which lingers between the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious, and between inner and outer objects. As such, they are central to human creativity and agency. Second, feelings stem from our *relationships* with others, and from how this relational experience is processed by the subject who comes into being and is continuously reshaped by these relational processes. Thus, feelings have a temporal dimension connected to the historical and social context of the relational experience, as well as to the subject's life course in time and space. Feelings live in socialised subjectivities. Third, this means that feelings, even though they are always personal, may also display *social patterns* characteristic of a certain class, gender or generation. These points also apply when feelings are expressions of gendered experiences.

In order to elaborate upon and combine these three points, in this chapter I will connect theoretical perspectives from and inspired by the German Frankfurt School with some of the more recent psychosocial

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work, which, drawing on object-relational approaches,[1] aims at combining psychoanalytic theory with societal context and change. What characterises both the older 'grand' theories from the Frankfurt School and the younger, more detailed psychosocial approaches is the effort to find ways to think in non-reductive ways about the connections between the outer and the inner world, between structure and meaning, and between object and subject. However, there are differences in their main questions and preoccupations, and also in the ways in which they proceed analytically. The old approach of the Frankfurt School seems to have a better grasp on the wholeness of the intertwinement of culture, individual and society, providing a framework to think about the social patterns of feelings, but not elaborating to any great extent upon the psychological processes in individuals. Conversely, the younger approach often focuses more on what goes on in the inner world of singular persons (and definitely with a more explicit emphasis on gender than the old approach), but sometimes with less attention to how psychosocial interchanges may also amount to more general social patterns of feelings. Where the old approach is occupied with social patterns, the younger approach concentrates on the multiple individual variations on and tracks to such patterns. I think we need both approaches to grasp feelings as an element in social organisation and change.

Feelings as Socially Patterned

The understanding of feelings as the emotional aspect of *meaning* makes the approach in this book different from the turn to affect that has occurred in a broad range of fields within the humanities and social

[1] The main characteristics of object-relational approaches are that they work with a broader concept of human motivation than drive theories tend to do, asserting that attachment and recognition by one's loved ones is as primary a human force as the sexual drive. There are many versions of object-relation theory, not least in relation to how much the social and historical dimensions are drawn into the analysis of the inner psychological object world. Melanie Klein, the founding figure of British object-relational theory, works only on the level of the inner, unconscious world, whereas more contemporary feminist psychoanalysts as Nancy Chodorow, Jessica Benjamin and Lynne Layton, whose work I rely on in this chapter, place emphasis on how social relations affect the inner psychic processes. It is the latter version I draw on in this chapter, whether I name it 'object-relational theories' or the psychosocial approach of 'relational feminist psychoanalysts'.

sciences as a response to the discursive dominance in poststructuralism (see Leys (2011) and Wetherell (2012) for critical reviews). In many theoretical versions of this turn, affect is seen as the opposite of meaning, as a 'formless, unstructured, non-signifying force or "intensity" separated from cognition': Leys 2011: 442). Contrary to this, I see feelings as an aspect of meaning and as part of the human capacity to understand and act in the world: feelings are enmeshed in stories, biographies and history (Chodorow 1999). This does not imply that feelings have to be verbalised in order to be felt and present in what is said and done. From psychoanalytic theory, I draw the basic assumption that feelings can be conscious, preconscious and unconscious, and that they work in ways that may be more or less known to the person who harbours these feelings. Feelings can be meanings that are existential rather than representational, 'a form of deep memory' (Bollas 1987: 50), but they may also be symbolised in words. Sometimes we reflect on and verbalise what we feel; at other times feelings just play an unacknowledged part—conflictual or not—in how we perceive the world, making themselves present in the ways we talk and act. I understand feelings as personalised meanings floating through inner and outer relations and through time. It is something the subject carries with him or her, but is also something that is continuously reinterpreted and reconstructed as he or she experiences and acts in the world together with others in shared contexts.

The idea that feelings are socially patterned is not new. Erik H. Erikson has already been mentioned as one psychoanalyst who wrote about the ways in which culture, history and ethnicity emerge in unconscious fantasies, symptoms and conflicts (Chodorow 1999: 227). A more sociological approach to this is found in the efforts of the Frankfurt School to integrate psychoanalysis and Marxism by studying the connection between social and economic structures, cultural patterns and individual psychological development. The main concern here is not the individual psychological story, but the social form of subjectivity and agency in a given historical context. One of the terms for this was Erich Fromm's concept of *social character*, the emotional attitude common to people in a specific social class or society in a given historical period. Erich Fromm defined a social character as the psychological reactions typical for a social group, which have developed as a result of common experiences and life conditions for

that group. The emotional matrix of cultural ideas is seen as rooted in the character structure of individuals, and this is key to understanding the spirit of a given culture, according to Fromm. What is seen as 'normal' in a society has an emotional foundation in the typical social character of this society. It is the similarities in individual responses of most of the members, not the differences between these responses that the concept frames. The differences are important if we want to understand the single individual fully, Fromm says; however, 'if we want to understand how human energy is channelled and operates as a productive force in a given social order, then the social character deserves our main interest' (Fromm 1941: 278). He engages with the cultural patterns in the subjects' psychological organisation not only as irrational adaption based on repression, but also as something that may work as a social and generative force, a dynamic psychological adaption of human needs to a particular mode of existence in a given society.[2] Thus, the social character has both adaptive and creative sides—it internalises the external necessities, but in a way that also appears as sensible and often emotionally satisfying and motivating for the person. Fromm's ideas about the social character, moulded in specific social spaces where the individual 'by adapting himself to social conditions … develops those traits that make him *desire* to act as he *has* to act' (p. 283) can also be linked to Bourdieu's much later concept of habitus and his idea about 'a socialized libido' which combines necessity with the person's engagement in the field (Aarseth 2016). However, since Fromm understands society as not merely repressive, it may also meet the human striving for freedom and growth. In this way the psychological organisation of the individuals, which develops as a result of the social process, also becomes 'productive forces, moulding the social process' (p. 13).

A problem with Fromm's concept of social character is that it works on a very general level, combining grand societal formations like Protestantism and modern authoritarianism with general traits of psychological reaction and defence, and thus leaves us with a rather massive image of the character as a fixed internal template that more or less

[2] It is important to be aware that the concept of 'socialisation' in this German tradition is not the functionalist one from Parsons with which it is often identified in the English-speaking world, but a concept that, like the concept of 'subjectivity', integrates societal moulding and adaption together with the constitution of personal agency.

stays as it was made, or gets defensive and destructive if the societal formations that produced it change. In this sense, Fromm offers a 'grand theory' working with jigsaw pieces too big to really understand continuing social transformations. The concept of character is also contested in modern psychoanalytic theory to the extent that it is based on assumptions about fixed and coherent identities. More process-oriented concepts like 'identifications' or 'subjectivities', indicating that a person have multiple versions of selves in his or her internal world, have gained foothold compared to theories of identity and character as fixed psychological structures (Benjamin 1995). Modern psychoanalytic theories would agree that developmental processes connected to biographical trajectories are formative, but not that such formations of subjective structures are unchangeable, coherent and without internal conflicts (Layton 1998). Instead of talking either about character and identity as reified entities, as in the case of Fromm, or about fluidity with no core or continuity, as is the case in postmodern theories, we may talk about historical *patterns* of identification, desire and subjectivity in individuals as well as across social groups.

The concept of pattern is central in the work of the British cultural critic Raymond Williams, who has expanded on Fromm's ideas with the concept *structure of feeling* in a way that maintains both the formative and the transformative dimensions of subjectivity and cultural practices. The structure of feeling is not an overall psychological organisation of the subject's inner world, but patterns in the subject's feelings:

> The term I would suggest to describe it is the structure of feeling: it is as firm and definite as the 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and intangible parts of our activity. In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of the period, it is the particular living result of all elements of the general organisation … I do not mean that the structure of feeling, any more than the social character, is possessed in the same way by the many individuals in the community. But I think it is a very deep and very wide position, in all actual communities, precisely because it is on it that communication depends. And what is particularly interesting is that it does not seem to be, in any formal sense, learned. (Williams 2011: 69)

Williams describes the structure of feeling as a felt sense of the quality of life at a particular time and place, and he connects it to gradual change and to generation: 'We are usually most aware of this when we notice the contrast between generations, who never quite talk "the same language"' (2011: 68). Structures of feeling may change over generations, they may take on different forms in different segments in society, and there may be several structures of feelings in a society at the same time.

In spite of its holistic character, Williams' concept seems to provide us with some smaller jigsaw pieces, explicitly detached from the idea that the material structures necessarily 'come first'. He insists emphatically on the interconnectedness of different processes in society: historical processes are complex wholes where each part needs to be understood for what it is, but it is the interaction, interpretation and feedback between them that leads to transformation: 'A keyword is *pattern*—it is with that any useful cultural analysis begins, and with its relationships to other patterns, which may sometimes reveal unexpected identities and correspondences in hitherto separately considered activities' (Williams 2011: 67). He opposes the idea of separating a concept of 'reality' from subject—as subjects are in themselves realities and expressions of society, not something that should be related to a social world *outside* itself. Thus, human experience is both objective and subjective in one inseparable process:

> It is right to recognise that we became human individuals in terms of a social process, but still individuals are unique, through a particular heredity, expressed in a particular history. And the point about this uniqueness is that it is creative as well as created: new forms can flow from this particular form, and extend in the whole organisation, which is in any case being constantly renewed and changed as unique individuals inherit it and continue it. … In practical terms I think such approaches will be the kind of study of patterns and relationships, in a whole process, which we have defined as the analysis of culture. There, in the practice of creation, communication and the making of institutions, is the common process of personal and social growth. (Williams 2011: 125–126)

Williams is primarily writing about art and culture; however, he also includes the psychological organisation of the subject in this constant renewing of society. The re-creation of meaning is done both by the

society as a whole and by every single individual. The idea that changes can happen on any level of society is particularly relevant to my argument about the generative role of feelings of gender. No structure has priority and subtle changes may take place before they are properly understood. Williams offers the example of gradual changes in literary style. Such small elements of qualitative changes are not necessarily epiphenomena to institutional changes or just accidental variation. They are social in two ways: they are 'changes of the present' and they are effective before they are classified and understood (Williams 1977: 132–133). Williams' concept of structure of feeling, his take on incremental changes and how they can happen anywhere in a system are highly generative ideas for my analysis of how patterns of feelings in different generations, genders and classes represent an agency that may contribute in creative ways to the gradual change of gendered practices. However, the concept of feelings needs more psychological elaboration in order to become operative in a study of lived lives.

Socialisation and Desire

In psychoanalytic theory, on the level of individual psychology, we find compatible ideas about the connection between the self and the world in the work of the German-American psychoanalyst Hans Loewald. Loewald does not start by separating the inner world of the subject from outer reality. On the contrary, in the psychological organisation of the subject—ego, reality, objects and drives—they are created at the same time, in a process where a unitary whole is gradually differentiated by the subject. In this process many versions of both ego and reality will be created and, unless fixations happen, this will allow for a flexible ego-reality integration where earlier versions will remain alive as dynamic resources in later versions (Loewald 1980: 20). This means that the qualities of inner and outer are not given in any direct empirical sense, but are elaborated by the subject in 'a lifelong process in which not only the meaning but also the constitution and organization of inner and outer are negotiated' (Chodorow 2003: 903).

It is the work of Hans Loewald and Nancy Chodorow who in particular have informed my understanding of the continuous and

creative interchange between the conscious and the unconscious. In their perspective the unconscious is not entirely equated with dynamically repressed emotions and fantasies, since the unconscious is also seen as a creative and generative part of our psychological organisation. This makes us co-creators of meaning and reality, not passive victims of the world. Neither Loewald nor Chodorow's vision is to replace unconscious life with conscious, but rather to infuse and integrate unconscious life in the conscious. It is this infusion and integration that gives conscious life its depth, texture and richness. Fantasy and reality come to resonate in a way where fantasy deepens and enriches the experience of reality, and reality keeps us rooted and connected in the world (Chodorow 1999: 248). The constant intertwining of the conscious, the preconscious and unconscious, of past and present, self and reality, subject and object are captured by the concept of transference. In Chodorow's words, transference is the phenomena 'that we personally endow, animate, and tint, emotionally and through fantasy, the cultural, linguistic, interpersonal, cognitive, and embodied world we experience' and, by this process, 'any single thought or feeling simultaneously creates and embeds itself in both realities' (Chodorow 1999: 244, 14). Thus, feelings are always part of experienced meanings, of the ways in which the subject makes sense—or cannot make sense—of things.

Nancy Chodorow has argued that Hans Loewald together with Erik H. Erikson and others can be seen as representatives of a specific American 'intersubjective school of ego psychology', which combines an understanding of the ego functions as integrating and synthesising experience in a creative way, with a relational perspective that sees the self as developed through interpersonal relations and by processes of transference between subject and object (Chodorow 2004). This ego-psychological and object-relational perspective where development is not only seen in terms of instinctual drives or universal conditions for subject formation, but also in terms of relational attachment and culture, and where the unconscious is not only understood as the dynamically repressed, but also as a part of the self that organises and may enrich experience and inform creativity and agency, has been criticised for severing the critical potential in Freud's theory of desire. Psychoanalytic perspectives indebted to Lacan reject the notions of ego and reality, and talk instead about a radical

difference between the conscious and the unconscious. The unconscious is here seen as a site formed by the prohibition and repressing of desire, and it can only express itself in enigmatic and symptomatic ways that are not translatable to consciousness. Whereas conscious identity is doomed to be expressed through language, social categories and norms, 'the unconscious constantly reveals the "failure" of identity' (Rose 1986: 90). As subjects, split and cast in socially defined identities, we will always lack something, and the pressure from unconscious desire will push us towards activity, but we do not know what we are looking for and we will never find it other than in momentary and partial ways.

A problem in conceiving of consciousness and the unconscious as radically separated systems of meaning is that it leads into a dualism of conformity and non-conformity. The possibility of reflection and agency as sources for change is dismissed as it is only unsocialised and unsocialisable desire that may represent resistance against the social because it is outside the symbolic realm (see also McNay 2004; Layton 2004 and Woodward 2015 for similar critiques). But as Erikson, Fromm and Williams insist, society not only represents pressure and pain for the subject, it also represents possibilities and pleasure. Conversely, Lynne Layton has argued that the unconscious is also infected by the social: it is neither a space free of norms nor a space that can solely be conceptualised as resistant to norms (Layton 2002, 2004). Her concept of 'the normative unconscious' refers to the splitting-off of feelings, behaviours and thoughts when they conflict with particular social norms connected to gender, class and ethnicity, and therefore are deemed unacceptable to those on whom one depends for love. Williams also argues that most human actions will combine conformity and non-conformity in a way that does not fit into a model of either/or of conscious confinement and unconscious protest, and these actions must be analysed concretely and over time to decide their character and outcome (Williams 2011: 117). Such combinations may represent small but desired steps of action, and even when they look rather conformist, they may still lead to change in a more long-term perspective. In particular, the dynamics between generations indicate how a series of actions that, seen independently, look only adaptive may in the long run become one of the conditions for change. Instead of understanding socialisation and desire as opposing forces, we may think in terms of 'socialised desire',

which places the subject in a generative and creative role that combines adaption, defensive reactions and change. Within this framework it is possible to understand the conscious, preconscious and unconscious as different levels of meaning that can float into each other, without also dismissing the existence of unconscious conflict and forbidden desires. By seeing self and reality as an original unity that is later differentiated and continuously reshaped throughout life, it is possible to see the subject not only as either conforming or protesting, but also as continuously in search of and as a creator of intermediate solutions in his or her life. In this view, the subject is simultaneously socialised, desiring and agential.

The blending of the conscious and the unconscious, of meaning and feeling, of conformity and non-conformity, of subject, identity and reality represents a perspective that renders a flexible and useful way to think about my data. What I see here is that feelings of gender change over lifetimes and between generations, and become part of the specific agency we see in each generation. A radical critique of the repressive society or an accidental acting-out of unconscious conflicts is seldom what informs agency and change of the generations in my study, but is rather a more gradual and varied response to the historically framed experience and possibilities and new ways of adapting to a given context, whether it is done with inattentiveness, hope, ambivalence or pain. This perspective makes it possible to describe and understand the strivings of the subject in a cultural and historical context instead of analysing it in terms of universal conflicts between the social order, power regimes and unruly desire.

Feelings and Relations

In an object-relational perspective, feelings stem from and are shaped in and through relations. In particular, but not exclusively, this begins in our first relations of love and dependency. Early identifications with caretakers, or aspects of them, are the way in which the human subject and psychic reality first come into being: Melanie Klein stated that object-relations are the centre of emotional life. The subject's feeling of its own self and others is differentiated from these early experiences with relations through processes of transference, projections and introjective

fantasies—feelings of who I am, who I can or cannot be in relationships with others:

> The child, by internalizing aspect of the parent, also internalizes the parent's image of the child—an image that is mediated to the child in the thousand different ways of being handled, bodily and emotionally … The bodily handling of and concern with the child, the manner in which the child is fed, touched, cleaned, the way it is looked at, talked to, called by name, recognized and re-recognized—all these and many other ways of communication with the child, and communicating to him his identity, sameness, unity, and individuality, shape and mould him so that he can begin to identify himself, to feel and recognize himself as one and as separate from others and yet with others. (Loewald 1980: 229–230)

The basic feelings of self and others are prior to mental representations and language and will become part of what Christopher Bollas has coined the individual's 'unthought known' (Bollas 1987: 280). The unthought known is an operational logic of 'being and relating': through countless intersubjective exchanges with the infant and its object world, 'sometimes in tranquillity, often in intense conflict', the unthought known comes to constitute the subject's ego-structure. Thus, 'ego-structure is a trace of a relationship' (Bollas 1987: 51–60). This also means that agency is formed and takes shape in relationships (Layton 2004: 47). Layton's concept of the normative unconscious refers to relational conflicts where the child split off aspects of itself to maintain love, and where these aspects will survive in the unconscious and be seen in behavioural tendencies to split, disavow or idealise what the child was refused to be. Thus, splits are produced by unmourned losses. Self-esteem problems generally reflect difficulties in negotiating a sense of agency while maintaining connections to others (Layton 1998: 17; 2004: 32). However, in contrast to Lacanian theories, where processes of splitting and disavowal of the other are seen as the universal conditions for subject formation, the relational and temporal perspective inherent in a object-relational understanding includes an intersubjective space that opens up the possibility for communication, mutual love, recognition, creativity and agency (Layton 1998).

The tension between self and others represents a developmental logic where the child learns to navigate between the intrapsychic worlds of

object-relations and the interrelational world of real subjects (Winnicott 1971; Benjamin 1995). Thus, the relational world gradually becomes both internally object-relational and interpersonally intersubjective: we may become both 'love objects' and 'like subjects' to each other, as Benjamin (1995) coins it. This means that whenever two people interact, there are at least two self–other psyches at play. If the inner objects do not overwhelm and invade us, we may experience a non-narcissistic interaction based on mutual recognition. The more we are able to see the other as a whole and separate subject, the more we can also integrate negative feelings we may have towards the inner object. Coming to terms with the internal and external parents is a major developmental project and a lifelong internal process for most people (Chodorow 2012: 47). Winnicott points out that for the child, it is the intrapsychic aggression towards the object that makes it possible to recognise the other as a like subject, as it gives the child the possibility to experience that the other continues to exist in spite of the child's aggression. Through this, narcissism or omnipotence is broken: there are others out there with a separate centre of existence and their own agendas. Benjamin states that in this way destruction is 'the Other of recognition' (1995: 48). The capacity to deal with both kinds of relationships is developmentally intertwined and therefore the pains of loss and the pleasures of attachment are equally determinant in subject formation (Layton 1998: 18–19). It never becomes a harmony, but implies continuous disruption and repair.

In the intrapsychic as well as in the interpersonal space, the sense of self and others is constructed through transference, which includes the universal psychic capabilities of the human mind like positive and negative *identifications* (I see myself and the other as alike in some respect—and I can like it or not like it), *introjections* (I see something of the other as part of myself), *projections* (I place something of myself in the other), affective *ambivalence* (I love and hate the other at the same time), *disidentifications* (this is not me!), *splitting* (dividing things into only good and only bad and projecting the aspects onto others or myself), *disavowal* (refusing to recognise the reality of a traumatic experience) and *idealisation* (aggrandising and exalting the other and thereby also enlarging myself).[3] These

[3] See Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) for more detailed definitions.

processes continue to create and re-create our psychic reality throughout life. Some of them exist to defend us from anxiety and pain; others, like identification and introjection, may also enrich our agency or sense of subjectivity. Furthermore, identifications are not a coherent relational system—we may identify with aspects of different persons, in negative and positive ways at the same time (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973: 207–209). They are ways of taking parts of the other into our selves.

If feelings come from and are reworked through relations, this adds a dimension of temporality to the different sociocultural locations. This is a point that has been developed especially by Lynne Layton (1998, 2004), who underscores how relatedness, agency and feelings take shape in particular cultural fields framed by class, race and gender. This makes some versions of subjectivities acceptable and others not, and generates particular patterns of conflicts and defences:

> We are born into families with their own histories and ways of mediating culture, and so we immediately engage in particular patterns of relating. The ways those patterns are internalized is conditioned by the accidents of gender, race, and class and by the power differentials that structure them at any given moment … It is also conditioned by the bodies and temperaments of individuals and those with whom they come in contact. The meanings these bodies, temperaments, and other individual identity elements take on are not outside of culture; they are culture … Subjects idiosyncratically make meaning of, identify with, disidentify with, take up parts of, or modify these positions in accord with on-going relational experience. (Layton 1998: 27–28)

An object-relational perspective is intergenerational in itself: it concerns change and transmission between generations in the light of changing sociocultural contexts which encounter the different generations at different points in their biographies. This means that the feelings that are experienced by the subject in any given situation will be historical in two ways: in the *biographical* dimension, where feelings from earlier points in life will be carried with the individual into new situations and continuously reworked; and the *contextual* dimension, where a specific historical

and political context will frame the reworking of conscious and unconscious feelings in the individual.

Gender and Feelings

Feelings of gender are also products of intrapsychic and intersubjective relations. From an object-relational perspective, gender involves both sexual object choices and the emergence of a gendered self, which again has multiple constitutive components that may vary from individual to individual and also over time. Gender is a 'soft assembly', as Adrienne Harris has called it, constructed, assembled and maintained differently in different persons (Harris 2008: 40). Chodorow (2012) suggests four components that are often central: the psychic creation of *bodily* experience, the experience of intrapsychic and intersubjective *self–other* relations, the transference of linguistic and *cultural categories*, and the *affective tonalities* explicitly connected to gendered fantasy content. These components will come together in each individual's personal animation of gender, 'with a characteristic emotional tonality and an organization designed to manage and contain particular anxieties and defenses' (Chodorow 2012: 146). Relational feminist psychoanalytic theories maintain that gender is a cultural as well as a personal construction (Layton 1998; Chodorow 1999). It is seen simultaneously as an effect of discursive positions and as elements of each individual's sense of self and his or her specific relationships with others. The personal images of gender gained through relational experiences, and the emotional qualities that are invested in them, do not necessarily conform to dominant cultural norms. Continuous and ongoing identity work is necessary to make the inner and the outer world connect (Nielsen 1996, 1999; Chodorow 1999). Every psychological formation of gender is unique, but it is also the case that a shared social and historical context may create social patterns in gendered subjectivities—between or within gender groups—because the society and the kinds of families where subjectivities are created are gendered in historical and cultural ways (Layton 2004; Roseneil 2007). As Chodorow (2012) formulates it, gender development is characterised by clinical individuality, universal psychic processes and social patterning.

The move towards thinking in terms of processes of identification rather than of identity mentioned earlier has been prominent in gender theory over the last 25 years. In particular, constructing gender identities in a binary system with different developmental routes for women and men has increasingly been seen as outdated, also in versions where they are not understood as universal, but historically contingent stories (Chodorow 1978; Nielsen and Rudberg 1989). The focus is not on gender identity as a specific content, but rather on processes of identifications, which may more often than not traverse biological and cultural gender dichotomies. In addition, relational psychoanalyst feminists today question the presumption that internally consistent gender identities are possible or even desirable. However, the rejection of the binary gender identity model has in this strain of thought not led to a dismissal of ideas of development or the significance of gender differences in such developmental processes. As Jessica Benjamin (1995) has argued, if the category of identification is seen as relevant for theories of gender, it must also be taken into account how such gender categories take hold in the psyche. The question has rather moved from taking difference as the point of departure to seeing how difference is constructed, not only culturally, but also personally. In Benjamin's words, the notion of psychologically 'coming to terms with [sexual] difference' has given way to exploring the ways in which perceptions of the body and the sense of self and others 'come to *figure* difference' (Benjamin 1995: 49). This places the question of gender differences in a relational space, which also includes how gender was built into the parents' own psychic worlds:

> Any term that a child learns is learned in the context of the parent's unconscious and her or his own particularized femininity and masculinity, which is itself emotionally cast, shaped by fantasy, and includes many elements of affective tonality and context that the parent has built into gender. (Chodorow 2012: 145)

The generational perspective makes visible that gender also emerges in same-sex relations, not only within the gender polarity. For instance, a women's positive or negative experience of her body may be organised around reproductive issues or sexuality, or both. A man may feel

his 'masculinity' threatened when confronted with powerful women or because he feels inadequate in relation to other men, or both (Corbett 2009; Chodorow 2012). By locating the formation of sexuality and gender in a relational space, 'sexual difference' in fact becomes less absolute and more complex than when differences lead back to a single principle of binarity, whether based on anatomy (Freud) or commanded by language (Lacan). The relational roots imply that even though personal gender identities will always have multiple components and represent some kind of psychological compromise formations, they are not always or necessarily defensive and pathogenic symptoms of splitting and repudiation of otherness, which is the dominant perspective in poststructuralist accounts (Butler 1990; Goldner 1991; Corbett 2009). Gender identities may, depending on the way they are culturally constructed and personally formed, be more or less hurtful, and in benign cases they may contain pleasurable elements that people may want to hold on to (Benjamin 1995; Layton 1998; Harris 2002, 2008).

Temporality in Theories

Psychoanalytic theory places sexuality and gender among the most important dimensions of human development. How this should be understood has been the target of heated debates ever since Freud first formulated his theory about the Oedipal phase, where the incest taboo installs masculinity and femininity as complementary psychological structures based on the identification with the same-sex parent and love of the opposite-sex parent. As is well known, this model has been heavily criticised for its inherent biologism, universalism, binarity, phallocentrism and heteronormativity. Later theories have challenged the Freudian idea that psychological gender differences are non-existent before the Oedipal phase and argue that differences in heterosexual masculine and feminine personalities are better explained by early object-relations and the ways in which gender arrangements frame processes of separation-individuation for girls and boys (Dinnerstein 1976; Chodorow 1978; Benjamin 1988). Newer gender theories have questioned the binary opposition between desire and identification and have argued that both fathers and mothers

alike may be 'love objects' and 'like subjects' for the child (Benjamin 1995; Chodorow 1999). The different models have emerged as theoretical alternatives in academic debates about psychoanalysis and gender, and the latest one is more in tune with recent relational thinking as well as with recent gender theory. However, one important point to notice in the context of a generational study is that different models of gender development have been formulated at different historical points in time. To what extent do different theories of psychological gender match different and historically delimited patterns of feelings? May psychological theories (and other theories about the social world) be seen and used as historical formations, not only in the sense that they reveal the cultural, normative and theoretical assumptions of their time, but also as sources of information about empirical patterns that later disappeared or became less poignant?[4] Psychological theories are made not only for internal academic use, but also as tools to describe clinical situations. Hence, theoretical models of gender and heterosexual development can also be seen as attempts to describe different figurations of gender that emerged in different historical and familial contexts. Such figurations represent what in the context of this book I call differently historically shaped 'structures of feeling' connected to gender. Maybe gender identities were, in fact, more binary and less fluid if we go back half a century? Is it the theoretical idea of stable identities that is wrong or have such identities simply become less frequent?[5] Because the childhoods of the three generations in our study took place in the same span of time as when these psychoanalytical models of gender development were formulated, criticised and dismissed, these questions beg to be asked.

I will return to the question of the possible connections between psychology, history and theory in Chap. 9, where I present some of the most influential theories of psychoanalysis and gender conceived in the historical period of our three generations, and see to what degree they fit

[4] See also Layton (2002) on this experience of how 'outdated' theories may fit some patients in the clinical setting well.

[5] Stable identities are not the same as coherent identities, which no psychoanalytic theory would assume. It was Freud who with his concept of the unconscious was the first to argue that the human psyche is internally contradictory. Thus, the self will always be in discord with itself in more or less painful ways.

the changes and continuities in psychological gender that emerge from our study. In raising these questions I am neither saying that we should assume that all theories will always be empirically true during the period in which they were conceived, nor that theoretical and normative critique is redundant or worthless. Rather, I am arguing that it may be useful to include historical perspectives in the ongoing theoretical, philosophical and normative debates. The current focus in feminist theory on the situatedness of knowledge that emphasises the importance of place, space and variation quite often appears to be oblivious to the dimension of temporality. Without historical framing, critiques of universalism and essentialism, for instance, may become universalist and essentialist themselves.