PART ONE

DIVIDED ORIGINS

Introduction: Divided Origins

The U.K. Human Genetics Commission's preliminary discussion document (HGC 2000) on the use of personal genetic information singles out children as a category with special interests. Given that ethical procedures in medicine rest crucially on the principles of informed consent and confidentiality, genetic testing poses a particular nexus of problems where children are concerned. Of course, both the question of young persons being incapable of giving consent in their own right and the need for parents to be informed of medical facts about their offspring long pre-date the new genetics. But genetic medicine introduces a particularly challenging set of issues, such as the testing of children for conditions for which they show no symptoms or for conditions that may only be relevant in adult life; the kind of understanding families might have about Mendelian inheritance; the implications of parentage testing and of who owns knowledge about a child's genes. Generally lumped together as posing ethical dilemmas, these add a significant dimension to the status of being a child. Yet, although they are important, it is arguable that they impinge on relatively few people and are in that sense exotic. I take the contrary view and suggest that such dilemmas arise out of and contribute to some very general currents of thinking in contemporary Euro-American societies.[1] We might then say that these general currents simply point to a recent phenomenon, a self-consciousness about living in a society in which communications and the so-called knowledge economy mobilise whole constellations of values that clamour for attention. But I would take the same step again and argue that this, in turn, is a recent version of a long standing preoccupation with knowledge.

Similar steps recur throughout this volume, old positions recaptured on new terrain, and I make no apology for the not-quite replication of issues. It is one way of working through a culture and its preoccupations, now explicitly linked, now implicitly so. Some of the many relationships between knowledge

and kinship are the subject of the first part of this book. To make the concerns concrete, I introduce a (seriously) playful vignette, although the precise cause for parental anxiety depicted here may be a little behind the times.

THE CHILD'S TWO BODIES

To be self-conscious about knowledge is in Britain a largely middle class predilection. Miller (1997) describes how, in bringing up their children, middle class mothers in 1990s North London used their knowledge of the world to shape the way they would like their children to grow. They cannot do anything about the genes; they can do everything about health, hygiene and many common afflictions; they chat about what food children should eat and what toys they want to play with. The outcome is that mothers come to regard the child's growing up as a series of defeats. The first enemy was sugar, then sweets and biscuits, then brands such as Coca Cola, and bigger temptations such as Barbie dolls and the ubiquitous gun: 'an unceasing struggle between what is regarded as the world of nature and the artificial world of commodity materialism' (1997: 75). The battles over diet and gender are regarded as efforts to resist commercialism and consumerism, efforts that invariably end first in capitulation and then in the withdrawal that characterises the grandparental generation, who find it easier to allow the child freedom to choose its own style.

Why struggle in the first place? As I see it, the young mother is placed in a position of responsibility *by her knowledge of* the effects of these substances and toys on the growing body, and on the growing mind and sets of behaviours. In other words, the child's condition depends on how the mother acts on her knowledge of the world. If the child is fed on sugar-free food he or she will be more healthy; love the child now and he or she will be able to love in the future, and so forth. At the same time, what the mother sees in the way the child grows up is her own half-hearted capacity to hold (say) the world of commerce at bay – or embrace it for that matter.

> Parents do not give up without a struggle, within which their concept of biology plays a major role. It is very common for such parents to insist that their infants have an allergy to anything artificial. It is as though the infants' bodies have antennae attuned to the mothers' ideology of nature. Infants are said to come out in spots as soon as they ingest any kind of additive or the wrong E-number. If the children do not oblige (with spots) then the parents may claim these additives cause behavioural problems, which is a harder claim to contest.
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> Miller 1997: 76

Although Miller does not put it in these words, the child seems to embody the conscientiousness with which the mother has acted on her knowledge and stuck to her principles. She must carry on until the child itself is properly informed about things. In the interim, its development reflects the application of her own knowledge.

Such a parent, in this view, shares body with the child twice over. First is the body of genetic inheritance, a given, a matter regarded colloquially as being of common blood or common substance. Second is the body that is a sign of the parent's devotion – or neglect – and in this middle class milieu it is above all through the application of knowledge that the parent's efforts make this body. Miller reports that in the neighbourhood circles he observed what the child ate or played with reflected back on to the mother's local reputation. He jokes that the child grows the mother.[2]

These mothers have to go through the same process with the next infant too; their socialisation is not in that sense ever complete. However, there is a gradual attrition of the effect that parents feel they have on the child. Whereas they can mould the first child, the second already grows up under the shadow of the first child's victories. The parent learns how to take defeat. In accepting defeat the parent is of course acknowledging the growing autonomy of the child. And what will cap it will be the fact that for all the struggle to impart a world view, to teach the child to know the world that the parent knows, knowledge will in the end divide them. In many senses, they may come to share similar suppositions about the fundamental nature of the universe, about biology for instance, but ultimately it will be the child's knowledge that separates him or her from the parent. This will be partly because information is changing all the time and people keep up to different degrees, partly because the child must come to be keeper of knowledge about him or herself. Here is the significance of confidentiality and the age of consent. But until there is understanding, the parent must take on the monitoring task on the child's behalf. Parents are a special case because of all a child's caretakers and teachers only parents share both bodies with the child.

The two bodies are regarded as belonging to the same world (after Viveiros de Castro 1998a; 1998b), traditionally rendered as at once given and constructed. The simultaneity is captured by Latour's (1993: 6) famous aphorism that one will never find any network of events that is not at once 'real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society'. Whether in affirmation or denial of its importance, people thus imagine themselves confronting reality; nature (as in Miller's account) might be the epitome, but that order of reality can be extended to any givens of existence. Yet this really-existing universe is inextricably bound with ways of knowing it; the world is *also* the

world they know that they create by their knowledge. It is the same world in which children are explicitly tutored (tautologously, acquire knowledge about). Kinship gives an added twist: even when people know that the routes to knowledge are divergent, the knowledge itself imposes an obligation on the knower in relation to those around him or her. It is a cause of moral action and creates a compulsion to act. Such at least would appear to be the implication of this mode of thinking. This doubled world is of course inhabited not only by these English-speakers but also by Euro-Americans at large.

In this vignette lies just the kind of material that would fuel continuing debate, within anthropology and beyond it, over the respective roles of the social and the biological in kin relations. However, I wish to locate its message rather differently – in what it tells us about knowledge practices – and in doing so to introduce a difference between two modes of relating. For the mother has to see the child as not only an extension of herself but also an extension of the world, and that she visualises through specific concepts that link the child to this world. In other words, the child, or aspects of his or her condition or behaviour, becomes a category, an exemplar of a type, as when it is conceptualised as prone to this or that. An example of such categorisation would be seeing one's offspring as a typical urban child, prone to allergies linked to eating habits, supermarket advertising, peer pressure from the playgroup, and such like. These all need to be brought in relation to one another, and the mother is the one to do it. In this (Euro-American) world view, persons can thus act on other persons in the same way as they act on the world, a folk model of the way in which 'we engage others in the processes of our own becoming' (Toren 2002: 189).

A TOOL

So there is indeed a footnote to be written to kinship studies. It has little to do with the substance of kinship thinking or its relevance to contemporary concerns; it does not enlarge our sensibilities about diversity or the ingenuity with which people work things out for themselves. It points to what people have in common rather than what makes them distinctive. Moreover it is not on the face of it very interesting: more a truism than a reflection, more surface observation than deep analysis, and of little theoretical (model-building) purchase. It has all the triviality of a universalism. Nonetheless, it gives present concerns another dimension. By way of shorthand, I shall refer to it as a tool. It works by virtue of its duplex character.

The idea of the tool[3] I have in mind is not unlike the enzymes that tailor and splice genes, the central tools of recombinant DNA in the words Pottage

(2004: 272) takes from Rheinberger. He adds: 'biotechnological inventiveness splices life into life', thereby 'dividing life into the two asymmetric regions of technique and object'. Life is put to work on life, much as anthropology uses relations to explore relations. The anthropologist's tool is a duplex that divides as it combines.

One of those present concerns we regard as contemporary comes from scholarly practice. Although anthropologists want to go on deploying the notion of kinship and although common sense tells them that they must find it everywhere, their analytical constructs keep pushing kinship back into the contingencies of the constructs themselves. In particular they (the constructs) regularly founder on the ubiquity or otherwise of 'biology', 'substance', 'conception', and so forth, notions evidently part of cultural thinking. For without that substratum, what then distinguishes kinship from any other phenomenon? This was the old question. Yet anthropologists are not easily going to say that there are peoples without kinship. So what is it that they go on finding everywhere? It cannot be these locally laden notions, obviously, but must be something else. It is not necessarily going to be useful to call it *kinship* either. However, and arguably, such being the compulsion of anthropology's own kind of relational knowledge, the *search for* kinship invariably throws certain forms of sociality into relief.

Perhaps what anthropologists find everywhere are two kinds of relations. Or rather, the realisation that relationality summons divergent thinking. A homely example in Chapter One is phrased in terms of connections and disconnections between persons who may or may not be counted as relatives; the one process implies the other. Now the relation is divided (into two kinds) in a particularly powerful way that I want to call 'anthropology's relation'. The two kinds that principally interest me here comprise the conceptual (or categorical) and the interpersonal. On the one hand are those relations seen to make connections through a logic or power of articulation that acquires its own conceptual momentum; on the other hand are those relations that are conducted in interpersonal terms, connections between persons inflected with a precise and particular history. We may focus on the division that is presupposed in the two kinds or on the routine social fact that they are managed in tandem. Either way, *it is the facility to deal with both together,* to operate two kinds of relations at the same time, that is the tool. This involves more than the cognitive ability to combine and discriminate, more than the content or ontological field (relations/relationships) being summoned, and more than the particular outcomes in terms of conceptual and interpersonal orientations. Rather, all these together define the implement by its usefulness. It is a tool, *tout court*, for social living. It simultaneously

compels social imagination and social action, theoretically trivial, immensely useful.

Both the mutual formula of connection/disconnection and the conceptual/interpersonal tandem may be exemplified in kinship systems. As far as Euro-American kinship is concerned they are joined by a third duplex, to which I return, namely a highly developed contrast between relations already in existence and those that must be deliberately created. Now the particular tool I am calling anthropology's relation, the divergence between the conceptual and the interpersonal, is composed neither of mutually referential opposites (as in connection/disconnection) nor of explicit features of any one cultural repertoire (as in the third case, which yields a contrast between the given and the constructed). Rather, only the work of anthropological exegesis will show how the one relation is folded into the other. We come to see that it is through interacting with persons that diverse interactions and further connections become intellectually conceivable, while it is through creating concepts and categories that connections come to have a social life of their own. The latter observation was presaged by Godelier (1986) in his search for the origins of kinship. Kinship appears where one can imagine – make an abstract image of – the relative of a relative, relationships between relationships. Kinship appears again where people make an imperative out of so doing. The imperative is logical and moral at the same time.

In sum, as anthropologists use it, their sort of relation is a tool for investigation that the discipline has borrowed from widely shared features of social life. What gives it purchase is the facility it offers for switching, as the North London mothers did, between relations of two kinds. The child who is the extension of the mother is also an extension of the world she inhabits. These mothers were involved in other switching too, as I comment in a moment.

For myself, there is a further source of interest in this duplex. It comes from submitting to the temptation to explore the (cultural) contingency of the very notion of relation. After what I have just said, it would be patently absurd to see the duplex as the creation of any one locale, let alone a creation of the scientific revolution (as Chapter Two might imply); however, it seems to have been pressed then into service in new ways, and specifically in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. This kind of knowledge I take as information attached to its source in some demonstrable manner. The point is, its formulation, use and circulation *in specific knowledge practices* is definitively contingent. Contingency does not make it un-useful; rather, it gives the duplex a specification of its usefulness. Thus a focus on the relational remains one of social anthropology's key strengths, and it does so among other things because of anthropology's willingness to move between conceptual and interpersonal

relations in its descriptions of social life. I believe anthropology thus arrives at a certain truth about sociality that could not be captured in any other way.

There is clearly an account to be written about all of this, and the present one is not quite it. (The artefactualisation of 'the relation' is particularly clumsy, but it perhaps has some use as shorthand.)[4] At the same time some of the account might already have been written, which is what this collection, drawing on the works of many others, is meant to indicate.

DIVIDED ORIGINS

Because they were formulated at different times, it may be helpful to be explicit about the connections between the chapters.

Anthropologists are of course latter day users of the relation (anthropology's relation) as a tool. Others have seized on it before them, and Part I hazards giving a special place to its development in the scientific revolution and its facilitation of that revolution. It helped produce among other things what I venture to generalise as 'science's relation', the third duplex. In fact, the duplex that I call anthropology's relation is not the only source of divergent ways of relating in anthropology itself. The discipline has drawn substantially on science's relation as it developed in tandem with new knowledge practices that came to describe the world in divergent ways, echoed in the North London mothers' anxieties over the effort to make the child as natural as possible.

The first three chapters contain a footnote within a footnote, namely a comment on what Carsten (2004: 165) calls Schneider's 'key perception about the relation between scientific knowledge and kinship'. This was that the more (Euro-)Americans learn about the biological facts of procreation, the more they feel informed about the facts of kinship.[5] Chapter One starts with a discussion that could have been composed of many elements, drawn from anywhere in the Euro-American world. The combination put together here is intended to illustrate ways in which people see science as affecting their lives, and specifically biotechnology. It thus moves over terrain familiar to a Euro-American readership and familiarly opens with an assumption about who *we* and *us* are. If it speaks with a Euro-American voice, Euro-American is spoken in many places and the action in this chapter takes place largely in Australia, from early days a country at the forefront of developments in assisted conception techniques. This aspect of biotechnology is prime material for prevalent and media-fanned assumptions about the increase of individualism that biotechnology supposedly brings in its wake.

In taking off from people's preoccupations, as reported in the press and elsewhere, Chapter One shows something of the value given to people's choices

and rights in how they manage their lives and how this chimes with knowledge about the given nature and obligations of heredity and family. Knowledge brings responsibilities. However, the anthropologist is as interested in what is not said as in what is said. The bulk of the account is taken up with a (positivist) understanding of individuals as entities prior to relationships, so to an age that thinks of itself as individualistic, the revelation of relationship can come as something of a surprise. The person as an individual turns out to be the person as a relative. This occurs in two distinct locations: one in the turbulence of family arrangements and one in the procreative obligations kin are (newly) imagined owing one another. And right at the end I present academic arguments that presuppose relational thinking. These last are interestingly complicated by the substance of the debate they address, the separateness or otherwise of pregnant mother and fetus. The example presses home the point that the concept of relationship asks us to think about connections and disconnections together. The duplex is left at that and not further elaborated.

Chapter One thus documents an arena that has brought families and their relatives into the spotlight in the way ethicists and medical administrators approach guidelines for the deployment of new technologies. Alongside Australian reports and reportage, U.S. and British materials point to how law and biotechnology work together (a parallelism in their effects and fabrications), and how law and kinship often do not (notions of the embodied and distributed person sit uncomfortably with the legal subject). At the same time, Chapter One introduces science (biotechnology) largely where folk parlance would conventionally locate it, something to be drawn 'into' society. Chapter Two opens up current discussions (among scientists, policymakers and others) about science and society that challenges this location. However, Chapter Two takes the challenge in an unexpected direction, asking us to imagine science as already embedded in society. But there is also a second challenge here. It was the anthropologist's pre-existing interest in relationships and indeed in a relational account that led me to spring two 'surprises' in Chapter One. We might ask how relationism comes to be embedded in anthropological analysis in the first place.

Social anthropology is an Enlightenment-inspired, information-gathering discipline; the first task is to grasp the role of relations in (Euro-American) knowledge-making. Chapter Two embarks on a case for the special status of relations in scientific epistemology. To repeat the point, it is obviously absurd to claim that what the scientific revolution created was a relational view of the world, which is the condition of social being in the first place. So, what *was* being created? Perhaps one could say that 'the relation' (and

I am talking of anthropology's relation) was being appropriated for particular, in this case *epistemological*, ends. Of course this points to little more than tautology – new practices of knowledge whose suppositions about relationships evidently developed in new ways. But if one can talk in these terms at all, then just such an appropriation, leading to a particular kind of (scientific) knowledge-making, would be the kind of cultural contingency for which I was looking.

At any rate, what emerged was knowledge with divided or divergent origins, that is, knowledge capable of looking to more than one source.[6] Truth might rest in the persuasiveness of concepts, as logically connected to other concepts, or truth might rest in the persuasiveness of persons, bringing with them the guarantee of professional expertise, and in either case relations had to hold. We shall come on to that in Chapter Three. In the meantime, Chapter Two explores the specific duplex I call *science's relation*.

Science's relation is exemplified in a trope that Schneider also used, though I deploy it for different ends. I refer to the distinction between discovery and invention, between unfolding relations already there (co-implications) and making new relations (meaningful connections).

The distinction allows Euro-Americans two ways of getting at relational knowledge: uncovering what is in nature and making new knowledge through culture. A couple of contexts render this divergence apparent. (There is no significance in there being a couple.) Thus Chapter Two considers the way science's relation informed a relational view within the discipline of social anthropology itself. It also considers the echoes of scientific relationism in indigenous, here English, kinship relationships. In both cases, what is of interest is a division between modes of knowledge about the world (or about oneself as part or not part of that world). In both cases, scientific knowledge practices appear an explicit model for the interpretation of certain elements. On much less certain ground, the argument about an implicit or embedded science is made in a thoroughly speculative manner. However, if I am driven to take the risk (of error, logical and otherwise), an indigenous ethic in modern epistemology is at my heels. Uncovering connections and making connections can both have the force of a moral imperative, in the first case to exploit or conserve but otherwise acknowledge the world as it is and, in the second, as Wagner (1975) pointed out long ago, to make human life work as social life, the grand project of creating society. Nature and culture! The contrast appears at once foundational and as requiring attention. And whether in terms of the verification of abstract knowledge or for the personal responsibilities that knowledge brings, the theme of accountability runs through Part I.