Chapter 2
Rethinking the Life Cycle

Abstract Carol Gilligan criticized Erik Erikson's account of the human life cycle for its sexist assumptions, but never offered an alternative general account. This can be done, however, by drawing on recent ideas about balancing career and family. An adult identity is forged through a "choice" of how much to emphasize career (or individual self-fulfillment) and how much to emphasize family (or relationships) in one's life. Erikson skimped on the relationship issues intrinsic to human development, but his work gives us the material we need for a fuller and non-sexist picture of development that treats males and females as facing the same basic developmental issues.

Keywords Development · Erikson · Gilligan · Sexism · Feminism · Identity · Career · Family · Life cycle · Freud

I am not sure why we don't see many discussions of the human life cycle these days. What used to be a hot topic at the humanistic end of (developmental) psychology doesn't seem to be so interesting to psychologists, educationists, and psychoanalysts these days, and I have a feeling that the main reason may have something to do with what has also happened to psychoanalysis. Feminists have criticized psychoanalysis from many different angles, and psychoanalysis is in something of a decline; and I have a feeling that similar forces or influences may have been at work to diminish interest in issues about the life cycle. After all, the most famous work on this topic was done by psychoanalysts, most notably Freud and Erik Erikson, and what these figures said about the life cycle and despite some important differences between them is subject, I think, to devastating feminist critique. In particular, and as Carol Gilligan has stated more forcefully than anyone else, both Freud and, especially, Erikson in his earlier work described the life cycle in terms taken from the experience and development only of males. And presumably we need and want a picture of human development that shows an equal understanding of both men and women. Moreover, when Erikson finally offered an account of the stages of women's development, it treated that development as occurring in an essentially different way from the typical male pattern and contained

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sexist assumptions that Gilligan and others have highlighted. But rather than offer a non-sexist and simply human account of how we develop, Gilligan (in *In a Different Voice*) only offers us a feminist picture of female development that has applicability exclusively to females, and I think we can do better or at least more. I think that it is possible to offer—and that many of us would like having—an account of the stages of human development that is not only non-sexist, but that is also equally applicable to males and females. This will be, I want to say, the first truly human picture of human development—even if it is also a picture that couldn't have occurred in the absence of Erikson's earlier sexist and bifurcated account(s) of human development and Gilligan's subsequent objections to it/them.

I am going to presuppose that most of you have read some of Erikson's work on the life cycle: his "Eight Ages of Man" from *Childhood and Society*, his longer account of the life cycle in *Identity and the Life Cycle*, or one of the other works in which he deals with this notion.[1] Erikson's picture of the human life cycle extends considerably beyond Freud, who spoke of various stages of childhood development, but didn't highlight human development *after childhood* in the way Erikson so notably sought to do. Also, Erikson attempts to stay clear of distinctively Freudian views about unconscious processes. To be sure, when he speaks of the basic issue of trust versus mistrust, he has Freud's ideas about orality definitely in mind. But he doesn't ride those ideas heavily and Freud's metapsychology is not explicitly invoked. Indeed, what he says almost seems like common sense. So let me just very briefly summarize what Erikson tells us about the early and middle stages of human development because that will put us on the same page and make it easier for me to explain Gilligan's feminist criticisms of Freud and of Erikson's views.

Speaking very roughly, Erikson believes that there is a sequence of early stages of human development each representing a "task" for the child, and he holds that the virtue of any given stage consists in the child's more or less successfully completing that task. Thus the task of the earliest stage is to develop trust in the world (and in one's ability to make one's way successfully in it) based on trust in one's parents for providing one with what one needs (e.g., food and comfort); and if one's parents or the larger environment don't reliably provide one with those things, then a child is likely to become mistrustful rather than trustful. All this presupposes, of course, that one is better off if one has a trustworthy initial environment and is thus able to develop basic trust—that is the import of Erikson's calling it a virtue of the first developmental stage, which he designates the stage of basic trust versus mistrust. And though I have no desire in these pages to question his underlying value judgment here, it is worth noting that the virtue of a given stage isn't entirely up to the child in the way that most ethicists tend to think of an adult's moral virtue as pretty much up to them. If a child doesn't develop basic trust, that can be because their *environment* was untrustworthy, so a lack of the virtue of a given stage clearly doesn't represent any kind of moral criticism of the child as far as Erikson is concerned.

[1]I shall mainly rely on *Childhood and Society*, NY: Norton, 1950.

Erikson goes on to speak of a stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt that centers around the task of becoming toilet-trained and whose virtue consists in becoming toilet-trained in a way that basically accepts, rather than resents, the need for such training. Erikson describes a sequence of subsequent stages whose successful or virtuous navigation and completion helps the child or later the adolescent or adult to develop (successfully) further. But I won't go into any further details except if and when it is necessary to do so in order to understand Carol Gilligan's critique of Erikson or the larger picture of the human life cycle I am going to sketch and defend here. So it is time to indicate what Gilligan found so objectionable about Erikson's theory.

Gilligan's main target in her ground-breaking book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* is not Erikson, but Lawrence Kohlberg (all three were or had been associated with one another at Harvard).[2] Kohlberg had worked out an account of moral development in terms of stages, but when it turned out that women tended to advance less far through those stages than men and the inference was drawn that men are on the whole morally superior to women, Gilligan had a devastating retort.[3] Kohlberg's studies of moral development had all been done exclusively on men, and Gilligan argued that if women advanced less far than men through Kohlberg's (male-based) stages, one could only conclude that women's moral development was different from men's, not inferior. That conclusion was the basis for the title Gilligan chose for her book, and it led her to suggest that women conceive morality in different terms from men. Men think in terms of justice, rights, autonomy, and (systems of) rules; women in terms of direct connection to and concern for others. So Kohlberg turned out to be as biased as Freud showed himself to be when he said that women have no sense of justice.[4] Kohlberg was saying much the same thing, and both of them missed the point that justice needn't be the central notion or concern of a morality. Gilligan went on to suggest that women tend to exemplify a morality of caring that doesn't see everything in terms of rules, autonomy, and justice (in later writings, however, she put less stress on the correlation with gender and more on the sheer difference between justice and caring as basic ways to approach moral issues).

All this background is relevant to Gilligan's critique of Erikson and (perhaps more importantly) to the views her book suggested about the nature of female (as opposed to male) development. She takes on Erikson early in her book, and (amazingly enough, at least as I see it) she definitively undercuts his views within

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[2]For Gilligan's critique, see her *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982, esp. pp. 11–15.

[3]For Kohlberg's account of moral development, see, e.g., his "Moral Stages and Moralization: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach" in T. Lickona, ed., *Moral Development and Behavior: Theory, Research and Social Issues*, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976.

[4]See Freud's "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, London: Hogarth Press, 1961/1925, Vol. XIX, p. 257f.

the space of three pages.[5] She does this in two ways. First, she notes that Erikson's original account in *Childhood and Society* and *Identity and the Life Cycle* focuses on, and is at best only accurate to, typical male development. Erikson says that one goes through and resolves some sort of identity crisis *before* one seeks out and joins a life partner for a long-term intimate relationship. And this was the male pattern in the days before the women's movement and is the male pattern to some extent even nowadays. In any event, it wasn't the women's typical pattern, and after having focused on male development and spoken of the life cycle in terms that only apply to typical males, he eventually acknowledged or claimed that women were different. According to Erikson, rather than, like a man, forge an identity before committing oneself to a lifetime intimate relationship (marriage), women tend to forge their *identity* through their choice of an long-term intimate relationship.[6] Again, of course, this was more true of women in the days before the women's movement than it is now, but that very fact shows a limitation of Erikson's perspective. His original approach simply ignored women, but his eventual view relegates men and women to different developmental fates in a way that clearly reflects sexist or patriarchal assumptions about what is natural or in most instances inevitable for women and for men. Gilligan herself in *In a Different Voice* seeks to emphasize differences between men and women and is more intent on getting equal credit for what women have traditionally done (care for others and invest themselves in relationships) and what men have traditionally received credit for (achievements in the world outside the family) than she is on criticizing the way women have been relegated to doing more of the caring and less of the achieving than men.[7] We shall return to this issue later on, where it will turn out to be crucial to what I take to be a better understanding of what is involved in human development, but for the moment let me press on to what I consider to be the most telling criticism of Erikson Gilligan makes in her book.

Even allowing that boys and men develop differently—have different stages and tasks—from what is appropriate to girls and women, Gilligan points out that Erikson's specific scheme of developmental stages doesn't make good psychological sense *even for boys/men*. She notes Erikson's view that young men are ready for relationships intimacy after they have forged or formed their basic adult (work) identity, but points out that there is precious little in Erikson's description of the young man's previous stages of development that can prepare him for such intimacy. Of the five stages that are supposed to precede the male's "choice" of intimacy over isolation, only one, the very earliest stage of basic trust versus

[5]See Gilligan, pp. 11–13. Before reading Gilligan's critique, I had long been a devotee of Erikson's views. But Gilligan convinced me that those views are deeply mistaken and left me wondering whether or how one could work out a theory of life's developmental stages in a more plausible way than Erikson had done. In other words, even if Gilligan's critique is by and large correct, one can still hope for a reasonable and less sexist account of human development, and we have to give Erikson credit, I think, for at least making such a hope plausible and understandable.

[6]See Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, NY: W.W. Norton, 1968.

[7]See especially Gilligan, *op. cit.,* Chap. 6.

mistrust, has anything immediately to do with the forming of intimate relationships. All the other stages prior to intimacy are treated by Erikson as increasing the boy's competence or skill as an autonomous individual so that he is subsequently ready to choose an identity that is defined in terms of the selection of particular work or a particular career. This makes it, according to Gilligan, just about impossible to understand how a boy/young man who has developed in this fashion and with these ends implicitly in (someone's) view can possibly be ready for intimacy and mature ("genital") love when Erikson says he is supposed to be ready for them.

I think this criticism of Erikson is very telling, and it suggests that we had better not look at the earlier stages of human or boys' development in the rather one-sided way in which Erikson looks at them. There had better be more emphasis on issues of affection and connection all along, if a life cycle for boys or, for that matter, any different life cycle for girls is to make psychological sense; and we will want to take this issue up again later, when we try to offer some new ideas about how the human life cycle should be understood. For the moment, however, let me just say that I think that any solution for this particular problem of Erikson's approach will have to involve a better sense or picture of what, developmentally speaking, the choice of an adult identity is all about. Once we understand that a bit better, we will be in a better position to make the necessary adjustments to the earlier stages Erikson posited, the adjustments that are going to be necessary if an account of the stages of human life cycle is to be developmentally realistic in a way that, as Gilligan so deftly pointed out, Erikson scheme really isn't. Also, it should be obvious by now that it lacks realism not only for boys but for girls. Girls are supposed to choose intimacy as the basis for their identity, but the earlier stages Erikson describes make it very far from clear how such a strong emphasis on intimacy can emerge, for girls, from stages whose virtues are described mainly in terms of the achievement of certain forms of autonomy and competence.[8] So how are we going to do better for both males and females?

Here is my suggestion or at least part of it. Gilligan describes a course of female development that differs in essentials from what was traditionally thought to be appropriate for males, a course of development in which the (patriarchally-induced) tendency of women to be self-denying and self-abnegating is overcome in and through their becoming able to assert themselves and their own interests. But although Gilligan mentions how important it is for men to learn to become more caring and not leave all the work of caring to women, *In a Different Voice* is too busy stressing the differences between men and women to work out a feminist ethic that applies equally to men and women *or an account of human development that very clearly* doesn't *assume essential or natural differences between males and females*. Gilligan made use of the work of Nancy Chodorow, who had attributed the differences between men and women largely to differences in the way they are raised (or how they typically relate to the person, the mother, who raises them), and Chodorow advocated forms of child-rearing that would do away with those

[8]Cf. Gilligan, p. 154.

differences.[9] But in *In a Different Voice,* Gilligan is more interested in citing Chodorow in order to show how different men's and women's lives (and morality) are than in using Chodorow's work to support an ethical agenda that would seek to minimize or do away with those differences.[10]

But even assuming that it is possible to do away with those differences and that as a matter of justice or caring or morality, we should try to do so, what does this have to do with (the psychology of) human development? Quite a lot, in fact. Feminism helps us to a certain ethical picture of human life in which men and women are more equal, but once we see that full picture, I think we can be on our way to a better understanding of human development as well.

What does feminism complain about? Among other things, that women are denied career opportunities that men can take for granted and that women, even women with careers, end up doing more of the housework and childcare in families than their spouses do. But apart from this issue of justice or fairness, there is another way to see the choices that surround people's careers and their family life. In the bad old days, men were the sole breadwinners and women did all or most of the emotional work within families. Fathers were typically absent or psychologically distant, and that was accepted. Women had fewer opportunities for creative careers/self-fulfillment and that was accepted too. But feminism tells us that men miss out on something important in patriarchal circumstances. They are taught to care less about personal relationships than about their careers, and as a result they typically miss out in substantial ways on the joys and the good of close, affectionate personal/family relationships. So nowadays, in the wake of the substantial but limited success so far of the women's movement (as it has occurred in the West), we can see more males being more involved with their families, more males being considered sensitive by the women around them and not embarrassed to be thus considered. And of course and more obviously we see women who achieve important career successes and/or get creative self-fulfillment in ways that were almost totally denied to women previously. Nowadays we even have househusbands who choose family relationships over career goals, and there are women who feel they simply don't have time for long-term close personal relationships and/or for motherhood, given their all-encompassing and demanding career goals or creative aspirations.

The fact that all this is possible shows something important. It shows that nowadays (and unlike earlier patriarchal times) both men and women have a choice to make (though sometimes, as we shall see, the choice is made for them by circumstances or their own capacities) between emphasizing career/creative self-fulfillment and emphasizing good intimate or personal relationships. They can choose to balance or "juggle" these goods or they can specialize in one side or the other of such a choice, but the important point is that both men and women are

[9]See Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, esp. pp. 211–219.

[10]On this point see especially Gilligan, p. 173.

in principle faced with the same choice here (and have more *freedom* of choice than either gender had under patriarchy).[11] And I think that that choice (which doesn't have to occur all at one time and may be to some extent revisable as one moves through adult life) can be thought of as basically determining an individual's long-term (adult) identity and to do so for both men and women.

The choice I have just been describing is a very important one. Not, perhaps, the only important choice every individual must make or even the most important. The choice or non-choice of a religion is arguably just as important—at least from the standpoint of religious people. But the point about the choice between a work-orientation and a relationship-orientation is that normal individuals have to make it whatever they may decide about religion or anything else. And arguably this choice is an aspect of human *development* in a way that (from a secular perspective at least) religious choice doesn't have to be. Indeed, what I want to say is that what defines an individual's identity in developmental terms is how as adults they deal or come to deal with the issue of choosing or allocating their interest between relationships and careers. Freud is supposed to have said or thought that a psychologically healthy individual basically has to be able to love and to work, but although I agree with Freud's presumed assumption here that these capacities are central to human development, I am saying more.[12] I am saying that we can choose to emphasize one side of the equation more than the other or else try to balance fairly equally between them—and that our choice of which way to go on this issue defines our identity in a way that is relevant to and grows out of our human development.[13]

Erikson saw two different pathways to the attainment of adult identity: for men, that process preceded a choice between intimacy with a life partner versus non-intimacy or "isolation"; and for women the attainment of a viable adult identity *involved* the choice of intimacy rather than isolation. And despite her evident commitment to feminism, Gilligan too saw women's development as following its own special "caring" track: as involving, in particular, a girl or woman's growing from purely egoistic self-concern to a caring concern for others that would be

[11]In my book *The Impossibility of Perfection: Aristotle, Feminism, and the Complexities of Ethics* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), I argue that it is impossible in principle to perfectly or ideally realize both creative/career values and relationship/family values. But all I need to assume here is that in present-day social circumstances the lives of most people have to make the "choices" I have been describing. And in a moment I shall also be giving you some of my reasons for thinking that none of these choices is ever absolutely perfect (in terms of considerations of happiness or well-being) for us humans.

[12]In *Childhood*, p. 264f., Erikson attributes this thought to Freud but doesn't cite any passage in Freud's published writings.

[13]I am assuming that not everything that significantly characterizes an adult individual has to be conceived as part of their adult identity. The aestheticism of an aesthete can be part of their adult identity if it is what they find most fulfillment in in their lives (even if it isn't part of a career). But the mere fact that someone greatly enjoys opera, or rap, doesn't necessarily count as part of their adult *identity*. I should also note that I am not assuming one cannot get self-fulfillment out of raising a family or caring for others.

balanced by a healthy degree of self-assertive concern or caring for oneself (one's own long-term happiness or welfare). But I think the fullest sort of feminism would and today does acknowledge that both interest in creative/career self-fulfillment and a desire for good and deep personal relationships are relevant to both males and females.[14] This involves a rejection of patriarchal or sexist values that assign these goods very unequally or asymmetrically in relation to men and women, and I am proposing that we take this emerging social/cultural understanding of what is *generally* valuable for human beings as the basis for understanding the human life cycle. Ideally, what happens in (the various stages of) childhood prepares us both for intimate relationships with others and for achieving significant things in the world, but every adult life over time represents a kind of choice with respect to these two goods. What emerges in and through adulthood is a person who either emphasizes their personal relationships rather than career/creative self-fulfillment or emphasizes the self-fulfillment over the relationships or seeks a balance between those two goals/interests, and I am saying that that choice constitutes in developmental terms the adult identity of that individual. And there can be failure here too if someone ends up a loner with no outside interests (say, a druggie or alcoholic or, more simply and generally, a person who can't hold a job or maintain any relationship). This is not so much what Erikson called role-diffusion as, again more simply, identity diffusion, and we can use the negative term "diffusion" here because, following Freud's and other psychoanalysts' views on love and work to at least this extent, it is plausible to think of an emerging inability to form close relationships or achieve anything meaningful in the world of work as a *developmental* human failure.

This understanding of what it is to eventually form an adult identity assigns a similar task to both men and women, but it allows some flexibility in how that task is fulfilled. Someone who isn't very good at or interested in relationships, but who is enormously creative in their work (the popular image of Beethoven comes to mind here) has successfully formed an adult identity. But, similarly, the Italian "mamma mia" who everyone loves, who enjoys her life of close but variegated personal relationships, and who has never for a moment thought about any career outside the home (she was married at age seventeen) also counts as having a genuine adult identity. And by the same token the woman or man who struggles to balance a career with family (and/or other personal) commitments and relationships also counts as having and maintaining an adult identity. The assumption here is that all three of these modes (and of the social/psychological/personal interstices between them) represent genuine solutions to the developmental issues or problems that our younger lives set up for us and also tend to prepare us for, but let me just clarify some of the presuppositions of what I am saying here.

[14]Are they equally relevant? Is there something about women that inevitably and on average makes them more inclined toward relationships and something about men that on average moves them more toward individualistic career/creative achievement/self-fulfillment? The model I am offering doesn't have to commit itself to any particular answers to these questions.

First, I am assuming that the juggling of career and family (alternatively, of work and life) is frustrating enough so that one cannot just assume that every other solution to the choice between career and family is to be ruled out of court as totally or basically unacceptable. In other words, for example, a woman or man who sees that the attempt to juggle career and family would limit to some extent what they can do in their career could decide that they prefer to emphasize career (or work) over family and relationships (or "life") and be able to live with the consequences of that choice. If you say that they would be missing something by making such a choice, you should remember that exactly the same thing can be said about those who juggle career and family/relationships these days. There is something very frustrating and somewhat unsatisfactory about such juggling (one's children will slightly resent one's career involvements and one's career can or will be slightly or more than slightly compromised by all the children's dance recitals and the like that any sort of family commitment can or will lead one to attend). But (and this is the main point) that doesn't mean that the juggling way of life is totally *unsatisfactory* either. It will have both its attractions/satisfactions and its frustrations/dissatisfactions, but it is an adult way to lead one's life, and so I think it represents in developmental terms a form of adult identity. But by the same token the choice to emphasize career at the expense of long-term intimate relationships or family life is an adult one. It involves the adult recognition that one can't expect to have an unfettered career if one takes on family responsibilities together with one's career commitments. The solution is not perfect, but nothing is here (the same things could be said about the mamma mia), but my point, again, is that it is a solution, a choice between or among genuine (adult) values, rather than a rejection of or inability to realize those values.

Second, I am assuming that if we look back at the developmental stages that precede the identity choice I am describing, we can see issues and elements that foreshadow and/or prepare us for that choice. Thus Erikson describes the stage of basic trust versus mistrust as involving both issues of competency and the eventual capacity for achieving things and issues about relationships. If the child's needs are taken care of by the parents, the child will tend to trust both the world and themselves and be confident about what they later may try to achieve in the world; and they will also trust and love their parents and to that extent be open to and able to eventually manage/fulfill intimate relationships more generally. But the next stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt also involves both sorts of issues. The name Erikson chooses for the stage emphasizes the issue of competency that toilet training involves, but Erikson also speaks of the power struggle between parent and child that such training often involves, and one might therefore add to Erikson's account that the good relationship of trust that is or can be established between parent and child in the oral stage of basic trust versus mistrust is tested and either reinforced or attenuated when the issue of toilet training arises and is resolved. So toilet training is not just training for competency, but, depending on how the parents and also the child handle it, is a testing or instancing of the value of relationships for the child. And a less satisfactory outcome in this latter respect might actually predispose the child against relationships as a central element in their later life or at least make them more willing to go fully and exclusively with their careers and less

willing or able to see their life's basic satisfaction as a matter of how good their relationships with others are.

One might also add that how one resolves the issue of toilet training may make a difference in one's relations with one's siblings. If one has been a difficult child, the parents may compare one unfavorably—both in their own minds and in conversations with each other and to one's face—to one's older (or eventually one's younger) siblings, and knowing this may affect how well one gets on with those siblings. One's relationships with both parents and siblings, in other words one's family relationships, can lay down a pattern that affects later intimate relationships, so it should be clear that, despite its achievement-emphasizing name, the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt represents a stage of development both for one's eventual ability or desire to achieve things in the world and for one's eventual ability or desire to have satisfying personal relationships.[15]

Similarly, although Erikson's nomenclature also emphasizes the autonomy/achievement aspect of the two stages that follow autonomy versus shame and doubt, those stages in fact pose developmental issues regarding both eventual achievement needs/goals and eventual relationship needs/goals. Taken together, the stage of initiative versus guilt and the stage of industry versus inferiority raise issues about the child's competency to master the basic social and cognitive skills that are requisite to any career/work identity (even Beethoven had to deal with music publishers and performers). But, pace Erikson's treatment of them, those two stages also represent important developmental stages for the ability or desire to have good personal relationships. In school we may (or may not) learn basic cognitive skills and the competencies of navigating a social environment, but to emphasize the competencies in the latter case is to play down the early experiences of (peer) *friendship* that the school (or playground) setting allows for and encourages. The emphasis on skills and competency precisely ignores, downplays, or misinterprets the meaning of childhood relationships both as valuable in themselves and as preparing us not only for some later career choice but also for a later choice or choices (given divorce and the possibility that one's spouse may predecease one) of a life partner.

So there is plenty of material within the life stages that precede the attainment of an adult identity that helps to prepare us for later intimate relationships and a choice between emphasizing or not emphasizing such relationships. Erikson's nomenclature for the stages and his whole way of conceiving them biases the issue in a way that favors the traditional and very one-sided emphasis on the eventual career or

[15]In *Childhood* (p. 256), Erikson notes that issues of autonomy—and also of initiative—can involve or bring about a contest between siblings for a favored position with a mother (and presumably with a father as well). But the issue is framed in egoistic terms, in terms of what may or may not affect what the developing child gets from his or her parents. The issue of what the child can intrinsically get from having good relations with his or her siblings is totally ignored. On the same page, incidentally, Erikson says that with freedom of locomotion (initiative rather than guilt) can come "pleasurable accomplishment wielding tools and weapons (sic), in manipulating meaningful toys—and in caring for younger children." But once again the emphasis is on the satisfactions of the child rather than on the relationship with the younger children or the non-egoistic concern for such children that such relationships characteristically or ideally involve.

work of a male.[16] But the stages themselves contain enough material—and we are indebted to Erikson for providing some of that material—so that a less sexist view of human development can make use of that material to explain how the way is prepared or not prepared for an eventual choice of identity that needn't be viewed in sexist terms and that can be seen as a basic human choice faced by all humans. Both Erikson's and (to a much lesser extent) Gilligan's approach to the life cycle and its stages separate out male and female development and place these on what we could call different tracks. And it is worth noting at this point that their doing this undercuts the whole idea of a distinctively human life cycle and of distinctively human development.[17] Let me explain.

The term "human" is sometimes used in a limiting way and sometimes in an expansive way. When John Rawls speaks of offering a theory of human justice, he is contrasting his view of justice with the view of justice and of morality more generally that has typically been attributed to Kant and according to which justice and morality have to be valid for all possible rational beings and not just all human beings.[18] So in this context "human" limits our focus, but in other contexts the use of the term has the effect, the necessary effect, of widening the focus of our concern and of what is relevant to discussion. If men and women have different basic developmental paths/tasks—as Erikson assumes and Gilligan never denies—then it is misleading or worse to speak of the *human* life cycle and of the basic pattern of normal or abnormal *human* development. But if we think (in non-patriarchal and feminist terms) of the life cycle as presenting similar issues to both men and women, then we *can* meaningfully and expansively speak of the *human* life cycle and of *human* development. So the picture offered here may make the idea of a truly human life cycle fully available and understandable for the first time. To be sure, Erikson in *Identity and the Life Cycle speaks* of the "human life cycle," but I am saying that his actual account of how women and men develop effectively undercuts the idea of there being such a life cycle.[19]

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[16]For Erikson's tendency to see every aspect of male development as bearing more immediately on work goals/values than on relationships goals/values, see, e.g., *Identity and the Life Cycle,* NY: International Universities Press, 1959, pp. 90, 92, 128, 163n.

[17]In *Motivation and Personality* (NY: Harper and Row, 1954), A.H. Maslow argued for a hierarchy of human needs with the desire for self-actualization at the apex of that hierarchy. But many critics have claimed that in placing self-actualization over, say, the need for love and the need to belong, Maslow was favoring Western-style individualism over the more relationship-oriented view of human life and human needs one finds in many other cultures. And to that extent his account of human needs also seems to favor traditional male goals over traditional females one. Maslow wasn't offering a *developmental* picture of human life in the way Erikson was, but his theory does seem sexist in the way Erikson's is. However, in the final part of this book I will be making positive use of some of the non-sexist aspects of Maslow's theory in an attempt to give a very general or overall picture of what human life and human lives are like.

[18]See John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, pp. 138, 251–257.

[19]See *Identity and the Life Cycle,* p. 1. In *Childhood and Society*, Erikson represents himself (p. 251) as describing the stages of "the growth and the crises of the human person," but, again,

However, I have so far limited our consideration of the factors that determine an individual's ("choice" of a) particular identity to the preferences or predilections of individuals. Some individuals feel more comfortable with a career than with relationships, others have the opposite (pre)disposition, and some, we said, value both sorts of goods in a way that makes them want to juggle or balance them as best they can. But sometimes this is more and sometimes it is less a matter of individual choice. If someone has a hideous appearance, that will make relationships more difficult; if they have low intelligence but are attractive, it may be easier for them to have friends and a spouse than to be successful or creative in some career or line of work. Such factors will influence the identity choice or alignment of individuals for reasons they may not like or may actually resent.

Then there are large social issues. Patriarchal societies shunt females into a relationship-emphasizing identity and males into the achievement/work style of identity, leaving little room for any sort of (non-lopsided) balance between these goods and very little room, more generally, for anyone, male or female, to escape the identity fate, as we might call it, that such societies assign to them. Does this mean that our supposedly human account of identity and of the life cycle doesn't apply in such societies? Not in the least; in fact it confirms our general picture. If certain societies cut off certain human possibilities (as envisaged by a feminism that can claim to be more enlightened about such possibilities than patriarchal societies are), we can say that those societies determine adult identity in a limiting way, but we can still say that what adult identity is, is a matter of how much the individual emphasizes relationships and how much they emphasize creative achievement and work. We can thus distinguish patriarchal societies from our less sexist society today (in the West) by saying that the latter allows more freedom for and individual choice in adult identity formation than does the former. And so, even assuming a feminist perspective, we can still say that the identity of individuals in both patriarchal and non-patriarchal societies is a matter of how much value their lives place on relationships as opposed to (or in balance with) career/self-fulfillment goals and values.

This way of putting things should indicate that my account is not wedded to speaking of individuals' *choosing* to balance or to differentially emphasize relationships and achievement/career. More often than not, individuals are (so to speak) *chosen* (or marked out or selected) for certain emphases by social influences or by irrecusable facts about or factors in themselves. So although my sketched account of the life cycle doesn't deny the reality or individuality of the individual, it doesn't assume that individuals are in total control over their lives or their adult identities.[20]

(Footnote 19 continued)

this characterization is belied by the total focus on male development and the (later) assumption that female development is very different.

[20]To simplify matters here, I have ignored Erikson's evolving views about the later stages of the life cycle. For specific discussion of those views see my *From Enlightenment to Receptivity: Rethinking Our Values*, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 232–239.

But the main point is and has been that a conception of adult identity (formation) that regards it as mainly determined by how one balances or emphasizes relationship values and self-fulfillment or career values avoids the sexism of Erikson's views and the radical incompleteness of Gilligan's and allows us finally to see the life cycle as a *specifically human* phenomenon.[21]

[21]Erikson deserves credit for being the first person to emphasize identity formation and its problems or challenges within the life cycle. (I believe the term "identity crisis" was his invention.) So we owe a great, great deal to Erikson, but I have argued that we need to conceive things in a non-sexist manner that Erikson, for all his insights and observations, never really saw as necessary.

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