

PRODUCE OR PERISH

A Feminist Critique of Generativity

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Guided by images of the life cycle defined primarily from the perspective of men, our society has removed the important virtue of generativity as a crucial value of all life and relegated it to later stages of development. To its detriment society ignores the experience of many women—that is, the earlier psychological emphasis on caring for others and the moral development of an ethic of connectedness and mutuality that occurs prior to a “mid-life crisis” late in life. However, we cannot begin to comprehend or resolve many of today’s pressing social issues—issues such as equal rights, abortion, childcare, women and job management¹—without serious reconsideration of the role of this particular value in contemporary culture as a whole. So far, popular responses to these dilemmas lack a much-needed appreciation for women’s psychological and moral development, particularly the development of care and generativity in women’s lives.

Prominent child psychologist Erik H. Erikson first articulated the conflict between generativity and stagnation as the primary focus of mature adult development.² In *Generative Man* practical theologian Don S. Browning characterizes generativity as the implicit moral and religious imperative operating at the core of Erikson’s psychology.³ But according to Browning, Erikson, and others such as developmental psychologist Daniel J. Levinson and his colleagues in *Seasons of a Man’s Life*,⁴ who build on Erikson’s theory, this norm does not truly determine action until later in a person’s life and then, in a distinctly restricted sense. The typical pattern for “normal” persons, that is, for men, involves “becoming one’s own man,” climbing the “ladder” of success in the hierarchical

public world of labor and productivity. This calls for a second reading. Certain feminist and alternative developmental theories, I will argue, force us to reconsider the dominant cultural model of generativity: Both men and women must see qualities of interpersonal and crosscultural generativity as integral *earlier* in development, appearing as central values more explicitly in early adulthood and emerging as a profound virtue at the climax of adulthood. Without a more comprehensive view of generativity, we cannot begin to comprehend the emotional, moral, and spiritual turmoil that social innovations in human rights, job opportunities, medical technology, and so forth create for women as well as for men.⁵

The "Norm" for Development: A Man's Definition

Men have long defined "health" for women. This has had severe repercussions. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English provide a powerful portrayal of 150 years of the experts' advice to women. The Industrial Revolution displaced women from a patriarchal world in which nonetheless, women possessed indispensable roles, particularly as midwives and respected healers of the family and community. When the market economy shattered the unity of work and home, public and private, the "Woman Question"—what would become of women in the modern world?—became a "gripping public issue" to which "men, men of the 'establishment'—physicians, philosophers, scientists—addressed themselves...in a constant stream of books and articles." Their answers rested upon the usurpation of the "ancient powers of women" and their authority upon denial of "the accumulated lore of generations of mothers."⁶ The general body of research and reflection on health continues to exclude women both as subjects and as authors. Disparity between theories of human development in medical, psychological, and ethical literature and women's experience signifies a problem in women's development, not an omission or error. Only in recent years have women begun to uncover the "ideology of a masculinist society" operating beneath this basic presupposition.⁷

Erikson, and behind him, Freud, exemplify the problem. They number among the more powerful "experts" who sought to solve women's "hysteria"⁸ or to explain the emptiness of their "inner space."⁹ They set standards for healthy development and the "normal" life cycle that captivated the American public and permeated its consciousness. But despite their interest and even extensive therapeutic experiences with women,¹⁰ the assumed subject of most of their writings remains men. Thus they presume, claims critic Naomi Weisstein, to define the "true nature of women" over against male standards "with a certainty and a

sense of. . . infallibility rarely found in the secular world."¹¹ While psychoanalysis has offered feminism a unique tool with which to dismantle male representations of reality, the basic psychoanalytic constructions about women only perpetuate their inherent inferiority.¹² Because Freud conflated the generic with the masculine, he "took the woman's lack of a penis literally as an ontological defect," as theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether notes.¹³ Hence women's major development must involve by necessity a frustrated quest to receive from males, whether father, husband, or son, what they lack by nature. Similar to the classic theological view, this fundamentally limits their ability to develop into an autonomous, rational individual capable of the higher realms of intelligence and moral discipline. The best women can hope for is a fixated stage in "normal" (i.e., male) development: passive acceptance of biological fate and even masochistic, narcissistic resignation to a secondary and dependent destiny as vessels of male activity and vicarious appendages of male offspring. In a word, women can never attain full humanity.

Given the pervasive condescending attitude toward women during Freud's era, his rationalization of oppressive patriarchal social structures as inherent flaws in female biological nature should not surprise us. More troubling, however, is the perpetuation of this pattern through therapies, life cycle theories, and models of moral reasoning that continue to promote certain masculinist images as normative. For the most part, ideals of development and moral discipline remain male-centered; women exist as the underside and helper.

The Ideal of Generativity

Does Erikson then simply perpetuate sexist sociocultural consensus as biological and psychological fact? In some ways, yes. With a slight change of phrase, Erikson says a woman's fulfillment rests upon filling her "inner space" with offspring of "chosen men" and upon "a biological, psychological, and ethical commitment to take care of human infancy."¹⁴ But despite the parallels with Freud in the former phrase, the latter—the "biological, psychological, and ethical commitment to take care of human infancy"—represents for Erikson not a duty placed upon women alone but an essential and highly prized virtue for all human beings. He himself worked extensively with children and never entirely forsook his identity as an artist after his mother. He found in Anna Freud, the founder of child analysis, not her father, his example of a psychoanalytic presence. These factors, among others, led him to value patterns, interconnections, mutuality, and care. For him, generativity—"the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation"—both

defines adult maturity for women *and* men and according to Browning, comes to comprise the implicit normative bedrock of Erikson's entire theory.

The virtue of care and the idea of generativity is at once the second to last stage in the "eight ages of man" and the ethical axis of the cycle of generations as a whole. The evolution of "virtue," Erikson's name for "ego strength," occurs with the "epigenesis" of the ego, "the seat of ethics," throughout life. He divides this epigenesis into a hierarchical sequence of eight stages and their corresponding "crises" or conflicts. At each stage different virtues emerge in a delicate developmental balance of "strengths" and "weaknesses." Ultimately virtue depends upon (1) healthy resolution of prior conflicts and the ascending, progressive building of one strength upon the next; and (2) an intricate interaction between biological need or impulse, the developing self, and ultimately, a responsive social context. In his treatment of each life phase then, mutuality and care for others as they interact with oneself in the cycle of generations determines growth and not simply the libidinal and aggressive forces behind the penis.

Based on Freud's extremely negative view of moral authority "holding sway" in the superego,¹⁵ many persons assume that all psychology tends to discredit moral thinking. Not so with Erikson.¹⁶ Granted, a narrow, conventional, superego-dominated morality fosters pathological conflict. But persons can develop a higher ego-ruled ethics that allows for the possibility of creative conflict and constructions. The capacity for ethics remains "an emergent phenomenon." As Browning points out:

The truly ethical stage of development does not begin to be visible until adolescence and does not mature until the stages of 'generativity' and 'wisdom' which occur during the middle and later stages of adulthood. But all the preceding stages are important for later ethical capacities. The capacity for higher generativity (which is of the very essence of ethical living) has its foundations in the very beginning of life.¹⁷

In the idea of generativity, Erikson implicitly promotes an encompassing orientation to life that Browning describes as "the culture of care."¹⁸ He presupposes a "generative ethic" centered around concern for and identification with family and the wider horizons of community and succeeding generations of communities. He never specifically articulates this view; he sees "generativity" as simply the adult stage of maturity. But as Browning demonstrates, the vision of the generative task has "great general significance for all of his writing."¹⁹ From its perspective, all human activities are judged. The highest good is "the maintenance of life" or the "regeneration of the cycle of generations." On occasion he

discusses this in terms of care for what one has generated, "mutuality," "an ecology of mutual activation," or even as a modern version of the Golden Rule: "Truly worthwhile acts enhance a mutuality between the doer and the other—a mutuality which strengthens the doer even as it strengthens the other."²⁰

At this point in his conception of the generative act and the metaphor of parenting Erikson's theories have important affinities with feminist understandings and with the addition of a feminist critique, significant implications for contemporary social ethics and politics. While certainly not a feminist before his time, in this idea he holds certain values that possess affinity with trends in feminist studies. But the term and the ideal itself seem ripe for misappropriation. Male-dominated psychological and moral theory as well as male-run institutions have come to think about generativity largely in terms of producing. Browning tempers this somewhat by emphasizing that generativity ultimately means a taking care of what (although not particularly who) one has produced. And Erikson himself uses the term broadly as a metaphor for an adulthood centered on relationships, not simply as another term for career advancement. Although generativity includes "procreativity, productivity, and creativity,"²¹ these popular synonyms, he insists, cannot and should not replace it.²²

But, in fact, they have. Erikson and Browning insinuate and Levinson's study demonstrates a progressive restriction of the ideal. Levinson's empirical survey of the patterns of male development based upon biographical interviews of forty men ages 17 to 47 illustrates that men pursue generating at the cost of preserving. Relying on Erikson's life cycle theory, he reveals a dramatic contradiction between Erikson's and Browning's abstract theories and the lives of men. His study captures an essential feature of the patterns of men's development: in our society as early as age 17 the products of "a man's work" are the singular "vehicle for the fulfillment or negation of central aspects of the self."²³ Adulthood means "generativity" but now understood largely in a technical, product-oriented sense. The men studied pass through Erikson's phase of generativity, placing its foci in the sphere of work, not in connections to others—whether friends, colleagues, wife, or children. "Adult" men have few intimate relations. When they choose to pursue relationships, they are byproducts of mature adult development, seldom the ideal, point, or goal; they help support "the Dream" but are not essential to its fulfillment. The wife, "special (loved and loving) woman," is "the true mentor" simply because she tries to further her husband's advancement:

Her special quality lies in her connection to the young man's Dream. She helps to animate the part of the self that contains the Dream. She facilitates his entry into the adult world and his pursuit of the Dream. . . shares it, believes in him as its hero, gives it her blessing, joins him. . . and creates a 'boundary space' within which his aspirations can be imagined and his hopes nourished.²⁴

That a man might learn to give comparable care and create space for a woman's or a child's dreams seems absurd. Or, at least it does not appear an essential aspect of development in the lives of the men studied. Whereas women strive to foster such space and base their self-image around the question "Am I giving enough?" men ask "Am I a doer?" As psychologist Jean Baker Miller notes, giving remains an "added luxury" after a man has paid his dues in productivity.²⁵ At least until the mid-life crisis as late as age 40, relationships are means to an end. Wife and children, colleagues and fellow employees are viewed in a distinctly materialistic or instrumentalist way.

Developmentalist Douglas C. Kimmel, author of the textbook *Adulthood and Aging*, and George Vaillant in *Adaptation to Life* join Levinson as examples of the constriction of Erikson's term. Kimmel defines generativity as "a sense of productive accomplishment," whether through work or as a parent, "so that there will be something one has done that will outlive oneself" (is a child "something one has done"?). He does not even mention generativity in his chapter on "Families and Singles." He actually places "rearing children and managing a home" in parentheses when listing factors that help resolve the crisis of generativity.²⁶ This task remains subsidiary, parenthetically reserved for women, and undervalued. For Vaillant, generativity simply refers to a mid-life stage of "Career Consolidation" focused upon achievements and rewards.²⁷ The idea of caring for the "production" drops out completely.

Not surprisingly, given this narrow perception of generativity centered around obtaining and owning products, the men in Levinson's investigation often experience a midlife crisis. Men abruptly question the emptiness of the path that they have chosen and reconsider the value of various relationships. Others such as Jan Halper in *Quiet Desperation*,²⁸ James E. Dittes in *The Male Predicament*,²⁹ and James B. Nelson in *The Intimate Connection*³⁰ confirm that men have begun to experience the strain of their formulaic career patterns or what Nelson calls "masculinization" or the ideology of "hegemonic masculinity." The four thousand executive men that Halper interviews have become increasingly disillusioned by the "fruits" of their "success." Although neither Halper, Dittes, Levinson, or Nelson draw this conclusion, I would contend that the crisis as each depicts it has relevance primarily for men rather than for women and results directly from an implicit cultural value that pushes men to

ignore generative relationships and to focus upon acquisitions of vocational success. At forty—an age that seems long delayed in light of women's development—only a kind of "crisis" may force men to recognize the importance of various attachments, whether wife, children, or others, previously devalued and ignored as marginal. As Levinson notes, men finally attempt "a more equal weighing of attachment and separateness."³¹ At last they realize that others are not "products" and do not exist solely for the promotion of their own dream. Success of this dream becomes less critical. Some of the men Halper studied respond to their "quiet desperation" by changing their lives and redefining what it means to be a man in today's world. Generativity in a fuller sense may become a possibility.

But how possible? Levinson, Erikson, and Browning all assume that the virtue of care for what one has generated cannot emerge fully until later in adulthood. Even if it were true that authentic generativity must await the forties, they fail to account for just how such a capacity to produce, care, *and* nurture can grow out of a series of stages that clearly prioritize other divergent values—self-assertion, independence, and even overt disregard for what one has created. If "only the initial stage of trust versus mistrust suggests the type of mutuality that Erikson means by intimacy and generativity," as Harvard professor Carol Gilligan observes, how can intimacy or generativity even emerge in adulthood?³² All the stages in between promote separateness and as in Levinson's study, have "individuation" as their ultimate goal. Browning does emphasize the way in which each stage contributes indirectly to the virtue of care and generativity.³³ But neither Browning or Erikson make entirely clear how generativity is actually woven into a childhood centered around autonomy and will, initiative and purpose, industry and competence. In the latter stage, for instance, the child, actually the boy, focuses on "industry" or "work roles" in "line with the *ethos of production*," learning to master the technical tools of the trade. But is this the case for girls? At this age it is not uncommon for girls to begin to focus instead on cooperating and caring for life's smaller beings: younger children, dolls, stuffed and live animals. Although Erikson acknowledges the significance of intimacy in a woman's resolution of the identity crisis, he does not draw upon women's experience to broaden his definition of this stage or any other for that matter and his general chart of the life cycle remains unchanged.

The midlife shifts that Levinson reports—in what and whom to care for and how to care—come too little, too late with too many restrictions. I question whether men can truly achieve such a dramatic alteration in their fundamental priorities at this point. How can men ultimately recon-

cile the values for care and mutuality with the deepseated status given to "Becoming One's Own Man"—a separate, self-sufficient authority not subject to dependence on or the impact of others? How can men relinquish ingrained patterns of climbing to "the top rung" of the ladder?³⁴ This has always demanded that attachments be "surrendered" or at least regarded as secondary or tertiary. How can one change such a basic orientation to life and begin to develop in midlife attributes of generativity? In few instances does Levinson actually provide example of meaningful attachments that do occur and endure beyond the crisis. Ambivalence about intimacy prevails. Even if the men do realize significant values of care and connection at some point, this realization stills symbolizes more a failure or loss of "success" as patriarchal society has defined it than a redefinition of the meaning of the word itself.

Generativity and Social Issues of Work and Love

Redefinition is ultimately what society requires, however, if we hope to resolve many demanding social issues related to women. It is not far-fetched to conclude that as difficulty handling concerns of generativity increases so does the ability to solve satisfactorily current dilemmas. One primary means of experiencing generativity—the institution of motherhood and parenthood itself—lies before us in question. We must now ask what seemed obvious: Why do we want to become mothers or fathers? Why do we want children in the first place? Even if having children is a socially-imposed and limiting ideal of fulfillment for women, as many feminists rightfully argue, this does not preclude the potential significance of bearing and nurturing a child for self-development and for enhancement of society. Indeed, as Erikson indicates, generativity builds upon and enhances identity development for both men and women.³⁵ When such generation fails or when healthy alternative forms do not arise to fill the gap, "stagnation"—to use Erikson's word—and regression to previous stages result. So important is generativity, he asserts, that its denial has as severe repercussions as the "denial of sexuality"—it is "as severe a source of inner tension."³⁶ While persons take sexual frustration seriously, they tend to overlook the pathology caused by "generative frustration."³⁷

Or, in an attempt to resolve such frustration, people look to science for highly technical, product-oriented answers. And the realm of reproductive engineering, pushing ahead so rapidly that it is virtually impossible to remain up to date, happily provides and even imposes not just immediate answers but new images of human fulfillment. Where before women readily recognized the limitedness of human life within even the monthly modulations of their bodies, now the many available technologies tempt

toward endless conquest and toward a reduction of conception to metaphors of production. Indeed, hasn't the "climbing the ladder" motif already crept into the fascination with new reproductive technologies?

In a similar vein but in the realm of work, the ideal of generativity has become skewed in another way. Public generativity in the "work world," separated so sharply from the values of home and care, receives an impoverished, one-sided reading. As we saw in Levinson and others, only those men (and now women) who enter the upper echelons, work long hours, and demonstrate heavy output see themselves as "generative." Given this reading, women beginning careers in the current decade face a serious conflict between models of generativity as their mothers have exemplified it, as feminists have redefined it, and ultimately, as the male-defined capitalist world has embodied it. In institutions now shaped by both the standards of a patriarchal society and the gains of the "first feminist wave," they must find ways to work out a personal and professional identity with integrity. Hence the struggles over childcare, maternity or paternity leaves, "mommy tracks," and so on, I would stress, are *not* simply a matter of the practical problems of working women but rather reflect a much deeper conflict between at least two different images of generativity—of mature womanhood and adulthood—and their related value systems. The change in the make-up of the work force has not yet had much impact on the patriarchal structures and criteria of productivity of the corporation or the institution. We consistently underestimate the reluctance by those entrenched in power to transform definitions of success. And we overestimate the capacity of changes in hiring policies to alter attitudes. Critiquing the male sex role and prerogatives is not enough. Strong advocacy for women is crucial. But this is still not enough. We must redefine the very nature of work and love as the Western world understands these terms.

Erikson expresses a concern that today "generative frustration" has gotten submerged in "the dominant technological ethos of birth control."³⁸ He recommends an alternative route. Persons ought to consider "a more *universal care* concerned with a qualitative improvement" for every child born.³⁹ In this statement he pushes us to both limit and broaden our horizons of the meaning of generativity. Simply stated, "man" must learn "to restrain his capacity for unlimited propagation, invention, and expansion"; generative responsibilities extend far beyond producing biological offspring or technological productivity. He calls us to universal "generative responsibility toward all human beings," not only through "contraceptives and food packages" but through a "guarantee to each child [of the] chance" for full development and through a guarantee for well-being justly distributed.⁴⁰

But Erikson avoids the troubling question of the requisite social structures, rituals, and institutions necessary to make genuine generativity for men and women a realizable possibility. For the most part, he ignores gender division in and conflict over the interpretation and enactment of generativity. Likewise, even though his book is more current, Levinson does not deal with the dramatic changes that have occurred as women enter the public work world or as society debates new definitions of masculinity and femininity. Browning does express concern that modern society, so busy in its technological generation of products, has lost the rudimentary means to conserve, preserve, maintain, and generally take care of itself and the highly advanced technological creations that it continues to generate. Erikson, he believes, identifies the "problem of modern *man*" as "his *nongenerative mentality*—his inability to care for what *he* creates." "Man" remains nongenerative "in the way *he* treats *his* children, builds *his* buildings, conducts *his* science, experiments with *his* technology, and ravishes *his* environment."⁴¹ Here I believe it important to retain the masculine pronoun. Browning, however, fails to perceive the masculinist, patriarchal roots and overtones of the problem.

Feminist Revisions: Generativity Redefined

In the concept of generativity, Browning and Erikson have proposed a significant moral ideal and model of maturity. But they have not understood its full implications nor foreseen how the concept might be misconstrued when interpreted only from the perspective of men or when its integral dimensions become artificially divided (publically men produce; privately women take care). In their onesided attention to masculine experience as normative to the exclusion of the feminine, Erikson, Browning, and Levinson only tell a part of the story. I do not consider it surprising that, in his first book on Erikson, Browning initially names Erikson's normative ideal "generative *man*." Although partly a technical blunder that now has Browning apologizing for his exclusive language, it remains a slip subtly revealing the predominant orientation of Erikson's ideal and Browning's study—man.

Can we begin to re-envision the self and its development in a way that reflects women's understandings of generativity and corrects masculinist misappropriations? Certainly before we can respond adequately to current concerns of work and home, we must begin to articulate (1) a more comprehensive normative image of development and (2) an ethic that includes the experience of women and their appreciation for a fuller definition of generativity and care. Alternative understandings of selfhood and a coinciding ethic may not resolve the pragmatic dilemmas but may at least allow us to consider the possibilities in a context more sensitive to women.

The Generative Self: Its Development Reconceived

Drawing on her work with process theologian John Cobb, Catherine Keller spins out a thesis in her recent book, *From a Broken Web*,⁴² that threatens to change the way all persons construe themselves. She bases her argument upon two seemingly simple but integrally related ideas—separation and sexism. These two notions, she contends, “have functioned together as the most fundamental self-shaping assumptions of our culture.” Simply put, the assumption of separation is that “selfhood requires separation”; the assumption of sexism, “that men, by nature and by right, exercise the primary prerogatives of civilization.”⁴³ As her extremely rich exegesis shows, hand in hand these assumptions have penetrated the very fabric of the individual psyche of Western civilization and the most abstract reaches of its metaphysics. One of Levinson’s sentences is a prime example: without hesitation or qualification he claims that it is “separation” that “fosters growth;” he implies that attachments hinder it.⁴⁴ Growth through dependence seems fraught with danger.

The pervasive anxiety about attachments in Levinson and implicitly in Browning and Erikson is not simply a result of differences in gender development. But we can begin there. In a classic sociologic extension of psychoanalytic insights to familial and sexual inequality, Nancy Chodorow argues that because women have universally taken the main responsibility for raising children, girls and boys develop in radically different ways. Girls find in mother someone with whom to identify, boys someone from whom they must eventually distance themselves. Thus women learn to define themselves through connection to and empathic identification with others, men through separation and individuation.⁴⁵

Carol Gilligan extends this thesis to moral development. Albeit at times oversimplified and even stereotyped for the sake of analysis, she understands women’s ethical perceptions within a distinct developmental context. Whereas men’s moral understandings parallel a development from aggression to separation through achievements, women’s perceptions reflect growth from differentiation to interdependence through attachments. While women’s moral decisions are shaped by their perceptions of danger in situations of competition and by their fears of isolation, men’s decisions are shaped by their perceptions of danger in intimacy and by their fears of entrapment and betrayal.⁴⁶ Men have trouble with concrete, relational, nonhierarchical moral thinking, women with abstract, universalistic moral premises. Women have problems in knowing their own thoughts and desires, men in understanding human connections. By ignoring these maturational differences or by labeling women’s uniquenesses derogatorily as deviations from a masculine

norm, we have lost sight of a critical line of development for both men and women, the development of intimacy, relationships, and care—crucial elements in a fuller actualization of generativity.

But the divergence in gender development fails to account completely for the extreme idealization of separation that leads to discrepancies in theories and enactments of generativity. Keller offers us further explanation. Having read Gilligan and Chodorow alongside ancient and contemporary texts in mythology, theology, and philosophy, she suggests that a much deeper fear of merger and self-dispersion underlies the theories and problems that we have studied here. Indeed a fundamental fear has permeated society for centuries. From Aristotle's disdainful views of women's role in reproduction⁴⁷ to the matricidal conquering of the "deep" in Genesis⁴⁸ to Freud's desire to oust the oceanic,⁴⁹ civilization has feared and hated the chaotic interconnections that women embody. In various ways it has preceded to slay, repress, and tear the web that women weave apart.

It is this fear of the maternal and feminine web that motivates the insistence on the ideal of a purely separate, monolithic ego and by extension, the insistence on a limited public ideal of a generativity that eventuates in a quasi-generative self accumulating products from a safe distance. Conceptions of selfhood have followed the classical dyad of the Greek myth of the warrior-hero Odysseus and woman-in-waiting Penelope—Keller's root metaphor for the dynamics of the idealization of separation. Odysseus represents the "self-enclosed subject, remaining self-identical through out its exploits in time," unaffected by its relations, busy in its heroic accomplishments.⁵⁰ To spin and wait upon the hero's return from adventure and to support the appearance of independence, Penelope develops a self literally and figuratively able to dissolve into the more substantive self of the man.⁵¹ She becomes what Levinson calls a "transitional figure," a mere "component" of the man's self-structure.⁵² Woman is artist Shel Silverstein's "missing piece"—not much by herself, useful only as she cares for and resolves the man's incompleteness, and dependent upon the selfhood of men (husband or son) for her very being.⁵³

This classic pair of Odysseus and Penelope repeats itself in American myths (Daniel Boone, the Lone Ranger) and more precisely, in every particular relationship between man and woman and their definitions of generativity. The God of classical Christian theology *Himself*, as an ultimately separate object, self-sufficient and safe from change and influence in His ("this God could only take the pronoun *he*") complete omnipotence,⁵⁴ embodies the supreme case of a restricted generativity. Similarly, classic moral philosophy upholds the spectre of Kant's "impartial observer" who looks down from above and arrives at a objective resolution from this distant height.

This may not explain exhaustively the roots of restricted interpretations of the virtue of generativity and the problems that men have with affiliations. But it does position the conversation within a broader cultural context, one characterized by a deep ambivalence about connection and the embodiment of generativity's many facets. It may also account for the social forces that relativize the woman's procreative role and privatize the value of caring. Even as we reappropriate values and rights of women, women themselves continue to struggle with their ingrained antipathy toward themselves and their desire to get away from their inherent connectedness by imitating the patriarchal ideal of separate selfhood and product-oriented generativity. But knowing what we know about the meaningfulness of conversation, of intimacy, of caring for children, of bonds that do not bind, do women really want what men fashion for themselves? Keller thinks not. Indeed, she claims it imperative that woman *not* "emulate the . . . style of the traditional male."⁵⁵ The implications of doing so extend far beyond the individual.

In her constructive response to the problematic of sexism and separativeness, Keller believes that we must (1) deconstruct the destructive ideals of the separative self (Keller replaces "separate" self with "separative" to indicate the fallacy of the former) that hold us so tightly within their grip; (2) reclaim the power of our mothers, of femininity, and of women—the repression of connection itself; and ultimately (3) begin to live out a new kind of selfhood that embraces connections to self, others, and world. Selfhood and by extension, generativity can no longer be understood in a singular, separatist sense. Both entail more than a polarized dicotomy of self versus relation or the divisive complementarities of Odysseus's productivity and Penelope's nurturance. Keller describes this new self as a postheroic, "participative personality," "an influent" or "connective self," "flowing into the others, feeling the others flow into self."⁵⁶ This is not to deny the dangers of merger and symbiosis; rather this conception recognizes a more adequate resolution to these than flight into separateness. Such a connective self could not tolerate the present gender division in the tasks of generativity.

Others have glimpsed the repression of this vision of selfhood and articulated the psychological and moral components of its recovery more successfully than Keller. Psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut, founder of the American movement of "self psychology," departs from Freudian interpretations of the self that sanction separation; he proposes a second line of development that respects attachments. Healthy persons not only develop from a narcissistic love of self to a mature object love or love of others as Freud contends. They experience a development from a primitive love of self to a mature narcissism.⁵⁷ As part of the latter, attach-

ments and dependencies upon others are *not* necessarily unhealthy infantile addictions that persons must outgrow. Rather persons depend upon others for empathy and idealization in order to retain a cohesive sense of self. An empathic matrix, the optimally responsive environment of child and mother, is absolutely necessary *throughout life*, not just at the infantile stage of trust and mistrust. Here we do not find a clear separation of self and object but a respect for the permeability of all the connections, projections, and transferences between selves and their "self-objects." Transformation occurs not through the presence (or distance?) of an austere "neutral observer," as Freud believed, but through empathic connection and a growing understanding of the disconnections or "empathic failures."

Using observations of infants as well as clinical work, psychiatrist Daniel N. Stern offers a more empirical challenge to the theoretical weight given separation. Disputing the pervasion interpretation that the child develops from an undifferentiated, hazardous immeshment with the mother through separation to everincreasing heights of individuation, he proposes that infants differentiate themselves from birth. *Growth then entails learning more and more sophisticated modes of relating.* Early development, in his words, "is not primarily devoted to . . . independence or autonomy or individuation—that is, getting away and free from the primary caregiver. It is equally devoted to the seeking and creating of intersubjective union with another." Indeed, the ability to unite with another, rather than symbolizing a dangerous return to primitive symbiosis, signifies an advanced developmental step; it indicates "the successful result of actively organizing the experience of self-being-with-another" rather than "a passive failure of the ability to differentiate self from the other."⁵⁸ While the child must face separation issues on one level of self-experience, new forms of being with another must proceed in other domains. As we learn to know ourselves as singular persons, we must equally attend to relating to others. Again, attachment, trust, and dependency are issues throughout life. From this perspective, a woman's ability to balance care for the growth of her children, a "passion for friends,"⁵⁹ a surveillance of aging parents and correspondance with relatives, and concern for her work demonstrates a more developmentally sophisticated generativity than most men ever achieve.

However, despite their theoretical emphasis on connection, in reading Kohut or Stern or in listening to those who draw on their theories, one suspects that these men still have trouble breaking free from the values of "separative man." Kohut and Stern all but ignore gender issues. Their focus on the early intrapsychic changes prevents them from exploring later interpersonal life cycle issues or social implications. In

her demand for an entirely new psychology of the self, psychologist Jean Baker Miller, on the other hand, locates the roots of the problem of separative selfhood precisely in the power differentials between genders. The male dominants of society have rigidly delegated certain essential human traits, such as vulnerability, weakness, helplessness, emotions, giving, meeting others' needs, participating in development of others, and cooperating, to subordinates: females.

These theories force us to stop and think. For so long we have taken the ideal of development as an increase in self-sufficiency and independence for granted. These theories represent an underside of human nature that has surfaced as women feel, think, and talk. The "truth" as we have "known" it is unsettled once again.

A New Ethic of Generativity

The possibility of a "connective self" suggests a more expansive generative ethic than talked about by either Browning or Erikson. Gilligan's pivotal study of women's moral cognition identifies the conflicts of connection and care for others as the central moral struggle for women at even the earliest stages of the life cycle. As she describes it, women tend to progress in negotiations between the self and other from (1) a stance of survival of the self in an inhospitable world to (2) a stage in which care or goodness is equated with self-sacrifice to (3) a more balanced view of care that demands attending to the truth and integrity of one's needs in close consideration with the needs of others.⁶⁰ This stage emerges when the woman recognizes the limitation and high costs both to herself and to others of ignoring her own needs. But although a sense of one's own needs as a self distinct from all others appears in the final phase, this separateness stands in dire relationship to others. The injunction becomes "to act responsively toward self and others and thus to sustain connection."⁶¹

For an ethic of care and generativity to await the second to last age in life is simply too late. Women's immature and mature moral understandings center around intimacy, relationships, and care and not around individuation and actualization of increasingly objective, universal and distant principles. Indeed, in this light it seems especially odd that Erikson could even confine care to a singular stage and age. Growth in morality means an awareness of the web of interconnection at all stages and an increasing ability over time to form and negotiate ever more sophisticated relationships. The essence of virtue at each phase lies in a variation of a love or care for self and others that does not rest merely upon separation but upon further understandings of connections.

For girls the beginnings of generativity arise in early initiatives to care for others. Proud is the mother whose daughter demonstrates early signs of generative impulses—who she sees, as one mother puts it, “care for her toys, watch out for her brothers, and...breastfeed her dolls.”⁶² Girls tend to develop a unique empathy to processes beyond themselves in childhood and continue this process as they grow. Moreover, for women, opportunities for a literal enactment of generativity come as early as the young adulthood years of childbearing. Miller compares women’s contextual, narrative mode of moral reasoning to the way they learn to respond to the changing needs when raising a child. This openness to the needs of others and self balanced by experience and knowledge takes root early on in a girl’s development. In short, the fruition of generativity and care does not appear suddenly out of a vacuum but belongs to a long and steady process of conflict and concern about mutuality.

Gilligan hopes idealistically that the different developmental patterns of both sexes will harmoniously compliment each other. Men and women follow inverse paths to reach maturity, she believes; they move away from opposite absolutes—for women, the denial of self and the absolute of care, defined initially as not hurting others and for men, the denial of the other and the absolutes of truth and fairness, defined by equality. Ultimately they will recognize the importance of *both* integrity and care.⁶³

But this presupposition of symmetry betrays and suppresses the power of her research. It subtly leaves women’s development dependent upon men’s. What reason do men have to give up an absolute that social structures support and sanction? If we take her insights into development seriously, we would have to question the appropriateness of men postponing generative concerns; we would have to demand more active participation in learning aspects of care long before some visionary joining of the ways later in life. Gilligan can only retain her optimism about the final reunion of “two disparate modes of experience” because she ignores oppressive historical, political, and social realities. She does not presume to apply her descriptive conclusions to actual ethical dilemmas or her ideas to matters of public policy that demand normative solutions.

But as we look at the range of lively debates over abortion, new reproductive technologies, job management and equal opportunity, parenting, childcare, care for the elderly, and so forth, we cannot passively wait for men to “catch up” in their moral development and correct the “potential indifference of a morality” of logic and a “conception of justice blinded to the differences in human life,” as Gilligan advises.⁶⁴ Not without serious consequence. We must attend to the development of the

capacity to care in both men and women long before midlife and learn to nurture the seeds of generativity and its attributes in both. We must begin to value, Gilligan herself says, "the importance *throughout life* of the connection between self and other," and I would add, for men as well as women.⁶⁵ As theologian L. Shannon Jung argues, "only the recognition and recovery by both sexes of the qualities which have been unnaturally split asunder will be sufficient."⁶⁶

The questionable division of the tasks of generativity has dire implications. It prevents men from integrating certain dimensions. But more importantly, a "bedrock modicum of cooperativeness," as Miller puts it, is absolutely essential for society to exist at all.⁶⁷ We must consider the possibility that, as Miller suggests, "male-led society" has made women the 'carriers' of certain qualities of the total human experience. It has "delegated to women not humanity's 'lowest needs' but its 'highest necessities'—that is the intense, emotionally connected cooperation and creativity necessary for human life and growth."⁶⁸ Unlike any other species, humans must shelter, protect, and nurture their offspring for not just the one to two years characteristic of other large mammals but at least ten to fifteen; the capacity to do so belongs to the set of essential human qualities necessary for survival.

To retrieve the fuller meaning of generativity may begin to mend the web broken by the manipulations of a separative self that depends upon the web of connection yet ignores its care. The expanse of the concept as Erikson may have originally intended it and more importantly, as women have experienced it has been misconstrued. Although he embraces a moral notion that respects some contemporary feminist concerns, he fails to provide adequate understanding of its development, both for women and in a society geared toward productivity in a more intrusive, masculine sense. Alternative definitions of womanhood have begun to challenge misogynist, materialistic interpretations. Generativity does not belong to a singular stage, the second to the last one, and cannot arise in a relational vacuum. Generativity always means more than simply producing or reproducing. We must revise our narrow, onesided masculinist definitions and consider a fuller definition of mature adulthood that honors and respects the power of generativity for both sexes.

But mere feminist theorizing and rhetorical changes remain a drop in the bucket without comparable institutional reform—something neither Gilligan nor Keller explores in any depth. Only by taking their ideas and using them to change the tone and the nature of current decisions, policies, and legislation will these ideas come to fuller fruition. This means not only new language to describe maturity (language other than "autonomy," for example, to describe the growing capacity for self-asser-

tion that comes with "a fuller not less ability to encompass relationships to others"⁶⁹) but new social structures that honor alternative values. We must reevaluate society's ideals of success and valuable personal qualities in light of the values of affiliation that women have long upheld. Social structures need to support these values. If developmental theories tell us that early bonding and continuity of contact with a primary caregiver are critical to healthy emotional development and to moral and spiritual maturity, for instance, we need to reevaluate current ways of structuring work and home life to provide for this. And by "primary caregiver," I am *not* referring strictly to the mother, as might have been imagined. Significantly, the intent of such reevaluation is not to return the woman to the role of "primary caregiver" but to divide the tasks more justly. The power inequalities of warped enactments of generativity will not change in any other way than through such consistent systemic reordering. Otherwise public policy and employee guidelines will continue to embrace sexist norms of culture and stultifying conceptions of female nature, certainly serving industry, research, and commerce but ignoring the person at the center of the problem.

Conversely I do not believe that we can begin to answer most of the pressing practical issues without attention to the more fundamental questions of our images of maturity, adulthood and ultimately, the nature of human fulfillment. Only by revisioning the possibilities and responsibilities for a more inclusive enactment of generativity and affiliation can we reach satisfying solutions to many current dilemmas. We can and have tended to address the actual mechanics—women have joined educational systems, work empires, and men's clubs previously closed to them; various employers have instituted maternity and paternity leaves. But superficial adjustments come at the expense of self and society. Understanding current dilemmas necessitates deeper comprehension of the nature of generativity in our society, as understood, obscured, and stereotyped for both men and women. Consideration of the larger moral task of generativity—of taking care of that which or whom we have produced—should help us place the technical questions in the broader context to which they belong, a context in which we might understand them more fully.

NOTES

1. Take for example, the latest flurry over the *Harvard Business Review* article by corporate leader Felice N. Schwartz ("Management Women and the New Facts of Life," *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 1989). She suggests that to prevent profit loss corporations should use women who want to have families in middle management positions (now dubbed "The Mommy Track"). She ignores a more troubling question of the shortsighted nature of the corporate view of

generativity—that the bottom line and maximum productivity are the ultimate criteria for evaluation of a person's worth.

2. Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 35th Anniversary Edition, (New York: Norton, 1963 [1950]) 266-68; *idem*, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968) 138-39.
3. Don S. Browning, *Generative Man: Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (New York: Delta, 1975).
4. Daniel J. Levinson, with Charlotte N. Darrow, Edward B. Klein, Maria H. Levinson, and Braxton McKee, *Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Ballantine, 1978).
5. In this article I approach the problem on a theoretical level. In two other related articles, I investigate more concrete dilemmas of women and new reproductive technologies ("Produce or Perish: The Question of New Reproductive Technologies," *Second Opinion* [forthcoming, March 1990]) and women and work ("Women Who Work and Love: Caught Between Cultures" in *Travail and Transition: A Pastoral Care For Women*, ed. Maxine Glaz and Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner [Fortress, 1990]).
6. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1978) 3-4. See also *idem*, *Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness* (New York: Feminist Press, 1973) and *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* (New York: Feminist Press, 1973).
7. Ehrenreich and English, *For Her Own Good* 5.
8. Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (New York: Basic/Hogarth: 1955 [1893-1895]).
9. Erik H. Erikson, "Womanhood and the Inner Space," in *Woman and Analysis: Dialogues on Psychoanalytic Views of Femininity*, ed. Jean Strouse (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985 [1968]), also published as "Inner and Outer Space: reflections on Womanhood," *Daedalus* 93 (1964): 582-606 and in Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis* 261-94.
10. It is worth noting that all the case histories in Freud's first clinical publication, *Studies on Hysteria*, are women.
11. Naomi Weisstein, "Psychology Constructs the Female," in *Women in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, eds. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: Basic Books, 1971) 133.
12. Granted, early on persons within the field of psychology, like Helene Deutsch, Alfred Adler, Karen Horney and others, challenged these orthodox Freudian notions. They acknowledged the existential framework of penis envy as envy of social (not ontological) domination. Still such appeals did little to alter the bias that lies at the heart of modern psychology.
13. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury, 1975) 137.
14. Erikson, "Inner and Outer Space," cited by Weisstein, "Psychology Constructs the Female" 133.
15. Freud decried the "harshly restraining, cruelly prohibiting quality" of "even ordinary normal morality" (*The Ego and the Id*, trans. Joan Riviere, ed. James Strachey [New York: Norton, 1962] 43-44).
16. Erikson acknowledges that psychology itself often functions as a positive ethical science and must be judged on that basis ("Autobiographical Notes on the Identity Crisis," *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 99, no. 4

- [Fall 1970]:741, 754; *idem*, *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review* [New York: Norton, 1982] 103).
17. Browning, *Generative Man* 157.
 18. Don S. Browning, *Pluralism and Personality: William James and Some Contemporary Cultures of Psychology* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1980) 20-22; *idem*, *Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 5-6, 29-31. Browning's general theory here is that psychology, originally conceived as a narrow science, easily becomes inflated into a broadly oriented project which shapes culture.
 19. Browning, *Generative Man* 24.
 20. Erik H. Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility: Lectures on the Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytic Insight* (New York: Norton, 1964) 231, 233.
 21. Erikson, *Life Cycle* 67.
 22. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* 267; *Identity, Youth and Crisis* 138.
 23. Levinson, *Seasons* 9.
 24. *Ibid.* 109.
 25. Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Boston: Beacon, 1976) 49.
 26. Douglas C. Kimmel, *Adulthood and Aging: An Interdisciplinary Developmental View* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1974) 189-90, 244-45.
 27. George Vaillant, *Adaptations to Life* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), cited by Gilligan, *Different Voice* 153-55.
 28. Jan Halper, *Quiet Desperation: The Truth about Successful Men* (New York: Warner Books, 1989).
 29. James A. Dittes, *The Male Predicament: On Being a Man Today* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985).
 30. James B. Nelson, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988).
 31. Levinson, *Seasons* 241.
 32. Gilligan, *Different Voice* 12.
 33. Browning, *Generative Man* 181-97.
 34. Levinson, *Seasons* 60.
 35. Erikson, *Life Cycle* 67. See Penelope Washbourne, *Becoming Woman: The Quest For Wholeness in Female Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) 94-112 for further illustration of this idea in the lives of women.
 36. Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* 132.
 37. Erikson, *Life Cycle* 68.
 38. Erikson, *Life Cycle* 68.
 39. *Ibid.*
 40. Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* 131-132.
 41. Browning, *Generative Man* 164. Emphasis added.
 42. Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Self* (Boston: Beacon, 1986).
 43. *Ibid.* 2.
 44. Levinson, *Seasons* 239.
 45. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1978). For earlier formulations of a similar contention, see Helene Deutsch, *Psychology of Women*

- (New York, Grune & Stratton, 1944); Margaret Mead, *Male and Female* (New York: New American Library, 1959 [1949]); Erich Fromm, "Sex and Character," in *The Family: Its Function and Destiny*, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York, Harper and Row, 1949) chap. xix; Ashley Montagu, *The Natural Superiority of Women* (New York: Macmillan, 1953); Theodor Reik, *Of Love and Lust* (New York: Grove Press, 1957 [1949]).
46. Gilligan, *Different Voice* 8, 42, 62.
 47. Aristotle, *Genesis of Animals*, 4:4, 735A14-15, cited in Keller, *Broken Web* 49.
 48. Keller, *Broken Web* 80-88.
 49. *Ibid.* 93-106. See also Gilligan, *Different Voice* 45-48 upon which Keller appears to draw indirectly.
 50. Keller, *Broken Web* 8.
 51. *Ibid.* 13. Anne Wilson Schaefer also acknowledges the metaphors of women's responsive "waiting"; she calls men "gypsies" and women "nesters" (*Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in the White Male Society* [Minneapolis: Winston, 1981] 64).
 52. Levinson, *Seasons* 109; see also Kimmel, *Adulthood* 245.
 53. Shel Silverstein, *The Missing Piece* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).
 54. Keller, *Broken Web* 35.
 55. *Ibid.* 8, 22, 46.
 56. *Ibid.* 67-68, 91-92.
 57. Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971) 220; *idem*, "Introspection, Empathy, and the Semi-circle of Mental Health," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 63 (1982): 402; *idem*, *How Does Analysis Cure* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984) 65-66.
 58. Daniel N. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic, 1985) 10.
 59. As in Janice G. Raymond's book, *A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection* (Boston: Beacon, 1986).
 60. Gilligan, *Different Voice* 74; see 64-105 for more extensive illustration of these distinct stages and the transitions between each one.
 61. *Ibid.* 149.
 62. Debby Kearney, "Many Reasons to Give Thanks," *New Beginnings* 5, no. 3 (May-June 1989) 149.
 63. *Ibid.* 166.
 64. *Ibid.* 100.
 65. *Ibid.* *Different Voice* 98. Emphasis added.
 66. L. Shannon Jung, "Feminism and Spatiality: Ethics and the Recovery of a Hidden Dimension," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 59; see also Joan L. Griscom, "On Healing the Nature/History Split in Feminist Thought," in *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, ed. Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, and Mary D. Pellauer (Minneapolis: Seabury, 1985) 85-98 and Ruth L. Smith, "Moral Transcendence and Moral Space in the Historical Experiences of Women," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1988) 21-37.
 67. Miller, *New Psychology of Women* 83.
 68. *Ibid.* 22-23, 25-26.
 69. *Ibid.* 94.

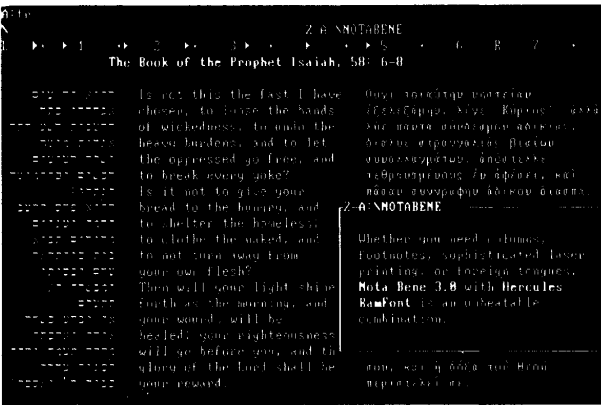
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