



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** What do you understand by feminist ethics? How is “ethic of care” different from “ethic of justice”? (150 words)

15 Mar, 2019 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

### Approach

- Write in brief what is the feminist ethics.
- Differentiate between “Ethic of care” and “ethic of justice.”

### Introduction

- **Feminist Ethics** is an attempt to revise, reformulate, or rethink traditional ethics. Feminists have developed a wide variety of gender-centered approaches to ethics. Some feminist ethicists emphasize issues related to women's traits and behaviors, particularly their care-giving ones. In contrast, other feminist ethicists emphasize the political, legal, economic, and/or ideological causes and effects of women's second-sex status. But they share the same goal: the creation of a gendered ethics that aims to eliminate or at least ameliorate the oppression of any group of people, but most particularly women.
- Proponents of feminist care ethics **Carol Gilligan** stress that traditional moral theories, principles, practices, and policies are deficient to the degree that they lack, ignore, trivialize, or demean values and virtues culturally associated with women.

### Body

For ages, ethical thinkers have talked about two great moral imperatives: ‘Justice’ and ‘love’. The concept of love is replaced by the concept of ‘goodness’, ‘utility’ etc. Carol Gilligan’s ethical theory is essentially based on the “communal nature of women”. The theory is titled as “ethics of care” as against typical conventional male oriented “ethics of justice”.

### Distinction between ethics of care and ethics of justice:

- Distinction was given by Carol Gilligan. According to her under the ethics of justice men judge themselves guilty if they do something wrong. Whereas under the ethics of care, women are reluctant even to judge the action.
- This reluctance to judge itself may be the indicative of the care and concern for the other. Thus women not only define themselves in terms of care and concern. As a result of this a women’s judgement, her moral deliberations become very different.
- In Carol’s view the quality and quantity of relationship is of great importance in both the systems – individual goals can be pursued without personal ties to others.
- Justice is impersonal. Whereas sensitivity towards others, loyalty, responsibility, self sacrifice and peace-making all these reflect interpersonal involvement. Care comes from connection.

### Conclusion

Feminist ethicists should aim, first and foremost, to improve the overall condition for women in

particular—and also for other vulnerable people like children, the elderly, the infirm, the disabled, and disadvantaged minorities.

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