CHAPTER - III

FEMINIST ETHICS: COMPARATIVE ESTIMATE OF THE DIFFERENT ETHICAL TRENDS
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Feminist ethics is a body of philosophical speculation that tries to validate women’s different ethical experiences and to identify the ethical experiences and the weaknesses and strengths of the values and virtues which cultures traditionally have labelled "feminine". It is a challenging endeavour to identify precisely what makes an approach to ethics "feminist." At a surface level, this body of speculation would certainly be women-centred and focused primarily upon women’s ethical experiences. More substantively, Feminist ethics, then, seeks to subvert rather than to reinforce any systematic subordination of women and other human beings.

Feminism is a social and intellectual movement that has impacted nearly all aspects of social life including but not limited to politics, economics, education, history, art, and philosophy. Crucial to feminism is the issue of gender equality and the dignity accorded to being a woman. What these notions mean, however, have evolved and changed as feminism has assumed a variety of forms since its early inception.

A group of eighteenth and nineteenth century thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Fredrick Engels, Catherine Beecheer, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton engaged them in the task of defining what women’s morality is. Each of these thinkers has shown their concern over the
following questions: Are women’s psychological feminine traits all natural? Or is it only women’s positive psychological traits that are natural and their negative one’s being somehow socially -constructed? Are there gender neutral standard available to separate women’s good or positive traits from women’s bad or negatives traits? If moral virtues as well as psychological traits are connected with one’s affective as well as cognitive dimensions, indeed with one’s physiological as Aristotle and Aquinas suggested, should men and women manifest in them different moral virtues as well as different psychological traits? Should all individuals be urged to cultivate precisely the same set of psychological traits and moral virtues or should there be room for trait and virtue specialization, provided that this specialization doesn’t split down into gender lines?

Most ethical speculations in the western world until the 1980’s voice primarily what males had been propounding. The rise of the women’s liberation movement in the United States during the 1960’s and 1970’s however, singled a sea change in the discourse as female voiced seriously. The scholarly challenges to those aspects of the traditional western ethics that feminists viewed as depreciating or devaluing the experience of the women could also unveil the reasons for non-recognition of the historical contributions women have made to ethical discourse.

In general, feminist ethics is the attempt: (1) to highlight the differences between how males and females experience and interpret their respective situations in life (e.g., biologically, socially, and culturally); (2) to provide strategies for human agents to deal with the dilemmas arising in the private as well as in public spheres; and, (3) to deconstruct any ethics and ethical conduct that perpetuate systematic subordination of women and other human beings.

In short, feminist approaches to ethics have the goal of creating gender-equal rather than gender-neutral ethics, that is, an ethical theory which generates non-sexist ethical principles, policies, and practices for both females and males.
DIFFERENT KINDS OF FEMINIST ETHICAL TRENDS

Women-centered thinkers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tended to think of morality as gendered. Since women-centered thinkers in the twentieth century also tend to think of morality as gendered, it is important to determine whether a gendered conception of morality is indeed correct. Such cannot be done, unless the ontological and epistemological assumptions of those who advocate feminine, maternal, feminist, and/or lesbian approaches to ethics are first revealed.

FEMINIST APPROACHES TO ETHICS

A feminist approach to ethics asks questions about power — that is, about domination and subordination — even before it asks questions about good and evil, care and justice, or maternal and paternal thinking. Proponents of these varied schools of feminist thought maintain that the destruction of all systems, structures, institutions, and practices that create or maintain invidious power differentials between men and women is the necessary prerequisite for the creation of gender equality. There are, for example, liberal, Marxist, radical, socialist, multicultural, global, and ecological feminists who have offered various explanations and sometimes conflicting solutions to the problems posed by the differences between the sexes and as these are purported to resolve the value conflicts embedded in contemporary ethical dilemmas. Actually “feminism” is the name for a variety of views about what constitutes a just society, depicting what is inequitable and unjust in the relation between man and woman in society and what are the ethical methods for achieving justice and equality. The elimination of gender inequality and the liberation of women (not exclusive of that of other human beings) are the targetted goals of various forms of Feminist Ethics. In general, feminist ethics requires an agent to listen first to others’ divergent points of view and, then, to develop an ethical theory and practice which will, despite the shortcomings of each, help as many women as possible move toward the goal of gender equality with men.
LIBERAL FEMINISM

Liberal feminism is a form of feminism that argues that equality for women can be achieved through legal means and social reform, and that men as a group need not be challenged. This is the variety of feminism that works within the structure of mainstream society to integrate women into that structure.

Liberal feminism represents conservative form of feminism by today's standards. It leans towards equality or sameness with men (which is not a 'difference' feminism).

Liberal feminism conceives of politics in individualistic term and looks to reform present 'non-liberal' practices in society, rather than advocating for a wholesale revolutionary change. Feminist writers associated with this tradition are amongst others Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill and second wave feminist Betty Friedan.

Liberal feminists charge that the main cause of female subordination is a set of informal rules and formal laws that block women's entrance and/or success in the public world. Excluded from places such as the academy, the forum, the marketplace, and the operating room, women cannot reach their potential. Women cannot become men's full equals until society grants women the same educational opportunities and political rights it grants men. Liberal feminism believes in gender equality, that is, equal rights to men and women. It rejects subordination of one sex by the other or treatment of women as sex objects instead of as human beings. It holds that women are best suited for family roles and man for outsides roles. The liberal feminists demand genuine equality of opportunity, recognizing that women must compete with men in the job of market. They accepted the sex role differences but with a provision that both are equal. Though liberal feminists want emancipation of women still they hold the view that women's world is confined to performing the tasks of child rearing and house management as well. They argued for equal rights for women by accepting the existing social order as
valid. They believe that social reform will transform society but don’t want to bring any radical restructuring. Liberal feminists are individualists who stress upon the importance of freedom, especially the freedom to choose. They see more similarities between women and men than differences and envision a community of equitable opportunity for both sexes. They also see most stereotypically masculine or feminine traits as culturally imposed. They view choice as an absolute right, and they seek control over the body and social circumstance. Liberals believe that individuals have the right to personal liberties.

According to liberal feminists, in a just society, women and men would have equal opportunities to compete in the educational, economic and political marketplaces. Given this opportunity women would reach high levels of achievement.

Liberal feminists see the following as sources of gender inequality:

- Gender stereotyping and devaluation of women.
- Division of works into women’s jobs and men’s jobs.
- Low pay for women’s jobs.
- Restricted entry into top positions.
- Lack of affordable childcare for mothers who work outside the home.
- Limitations on reproductive choice.

Liberal Feminists, being influenced by liberal ideology demand equal political rights for women. They believe in autonomy of the female self and demand equal opportunities for women. They want all sorts of gender discriminations to be abolished. To them the biological differences are just accidental. They insist on equal treatment towards women in all spheres. They oppose gender roles, which compel women to do monotonous work all the time. They contend that since women are as much rational and autonomous as men are, they also must have
equal opportunity to exercise their rational power and to affirm their autonomy. Liberal feminists insist on economic independence for women in order that they may experience and enjoy full identity and freedom. Liberal Feminists include all those who campaign for equal rights for women within the framework of the liberal state, arguing that the theoretical basis on which the state is built is sound but that the rights and privileges it confers must be extended to women to give them equal citizenship with men.

While classical liberal ideology was, during the Enlightenment, a revolutionary departure from the feudal systems that preceded it, its focus on citizenship and individual rights did not extend to women. Like other classical liberals, those feminists who advocate liberal positions do not attempt to resolve all questions of gender-based differences. Instead, their strategies for overcoming oppression focus on equality before the law and the inclusion of women in public life. Liberal feminists of the 19th and 20th centuries recognized that women were oppressed in many areas of their lives. Their strategies for change, however, focused primarily on bringing about changes in the legal system, expecting that formal equality would lead to wide-ranging equality or rights.

Wollstonecraft is usually considered a liberal feminist because her approach is primarily about the individual woman and about rights. Although feminist ethics grew in popularity in the 1980s, its emergence but gendered neutral ethical implications is found in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft who has been called the "first feminist" or mother of feminism by many. Her book on women’s rights and especially on women education, "A Vindication of the Rights of Women", is a classic of feminist thought. Its emergence in scholarly circles consequenced the Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. It was the most important of a number of feminist works published in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Debates about the allegedly gendered nature of ethics can be traced back at least to the 18th century. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, reflected deeply about
what makes a character good and a personality socially acceptable. Like ethicists before her, Wollstonecraft prized the ability to reason more highly than feelings, which, she believed, distinguished human beings—not simply males from brute animals. Wollstonecraft (1988) concluded that, if women are to be regarded as ethical creatures, they should also display the psychological traits usually associated with virtuous men. Before Wollstonecraft, there were works suggesting the reform of female manners or proposals for improving female education, but there was no single-minded criticism of the social and economic system, which created a double standard of excellence for male and female and relegated women to an inferior status.

In her book, Wollstonecraft consistently brings up Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his writings. Specifically she speaks of his *Emile* that was written in 1762. Since Wollstonecraft's time, the central aim of liberal feminism has been to carry out the agenda she outlines: greater access to the same education as men enjoy, more emphasis on physical fitness for women, a strong emphasis on Rousseauian training in femininity (along with the tendency of the market to foster false images of femininity), an increasing sense of Women's Rights, including most importantly the right to vote. For the liberal - individualist feminist the movement must concern itself with attaining more freedom for women, a freedom from all social oppression that equivalents to man's freedom. And society must reform itself in order to achieve that freedom. She writes: “I shall begin with Rousseau, and give a sketch of his character of woman, in his words, interspersing comments and reflections” Rousseau believed that women had a specific purpose. He felt that men and women were different and should be encouraged to behave in certain ways. He felt that men should be "active and strong". In her mind, it was men like Rousseau; whose ideas were so anti-feminist, that were discouraging women to be less than they are capable of being. It was not quite Rousseau as a person that she was aiming to denounce, but rather his view on women that many other men of her
time shared.

Rousseau stated in *Emile*: "The male is only a male now and again, the female is always a female or at least all her youth; everything reminds her of her sex." Wollstonecraft quotes Rousseau in her book, expressing her outrage at his opinion of women as totally subordinate to men and at his educational scheme that would fit females only for such a role. She emphasizes virtue and reason throughout in an attempt to correct Rousseau's view that "young women need only cultivate those qualities that make them alluring to men". To the question whether morality would be different for men and women Wollstonecraft answered that women's and men's moralities are fundamentally the same. Although she did not use terms such as "socially-constructed gender roles," Wollstonecraft denied that women are by nature more pleasure seeking than men. She reasoned that if men were confined to the same cages women find themselves locked in, as are low-ranking military men, for example, they would develop the same kind of weak characters women develop.

Wollstonecraft believed that women had a higher purpose than to be a man's subordinate. What is needed is to overcome their ignorance about the possibilities in life. In her mind the way for women to realize this was for them to receive an education. This education should not necessarily be from books, but rather it should be based on society's rules and bias's. She says, "... I principally wish to enforce the necessity of educating the sexes together to perfect both..." She contends – "Let woman share the rights and she will emulate the virtues of man; for she must grow more perfect when emancipated or justify the authority that chains such a weak being to her duty." Wollstonecraft also writes that women are not prepared for the real world. They are never given the proper training to analyze and assess. They have had to focus so long on their appearance and manners that they are not quite sure why
they do the things they do. Instead of trying to comprehend their status as women, they just go along with the ways in which they were raised. Because she regarded the ability to reason rather than the capacity to feel as the characteristic that distinguishes humans from brutes. Wollstonecraft contrasted manners, such as any automaton might master, with morals, which requires an educated understanding. Whereas society teaches men morals, it teaches women manners. More specifically, society encourages women to cultivate negative psychological traits like “cunning,” “vanity,” and “immaturity,” all of which impede the development of more positive psychological traits. Wollstonecraft concluded that the quickest way for women to be regarded as moral is for them to become like men — that is, for women to display the psychological traits usually associated with men. Yet, just because Wollstonecraft lamented women’s moral deficiencies does not mean that she totally blamed women for not being as good as they possibly could be. On the contrary, she claimed that because women are politically and economically oppressed, they do not have the material means necessary to develop their moral potential.

Without having a proper education, a woman can not be fully independent; she must rely on others even if others do not have woman’s best interests at heart. She believes that education is a necessity in life. Wollstonecraft states that, “Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings, and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vices.”

"A Vindication of the Rights of Women" was an important book for Wollstonecraft’s time. In a period where most men believed that women were basically puppets, Mary helped to bring to light the feminist view on the reality of it all. It was time that someone should make a valid and public argument so that women and men with misogynist views would see that it was not necessary for a
woman to be thought of as less than a person. Women are not on this earth solely to serve their fathers, husbands, or families. Women should have the same opportunities and equality as her counterparts. Wollstonecraft’s writings marked the beginning of a strong feministic view. As history shows the notion of women’s equality though has slowly started gaining grounds these days, but general acceptability is yet to be created. Wollstonecraft believes that women should not only recognize their strengths, but men should learn to encourage them, whereas men still are insistent on making women believe that they should be subservient to them. She writes, "Men have superior strengths of body; but were it not for mistaken notions of beauty, women would acquire sufficient to enable them to earn their subsistence; and to bear those bodily inconveniences and exertions that are requisite to strengthen the mind."  

The 19th century utilitarian philosopher and liberal feminist, John Stuart Mill, concurred that gender should define neither virtue nor intellectual prowess. Stating that society had set up a double standard which not only assessed ethics and ethical conduct differently for women and men but also specified and imposed upon women a set of virtues and intellectual powers which served only to re-enforce society’s patriarchal structure, Mill argued that female “virtue” was not something unique to females but, instead, something society imposed upon women. Mill regarded women as a subject class. However, he recognized that the state of female bondage in at least one respect was a refinement over that of black slave: each man wants his woman to be “not a forced slave but willing one, not a slave merely, but a favourite”. In The Subjection of Women, he emphasized that subtle and pervasive social conditioning is the means by which women are prepared to accede to roles as the servants of men. That to praise women on account of their virtue was to dictate that a woman’s worth is to be discovered in living for and sacrificing for others, to give and not to receive in return, to submit, yield, and obey, as well as to be long-suffering. Like Wollstonecraft, Mill believed
one set of virtues must apply equally to both women and men. The set of virtues advocated by Mill, however, contained the psychological traits commonly associated with men.

All women are brought up from the very early years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and governance by self control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections. And by their affections are meant the only ones they are allowed to have—those to the men with whom they are connected, or to the children who are the outcome of an additional and independent tie between them and men.⁹

The passing of time can certainly result in changes, for by the nineteenth-century women were regarded as more moral (though also as less intellectual) than men, a view that disturbed utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill. As he saw it, virtue (as well as intellect) has nothing to do with gender. Society is wrong, he said to set up an ethical double standard according to which women’s morality is to be assessed differently than men’s morality. Reflecting further on women’s alleged moral superiority, Mill concluded that women’s ‘moral nature’ is not the result of innate female propensities but of systematic social conditioning. Their ‘virtue’ is not of their own doing; society imposes it upon them. In the field of morality Mill’s conviction is that women are no less than men. In his words, “The principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, and admitting no power as privilege on the one side nor disability on the other.”¹⁰
In contrast to Wollstonecraft and Mill, other eighteenth-and nineteenth-century thinkers denied that virtue is one. Instead, they forwarded either a separate-but-equal theory of virtue according to which male and female virtues are simply different, or a separate-and unequal theory of virtue according to which female virtue is ultimately better than male virtue. Significantly, this diverse group of thinkers disagreed among themselves whether the characteristics typically associated with women (nurturance, empathy, compassion, self sacrifice, kindness) are (1) full-fledged moral virtues to be developed by men as well as by women; (2) positive psychological traits to be developed by women alone; (3) or negative psychological traits to be developed neither by women nor men.

Though Catherine Beecher believed that women's place is in the home, she did not believe that women's work is unimportant. On the contrary, she believed that women's work — the creation and maintenance of homes in which moral virtue thrives — is absolutely essential for society's well-being. Catherine Beecher, for example, rooted her reflections in a 'separate but equal' theory of virtue, which insisted that male and female virtues are different. She viewed the home and the woman's central role in it as absolutely essential not only for the well-being of society but also the construction of a better society. Together with her sister, Harriet, Catherine described the discipline of 'domestic science' in *The American Woman's Home* which required a different yet equally demanding kind of intelligence and skill as well as kind of virtue than that required in the public sphere of politics, commerce, and finance. It is reasoned that men would lose their *raison d'être* for working if they lacked loving families and well-ordered homes. They stressed that women's work requires much intelligence and skill; that it is not easy to manage a household properly. They also emphasized that women's most important work is to make society Christlike — that is, submissive, self-sacrificial, and benevolent. Sheltered safely in the private realm, where they are largely insulated from the siren calls of wealth, power, and prestige that pervade the public sphere of politics.
and economics, women are supposedly better situated to cultivate what Beecher and her sister termed the Christlike virtue of 'self-denying benevolence.' The better that women are, the better that everyone else will be. Convinced that women were somehow responsible for the moral rectitude of men and children, it never occurred to Beecher to ask herself why Christ, a man, had selected women rather than men to specialize in the virtue of self-denying benevolence.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s discussion of this already knotty topic is complicated by her apparent inability to decide whether female and male virtue and vice are more the product of nurture or nature. But whether her final view is that men’s and women’s diverging virtues and vices are the result of social manipulation or biological imperative, Stanton consistently maintained that what she regarded as men’s inferior set of morals have set the standard for behaviour in the public world. The education that will fit her to discharge the duties in the largest sphere of human usefulness, will best fit her for whatever special work she may be compelled to do.

By the second wave of Feminism in the 1960’s and 1970’s, most women in Western countries had gained basic social and political rights such as the vote after considerable social dispute. The new ‘women’s movement’ gave rise to a new form of Liberal Feminism. Second-wave Liberal Feminism has tended to extend the more ‘welfare’ version of mainstream Liberalism and, as such, has countered the marked individualism of most of its forms. This second-wave approach develops the welfare strand within mainstream Liberalism in terms of advancing a sense of collective or social responsibility and a marked attention to social justice. The collective and social justice political programme of this form of Liberal Feminism is evident in its focus upon overcoming discrimination against women as a class or group. It is also evident in the attention given to repealing or reforming social obstacles to women’s public participation. The emphasis was on improving women’s legal and political position as a group, while undercutting the individualistic characteristic of
mainstream Liberalism, nevertheless continued to be firmly oriented towards enabling women to become like men. Hence, even second-wave Liberal Feminism's concern with collective politics, with women as a class/group, is strategic and temporary rather than long-term. Its political aim remains recognisably Liberal – that is, to enable women to achieve the status of autonomous 'individuals' in public life as equals of men and as equally capable of public participation.

Naomi Wolf specifically locates her 'power feminism' as an extension of the Liberal Feminism of nineteenth-century thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft. In common with Wollstonecraft and most Liberal feminists, she is little concerned with class or money or race, and appears primarily focused on the problems of women like herself – that is, white, educated, middle-class young women. She encourages women, for example, to form 'power groups' to pool their resources in the way men do. Nevertheless, like other third-wave liberal feminists, she also focuses upon empowering individuals. Her political programme as well as her political aim is about individuals. She celebrates the autonomous individual in traditional Liberal terms and criticises what she calls 'victim feminism' for saddling women with an 'identity of powerlessness'.

MARXIST FEMINISM

Marxist feminists disagree with liberal feminists. They argue that it is impossible for any oppressed person, especially a female one, to prosper personally and professionally in a class society. The only effective way to end women's subordination to men is to replace the capitalist system with a socialist system in which both women and men are paid fair wages for their work. Women must be men's economic as well as educational and political equals before they can be as powerful as men. Marxist feminism is a sub-type of feminist theory which focuses on the dismantling of capitalism as a way to liberate women and states that capitalism, which gives rise to economic inequality, dependence, political confusion and ultimately unhealthy social relations between men and women, is the root of women's oppression.
According to Marxist feminists, the oppression of women is not directly caused by an individual's intentional actions, but rather by the social, political, and economic structures within which the individual lives. A person's entire identity is based upon production; we are what we are because of what we produce. Women, because of the second-class role in which they are placed, form negative concepts of themselves due to the socially and economically subordinate roles assigned to them by their family and workplace. In recent years, there has been an increasing uprising among Marxist feminists when it comes to the idea of "women's work." Not only were women required to do such things as cooking and cleaning in the private sector, but as the need for labour increased outside of the home, women were expected to do domestic work for commercial use, as well. It was not the concept of women working outside of the home that angered Marxist feminists, but rather the trivialization of 'women's work' itself. Women were working long hours in poor conditions for little reimbursement. Many Marxist feminists proposed paying women for housework, but many people thought this would simply trivialize husband-wife and mother-child relations. Other Marxist feminists believed that payment for household chores would decrease the incentives for working outside of the home.

According to Marxist theory, in capitalist societies the individual is shaped by class relations; that is, people's capacities, needs and interests are seen to be determined by the mode of production that characterizes the society they inhabit. Marxist feminism arises out of the doctrine of Karl Marx, whose theory is centred less on the material aspects of life than on the more broadly defined social ones. Simone Weil in *Oppression and Liberty* describes Marxism as being a theory quite incomplete insofar as its application is concerned, yet very relevant in describing the mechanisms of economic growth. Central to Marxism is the idea of the divisions of labour, which are familiarly evident in the capitalist system.

Marxist feminists see gender inequality as determined ultimately by the
capitalist mode of production and the major social divisions as class related. Women's subordination is seen as a form of oppression (rather than an illiberal discrimination) which is maintained (like racism) because it serves the interests of capitalists and the ruling class. Marxist feminists have also extended traditional Marxist analysis by looking at domestic labour as well as waged work. Given the concepts' centrality in their theory, Marx and Engels focused on the oppression and exploitation inherent in the relationship between wage labourers and capitalists. They paid less attention to other forms of labour—for example, the labour of peasants or of women in the family—and to other kinds of oppression simply because they were not as central to their project of understanding capitalism and overturning it. Marx and Engels believed that if they could understand how capitalism worked and help make workers conscious of their oppression they could contribute to workers' self-emancipation. They believed that the self-emancipation of the working class—men and women, of all nations races, and creeds—would be the basis for the end of all other forms of oppression.

The theory put forward in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* is based largely upon the pioneering research of the nineteenth-century anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan. Morgan's research helped support Marx and Engels' long-held contention that a long period of 'primitive communism' preceded class society. But it also helped Engels to clarify precisely how women's oppression arose hand in hand with the rise of class society. Morgan's careful study of the Iroquois showed two things: (1) that Iroquois women and men had a rigid division of labour between the sexes; but (2) that women were the equals of men, with complete autonomy over their own responsibilities and decision-making power within society as a whole.\(^{11}\)

Marxists have attempted to develop explanations for the relatively lower pay of women than men. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the family responsibilities of women and their economic dependency on the earnings of their
husband meant that their wages were depressed relative to wages of men. Many
men, trade unions, and even employers argued that the wages for males needed
to be living wages or family wages – sufficient to support a family. That is, the
male wages needed to be sufficient to ensure at least part of the reproductive
costs of the family and labour force. The corollary of this is that women's wages
did not need to be so great, because they were at least partially supported by their
husbands. Single females were expected to work only temporarily, until marriage,
so did not need high wages either. As a result, the dependency of women on men,
and the attempt to pursue a high wage strategy for men, may have led to
relatively low wages for women approach would argue for an end of the nuclear
family, at least as it is currently structured. But Marxist feminist approach that
argues for really ending patriarchy and inequality may require changes at all levels,
in the economy, in attitudes, in institutions, etc.

Marxist theory approaches the question of women's oppression quite
differently–from a materialist standpoint. It is based not upon speculation, but
upon piecing together what we actually know about the evolution of human society.
Most importantly, we know that women have not always suffered oppression—in
fact; the evidence shows that in a number of more primitive societies, women
have been regarded as the equals of men. It was only recently in the evolution of
human beings that the social position of women has fallen compared with that of
men.

In his introduction to the first edition of The Origin of the Family, Private
Property and the State, Engels explains materialism as follows:

"According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is,
in the final instance, the production and reproduction of immediate life. This, again,
is of a twofold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence,
of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the
other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species.” 12

The crux of Engels’ theory of women’s oppression rests on the relationship between the sexual division of labour and the mode of production, which underwent a fundamental transformation with the onset of class society. Engels argued that the rise of class society brought with it rising inequality—between the rulers and the ruled, and between men and women.

The nuclear family’s material roots in class society were crystal clear to Marx and Engels. In 1846, they argued in The German Ideology that with the abolition of private property, “the abolition of the family is self-evident.” Engels understood the hypocrisy of contemporary ruling-class marriage and the degradation of women that went with it. In the Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, Engels also traced the historical rise of the family as a property relationship—which developed hand in hand with class society. He demonstrated this relationship by showing the meaning of the term “family” in the Roman Empire.

The Original meaning of the word “family” (familia) is not the compound of sentimentality and domestic strife which forms the ideal of the present-day philistine; among the Romans it did not at first even refer to the married pair and their children but only to the slaves. Famulus means domestic slave, and familia is the total number of slaves belonging to one man. As late as the time of Gaius, the familia, id est patrimonium (family, that is the patrimony, the inheritance) was bequeathed by will. The term was invented by the Romans to denote a new social organism whose head ruled over wife and children and a number of slaves, and was invested under Roman paternal power with rights of life and death over them all. 13

Engels adds, quoting Marx, “The modern family contains in germ not only slavery (servitus) but also serfdom, since from the beginning it is related to agricultural
services. It contains in miniature all the contradictions which later extend throughout society and its state.”

But there was a further contradiction between earlier communal social organization and rising class society, Engels argues. Wealth was owned by men, but since most societies were matrilineal, inheritance was passed through the mother, not the father. Moreover, without strict monogamy, a man cannot be certain that his wife’s children are also his own. Engels writes, “Thus, on the one hand, in proportion as wealth increased it made the man’s position in the family more important than the woman’s, and on the other hand created an impulse to exploit this strengthened position in order to overthrow, in favour of his children, the traditional order of inheritance... Mother right, therefore, had to be overthrown and overthrown it was.”

Engels’ method not only opened the door to understanding women’s oppression, but also put forward a vision of women’s liberation, which has continued both to inform and inspire successive generations of socialists since his time. As he writes, “What we can now conjecture about the way in which sexual relations will be ordered after the impending overthrow of capitalist production is mainly of a negative character, limited for the most part to what will disappear. But what will there be new? That will be answered when a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in their lives have known what it is to buy a woman’s surrender with money or any other social instrument of power; a generation of women who have never known what it is to give themselves to a man from any other considerations than real love or to refuse to give themselves to their lover from fear of the economic consequences. When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual – and that will be the end of it.”
It is a branch of feminism that views women’s oppression as a fundamental element in human society and seeks to challenge that standard by broadly rejecting standard gender roles. “Radical” (from Latin rādix, rādīc-, root) in radical feminism is used as an adjective meaning the root; radical feminists seek the root cause of women’s oppression. The traditional Radical feminist standpoint may be expressed as viewing the division in all societies as that between men and women and stating that men are the oppressors of women. These concepts were first developed in the late sixties as a significant part of second-wave feminism. Radical feminism questions why women must adopt certain roles based on their biology, just as it questions why men adopt certain other roles based on theirs. Radical feminism attempts to draw lines between biologically-determined behaviour and culturally-determined behaviour in order to free both men and women as much as possible from their previous narrow gender roles. Radical feminists believe that the men who hold power in society abuse that power by consciously and deliberately blocking women’s access to it.

Radical Feminism was the result of the disillusionment resulted from the failure of Marxist Feminism. According to radical feminists, in order to liberate women, it is not Capitalism that is to be overthrown but patriarchy. Above all, they opposed the growing sexual crimes against women. The analyses of radical feminism points out the need for women to escape from cages of forced motherhood and sexual slavery. Hence, the immediate goal of radical feminist politics is for women to regain control over their own bodies. In the long run, the radical feminists seek to overthrow patriarchy and to create a new society informed by the radical feminist values of wholeness, trust and nurturance of sexuality, joy and mildness. Radical Feminists see men’s domination of women as the result of the system of patriarchy, which is independent of all other social structures – that is, it is not a product of capitalism.
In this radical view, gender is the key issue. And gender is something imposed on women by male-dominated society. In comparison with socially imposed gender roles, sex-linked behaviour traits are largely irrelevant. Hence, the central issue for radical feminism is that women’s femaleness, their identity as women, is in the hands of men and is manipulated by men for their own purposes—economic, psychological, and sexual. Femininity is man’s creation of woman in his own interests. Radical feminism promotes the basis for many of the ideas of feminism. They usually clash with the ideals of the liberal feminist, because radical feminists believe that society must be changed at its core in order to dissolve patriarchy, not just through acts of legislation. Unfortunately, this type of feminism also attracts a lot of negative media attention creating a backlash of feminism. Radical feminists believe that the domination of women is the oldest and worst kind of oppression in the world. They believe this because it spans across the world oppressing women of different races, ethnicities, classes and cultures. Radical feminists want to free both men and women from the rigid gender roles that society has imposed upon them. It is this sex-gender system that has created oppression and radical feminist’s mission is to overthrow this system by any possible means. Sometimes radical feminists believe that they must rage a war against men, patriarchy, and the gender system which confines them to rigid social roles. They completely reject these roles, all aspects of patriarchy, and in some cases, they reject men as well. Radical feminists emphasize their difference from men. They form groups that exclude males completely. This type of feminism highlights the importance of individual feelings, experiences and relationships. Radical feminists have been divided into two groups with very different views.

Radical-Libertarian feminists believe that femininity and reproduction limit women’s capacity to contribute to society. Women should essentially be androgynous. Radical-Libertarian feminists like to violate sexual norms and believe that women should control every aspect of their sexuality. They also advocate artificial means
of reproduction so that less time is devoted to pregnancy and more time is devoted
to worthwhile things. They are strong promoters of abortion, contraceptives and
other forms of birth control.

Radical-Cultural feminists views are highly different from Radical-Libertarian
feminists’ views. The Radical-Cultural feminists believe that women should encompass
their femininity because it is better than masculinity. Mary Daly advocates finding
the “wild female within”. This type of radical feminist sees sex and penetration as
male dominated. They see a link between sex, female subordination, rape and
abuse. These must be eliminated, according to Cultural-Radical feminists. Yet another
opposing view is that reproduction is the source of power for women. They believe
that men are jealous of women, and that they try to control reproduction through
means of technology.

Radical feminists believe that society is an oppressive patriarchy, which
primarily (or solely) oppresses women. Radical feminists seek to abolish this
patriarchy. Some strands of radical feminism advocate replacing patriarchy with its
opposite (matriarchy). Because of this, some observers believe that radical feminism
focuses on the gender oppression of patriarchy as the first and foremost fundamental
oppression that women face.

Patriarchal theory is not always as single sided as the belief that all men
always benefit from the oppression of all women. Patriarchal theory notes that
dominant men use violent hierarchical social power to control non-dominant men as
well as women. Additionally, patriarchal theory analyses some societies (like
contemporary Western societies) as allowing women to play an active role in
patriarchy, by taking over the role of dominant male. In these forms patriarchal
theory maintains that the primary element of patriarchy is a relationship of dominance
where one party (almost always male) is dominant and exploits the other party
(generally women) for his own benefit.
However, critiques of the above view have resulted in a different perspective on radical feminism held by some which acknowledges the simultaneity or intersectionality of different types of oppression which may include, but are not limited to the following: gender, race, class, perceived attractiveness, sexuality, ability, whilst still affirming the recognition of patriarchy. Some strains of radical feminism have been compared to Marxism in that they describe a “great struggle of history” between two opposed forces. Much like the Marxist struggle between classes (typically the proletariat and bourgeoisie), radical feminism describes a historical struggle between “women” and “men”. Radical feminism has had a close, if hostile, relationship with Marxism since the 1970s. Both Marxists and radical feminists seek a total and radical change in social relations; believe themselves to be on the political left; and, are primarily active amongst Western university students.

SOCIALIST FEMINISM

Feminists who belong to what is known as Socialist Feminism attempt to combine, the anti-patriarchal views of Radical Feminism and anti-capitalist ideas of Marxism. After highlighting clearly the patriarchal features in capitalism, they try to reconstruct the concept of socialism which can offer true liberation to women. The Socialist Feminist’s analysis of women’s oppression shows that women’s liberation requires a totally new mode of organizing all forms of production. It also tries to study radical, colonial, class, caste and ecological problems. Feminists believe that when we speak about women’s oppression as well as liberation it should not be in vague undifferentiated or a historical terms. They claim that what they are advocating is the total liberation for women. Socialist feminists have spent much time thinking about issues leading to the development of a rich body of feminist thought and practice. Six of the central features of socialist feminism are—capitalism/class, revolution, patriarchy, psychoanalysis, subjectivity and difference. Clearly socialist feminism has been deeply influenced by Marxism and therefore, Marxist theories of class and capitalism initially inspired socialist feminists. Marxism recognizes that
women are oppressed, and attributes the oppression to the capitalist/private property system. Thus they insist that the only way to end the oppression of women is to overthrow the capitalist system. Socialist feminism is the result of Marxism meeting radical feminism. Socialist feminism appears to adopt some of the same tenets of Marxism, but instead of focusing on economic determinism as the primary source of oppression, the socialist feminist sees the oppression as having psychological and social roots.

The socialist feminists share a genuine concern for women that transcends politics. Their focus is on people, not profits. Socialist feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses upon both the public and private spheres of a woman's life and argues that liberation can only be achieved by working to end both the economic and cultural sources of women's oppression. Socialist feminism is a dualist theory that broadens Marxist feminism's argument for the role of capitalism in the oppression of women and radical feminism's theory of role of gender and the patriarchy. Socialists most often find themselves alone in challenging the assumption that women's oppression is due, to a greater or lesser extent, to men's long-standing need to dominate and oppress women. The specific explanations for women's oppression range far and wide—some are downright preposterous and most are based far more on mere speculation than on any concrete evidence. The most common theories have been based on the assumption that men's greater physical strength leads them to be more aggressive. Socialist feminism is the approach with the greatest capacity to illuminate the exploitation and oppression of most of the women of the world.

Socialist feminism should be seen as an ongoing project. It is alive and well today and it existed before the women's liberation movement as well—though both now and then, not necessarily in that name. It has sometimes been called Marxism, sometimes socialist feminism, sometimes womanism, sometimes materialist feminism, or feminist materialism, and sometimes is implicit in work that bears no
theoretical labels. Though the term 'socialist feminist' can be used more narrowly, to understand women's subordination in a coherent and systematic way that integrates class and sex, as well as other aspects of identity such as race/ethnicity or sexual orientation, with the aim of using this analysis to help liberate women. Socialist feminism is the approach with the greatest capacity to eliminate the exploitation and oppression of most of the women of the world.

According to socialist feminists, in a just society, the relationships between women and men would be regulated by respect and love rather than by their relationships to economic forces. Because the capitalist economic system concentrates wealth in the hands of a few large business owners, the vast majority of women and men are low wage workers in factory or service jobs.

Socialist feminists believe that, the powerlessness of women in the society is rooted in four basic structures: those of production, reproduction, sexuality and socialization of children. The socialist feminists have raised the whole debate of domestic work. The orthodox Marxist analysts consider house work as producing only use value but not exchange value. A group of socialist feminists argue that women's oppression is based on unpaid housework.

Socialist feminists generally agreed that Marx and Engles paid serious attention to the so called women question. Equality was the battle cry for both feminist, and socialist, however they were fighting different wars. The socialist’s was a battle against the differences between the classes; the feminist’s was a battle against the differences between sexes. Socialism is the middle ground for the success of feminism.

EXISTENTIALIST FEMINISM

Departing from these inclusionary ways of understanding women’s oppression, existentialist feminists stress how, in the final analysis, all selves are
lonely and in fundamental conflict. In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir writes that, from the beginning, man has named himself the Self and woman the Other. If the Other is a threat to the Self, then woman is a threat to man; and if men wish to remain free, they must not only economically, politically, and sexually subordinate women to themselves, but also convince women that they deserve no better treatment. Thus, if women are to become true selves, they must recognize themselves as free and responsible moral agents who possess the capacity to perform excellently in the public as well as the private world.

In 1940 Simone de Beauvoir published what was to become a definitive statement of the contemporary feminist movement: *The Second Sex*. One of the important insights given by Beauvoir is that woman is the product of civilisation. In her own words: “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No psychological or economical fate determines the figure that the human female presents in the society. It is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.” Her famous statement, that one is not born but rather becomes a woman, can be read in this way as arguing that there is no ontological subjectivity which is the exclusive domain of men or women. Instead, subjectivity can be granted or withheld by the society in which potential knowing subjects come to existential consciousness. The result, according to de Beauvoir, is of women’s lack of existential subjectivity.

Beauvoir claims that there is no unchangeable feminine essence. Existentialism, Beauvoir argued in her introduction would be the perspective out of which she will be able to understand women’s situation. Her first philosophical essay *Ethics of Ambiguity* was also an existentialist treatment of the human situation. But it was in *The Second Sex*, that Beauvoir embarked on the existentialism extensively to identify the true sources and reasons of women’s perennial oppression. Beauvoir insisted that womanhood, as we know it today, is a social construct. That is, the subordination of female to male does not represent an immutable state of nature,
but is the result of various social forces. At the same time, by asserting that one is
not born, but rather becomes a woman, Beauvoir hints at the importance of
human intervention and action in becoming a person. This enables one to counter
the determination of simple biological or cultural explanations. She asks question
like: First we must ask: 'what is woman? 'Tota mulier in utero', says one, 'woman
is a womb'.

The subordination of woman is explained in The Second Sex not only as a
social and historical phenomenon, but also from an existentialist perspective.
Influenced by Sartre, she explains the oppression and submission of women, using
many of the existentialist notions. It is widely known that though at the time of her
writing The Second Sex, she did not like to be called a feminist, but she reluctantly
accepted the label of being called an existentialist. So, it is clear through The
Second Sex Beauvoir was moving towards an existentialist feminism, the idea of
equality and similarity of all human status that will allow full subjectivity to women.
Beauvoir's thoughts expressed through her writings, particularly in The Second
Sex, influenced the feminist worldview. Beauvoir's feminism, which later came to
be identified as existential feminism has had its effect in the feminist search. Many
of the modern feminist thinkers have adapted their methods of feminism from the
original thought stream of Beauvoir. Therefore, Simone de Beauvoir remains to be
a leading figure in the history of feminism.

The framing paradigm of de Beauvoir's The Second Sex, derived from
existentialist philosophy, is the binary of Self/Subject and Other. The Self/Subject is
the active, knowing subject of traditional epistemology, and is by default male. De
Beauvoir argues that the Other, who exists for the Self/Subject in an asymmetrical
relationship, is female and feminized, occupying a secondary place in both concrete
activity and subjective consciousness. The Other is not an equal complement to
the Self/Subject, but rather serves as a projection of everything the Self/Subject
rejects: immanence, passivity, voicelessness.
This is not to say that the designation of the other is a simple case of repression. De Beauvoir notes that there are a variety of reasons why women may not resist their designation of Other: lack of resources, close ties with men, and perceived advantages in being Other.

One of de Beauvoir's most important contributions to 20th century feminist thought is the separation of 'woman' (as a biological entity) from 'femininity' (as a social construction). In this she is not entirely successful, since in her section on biology she paints a very discouraging picture of women’s alienation from their bodies; though she views female biology as an obstacle to be surmounted instead of a fixed destiny, the fact remains that women's bodies are constituted as such. Still, this sense of possibilities and the body as a “situation” rather than a “thing” represents as positive a view as can be imagined within a paradigm that depends on transcendence of the physical self. De Beauvoir also argues that biology cannot be understood outside of its social, economic, and psychological context, and that biology alone is insufficient to explain why women are constituted as the Other. She concludes that: “Woman is determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the action of others than herself.”

Though de Beauvoir attempts to build a historical model of women’s subjugation, she rejects much of the historical materialism of theorists such as Engels. In her view, economic subjugation is insufficient to account for the existential Othering of women, and lacks theoretical complexity as an explanatory perspective. She states: “We must not believe, certainly, that a change in woman’s economic condition alone is enough to transform her...” Despite this rejection, she notes, in line with Marx, that it was "through labour that woman has conquered her dignity as a human being..." and that “this [economic] factor has been and remains the basic factor in her evolution...” Still, “until it has brought about the moral, social, cultural, and other consequences that it promises and requires, the new woman
Having largely discarded the theoretical streams of biology, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism, de Beauvoir turns her attention to historical ethnography as seen through an existentialist lens. As Beauvoir writes, "Our perspective is that of existentialist ethics. Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out towards other liberties. There is no justification for present existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future. Every time transcendence falls back onto existence into the en-soi - the brutish life of subjection to give conditions- and of liberty into constraint and contingence."

Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* gave us the vocabulary for analyzing the social constructions of femininity and the structure for critiquing these constructions. An important point that Beauvoir wants to make here, as she does throughout the Second part of *The Second Sex*, is that the resignation of woman to man, does not come from any predetermined inferiority. On the contrary, this resignation has its source in the adolescent girl's past, in the society around her and particularly in the future assigned to her. In short, Beauvoir insisted that womanhood, as we know it today, is a social construct.

As Beauvoir writes, "When man makes of woman the other, he may, then, expect to manifest deep-seated tendencies towards complicity. Thus, woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the other."

Existentialism is a philosophical movement, which came into prominence in Continental Europe between the two World Wars. Though it cannot be defined comprehensively; existentialism implies a passionate return of the individual to his/her own subjectivity, in order to extract the significance of his/her being. It studies
our concrete individual actions and moods, in an intense attempt to understand people in their individuality and differences. ‘Existence precedes essence’ is the most popular existentialist credo. Existentialists claim that essence does not determine existence. An individual has no essential nature, no self-identity other than that involved in the act of choosing. Abstractions can never grasp nor communicate the reality of individual existence. The universe does not provide moral rules. Moral principles are constructed by humans in the context of being responsible for their actions and the actions of others. Individuals have complete freedom of the will. Individual cannot help but make choices. An individual can become completely other than what he/she is. Beauvoir in her analysis of the oppression of woman makes use of these existentialist perspectives.

PSYCHOANALYTIC FEMINISM

Like existentialist feminists, psychoanalytic and cultural feminists seek an explanation of women’s oppression in the inner recesses of women’s psyche.

Psychoanalytic feminism is based on Freud and his psychoanalytic theories. It maintains that gender is not biological but is based on the psycho-sexual development of the individual. Psychoanalytical feminists believe that gender inequality comes from early childhood experiences, which lead men to believe themselves to be masculine, and women to believe themselves feminine. It is further maintained that gender leads to a social system that is dominated by males, which in turn influences the individual’s psychosexual development.

Freud however, has not viewed man and woman at par. Some of the problems typically raised by the Psychoanalytic feminist philosophers in response to Freudian theory are:

1. According to post Freudian psychoanalysis “gender” is not biological it is also (mostly) social. Feminist psychoanalytic theories are based on the view that children establish gender identity much earlier. Their
major revision is of Freudian view that mother is primary, but boys and girls relate to mother differently. They reject biological / essentialistic explanation of gender difference (Anatomy is not destiny)

2. The theory is based on an inadequate conceptualization of the experience of women.

3. The theory overemphasizes the role of sexuality in human psychological development and experience.

Jacques Lacan, another post-Freudian French psychoanalytic theorist, focused on language and language-related issues. Lacan reinterprets Freud in light of structuralist and post-structuralist theories, turning psychoanalysis from an essentially humanist philosophy or theory into a post-structuralist one. Jacques Lacan has reinterpreted Freud in structuralist terms, bringing the theory into the second half of the Twentieth Century. Like Freud, Lacan discusses the importance of the pre-Oedipal stage in the child’s life when it makes no clear distinction between itself and the external world; when it harbours no definite sense of self and lives symbiotically with the mother’s body. Lacan refers to this stage as the imaginary.

Lacan also revised Freud’s concept of the Oedipus complex—the childhood wish to displace the parent of one’s own sex and take his or her place in the affections of the parent of the opposite sex—by relating it to the issue of language. He argues that the pre-oedipal stage is also a preverbal or “mirror stage,” a stage he associates with the imaginary order. He associates the subsequent Oedipal stage—which roughly coincides with the child’s entry into language—with what he calls the symbolic order, in which words are not the things they stand for but substitutes for those things. But, Lacan says, every subject in language is constituted by/as lack, or Lack. The only reason we have language at all is because of the loss, or lack, of the union with the maternal body. In fact, it is the necessity to
become part of “culture,” to become subjects in language, that forces that absence, loss, lack. For Lacan, the ego or “I” self is only an illusion, a product of the unconscious itself. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the unconscious is the ground of all being. “The unconscious is structured like language. The unconscious is the discourse of other.”

In Lacan the conception of the human is the notion that the unconscious, which governs all factors of human existence, is structured like a language. Lacan says that the contents of the unconscious are acutely aware of language, and particularly of the structure of language. His essay on the Mirror Stage describes that process, showing how the infant forms an illusion of an ego, of a unified conscious self identified by the word. This psychological development of the child is part of a reciprocal process of adjustment between child and caretaker — both must learn to be responsive to the needs and interests of the other.

Lucy Irigaray states on the opening page of An Ethics of Sexual Difference that each age is defined by a philosophical issue that calls to be thoroughly examined — ours is sexual difference. Sexual difference is often associated with the anatomical differences between the sexes. However, Irigaray follows Lacan in understanding sexual difference as a difference that is assigned in language at the same time also being critical of Lacan.

Irigaray employs the Lacanian imaginary body in her discussions about Western Culture’s bias against women. Irigaray argues that, like people, cultures project dominant imaginary schemes which then affect how that culture understands and defines itself. According to Irigaray, in Western culture, the imaginary body which dominates on a cultural level is a male body. Irigaray thus argues that Western culture privileges identity, unity, and sight—all of which she believes are associated with male anatomy. She believes that fields such as philosophy, psychoanalysis, science and medicine are controlled by this imaginary body. In Speculum of the Other Woman, Irigaray addresses Freud’s claim in his essay
“Femininity” that little girls are only little men. She argues that Freud could not understand women because he was influenced by the one-sex theory of his time (men exist and women are a variation of men), and expanded his own, male experience of the world into a general theory applicable to all humans. According to Irigaray, since Freud was unable to imagine another perspective, his reduction of women to male experience resulted in viewing women as defective men.

Irigaray critically appropriates this radical description of sexual difference. She discusses the linguistic character of sexual difference in a manner similar to Lacan. Irigaray is more concerned with how culture and language as a product of culture understand sexual difference and subjectivity than with arguing that truths about sexual difference or subjectivity emerge out of biology itself. However she distances herself from Lacan in two key manners.

First, Irigaray disagrees with Lacan’s depiction of the Symbolic order as ahistorical and unchanging. Irigaray believes that language systems are malleable, and largely determined by power relationships that are in flux. Second, Irigaray remains unconvinced by Lacan’s claims that the Phallus is an ahistorical master signifier of the Symbolic order that has no connection to male anatomy. Thus Luce Irigaray, the French Feminist and analyst, challenges Lacan not just for the phallocentrism of his arguments but because the Freudian account is seen to cut women off from an early and untroubled psyche which feminist seek to restore. Irigaray calls this the "imaginary of Women".

Kate Millett, in the *Sexual Politics* drew attention to the ubiquity and to the ways in which it reproduced itself through the family and culture.

Firestone in the *Dialectic of sex*, accepts the biological inequality between men and women. She states that the Oedipus complex and its dissolution is the mental reaction of the child trying to discover its place in the world; in our society,
this is in the context of two parents and its prohibited sexual desires towards them

Nancy Chodorow, a sociologist, psychoanalyst, in her book *Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, challenges the traditional view that females are biologically predisposed toward nurturing infants. She argues that mothering fulfills a woman's psychological need for reciprocal intimacy.

Nancy Chodorow sets out to explore why women choose to mother. She rejects the idea that mothering is an innate, natural instinct, and equally the idea that it is merely the result of social conditioning. For, as she argues, this would imply that women had a free choice in the matter of whether to mother. Chodorow argues that the desire to be mother is part of the desire to be feminine, which girls pick up at an early stage.⁹

According to Chodorow, contemporary psychoanalytic feminism begins with a dismissal of psychoanalysis of the unreflective type and the feminist challenge of it. Chodorow believes that psychoanalysis cannot make universal claims that concern psychological development. They must take into account the cultural and historical conditions of the present time. She characterizes Freud's work as only sometimes describing how women develop in a patriarchal society. Instead of his work arising out of clinical observation, Chodorow illustrates Freud's work as making unsupported statements about how women and men "ought to be".

In *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, Mitchell speaks about the indispensability of psychoanalytic theory to feminist thought. Mitchell presents an account about the indispensability of psychoanalytic theory in feminist theory. She employs a structuralism in her reading of Freud. According to her "Psychoanalytic theories are always models of conflicts. Indeed, all Freud's theory take conflicts as their base."⁹⁰ According to Juliet Mitchell (1974) key structures of women's are due production (organises work: waged and unwaged), reproduction - of children/species, sexuality-
systems of heterosexual relations monogamy, marriage, socialisation of children -
mother as primary child-rearer, liberation implies that change is necessary in all four
structures. Patriarchy constituted by exchange of women by men in kinship systems
and by social construction of 'biological' sex differences in terms of this exchange,
Oedipus complex stems from organisation of kinship/family system which locates
power in the older male, psychology of masculinity/femininity have their basis in
ideologies of 'sex differences' which are seen as 'natural', and the material
organisation of kinship systems in work, sexuality, reproduction and child-care.

It is this aspect of Juliet Mitchel's book which seems to have been taken up
most strongly by feminist who have attempted to follow through the political
implications of psychoanalysis as a critique of patriarchy. For Juliet Mitchell, capitalism
and industrialization are specific preconditions for women's liberation: "Probably it is
only in the highly developed societies of the West that an authentic liberation of
women can be envisaged today". Freud's analysis of the psychology of women
takes place within a concept that it is neither socially nor biologically dualistic. It
takes place within an analysis of patriarchy.

Psychoanalytic feminists use notion of sex/gender system, which includes: the
ways in which biological sex becomes cultural gender, social relations for the production
of gender and gender-organised social worlds, rules and regulations for sexual
object choice (i.e. the opposite sex) and concepts of childhood. Their works offer
an understanding of the conceptions of the female and male body in
culture. Psychoanalysis is not, therefore, a single entity. Institutional divisions within
psychoanalysis have turned on the very questions about the phallocentrism of
analysis, the meaning of femininity, the sequence of psychic development and its
norms, which have been the concern of feminists.

POSTMODERN FEMINISM

Feminism and post modernism are the only contemporary theories that
present a truly radical critique of Enlightenment legacy of modernism. No other approaches on the contemporary intellectual scene offer a means of displacing and transforming the masculinist epistemology of modernity. One of the most influential thinkers in post modern stream is Michel Foucault who established the *Genealogy of Truth*, which means the practices and influences that paved the establishment of discourses. His notion of truth is strongly related to power, in his latest work he becomes fully convinced that power relation within a defined region established what is known to be the subject and theory of human discourse setting in this way the inevitable conjunction between subject and knowledge. Jacques Derrida another important writer used a device called deconstruction in which the text (which is the knowledge in itself) becomes a phenomenon of indefinite interpretation. In this way post modern writers alienate themselves completely from any theory that proclaims the establishment of the ultimate truth as the only possible discourse.

Postmodernism attempts to deconstruct many of the categories that feminists have placed at the centre of their theories and activism. Postmodernism claims that terms such as “oppression” are simply constructs that actually inhibit women’s freedom because making claims of oppression strengthens the dichotomy of “oppressor and oppressed.” In contradiction to this, Foucault and Derrida suggest that “individual motivations and intentions count for nil or almost nil in the scheme of social reality. Women are constructs—that is, their experience of their very subjectivity is a construct mediated by and/or grounded on a social discourse beyond (way beyond) individual control.” Postmodernism unveils the oppressive structures that are built into feminist theories. It reveals not only feminists’ role in continuing the dichotomies of oppression, but also the failure of feminist terms such as “woman” to include the diffuse perspectives of various women. Postmodernism answers these problems by deconstructing everything and forcing feminists into a corner. Postmodernists claim that “there is no essential core ‘natural’ to us, and so there is no repression in the humanist sense.”
Postmodern Feminism is a field developed mainly from Foucault and Derrida’s writings. Its main belief is that women and men denoted in terms as subject are phenomena in history created through practices where the discourse around man gained more importance in terms of power than the female discourse. Foucault in his *Genealogy of Truth* clearly explains how subjects emerge in history through practices of power relations. Feminist writers claim that woman view of the world would change most of the interpretations of the world and specifically international relations. Judith Butler gives a clear prospective how deconstruction can be used in feminist theory to give it a new prespective. The concept of deconstruction is being used correctly comparing it to the original version of Jacques Derrida and it is also adopted quite cohesively to the feminist discourse. The new assignment of meaning given by disconstructing feminism remains still a prospect of postmodern feminism without any real implication to the problem of gender issues.

According to Judith Butler, the term “postmodernism” can be characterised as a historical, theoretical, conceptual, practical and political theory that can be applied to feminism. However, the concept of feminism cannot be examined simply as such, rather we must first look at postmodernism and feminism in relation to it, postmodernism attempts to subvert and challenge the hierarchy that exists within cultures, thus by definition or by our understanding of the term, it deconstructs as well as constructs, negotiates and challenges the notion of feminism.

These post structuralist and post modernist feminisms consider not only differences between men and women, or differences between women themselves, but also differences within and constitutive of the female subject or a difference ‘within woman’. They reject the notion of a fixed female identity and in this way they believe that they overcome the problems of the essentiiisms which other feminisms have had to face. For some feminists, this move away from fixed, knowable identities is a way forward that can overcome the seemingly never ending debate over equality and difference. For others, however these post
structuralist and post modernist view points are actually damaging to the cause of feminism.\textsuperscript{34}

Postmodernism has offered feminism, and thus female Humanists, some useful ideas about method, particularly a wariness toward generalizations that transcend boundaries of culture and region. Postmodernism recognizes that objectivity and reason have reflected the values of masculinity at a particular point in history; this recognition by the postmodernists has opened the door to feminists who feel that postmodernism is an ally of feminism. The postmodern critique has come to focus on philosophy and the very idea of a possible theory of knowledge, justice, or beauty that excludes the female experience. Jean Grimshaw writes "The experience of gender, of being a man or a woman, inflects much if not all of people's lives. ... But even if one is always a man or a woman, one is never just a man or a woman. One is young or old, sick or healthy, married or unmarried, a parent or not a parent, employed or unemployed, middle class or working class, rich or poor, black or white, and so forth. Gender of course inflects one's experience of these things, so the experience of anyone of them may well be radically different according to whether one is a man or a woman. But it may also be radically different according to whether one is, say, black or white or working class or middle class. The relationship between male and female experience is a very complex one. Experience doesn't come neatly in segments so that it is impossible to abstract what in one's experience is due to 'being a woman' or 'being a man'".\textsuperscript{35}

Finally, as postmodern feminists see it, all attempts to provide a single explanation for women's oppression not only will fail but should also fail. They will fail because there is no one entity, "Woman," upon whom a label may be fixed. Women are individuals, each with a unique story to tell about a particular self. Moreover, any single explanation for "Woman's" oppression should fail from a feminist point of view, for it would be yet another instance of so-called
“phallogocentric” thought: that is, the kind of “male thinking” that insists on telling as absolute truth one and only one story about reality. Women must, in the estimation of postmortem feminists reveal their differences to each other so that they can better resist the patriarchal tendency to center, thought into a rigid “truth” that always was, is, and forever will be.

**CULTURAL FEMINISM**

It is a variety of feminism which emphasizes essential differences between men and women, based on biological differences in reproductive capacity. Cultural feminism attributes to those differences which results in distinctive and superior virtues in women. Women are inherently more kind and gentle. Cultural feminists believe that because of these differences, if women rule the world there would be no more war and the world would surely be a better place. Essentially, a women’s way is the right and better way for what women share, in this perspective, provides a basis for “sisterhood,” or unity, solidarity and shared identity. Multicultural feminists generally affirm socialist feminist thought, but they believe it is inattentive to issues of race and ethnicity.

Cultural Feminism is the theory that there are fundamental personalities differences between men and women, and those women’s differences are special and should be honoured. This theory of feminism supports the notion that there are biological differences between men and women. Cultural feminists are usually non-political. Their focus is on individual change and influencing or transforming society through this individual change. They usually advocate separate female counter-cultures as a way to change society. Cultural feminism seeks to overcome sexism by celebrating women’s special qualities, ways, and experiences, often believing that the “woman’s ways the better way”.

Although Global feminists praise the ways in which multiculturalist feminists have amplified socialist feminist thought, they nonetheless regard even this enriched
discussion of women’s oppression as incomplete. All too often, feminists focus in a nearly exclusive manner on the gender politics of their own nation. Thus, while U.S. feminists struggle to formulate laws to prevent sexual harassment and date rape, thousands of women in Central America, for example, are sexually tortured on account of their own, their fathers’, their husbands’, or their sons’ political beliefs. Similarly, while U.S. feminists debate the extent to which contraceptives ought to be funded by the government or distributed in public schools, women in many Asian and African countries have no access to contraception or family planning services from any source.

**ECOFEMINISM**

Ecofeminists agree with global feminists that it is important for women to understand how women’s interests can diverge as well as converge. In Western society, women are treated as inferior to men, ‘nature’ is treated as inferior to ‘culture’, and humans are understood as being separate from, and often superior to, the natural environment. Throughout our history, nature is portrayed as feminine and women are often thought of as closer to nature than men. Women’s physiological connections with birth and child care have partly led to this close association with nature. The menstrual cycle, which is linked to Lunar cycles, is also seen as evidence of women’s closeness to the body and natural rhythms. Our cultural image of the ‘premenstrual woman’ as irrational and overemotional typifies this association between women, the body, nature and the irrational.

Ecofeminists focus on these connections, and analyse how they devalue and oppress both ‘women’ and ‘nature’. Ecofeminism believes that Patriarchal society is built on four interlocking pillars: sexism, racism, class exploitation and environmental destruction. Ecofeministic analysis reveals that it is not only women who are portrayed as being ‘closer to nature’; oppressed races and social classes have also been closely associated with nature.
Ecofeminism is as broad a paradigm as the patriarchal one it seeks to supplant, with nearly as many interpretations as there are ecofeminists. In a nutshell, however, it is the application of feminist theory to the ecological crisis. The basic notion is that social oppression and environmental exploitation are inextricably linked to fundamental social constructs that have co-evolved with patriarchal power relations. In Western patriarchal thought, for example, reality has been construed in terms of dualisms, such as culture/nature, reason/emotion, subject/object, science/art, public/private, hard/soft, mind/body and so on. These basic dualisms are gendered and hierarchical, in that the latter side of each pair has been associated with the feminine and devalued in the culture. Culture’ (or order) has been until very recently a male domain, while the idea of ‘nature’ (or chaos) has been conceived as female and has included women as a caste, slaves, indigenous peoples, non-white races and animals. This association with nature has been used to justify their exploitation; they have been considered to have less inherent value than their more powerful counterparts and therefore to exist for the fulfillment of (elite, white) Man’s purposes and needs. As ‘lower orders of being’, their dominance and control has seemed preordained or natural. This cultural devaluation of the natural, biological and feminine has been reflected on the psychological level. There is a strong tendency, especially among men, to try to deny dependency upon, distance oneself from, and control the ‘female’ aspects of their internal and external nature. Ecofeminism explores how this andocentric dualism has shaped our theories, institutions, our sense of self, and even our relationship to nature and community.

Historically, ecofeminism grew out of grassroot political actions initiated by women; it has found diverse expression in the arts, literature and language, science and technology, philosophy and religion, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Ecofeminism demands a radical critique of the categories of ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ together with an affirmation of the degraded partner in all the patriarchal dualities. ‘Female’ qualities such as co-operation, nurturing, being supportive, non-
violent and sensual are especially appropriate for creating an environmentally aware society.

Some ecofeminists believe that traditional 'male' qualities like competitiveness, individuality, assertiveness, leadership, and intellectuality, are valuable in appropriate contexts and should be integrated with 'female' qualities in a balanced person. Some eco-feminists see women's reproductive and nurturing capacities as giving women superior insight into how humans can live in harmony with nature. Other eco-feminists argue that it is women's low status and social roles that make them more aware of threats to the environment e.g. dumping of toxic waste, degradation of fertile land through intensive farming & pesticides.

The feminist critique of patriarchy is not just an intellectual attack on men. Most feminists, though not all, do not see men as 'the enemy'. Patriarchy is a particular way of thinking which can be used by any gender and ecofeminism can be a common ground for both sexes. A closely related critique focuses on the disconnected 'sense of self' which typifies modern consciousness. Ecofeminists argue that men tend to view the world in terms of a self-contained self and a separate 'other' that is the world. The world is analysed into discrete units with the self 'in here' & everything else 'out there' Most ecofeminists believe that men have as much potential as women to adopt a deeper environmental awareness, but they will need to work harder to fully embrace those values.

In deepening and broadening women's political concerns within a global ecological frame, ecofeminists may draw on liberal, radical, socialist, cultural, or poststructural feminist paradigms. As Mary Mellor's history of ecofeminism shows, its literature and strategies for change continue to reflect the diversity of feminist and womanist thought. Similarly, by calling for gender awareness, ecofeminism deepens environmental philosophy and political programs like deep ecology, social ecology, ecosocialism. While ecofeminists may adopt different styles of argument,
all consider the late 20th century crises - social and environmental - an inevitable outcome of 'masculine' values and behaviours. The keystone of this destructive patriarchal is identified in the everyday notion that men represent the sphere of 'humanity and culture', while women, children, animals, plants, and so on, are part of 'nature'.

The past few decades have witnessed an enormous interest in both the women's movement and the ecology (environmental) movement. Many feminists have argued that the goals of these two movements are mutually reinforcing; ultimately they involve the development of worldviews and practices that are not based on male-biased models of domination. As Rosemary Ruether wrote in 1975 in her book, *New Woman/New Earth*, "Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women’s movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this [modern industrial] society."

Since the early 1970s, many feminists, especially ecological feminists (ecofeminists), have defended Ruether’s basic point: the environment is a feminist issue. Question may arise, what makes the environment (ecology) a feminist issue? What are some of the alleged connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature? How and why is recognition of these connections important to feminism, environmentalism, and environmental philosophy? Answering these questions is largely what ecofeminism is about.

Ecological feminism is the name given to a variety of positions that have roots in different feminist practices and philosophies. These different perspectives reflect not only different feminist perspectives (e.g., liberal, traditional Marxist, radical, socialist, black and Third World), they also reflect different understandings
of the nature of and solution to pressing environmental problems. So, it is an open question how many, which, and on what grounds any of the various positions in environmental philosophy that acknowledge feminist concerns or claim to be feminist are properly identified as ecofeminist positions. What one takes to be a genuine ecofeminist position will depend largely on how one conceptualizes both feminism and ecofeminism.

For instance, suppose by "feminism" one means "liberal feminism." Liberal feminism is built upon a Western liberal political and philosophical framework that idealizes a society in which autonomous individuals are provided maximal freedom to pursue their own interests. There are two main ecological indications of liberal feminism: the first draws the line of moral considerability at humans, separating humans from non-humans and basing any claims to moral consideration of non-humans either on the alleged rights or interests of humans, or on the consequences of such consideration for human well-being. The second extends the line of moral considerability to qualified non-humans on the grounds that they are deserving of moral consideration in their own right: they, too, are rational, sentient, interest-carriers, right-holders.

Is either of these two liberal feminist ecological implications acceptable from an ecofeminist perspective? It depends, in part, on what one means by "ecofeminism." Many ecofeminists have argued that in so far as liberal feminism keeps intact oppressive and patriarchal ways of conceptualizing nature, including problematic human-nature dichotomies of the sort it will be inadequate from an ecofeminist perspective.

To take another construal of feminism: traditional Marxist feminism. Traditional Marxist feminism views the oppression of women as a kind of class oppression, a direct result of the institution of class society and, under capitalism, private property. Since praxis (i.e., conscious physical labour of humans directed at transforming the
material world to meet human needs) is the distinguishing characteristic of humans, traditional Marxist feminism, following traditional Marxism, would seem to suggest that the primary value of nature is its instrumental value in the production of economic goods to meet human needs.

Is traditional Marxism fertile soil for ecofeminism? Again, it depends, in part, on what one means by ecofeminism. If ecofeminism is a position that recognizes that nature has value in addition to its use value to humans, or if ecofeminism asserts that more than gender-sensitive class analyses are needed to explain the interwoven dominations of women and nature, then traditional Marxist feminism will be inadequate from an ecofeminist perspective.

We may consider one last example; a radical feminist construal of feminism departs from both liberal feminism and traditional Marxist feminism by rooting women’s oppression in reproductive biology and sex-gender systems. According to radical feminists, patriarchy (i.e., the systematic oppression of women by men) subordinates women in sex-specific ways by defining women as beings whose primary functions are either to bear and raise children or to satisfy male sexual desires. The liberation of women requires the dismantling of patriarchy, particularly male control of women’s bodies.

Is radical feminism ecofeministic? While radical feminists historically have had the most to say about ecofeminism, sometimes claiming that “women are closer to nature than men,” some ecofeminists have worried about the extent to which radical feminism both mystifies women’s experiences by locating women closer to nature than men, and offers a historically essentialist accounts of “women’s experiences.” Furthermore, some ecofeminists worry that any view that makes any group of humans closer to nature than any other is conceptually flawed and methodologically suspect: it maintains just the sort of value dualistic and hierarchical thinking that is critiqued by ecofeminism. Hence the extent to which radical feminism
is an adequate theoretical basis for ecofeminism will depend partly on what one takes to be the defining characteristics of ecofeminism.

What, then, can one say about ecofeminism? What characterizes ecofeminism as a theoretical position and political movement? Despite important differences among ecofeminists and the feminisms from which they gain their inspiration, there is something all ecofeminists agree about; such agreement provides a minimal condition account of ecofeminism: there are important connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature, an understanding of which is crucial to feminism, environmentalism, and environmental philosophy. A main project of ecofeminism is to make visible these “woman-nature connections” and, where harmful to women and nature, to dismantle them.

If woman-nature connections are the backbone of ecofeminism, just what are they? And why is the alleged existence of these connections claimed to be so significant? What is the relationship between Woman and Nature in western thought? Is the domination of women and nature rooted in patriarchal ideology? Feminists prepare critique of science and western concepts of “development.” How does the gendered division of labour structure relations to the natural world?

In "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," Karen J. Warren, like Plumwood, focuses on the conceptual connections between the dominations of women and nature. She argues that because the conceptual connections are located in an oppressive patriarchal conceptual framework characterized by a logic of domination, first, the logic of traditional feminism requires the expansion of feminism to include ecological feminisms, and second, ecological feminism provides a distinctively feminist environmental ethic. Appealing to the argumentative significance of first-person narrative and emerging ecofeminist ethics of care, kinship, and appropriate reciprocity, Warren concludes that any feminism, environmentalism, or environmental philosophy that fails to recognize important woman-nature
connections is simply inadequate.  

A ‘feminine principle’ is found to be at work in women—nature relationship particularly through the reproductive and productive work of giving birth to children and feeding them and keeping them healthy as they grow. This feminine principle ensures that the natural environment is not abused but is cared for and used carefully.  

Ecofeminists believe that patriarchy or male domination is harmful to women as well as the environment. Since the 1960’s there has been a movement that centres around beliefs that feminine nature is linked to the Earth. This movement believes that “Earth is Our Mother.” Eco-feminism came to prominence in the 1980’s and 1990’s. Ecofeminists make a connection between men’s oppression of women and their exploitation of Nature and argue that women have a central role to play in the environmental movement. If the world’s ecosystem and biodiversity are to be conserved, it is therefore vital to start listening to women and taking their knowledge seriously.

**FEMININE APPROACHES**

Proponents of feminine approaches to ethics like Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings stress that traditional western moral theories, principles, practices, and policies are deficient to the degree that they lack, ignore, trivialize, or demean those traits of personality and virtues of character that are culturally associated with women. The distinctness of women’s moral voice figures mainly in Gilligan’s work. Commenting on the powerful influence of Gilligan’s writings on feminist circle. Susan J. Hekman writes “Several feminist moral theorists have used Gilligan’s work to proclaim the superiority of women’s moral voice.”

Gilligan presents her work as a response to the Freudian notion that where as men have a well-developed moral sense, women do not. Freud attributed
women's supposed moral inferiority to girls' psychosexual development. Gilligan believes that the field of psychology has tried to treat women as if they were men. Psychologists who study moral and intellectual development have assumed that male experience is the typical way of childish views of right and wrong grow into adult ethical thinking. When women don't follow the normative path laid out by men, "the conclusion has generally been that something is wrong with women." To understand the basis of Gillian's criticism, we need to be familiar with the work of her well-known colleague at Harvard, psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. He measured ethical maturity by analyzing responses to hypothetical moral dilemmas. The story of a man named Heinz is typical of the case studies he used: 

In Europe, a woman was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctor's thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid $200 for the radium and charged $2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could get together only about $1,000, which was half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that? Was it right or wrong? Most people say that Heinz's theft was morally justified, but Kohlberg was less concerned about whether they approved or disapproved than with the reasons they gave for their answers. Starting in the 1950s with a group of seventy-five boys ranging in age from ten through sixteen, he monitored the reasons they gave for their judgment over a twenty-year period. He was able to isolate six distinct stages of moral thought. Each stage built on previous thinking,
but each one also represented a qualitative jump from the type of reasoning that went before. From Kohlberg’s standpoint, higher meant better. Although most of his subjects never reached the highest stages, those who did invariably went through the sequence one stage at a time without ever skipping a step or reversing the order. Kohlberg’s hierarchy of moral development and the type of comments people make about the Heinz case at each stage of their thinking. He regarded moving from concrete interests to general principles as a sign of moral maturity. Below are examples of possible arguments that belong to the six stages. It is important to keep in mind that these arguments are only examples. It is possible that a participant reaches a completely different conclusion using the same stage of reasoning:

- **Stage one (obedience):** Heinz should not steal the medicine, because otherwise he will be put in prison.
- **Stage two (self-interest):** Heinz should steal the medicine, because he will be much happier if he saves his wife, even if he will have to serve a prison sentence.
- **Stage three (conformity):** Heinz should steal the medicine, because his wife expects it.
- **Stage four (law-and-order):** Heinz should not steal the medicine, because the law prohibits stealing.
- **Stage five (human rights):** Heinz should steal the medicine, because everyone has a right to live, regardless of the law. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine, because the scientist has a right to fair compensation.
- **Stage six (universal human ethics):** Heinz should steal the medicine, because saving a human life is a more fundamental value than the
property rights of another person. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine, because that violates the golden rule of honesty and respect.

These stages can be classified into three levels:

**Stages**

**Level 1 (Pre-conventional)**
1. Obedience and punishment orientation
2. Self-interest orientation

**Level 2 (Conventional)**
3. Interpersonal accord and conformity (The good boy/good girl attitude)
4. Authority and social-order maintaining orientation (Law and order morality)

**Level 3 (Post-conventional)**
5. Social contract orientation
6. Universal ethical principles (Principled conscience)

Kohlberg (1969), in his extension of the early work of Piaget, discovered six stages of moral judgment, which he claimed formed an invariant sequence, each successive stage representing a more adequate, construction of the moral problem, which in turn provides the basis for its more just resolution. The stages divide into three levels, each of which denotes a significant expansion of the moral point of view from egocentric through a societal to universal ethical conception. These principles provide criteria upon which both individual and social claim can be impartially assessed. In Kohlberg's view, at the highest stages of development morality is freed from both psychological and historical constrains and the individual can judge
independently of his own particular needs and of the values of those around him.\textsuperscript{43}

Gilligan’s criticisms were published in 1982 in her most famous book titled, \textit{In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development}. Harvard psychologist Carol Gilligan studied Kohlberg’s findings and found them non-comprehensive. Because Kohlberg’s subjects were all male, Kohlberg could not have taken into account the differences in socializations of little girls and little boys in our culture.

Gilligan’s study opposed Kohlberg’s findings, as well as his interpretation of them. She attempted to define a separate but equal moral sphere for the different voice and thus to reform Kohlberg’s theory by describing women as equals rather than inferiors.\textsuperscript{44}

Males are traditionally socialized to be autonomous and independent, while females are supposed to be passive but loving caretakers for the members of their group. Gilligan’s subsequent research suggests that Kohlberg missed an alternate way of thinking about right and wrong, an approach used by both men and women, but used far more frequently by women. In this outlook, care and responsibility to others, rather than justice and individual rights become the fundamental ethical principles. Gilligan claims that this ethical outlook defines an ethical issue mainly in terms of helping others and minimizing harm. The most basic moral command becomes “an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the `real and recognizable trouble’ of this world.” If ethics is essentially a matter of getting involved with other people’s lives in order to reduce their troubles, then, we have a responsibility to help others.

Morality is an imperative to care for others. Gilligan summarizes this by saying that male morality has a “justice orientation”, and that female morality has a “responsibility orientation”. She also outlines three stages in moral developments. The first is a selfish stage, the second is a belief in conventional morality, and the
third is post-conventional. This is a progression from selfish, to social, to principled morality. Female children start out with a selfish orientation. They then learn to care for others, and that selfishness is wrong. So in their second, conventional stage, women typically feel it is wrong to act in their own interests, and that they should value instead the interests of others. In the third, post-conventional stage, they learn that it is just as wrong to ignore their own interests as it is to ignore the interests of others. One way to this understanding comes through their concern with connecting with others. A connection, or relation, involves two people, and if either one is slighted, it harms the relationship. Like Kohlberg, Gilligan thinks that people develop through a series of stages on their way to “moral maturity” (although the stages are less central to her thought than to Kohlberg’s and are given much briefer treatment). Whereas Kohlberg’s stages involve a progressively more abstract way of thinking about ethics, however, Gilligan describes stages that involve a woman’s developing an advanced sense of responsibility. She concludes her study by asserting: “yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care”\textsuperscript{49}. The first stage is characterized by caring only for the self in order to ensure survival. This is how we all are as children. Then comes a transitional phase when others criticize this attitude as selfish and the individual begins to see connections between her and others. The second stage is characterized by a sense of responsibility. “Good” is equated with caring for others, a value readily captured in the traditional role of wife and mother. Such devotion to caring for other people often leads to ignoring the self, however, and this ultimately gives way to a second transition in which the tensions between the responsibility of caring for others and the desire to have one’s own needs met are faced. Finally the third stage is defined by an acceptance of the principle of care as a universal ethical principle which schemes exploitation and hurt in the lives of others and ourselves. The criterion for judgment thus shifts from goodness to truth when the morality of action is assessed not on the basis of its appearance in the eyes of others, but in terms of the realities of its intention and consequence.
Thus Gilligan produces her own stage theory of moral development for women. Like Kohlberg’s, it has three major divisions: preconventional, conventional, and post conventional. But for Gilligan, the transitions between the stages are fuelled by changes in the sense of self rather than in changes in cognitive capability. Kohlberg’s approach is based on Piaget’s cognitive developmental model. Gilligan’s is based instead on a modified version of Freud’s approach to ego development. Thus Gilligan is combining Freud (or at least a Freudian theme) with Kohlberg & Piaget.

Gilligan’s model of moral development resembles Kohlberg’s in a couple of ways. Both progress from a totally self-centred outlook to one governed by a central moral principle. Both begin with an emphasis on the greater authority or importance of someone else, but Gilligan’s findings speak to the psychological struggle of women against our society’s traditional idea of their gender-determined role. According to Gilligan, women can gain personal independence and autonomy only after they reject the idea that their proper role is to subjugate their interests to those of their husbands, children, or other people they are caring for. A typical woman in our culture probably has no trouble accepting the idea that helping others is important. The harder task is accepting the idea that she should apply the principle of care to her own life as much as she applies it to others. Kohlberg’s stages reflect no such psychological struggle for men.

“How would you describe yourself to yourself?” The question is Carol Gilligan’s open invitation for women to voice the images of self they carry inside. The answers she hears are sometimes muted, often halting, but together they reveal a common image, which she believes guides women throughout their lives. The responses show a feminine fusion of identity and intimacy. Women speak of being a daughter, wife, mother, lover, or friend. In short, they define who they are by describing relationships. Gilligan says the male image of going forth alone is consistent with masculine relationship patterns. The average adult male has a wide
circle of friendly relations, but no intimate friends. Women picture themselves as part of a closely-knit network of intimates; they are in the centre of a web of connectedness. The difference between the self-descriptions of men and of women is consistent with a distinction long recognized in the field of group dynamics; groups need a mix of task-oriented and relationship-oriented members. Males tend to be more concerned with getting the job done; females tend to be concerned with holding the group together.

In her foundational abortion study, she shows only women moving in and out of the three moral frames of reference that constitute her relational ethics: Level One in which women overemphasize the interests of their selves; Level Two in which women overemphasize others’ interests; and Level Three in which women weave their own interests together with those of others. Thus, a woman at Level One would make her abortion decision in terms of what is best for herself, at Level Two in terms of what is best for others, and at Level Three in terms of what is best for herself and others considered as a relational unit.

The abortion decisions only considered the relation between experiences and thought and the role of conflict in development. Twenty nine women, ranging in the age from fifteen to thirty three diverse in ethnic background and social class, some single, some married, a few mother of preschool child, were interviewed during the first trimester of a confirmed pregnancy at the time when they considered abortion.

A case was referred to by Gilligan in a Different Voice: The concern with selfishness and its equation with immorality recur in an interview with another catholic woman whose arrival for an abortion was punctuated by the statement, “I have always thought abortion was a fancy word for murder”...... In the face of these manifold moral contradiction, the psychological demand for honesty that arises in counseling finally allows decision:
"On my own, I was doing it not so much for my self, I was doing it for my parents. I was doing it because the doctor told me to do it, but I have never resolved in my mind that I was doing it for me. Because it goes back to the fact that I never believed in abortion........Actually, I had to sit down and admit, no, I really don't want to go to the mother route now. I honestly don't want to go to the mother and that is not really such a bad thing to say after all. But that is not how I felt up until talking Maureen (her counselor?). It was just a horrible way to feel, so I just wasn't going to feel it, and I just blocked it right out."  

Gilligan’s study was based primarily on the moral views of women who were deciding whether to have abortion, and she discovered that these women had a conception of the self that was different from that of most men. Women saw themselves as connected to others and dependent on others for their identity rather than autonomous and separate and as men tend to see themselves. 

From these studies Gilligan discovered that women more often focus upon “care” while men focus upon “justice”. The contrasting perspectives of Ethic of Care and Ethic of Justice give rise to a series of questions, answers to which seem to have relevance for drawing the contours of any feminist ethics.

- Is it an empirical fact that men and women manifest different type of morality / moral thinking?
- Should ethical concerns be primarily oriented either by care or justice only?
- Whether care-justice relationship is disjunctive relation?
- Is one type of moral thinking higher or more developed or better that the other? Can men adopt an ethics of care? Can women adopt an ethics of justice?
• Can both ethics of care and justice operate together?
• Is ethics of care better than ethics of justice?
• Whether justice is uncaring and caring is unjust?
• Is care as important a moral principle as justice?

Nell Noddings (1984) has argued for the development of a feminine relational ethics of "caring." Caring is not about simply feeling favourably disposed toward people with whom one has no concrete connection. In *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Noddings asserted that authentic care requires actual encounters with specific individuals—the "one-caring" and the one "cared-for"—something that cannot be accomplished through an agent's good intentions alone. Women have an innate and immensely powerful sentiment of care as is evidenced in their unflinching care for their infants. Noddings insisted, and the feelings of ethical obligation women experience emanate from this innate sentiment. Children also act from a natural form of caring that moves them to assist others simply because they want to. But, as children mature, society distorts what children want to do, making it harder for them to care. And, when they do care, "the deliberateness of ethical caring" supplements the spontaneity of natural caring. The latter is better than the former and, according to Noddings, the condition of its possibility.

Natural caring, such as that of a mother for a child, according to Nel Noddings, comes before ethical caring and is preferable to it. "Ethical caring, the relation in which we do meet the other morally... [arises]... out of natural caring - that relation in which we respond as one-caring out of love or natural inclination. The relation of natural caring... [is]... the human condition that we, consciously or unconsciously, perceive as 'good'. It is that condition toward which we long and strive, and it is our longing for caring - to be in that special relationship - that
provides the motivation for us to be moral. We want to be moral in order to remain in the caring relation and to enhance the ideal of ourselves as one-caring."^50

Nel Noddings helpfully, also, highlights the distinction between caring-for and caring-about. Thus far, we have been looking largely at caring-for - face-to-face encounters in which one person cares directly for another. Caring-about is something more general - and takes us more into the public realm. We may be concerned about the suffering of those in poor countries and wish to do something about it (such as giving to a development charity). As Noddings initially put it, caring-about involves 'a certain benign neglect'. She appears to experience caring as self-forgetting identification with the cared-for, punctuated with ever renewed thinking and dualities.

It is a total conveyance of self to other, a continual transformation of individual to duality to new individual to new duality. Neither the engrossment of the one-caring nor the perception of attitude by the cared-for is rational; that is, neither is reasoned. While much of what goes on in caring is rational and carefully thought out, the basic relationship is not, and neither is the required awareness of relatedness.51

MATERNAL APPROACHES TO ETHICS

Closely related to feminine approaches to ethics are so-called maternal approaches to ethics. Maternal thinkers like Sara Ruddick, Virginia Held, and Caroline Whitbeck affirm the feminine psychological traits and moral virtues that society associates with women. According to maternal approach to ethics, ethics should be built on a model that fits life as most people live it on as everyday basis. Sara Ruddick, Virginia Held, Caroline Whiteback affirm the feminine psychological traits that society associates with women. In her maternal approach to ethics, Ruddick claims that society should not trivialize what she terms "maternal practice." Like any human practice, maternal practice has its own form of thinking with a vocabulary and logic peculiar to it, and its own aims and goals. In the case of maternal
thinking, these aims and goals consist in the preservation, growth, and acceptability of one’s children.

Sara Ruddick writes, “Maternal practive responds to the historical reality of a biological child in a particular social world. The agents of maternal practice, acting in response to the demands of their children, acquire a conceptual scheme—a vocabulary and logic of connections—through which they order and express the facts and values of practice.” Ruddick’s ultimate goal is not simply to develop a phenomenology of maternal practice. Rather, she wants to demonstrate that anyone, male or female, who engages in maternal practice will come to think like a mother in the public world as well as the private world. If men spent as much time rearing children as women do, men as well as women would come to think and see what mothers think and see. People who think and see like mothers make connections, for example, between war in the abstract and war in the concrete. For them, war is not about winning, defending one’s way of life, and establishing one’s position of power. Instead, it is about destroying that boy or girl whom one has spent years preserving, nurturing, and training: a unique human person who cannot be replaced. In sum, for a maternal thinker, war is about death — about canceling out the "product(s)" of maternal practice. In the concluding chapeter of maternal thinking she writes, “......I look forward to the day when men are willing and able to share equally and actively in transformed maternal practices. When that day comes, will we still identify some thoughts as maternal rather than merely parental? Might we echo the cry of some feminists — there shall be no more ‘women’ with our own there shall be no more ‘mothers’ only people engaging in childcare? To keep matters clear I would put the point differently. On that day there will be no more ‘fathers’, no more people of either sex who have power over their children’s lives and moral authority in their children’s world. Though they donot do the work attentive love, there will be mothers of both sexes who live out a transformed maternal thought in communities that share parental care—practically,
emotionally, economically, and socially. Such communities will have learned from their mothers how to value children’s lives.\textsuperscript{13}

Held believes that men as well as women can be mothering persons. Just because men cannot bear children does not mean that they cannot. Held also admits that, in their attempt to celebrate the positive features of maternal approach, men as well as women can, indeed should, appropriate the moral outlook of those who care for others. Held claims that human survival may depend on our ability to reorganize the way we parent. Equal parenting, based on men’s and women’s equal respect and consideration for each other’s equal rights of self-determination must become the order of the day.\textsuperscript{14}

Whitbeck concedes that men can learn how to mother their children and that women can choose not to mother their children, she nonetheless believes that men’s and women’s different biological experiences typically affect the intensity of their respective attachments to their offspring. The bodily experiences that women have simply because they are women tend to deepen those feelings and attitudes which cause people generally to care for their infants. To the degree that human beings are mind-body unities rather than mind-body dualities, a mother’s physical experiences will affect the way she thinks about her children. Whitbeck suggests that women’s “maternal instinct” causes them to notice things about their babies that men do not. Specifically, a mother often feels as vulnerable as an infant throughout her pregnancy, but especially during labour. It is her helplessness — in the sense of losing control of her body during pregnancy, of suffering pain during labour, of feeling weak during the postpartum period — that enables a mother to understand just how dependent her infant is on her. No matter how hard a father tries, he can never experience either a mother’s or an infant’s helplessness. All he can do is to intellectualize about this experience, sympathizing with it the best he can.

The critics of maternal approaches to ethics, like the critics of feminine
approaches to ethics, are of two kinds: nonfeminist and feminist. Nonfeminist critics doubt that any one human relationship either can, or should, serve as the paradigm for all human relationships. As they see it, any human relationship — be it one of husband-wife, parent-child, sibling-sibling, friend-friend, or ruler-subject — is simply too specific to provide a general model for how people should treat each and every person with equal respect and consideration. Certainly, relationships between unequals should not serve as the model for relationships between equals or vice versa. They note that Ruddick herself has some doubts even about her own version of maternal ethics. She worries that she might be over-idealizing mothers, unnecessarily excluding men and nonbiological mothers from maternal work, and underemphasizing the differences that exist among mothers, some of whom find themselves “mothering” under extremely oppressive circumstances.

According to Jaggar, all fully feminist approaches to ethics seek to (1) articulate moral critiques of actions and practices that perpetuate women’s subordination; (2) prescribe morally justifiable ways of resisting such actions and practices; (3) envision morally desirable alternatives for such actions and practices; and (4) take women’s moral experience seriously, though not uncritically (Jaggar, “Feminist Ethics” 1992). Women should not focus on making the world a better place for everyone in general; rather, their primary aim should be to make the world a better place for women in particular — and perhaps also for other vulnerable people like children, the elderly, the infirm, the disabled, minorities, etc. In Jaggar’s estimation, encouraging women with supportive thoughts, kind words, and benign actions is not enough. A feminist approach to ethics entails women resisting and overcoming their continuing oppression under patriarchy.

All the different Feminist Ethical trends outlined in this chapter have insight into the problems of gender equality and all have come up with good strategies for remedying various gender related problems. Though the explanations offered are various and sometimes conflicting too. Feminist ethics, in general, seeks to subvert
rather than to reinforce any systematic subordination of women and other human beings. In short, liberal feminism claims that gender differences are not based on biology, and therefore that women and men are not all that different — their common humanity supersedes their procreative differentiation. If women and men are not different, then they should not be treated differently under the law. Women should have the same rights as men and the same educational and work opportunities. The main contribution of liberal feminism is showing how much modern society discriminates against women. Thus the ethical selves of both men and women would have equal autonomy and worth in this liberalistic framework with least preference for the individual or gendered differences. Marxist and socialist feminisms severely criticize the family as a source of women’s oppression and exploitation. Marxist and socialist feminisms argue that the source of women’s oppression is their economic dependence on husband. Their solution is full-time jobs for women, with the state providing paid maternity leave and child-care. Radical feminism turns male-dominated culture on its head it praises what women do — feed and nurture, co-operate and reciprocate, and attend to bodies, minds, and psyches. Radical feminism neglects ethnic and social class differences among men and among women, and that it downplays other sources of oppression. Existentialist feminism, Beauvoir grounded her arguments in science, history, sociology, and law, overlaid with her existentialist belief that women could define themselves and in so doing could free themselves from patriarchal domination. Beauvoir was writing within a milieu that was becoming slightly more open to women’s equality. Psychoanalytic feminism is based on Freud and his psychoanalytic theories. It maintains that gender is based on the psycho-sexual development of the individual. Psychoanalytical feminists believe that gender inequality comes from early childhood experiences, which lead men to believe themselves to be masculine, and women to believe themselves feminine. It is further maintained that gender leads to a social system that is dominated by males, which in turn influences the individual psycho-sexual development. Postmodern feminism
examines the ways societies justify the beliefs about gender at any time (now and in the past) with ideological “discourses” embedded in cultural representations or “texts.” Post modern feminism in general is aligned with the deconstruction strategies of post modernism in general and the feminine / female. In particular, some feminist have also looked at the ways in which women might use mother hood as a source of strength and as a way of influencing future generations , rather than as means of reproducing patriarchy. Cultural feminism focuses on its claims of essential differences between men and women, its view of heterosexual sexuality as coercive and potentially violent, its valorisation of motherhood, and the promotion of a separate and distinctive woman’s culture rooted in female bodies and life experiences. Ecofeminists want to eradicate all oppressive conceptual frameworks and create a world in which differences do not lead to domination. Again, debate concerns the relationship between justice and care as exemplified by the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan, among others. Gilligan did assert that women are different than men and the “ears” of traditional Western ethicists have been attuned to male rather than female ethical "voices." Different Feminist trends to ethics are distinguished by an explicit commitment to correcting male biases they perceive in traditional ethics, biases that may be manifest in rationalizations of women’s subordination, or in disregard for, or disparagement of, women’s moral experience. Feminist ethics, begins from the convictions that the subordination of women is morally wrong and that the moral experience of women is as worthy of respect as that of men. The goals of feminist ethics are, to articulate moral critiques of actions and practices that perpetuate women’s subordination and to prescribe morally justifiable ways of resisting such actions and practices and to envision morally desirable alternatives that will promote women’s emancipation. Feminist ethics suggest several paths women can walk, each of which is alleged to lead toward the singular goal of an all women-centred ethics, namely, the elimination of gender inequality and the liberation of women (and perhaps all other human beings) from any subjugation to a lesser form of human dignity. The general
feeling was that there is nothing to be said about women as such and we must become more sensitive to the many conceptions of femininity found in different societies. Though there are continuities and convergences, as well as sharp debates, among the different feminisms. A thin and highly abstract characterization of the project of Western feminist moral philosophy is that it seeks to overcome the overt and covert devaluation of women and whatever has been associated culturally with the feminine in the ideals, concepts, and theories of western moral philosophy. Feminist philosophers criticize both the historical exclusion of women from the philosophical tradition, and the negative characterization of women or the feminine in it. It is important to the credibility of feminism as a movement that differing schools of feminist thought be recognized. Feminist philosophers are making positive contributions to matter of moral concern as well as developing increasingly sophisticated alternative moral theories. Feminist ethics is a critical reflection on morality that is informed by feminist theory and the experiences of women in a patriarchal society. It has developed a sharp critique of traditional ethical theories in a male-dominated and androcentric culture. Feminist theory raises questions about the idea of objectivity and neutrality and sometimes challenges what feminists regard as western -orientated/masculine biased thought. However, feminist philosophers have also developed constructive ethical models that constitute serious alternatives to traditional moral discourse. This is how feminist ethics is trying to develop ethical reflection and claim for gender egalitarian approaches.

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