



A) Explain how Fletcher's fundamental principles can be applied to polyamory (20)

Situation ethics is a 20th century Christian approach to ethics devised by Joseph Fletcher. It is a relative (what is right and wrong changes based on the situation) and teleological (what is right or wrong is based on the consequences or end goal) theory. Based on the 'boss' rule of agape, Joseph Fletcher devised 6 fundamental principles to offer Christians an ethical guide. Polyamory refers to open loving relationships and is becoming particularly popular as a concept in recent years.

Two of Fletcher's fundamental principles are that 'a loving end justifies the means' and that 'decisions should be made situationally not prescriptively'. These principles highlight the relative and teleological nature of S.E and demonstrate that S.E is a theory that asks the agent to consider the outcome of an action in each given situation. It also asks the agent to reject traditional concepts of 'legalism' and to accept that each situation is unique and therefore requires unique decision making. Polyamory can be justified based on these two principles. Firstly, the end goal of polyamory is love with several partners, and therefore this would justify the means of rejecting traditional concepts of monogamy because love is multiplied in polyamorous relationships. Secondly, the nature of polyamory is relative and situational because only certain people want to be in polyamorous relationships. In this sense, S.E justifies polyamorous relationships.

A further two of Fletcher's principles are that 'the Christian ruling norm of decisions is love' and that 'only love is intrinsically good'. These two principles depart from Christianity's traditional legalistic approach to ethics where many values are deemed intrinsically good such as faith, hope and obedience. Fletcher uses passages from the Bible such as 1 Corinthians 13 where St Paul states that love is the overriding rule in Christian ethics to justify his claim that only love is good within itself. Again, both of these can justify polyamory. Polyamory puts love above all other normal conventions, even reason in some cases. Moreover, if St Paul states that love should supersede all other values, then arguably polyamory fits in with the Christian ruling norm is love.

The final two fundamental principles are that 'love is justice distributed' and that 'love will's the good of other, even our enemies'. Fletcher suggested that if agape is your end goal, then justice and equality will flourish in a given situation. In other words, justice naturally derives from love. He also reminded us that love has no favourites and that, as Jesus stated in Luke 10 (the parable of the Good Samaritan), love should be awarded to all fellow humanity. Again, we can see that these principles could be used to justify polyamory because polyamorous relationships tend not to be hierarchical. In fact, the whole notion of polyamory is to reject hierarchical relationships. Whilst some relationships have 'primary' and 'secondary' relationships, the quality of love between the different relationships should be no less sincere. Moreover, polyamorous relationships are meant to be equal and therefore lead to justice, especially because of the transparent nature of polyamory communities.