

## Introduction into Situation Ethics

1	What is a teleological ethic?	Moral goodness is determined by the end result
2	Who created the theory?	Joseph Fletcher
3	What does situational ethics means?	Theory focused on the situation not fixed rules
4	What are Fletcher's three approaches to moral thinking?	Legalistic, antinomian, situational
5	What does Agape mean?	Unconditional self-sacrificing love
6	Is the theory absolute or relative?	Relative- it has no fixed rules

## Ideas behind the theory

1	What is Legalism?	There are fixed rules that are universal
2	What is antinomianism?	Denial of any possibility of rules
3	What is situationism?	The only rule is love, it Fletcher's position
4	Name two influences on situation ethics	William Temple Aristotle
5	Whose teachings is situation ethics based upon?	Jesus
6	Why is situation ethics not a Christian Ethics?	It was rejected by the church and Fletcher stopped following Christianity whilst maintaining Situation ethics

## Propositions and Principles

1	What are the six fundamental principles?	Only love is intrinsically good, love is the ruling norm, love and justice are the same, love wills good, the end justifies the means, loves decisions are situational
2	What are the four working propositions?	Pragmatism, relativism, positivism, Personalism
3	What is Pragmatism?	Being practical rather than following ideology
4	What is Relativism?	Avoiding absolutism
5	What is Positivism?	Accepting love is intrinsically good and God is love
6	What is Personalism?	Situationalists put humans first

## Critiques

1	What does individualistic mean?	Too focused on the individual not the mass
2	Which theory does it conflict with mostly?	Natural law and Aquinas
3	Which Biblical teaching is it based on?	'Love thy neighbour'
4	It is teleological or deontological?	Teleological its focused on the end result
5	What society did Fletcher run?	Euthanasia Society
6	Name three scholars to apply	Paul Tillich, William Temple, J.A.T Robinson

## Key Vocabulary

Justice	Fletcher specifically see justice as a kind of tough love; love applied to the world
Pragmatism	Acting, in moral situations, in a way that is practical, rather than ideologically
Relativism	The rejection of absolute moral standards, such as laws or rights.
Positivism	Proposes something as true and good without demonstrating it
Personalism	Ethics centred on people, rather than laws or objects
Conscience	A function rather than a faculty
Teleological ethics	Moral goodness is determined by the end result
Legalistic ethics	Law-based moral decision-making
Antinomian ethics	Do not recognise the role of the law in morality
Situational ethics	Another term for situation ethics, focused on the situation not fixed rules
Agape	Unconditional love, the only ethical norm
Extrinsically good	Good defined with reference to the end rather than good in and of itself. Only Love is intrinsically good.

**Situation ethics** is a Christian ethic but is very different from other theories such as Natural Law. Its main thinker is Joseph Fletcher (1905-1991) who put forward the idea that in any situation the best action is that which results in the most loving outcome. Fletcher argues the everyone should follow 'agape' love which Jesus shows in the New Testament. What the most loving thing is depends on the situation, hence the name.



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### Key Vocabulary

- Justice
- Pragmatism
- Relativism
- Positivism
- Personalism
- Conscience
- Teleological argument
- Legalistic ethics
- Antinomian ethics
- Situational ethics
- Agape
- Extrinsically good

### Propositions and Principles

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- 2 What are the four working propositions?
- 3 What is Pragmatism?
- 4 What is Relativism?
- 5 What is Positivism?
- 6 What is Personalism?

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What the specification says	
<b>Agape</b>	Origins of agape in the NT and its religious development according to Fletcher
<b>The six propositions</b>	What they are and how they link to moral decision making
<b>The four working principles</b>	What they are and how they are intended to be used
<b>Conscience</b>	What it is and what it is not according to Fletcher

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Its teleological



Link to Bonhoeffer!  
He also made decisions based on the situation

### Case for situation ethics being religious

- Jesus suggests that there is only two commandments 'Love God' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself' Jesus in the NT opposes legalism by the Pharisees Jesus argues that love is the primary evidence of the genuineness of religious faith

### Case for situation ethics not being religious

- His choice of Jesus' teachings is highly selective – focus on hell and not heaven
- Jesus tells his disciples if they love him they will obey him- implies commandments other than love
- His interpretation of agape is not explicitly Christian
- Similar to Act Utilitarianism



The core idea in situation ethics is Agape. It is key to Fletcher because it is based both on God's love for creation and the command to love thy neighbour.

Don't think love is always nice and kind. Sometimes Agape love is tough love

Agape:  
unconditional love

### Apply situation ethics to:

- Abortion
- Rape
- Euthanasia
- Adultery
- Prostitution

Legalism	Situationism	Antinomianism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making ethical decision making is by a system of laws.</li> <li>Thinking there were too many rules at the time of Jesus</li> <li>Natural Law has too many rules as does Catholicism</li> <li>Protestants who take the Bible literally are also guilty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to Fletcher it's the right approach in the middle.</li> <li>It means knowing when to apply the situation and when to recognise exceptions.</li> <li>Like game tactics, the expert knows when to ignore the general rule and know what agape requires in that situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having no law at all.</li> <li>They believe in complete freedom to make ones own decision.</li> <li>Some Christians believe 'the spirit will guide you instead'</li> <li>But this may lead to anarchy according to Fletcher</li> </ul>

### Fletcher's six propositions

- Only one thing is intrinsically good, love, nothing else.
- The ruling norm of Christian decision is love, nothing else.
- Love and justice are the same, love is justice distributed
- Love wills the neighbour good whether we like him or not.
- Only the end justifies the means, nothing else
- Love's decisions are made situationally.

- ### Four working principles
- Pragmatism**- requires solutions in action.
  - Relativism**- Love is absolute everything else is relative to it.
  - Positivism**- we create the good rather than discovering it
  - Personalism**- people are the ultimate moral value