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ethical theories
helpful when
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issues surroundi...

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To what extent are ethical theories helpful when considering the issues surrounding homosexuality? Many ethical theories can be used to discuss and interpret the issues surrounding homosexuality. I shall begin by outlining some relevant views, from the perspective of Virtue, Utilitarianism, Natural Law, Christian Ethics and Kant Christian Ethics can be separated into difference sections as there does not appear to be one single Christian view on homosexuality . At a glance, many Christians interpret passages in the Bible as condemning homosexuality and something that people should be cured of.

The Protestant approach is ‘ to love the sinner and hate the sin’ which would mean that the practice of homosexual acts is wrong, but homosexuals themselves ought to be loved. The Roman Catholic approach teaches similarly- there is nothing wrong with being homosexual, but a homosexual act is a sin. They would say then that a homosexual must commit themselves to celibacy, a view influenced by Paul. There are more liberal approaches within Christianity where homosexuality is not an issue, as long as the relationship is stable and committed; the same as a heterosexual relationship.

This view is also founded on Bible teachings- if God created man in his image and God is perfect, then all people are good because God made them either straight or gay. Aquinas’ Natural Law states that the purpose of sex is purely procreation and as homosexuality can never result in a child, it defies Natural Law and must be wrong. The primary precept of ‘ Continuation of the species through reproduction’ is also violated by the concept of homosexuality for the same reason.

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It also involves sex outside of marriage which Aquinas also: Aquinas, the behind natural law also condemned homosexuality as 'unnatural', so natural Law clearly has very strong views against homosexuality. Utilitarianism would currently view all sexualities as viable as it is likely there are more gay people than people who are upset by homosexuality, therefore it is the greatest good for the greatest number. However, were the majority of earth's population to become homosexual, Utilitarianism would no longer approve as it would not lead to the continuation of the human race, which would be not good for a great number of people.

Utilitarianism holds a fairly liberal view on homosexuality, saying that there may be a situation in which there is a happier homosexual couple than a heterosexual couple, in which in fairness to the homosexual couple, it would be right to allow them the happiness of being in a relationship. However they may also say that homosexuality is currently held in a somewhat negative view by man people, and that their happiness is in question if they are an 'outcast' in society.

The first maxim of Kant's Categorical Imperative could be a problem with homosexuality as it implies that if you are homosexual everyone else ought to be to . Universalisation says that we should apply homosexuality as a maxim and apply it to everyone; however this would lead to a problem, as the continuation of the species would not occur. We could however adjust this maxim for sexuality, however, this may be moving away from the absolutist nature of Kants categorical imperative. He also states that marriage is the only place in which sex may take place. However, were gay marriage to become legal Kant may approve.

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Fletcher's Situation ethics encourages only the most loving thing, which would mean that the only thing that would be wrong according to it is sex without a loving commitment. This would mean that there is no problem with being homosexual and relationships are fine as long as they are loving and committed. In Christian Ethics there appear to be many contradictions in approaches to homosexuality. Where many say the Bible condemns homosexuality, others say that the most important message of the Bible is to love your neighbour, which would of course include homosexuals.

As well as this, there is the question of such an ancient texts' relevance in contemporary culture. Many messages of the Bible are ignored and dismissed as culturally irrelevant, for example, many messages about the rights and roles of women, as if the Bible and the Church have managed to change the views on the role of women, they could indeed do the same for homosexuality. It could be argued that we should prioritize loving everyone over condemning homosexuality. For this reason, it isn't a very good theory to refer to when exploring the issues of homosexuality. Natural Law, however, is much easier to understand.

It has the advantage of having no room for misinterpretation and can be totally universal and absolutist. The only problem with it is that perhaps it is not in fact natural for humans to follow such strict laws. It is not liberal enough to allow for a loving relationship between homosexuals. Utilitarianism seems like a good theory to apply when looking at fairness in sexual ethics. As long as there are more homosexual people than people who dislike homosexuals and enough heterosexual people for continuation of the

species to happen, all sexualities are fine and the majority of the human race ought to be content.

The issue with Kant's approach is the fact that the maxim of universalisation is difficult to apply to sexual ethics. As you can't universalize homosexual sex as it would make continuation of the species impossible, Kant cannot condone this. However, this creates countless other problems when you think about how complex it would be to actually apply universalisation to every single aspect of sexuality. If we choose to ignore universalisation because we might not be able to continue the species at all if we were to stick to it entirely, we can then look to Kant's rule of no sex outside marriage. This is, of course, much easier to follow.

Fletcher's Situation Ethics following the cause of Agape seems the best approach to issues surrounding homosexuality. It can be universalized easily- have sex only in a loving committed relationship and is easy to remember and maintain. It does not discriminate between sexual preferences and should end with as many people happy as possible. In conclusion, there are many ways in which ethical theory can be used to address issues surrounding homosexuality. It is perfectly possible to be ethically sound and homosexual simultaneously, main problems arrive when we consider rules about procreation and the continuation of the species