

Conscience



Key words:

Conscience: A person's moral sense of right and wrong viewed as acting as a guide to one's behaviour. (This is a generic definition; the range of definitions is problematic).

Reason: ratio

Synderesis: an innate principle in each of us directing us to good

Conscience: Conscientia

Vincible Ignorance: Blameworthy/ responsible.

Invincible Ignorance: Not Blameworthy/ not responsible.

The Id: Pleasure Principle

The Ego: Reality Principle

The Super Ego: Ego ideal

St Augustine (of Hippo) 354- 430 (Secondary philosopher use for comparison and evaluation)



Conscience is **GOD GIVEN**. Was influenced by Plato- all forms are aspects of the Form of the Good. Augustine – there is one God- the source of all goodness. God= virtue- all aspects of virtue (eg. Goodness and justice) are therefore aspects of God.

It is Divine Love that connects all virtues. Conscience emerges as a result of Divine Love. It is God speaking to individuals. It is in these moments we realise how inadequate we are, as we realise how perfect God is.

Example: Sport. Imagine you are running around the track and you think you are doing well. All of a sudden Ussain Bolt joins the race...you suddenly realise you weren't as good as you thought you were!



Conscience is a tool that allows us to know God.



Humans have an innate capacity to know the difference between right and wrong. Every person has a conscience, however this alone is not enough to make a person virtuous. **Humans need God's grace as well as conscience.**

Augustine claimed 3 things:

1. God implants knowledge of right conduct in humans and this can be known through conscience.
2. A person cannot rightly act (as opposed to knowing what is right) without the grace of God.
3. The motive also has to be right – this is to draw close to God.

Pelagius v. Augustine –

Pelagius held that humans have the ability within themselves to decide for or against the good. Augustine insisted that God's grace was necessary for moral goodness. If God's grace is needed in order to *do* good, only Christians can do good.



Influence of Augustine...

He often said the conscience is more important than the Bible. Martin Luther- (originally Catholic), left Catholic Church as his conscience would not allow him to accept the teachings of the Pope. St Paul supported slavery in his letter to Philemon. William Wilberforce felt his conscience went against this and was a leading force in the abolition of slavery.



KEY REMINDER- AUGUSTINE IS A SECONDARY PHILOSOPHER.



He might be used comparatively as another theological view of the conscience, but the main focus will be on Aquinas and Freud.

Aquinas- KEY THEOLOGIAN



Reason = ratio

To understand the concept of the conscience you must first understand the concept of reason, for without reason humans cannot have a conscience. Reason is a divine gift from God, as God made humans in his image and likeness.

“God created mankind in his own image.”

Genesis 1:27

It is important to realise that our conscience may guide us to break from social norms or have a different moral reaction to the majority. **It is important we follow our conscience, as it is the ultimate guide.**

Synderesis = an innate principle in each of us directing us to good.

Through using reason we can cultivate habits to develop synderesis. Synderesis gives us knowledge of the primary precepts. Eg. Preservation of life.

We can be tempted by the sensuality within each of us to do evil, but Aquinas had a positive view of our capability to lean towards good, not evil.

Example of temptation: Eve eating the forbidden fruit.



“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

(Genesis 2:15-17)

Conscience

Conscience = *Conscientia*

This is NOT a voice giving us commands, but is your reason making the right decision. Reasoning starts with the understanding of the principles naturally known and moves to intellectual activity making judgements.

"Conscience is an act"

For example moving from the Primary to Secondary Precepts.



Preservation of human life.

Do not murder.

Ignorance

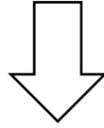
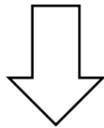
Reason is a cognitive faculty that makes us human. Humans make mistakes and Aquinas recognised this.

Vincible ignorance:

Making mistakes when tempted by sensuality or not educating yourself on a matter.

Invincible ignorance:

Making a mistake when you have educated yourself fully in the matter and believing you are doing the right thing.



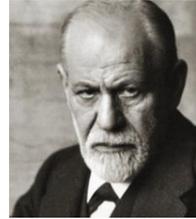
Blameworthy.

Not Blameworthy.

Conscience is the most important source of moral guidance.



Freud- KEY PSYCHOLOGIST



Conscience is a product of psychological factors.

Psychosexual development: Psychological development occurs in fixed stages as the libido focuses on a certain part of the body. EG. 0-1 Oral stage.

Conscience= guilt complex.

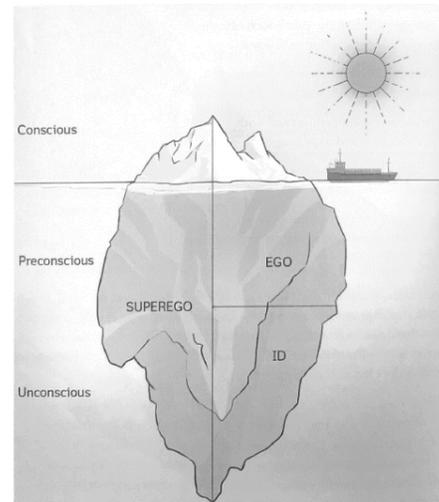
Leads us to take actions out of guilt or embarrassment. Derived from his idea of the Oedipus Complex (Boys) or Electra Complex (Girls). A child's desire for sexual involvement with a parent, leading to a rivalry with the other parent. He thought this desire was less strong for girls.

This desire creates guilt (it is wrong to sexually desire a parent and reject the other parent). Through this guilt the conscience develops. The resolution of these desires is the origin of moral development. Your psyche develops due to your need for love and affection. So your physical needs lead to your psychological development.



The Psyche / personality is made of three parts

- ✓ ID
- ✓ EGO
- ✓ SUPEREGO



The Id: Pleasure Principle

"Dark, inaccessible part of our personality".

- Entirely unconscious
- Present from birth.
- Driven by pleasure and seeks immediate gratification.
- If desires are not met it results in anxiety and tension.

The libido drives the Id to desire sexual gratification. Sexual frustration is a broad term, under Freud's understanding. From not being able to go to the toilet, not getting food, to actual frustration of not having sex.

The Ego: Reality Principle

It is not socially acceptable to seek immediate gratification for all our desires. We learn as children to keep these desires in check. You are taught by parents and society what is socially acceptable. The mediation between the id and social norms is the ego.

Example horse rider and horse. Horse = ID. Horse rider = EGO



The Super Ego: Ego ideal

Last part of the human psyche to develop. Approx aged 5. The part of the mind where we internalise the moral standards acquired by family and society. Fulfilling these rules leads to a sense of pride, accomplishment, approval and recognition. Failing to live up to these rules leads to criticism, punishment, guilt and remorse.

Religious and moral feelings related to the super ego.

The super ego makes us feel guilty. This = conscience.

Breaking the rules – linked to the conscience in the super ego. To break rules will bring a sense of guilt. A significant role is given to the conscience in decision making. Even if you don't give sexual importance the high level of significance Freud does, it still seems fair to say that guilt plays a role in decision making. Freud also places high importance on the role of parenting.



Our minds are completely unique. Every conscience is different.

Conscience

The comparison of Freud and Aquinas could be a core element of an essay question. Key areas of comparison are:

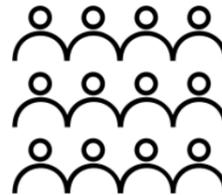
- ✓ Guilt
- ✓ The presence of God within the working of the conscience.
- ✓ The process of the moral decision making.

Secondary psychological views towards conscience. (Use in essays for evaluative comparison.

FROMM 1900-1980



Fromm stated Free Will is an illusion. From birth we exist in a state of obedience. You are controlled by your parents. We have a social character – we need to fit into the needs of society. You have your individuality removed- this makes you aware of who you are and the group you belong to in society.



People identify themselves in relation to the state- **Authoritarian Conscience**. Modern day we are controlled by advertisements, scientists and politicians. We are made to feel that **T.I.N.A** *there is no alternative*- we must fit our role in society. (The TINA PRINCIPLE)

Morality is consumer based. The conscience is predetermined. Self alienation caused by our guilt- we feel no contentment.

Fromm ultimately changed his views (in 1960). Our conscience is the force that will allow us to rise above the self alienation.



PIAGET 1896-1980

We don't all have the same conscience. The development of your morality is like a train journey from station A to station C. However, some people get off at Station B. The moral development of these people is stunted. They will not develop past the early stages of life.

This is **heteronomous morality**. It is "other based"- developed by parents and society. Moral conscience is based on following rules and the understanding that failing to follow rules will lead to punishment. Some people will never develop past this stage Their life is dominated by the need to follow rules. God may be the rule giver and judge.

Those who continue on the journey to station C (developing beyond heteronomous morality) have **autonomous morality**. Morality becomes a case of self discipline as you are mature enough to decide what is morally good.



KOHLBERG 1927-1987

Believed Piaget needs more "stations" – i.e. there are more station we can get off at. More stages at which your moral development can stop. For Kohlberg there are 6 stages of moral development

