



Continuing the Work of Educating the Conscience

22 July 2020, 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 Noon
Fr. Primitivo E. Viray Jr., S.J.

Educating the Conscience

- Q: How do you educate the conscience?
- Prior Q: How do you make moral decisions? How do you decide what constitutes right and wrong?
- Pause for a while to consider ... a moral situation

Educating the conscience of those entrusted to us is very important and essential. But we have to ask ourselves first, “How do I educate my conscience.?”

Prior Q is important because we have assumptions that shape how we go about educating the conscience. There are basically three beliefs here on how we go about making moral decisions.

Educating the Conscience

- 1st Belief: “There is only one correct response”
- “Absolutist” or “Fundamentalist”

Basis: some authority like the Bible, Church teachings, parents, teachers, priests, bishops

Educating the Conscience

- 2nd Belief: “There is more than one correct response and they are all equally valid.”
- “Relativist” tendency

Basis: Each to his own, “kanya-kanya”, personal opinion and usually based on “what I like” or “what’s convenient for me” whether I am conscious or unconscious of my motivation

Educating the Conscience

- 3rd Belief: “There can be more than one correct response, and some responses are more correct than others.”
- “Evaluativist” tendency.

Basis: weighing on the evidence from experience, consultation with different views/perspectives not only on one authority or opinion but on the evidence and I taking responsibility to EVALUATE these views seriously and making a judgment even if tentative according to my best lights.

Educating the Conscience

- The 1st gives me a sense of certainty, though false.
- The 2nd spares me from the hard work of critical thinking.
- The 3rd challenges me to be open to different views and to exercise the hard work of critical thinking and personal decision-making.

Pluralist but not accepting just anything as equally valid; requires critical self-reflection of my human experience, consultation with others, weighing of evidence and ultimately to make a personal decision based on what I decide to be right.

Educating the Conscience

- Q: What is the challenge today in educating the conscience?
- To accept the ambiguity of the world which is VUCA
- VUCA—Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous

VUCA—volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous—to exercise personal responsibility for thinking things through especially in moral decisions and making a personal decision according to my best lights.

- Let's have a concrete exercise in exploring our moral decision-making



- Issue of Congress granting or not granting the ABS-CBN franchise

The CBCP Episcopal Commission on Social Communications

“...We continue to express our position on ABS-CBN, as well as our belief in the importance of its role as a vital source of information in the Philippine society. The network forms part of the whole Philippine democratic landscape as it continues to help in making the latest news available to Filipinos in the country and abroad, and contributes to the people’s capacity to make informed decisions.

After having listened to the many deliberations during the 12 hearings, we have come to the conclusion that the unbiased and impartial pronouncements and official manifestations of the different resource speakers from various government agencies did not only answer the accusations against the network, but also proved that the network has not violated any law, rule or regulation that would be reason enough not to grant the renewal of their franchise.

The CBCP Episcopal Commission on Social Communications

Be that as it may, it is not our intention to pressure you, our honorable lawmakers, to vote for the approval of the renewal of the franchise of ABS-CBN. The only thing that we humbly ask of you is that you vote according to your **conscience** and do what you truly believe is right...”

Educating the Conscience

- “Vote according to your conscience.”
- Q: But what is conscience?
- Q: What is the basis for my deciding what is right and wrong? Authority? My personal opinion? Others’ perspectives? Available evidences? Moral sources?

Sources Used

1. Richard M. Gula, S.S., REASON INFORMED BY FAITH: Foundations of Catholic Morality, Chapters 9 and 10
2. John W. Glaser, S.J., “Conscience and Superego: A Key Distinction”. Theological Studies (1971), volume 32, pp. 30-47
- ** 3. Jim Sheppard, “See, Judge, Act” and Ignatian Spirituality. The Way, 56/1 (January 2017), 102-111.

What is Conscience?

- Conscience is often used but little understood
- What is this thing called conscience? What is true conscience?
- 1st task ahead: distinguish a moral conscience from the superego (psychological notion of conscience)
- Why distinguish? Two reasons

- We know we have a C.
- Our experiences of C are ambiguous in facing big decisions in life and in petty matters.
- We are told that our C enjoys inviolable freedom but we are often given rules so absolute that we wonder whether C really matters at all.
- Tasks 1:
clarify important distinction between moral C and the superego
 1. to help us appreciate the meaning of personal moral C in our theological tradition
 2. to help us now consider the critical issue of educating/forming conscience

1st Task: Moral Conscience vs. the Superego

- Role of Psychology in clarifying distinction
- Criterion of a mature moral conscience: ability to make up one's mind **for** oneself, not **by** oneself
- Mature conscience is formed & exercised in community in dialogue with other sources of moral wisdom.

Task 1: Moral C and the Superego

- Role of Psychology helps us understand in clarifying conscience, its growth and development
- *. Mature conscience depends on the variety of our human experiences of growth and development.
- Normal pattern of growth:
 - from a C subject to **external** control (moral backbone is on the outside and we do what we are told by someone in authority, or what we see others do)
 - to a more **internal**, self-directing C (moral backbone is on the inside and we do what we ourselves perceive to be right and want to do). (image of scaffolding)

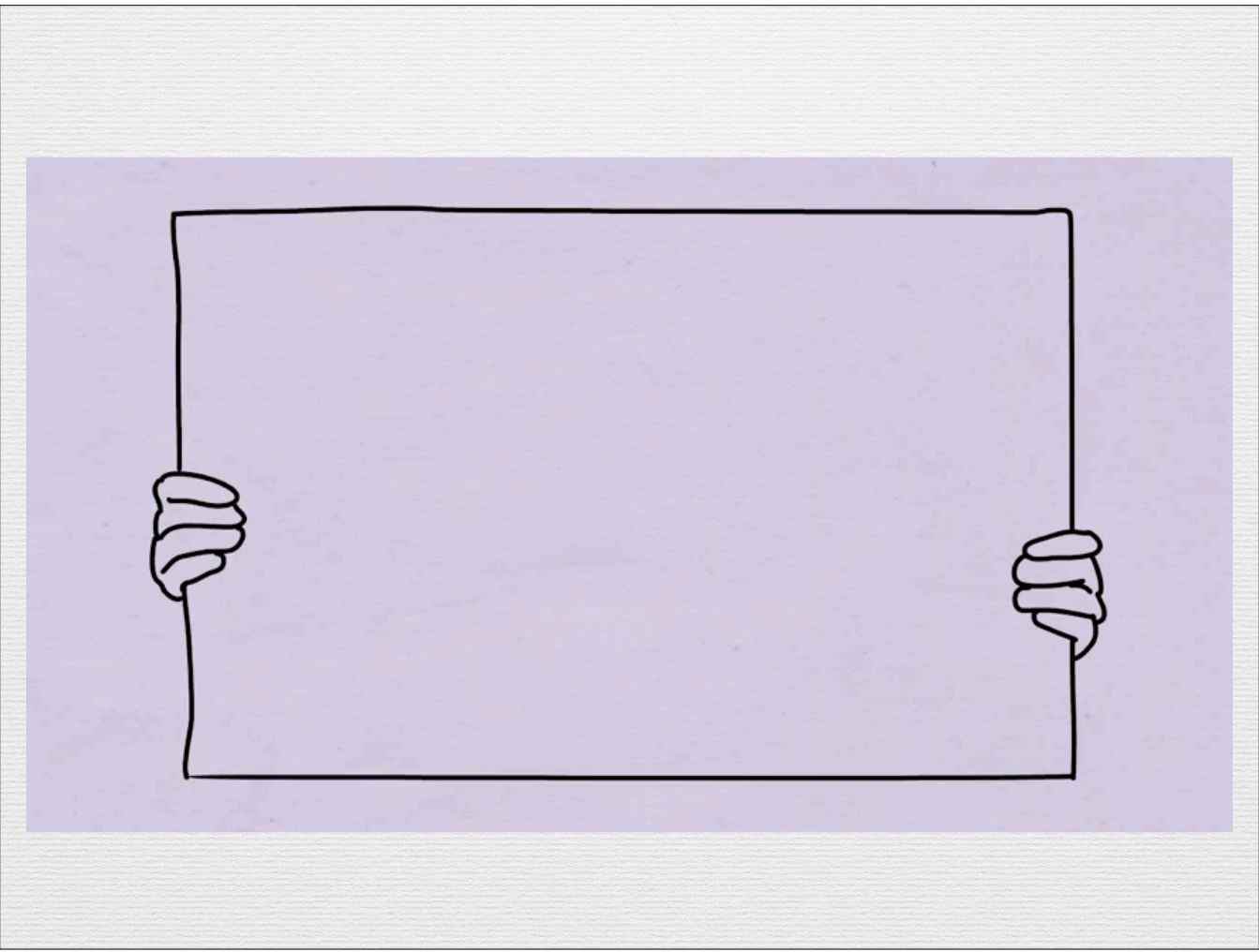


Morally mature: one must be one's own person.

Morally mature person: is called to commit her freedom, not to submit it. We give our lives meaning by committing our freedom.

1st Task: Moral Conscience vs. the Superego

- Q: Where is the confusion when talking about the conscience?
- Theologians' moral conscience is not equal to psychologists understanding of conscience as superego
- Q: First, what is superego?



1st Task: Moral Conscience vs. the Superego

- Superego:
 - an internal censor using guilt as a powerful weapon
 - stores all the “shoulds” and “have-tos” that we absorb in our growing up

- **Superego**—the ego of another superimposed on our own to serve as an internal censor to regulate our conduct using guilt as its powerful weapon.
- This stores all the “shoulds” and “have-tos” which we absorb in the process of growing up under the influence of authority figures: parents, teachers, police, boss, sisters, priests, etc.
- The superego tells us we are good when we do what we are told to do, and it tells us we are bad and makes us feel guilty when we do not do what the **authority** over us tells us to do.

Moral Conscience vs. Superego

- Q: What then is the difference between them?
- Superego: pertains to “shoulds” and “have-tos”
- Moral conscience: pertains to the “wants” as the source of commands directing our behavior.
- “Shoulds” and “have-toos” belong to someone else, “wants” belong to us.

→ “Don’t ‘should’ on me. I don’t want to be the way you think I should be.”

Moral Conscience vs. Superego

- Superego: we follow it out of fear of losing love, or out of need to be accepted and approved.
- Moral Conscience: acts in love responding to the call to commit ourselves to value.
- Example of the difference

• The commands of the moral C come from the personal perception and appropriation of values which we discover in the stories and examples of persona we want to be like.

Whereas the “shoulds” and “have-tos” of the superego look to authority, the “wants” of the moral C look to personalized and internalized values.

→ An example is that of the value of fidelity in marriage. If try to remain faithful to my wife because the priest (authority) tells me I should be faithful or else I will get punished, that’s the superego speaking. Or I should be faithful because my wife will beat me up if I get caught cheating, that’s the superego. But if I choose to want to be faithful because of the value of my commitment to love and fidelity that’s the moral conscience speaking.

Moral Conscience vs. Superego

- **Q:** As educators what then is an important **task** & **goal** of moral education?
- **Task:** to reduce the influence of the superego and to allow a genuinely personal way of seeing and responding to grow.
- **Goal:** to act more out of a personally appropriated vision and personally committed freedom and less of the superego.

What is Conscience?

- Simply put, Conscience is “me coming to a decision.”
- Conscience is the whole person’s commitment to values and the judgment one must make in the light of that commitment to apply those values.

- A: Simply put, C is “me coming to a decision.” It includes not only 1) cognitive (mind) and 2) volitional (will) aspects, but also 3) affective (feelings), 4) intuitive (gut), 5) attitudinal (particular way of thinking and feeling) and 6) somatic (body) aspects.
- A: In other words, C is the whole person’s commitment to values and the judgment one must make in the light of that commitment to apply those values. Holistic!

Did Congress vote according to their conscience or their Superego?

“

ABS-CBN should have been granted this franchise renewal within hours or within days, the way other franchise seekers are treated. Congress obviously is not going to vote their 'conscience.' Maybe they have none.

”

Solita Collas-Monsod
Get Real

READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:
PHILIPPINE DAILY
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Formation of Conscience

- Not simply, “What ought I to do?”
- But, “What sort of person ought I to be?”
- An example of who we are matters in the formation of conscience: St. Thomas More

- Formation of C is not simply to increase a person’s knowledge of facts and values, or skills for resolving a dilemma but must also include the fuller texture of the person’s moral character.
 - Morality is interested in who we are, as well as what and how we choose.
- < Thomas More portrays this well in Robert Bolt's drama. The following scene takes place in the jail cell when Thomas More's daughter, Margaret, comes to persuade him to swear to the Act of Succession:

MORE: You want me to swear to the Act of Succession?

MARGARET: "God more regards the thoughts of the heart than the words of the mouth." Or so you've always told me.

MORE: Yes.

MARGARET: Then say the words of the oath and in your heart think otherwise.

MORE: What is an oath then but words we say to God?

MARGARET: That's very neat.

MORE: Do you mean, it isn't true?

MARGARET: No, it's true.

MORE: Then it's a poor argument to call it "neat," Meg. When a man takes an oath, Meg, he's holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. (He cups his hands) And if he opens his fingers then-he needn't hope to find himself again. Some men aren't capable of this, but I'd be loath to think your father one of them.

- We don't make moral choices in a vacuum.
 - } We make them by how we see the world, how we have been formed.
 - } The way we describe a situation and the choices we make follow from our character.
 - } Character gives rise to choices. Choices in turn confirm or qualify character, for choices are self-determining.



Value of Role Modeling

Kenyan runner Abel Mutai was just a few feet from the finish line, but became confused with the signage and stopped, thinking he had completed the race...

[Read the story...](#)

Conscience and Character

- How do we acquire character?
- How do we acquire Christian character?
- Christian character is formed by directing our freedom to the person and message of Jesus as the ultimate center of our loyalty.
- Character is what results from the values we make our own. The just person “justices”, the loving person “loves”

- How we acquire character: by directing our freedom to loyalties outside ourselves.
- Christian character is formed by directing our freedom to the person and message of Jesus as the ultimate center of our loyalty.
- Character is what results from the values we make our own. When a value has woven its way into the fabric of our being, we delight in doing what pertains to that value.
- The just person "justices" and the loving person loves with such ease that we say such actions are "second nature" to these people.
- Character predisposes us to choose in certain ways, even though it does not predetermine every choice. We can act against character, and by making new choices we can change our character.

Formation of Conscience

- Conscience is formed in **dialogue** with several **sources of moral wisdom**
- **Point:** if you want to form conscience properly, use these sources of moral wisdom to inform the four points of moral analysis—agent, beliefs, situational analysis, and moral norms.

- a. As humans, we consult our experience + experience of family, friends, colleagues, experts in the field on the area concerned; analyze and test the stories, images, language, rituals and actions which the various communities in which we participate live the moral life.
- b. As Christians, we turn to testimony of scripture, religious convictions of our creeds, lives of moral virtuosos, informed judgment of theologians, past and present who help interpret traditions of Christian life
- c. As Christian communities, we access rich heritage of stories, images, language, rituals, devotional practices, spiritual disciplines which nurture one's moral vision and practice + moral statements made already by its leaders.
- d. As Catholics, we pay attention to rich heritage of stories, images, practices as well as official teaching of the magisterium which are pertinent to the areas of concern.

Formation of Conscience

- “KATOTOHANAN” - TRUTH
- “KATOTO-HANAN” - with fellow seekers of Truth
- Isang tunay na katoto: BRO. ARMIN LUISTRO!