

A CRITIQUE OF THOMAS AQUINAS'S NOTION ON CONSCIENCE AS A GUIDE TO ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

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Abstract

Conscience has always been seen as the cornerstone of an action's goodness in the study of morality. The Notion of Conscience, a work by Thomas Aquinas, was crucial in establishing the concept of conscience and the related theoretical concerns. Synderesis, largely a cognitive role, is assigned to Aquinas. He insisted that people had a fundamentally firm understanding of what is ethically good and bad. Aquinas connected synderesis and natural law by equating synderesis, which is the habit, with the earliest practical principles and the fundamental tenants of natural law. This study tries to demonstrate the essential role of conscience as a motivational force in order to build a society that is balanced and encourages ethical living. Since conscience is bound, whether one is right or wrong, in accordance with Aquinas, acting against it is always wrongdoing.

Keywords: Aquinas, Conscience, Synderesis, Moral Decisions.

Introduction

In accordance with man's own experience, the inner voice, which appears in his personal existence, particularly in his moral deeds, is surely something that exists in him. This inner voice is your conscience. It is a perpetual word and idea in the history of ethics in the sense that it is essential to moral judgment. Nevertheless, the discussion of conscience has remained across time, and those who consider what drives human conduct and activity- such as philosophers, psychologists, religious believers, theologians, etc.- continue to find it important. It is true that different individuals in these professions have varying perceptions of what conscience is.

The innermost cognitive center, the higher self, the silent voice of God, etc. are all descriptions of conscience; therefore it is not surprising to hear them. In any case, "conscience is seen as the moral faculty that tells humans what is good or evil subjectively and which, in turn, indicates to them what their moral obligations are in any concrete action to be performed" (Eboh, 2005). But as a moral being,

man has a responsibility to act on his conscience and "to do what his conscience tells him, even when it is objectively wrong" (Omoregbe, 1993:57). Thus, it has been proclaimed by the Vatican Council II that:

Even if it is not a law that he has set on himself, man discovers a rule that he must abide by deep within his conscience. When the time is right, he is guided by its voice, which is continually telling him to love, act morally, and avoid evil. (Flannery, 1988) This supports the idea that conscience is a moral faculty and a motivating force. Thomas Aquinas, whose line of reasoning is used to support this argument, states that "conscience in this sense is said to incite or to bind" (Aquina, 1981:408).

This idea relates to how we determine whether or not to perform something. As a result, conscience expresses a person's moral responsibility while also defining good and evil in their own minds. It is vital to establish the context, the problem statement, the purpose, the scope, the methodology, and how the work is split in this introduction in order to explain the nature of this research effort.

Aquinas' Notion of Conscience

The controversy around the nature of the connection between synderesis and conscience throughout the medieval era drew St. Thomas Aquinas into "the discussion on conscience." The word "conscience" was used by Aquinas to describe what he meant when he discussed synderesis. Therefore, we will first discuss his concept of synderesis before moving on to conscience and its compelling force. As a natural inclination bestowed upon us by nature, synderesis has been described as the process through which we intuitively comprehend basic moral principles. According to certain medieval philosophers, the center of the soul is the part that is least susceptible to being tainted by sin. The good must be done and evil must be avoided, which is a clear expression of the universal synderesis concept.

The question of whether synderesis is a unique soul power that is different from other powers has been debated. It is divided against the irascible, concupiscible, and rational, which are powers, according to others, who believe that it is genuinely a special power. Synderesis is therefore a power (Aquinas 1981:407). Others countered that since synderesis always inspires good, it is a power. To these concepts, Aquinas responded by claiming that synderesis is not a power

but a habit since "rational power regards opposite things, but synderesis does not regard opposites but incites to good only" (Aquinas, 1981:407). Synderesis, according to him, is "a habitus of the intellect, enabling it to know the first principles of pragmatic reasoning" (Dagobert, 1981:308).

He continued to assert that just as the practical reason makes arguments concerning practical issues, the speculative reason does the same. It follows that nature must have endowed us with both conceptual and practical ideas. Thus, he asserts: The initial practical principles endowed upon us by nature do not belong to a specific force but rather to a special natural habit, which we term synderesis. Since we proceed to investigate and appraise what we have discovered using basic principles, synderesis is said to stir up good and stir up evil. Therefore, it is evident that synderesis is not a force but rather a natural habit. (Aquinas 1981:407)

This suggests that synderesis is related to the natural law because it helps man's reason understand the fundamental ideas of the natural law. In addition, Aquinas believes that synderesis is infallible, inherent in every man, and hence, cannot be unaware of the basic moral tenets. Augustine is quoted by Aquinas as saying, "In our natural power of judgment, there are some laws and seeds of virtue, both true and unchanging, that support this fact. Synderesis is what we refer to as this (Aquinas, 1981:408).

Here, Aquinas seems to be asserting that we understand and are aware of the basic moral principles on an intuitive level. Synderesis cannot fail since it disposes of the fundamentals. However, Aquinas noted the evident reality that synderesis, despite being unailing, can be thwarted. It is very likely that people with medical or psychological issues would experience this, affecting their ability to employ reason and free will. Aquinas seeks to demonstrate that certain circumstances can prevent certain people from acting rationally as they ought to. As a result, he claims, "A man sometimes finds himself unable to use that which is in him naturally, due to some impediments" (Aquinas, 1981:1008).

He defined these obstacles as having been brought about by harm to specific bodily organs that our reason needs to receive from. Humans always make decisions, nevertheless, in actual situations. Aquinas extended the name conscience to this concrete activity in decision-making. He claims that conscience is an act rather than a force in the Summa Theologica (Aquinas, 1981:408). This is

due to the fact that, unlike power, conscience may be set aside. Aquinas (1981:408) continued by stating that "conscience, due to the very nature of the word, implies the relation of knowledge to anything... knowledge applied to an individual circumstance.

He contends that some act enacts the application of this knowledge to something. Conscience is therefore an act. However, Aquinas specifically identified three ways that conscience can present itself in various contexts. As a result, it is stated that it is "to witness, to bind, or to incite, as well as to accuse, torture, or to reprimand (Aquinas, 1981:410). First and foremost, it is argued that conscience bears witness to our awareness of our actions or inactions "hic et nunc" (in the present). "Thy conscience knoweth that thou hast often spoken evil of others" (Ecclesiastes 7:22). Second, "insofar as we judge whether something should be done or not through the conscience; and in this sense, conscience is said to incite or to bind" (Aquinas, 1981:412).

Thirdly, since we assess if something was done well or not through conscience, it is argued that conscience can accuse, defend, or torture. This is a reference to the ensuing conscience, as we observed when categorizing conscience in relation to moral judgment. All these things, according to Aquinas, come after the application of knowledge to our daily activities. As a result, in a strict sense, conscience designates an action (Aquinas, 1981:415). Since habit is a principle of action, Aquinas noted that conscience and synderesis are related in that "conscience is sometimes given to the first natural habit, namely synderesis" (Aquinas, 1981:415).

Despite the similarity, the two concepts should be noted to differ from each other to some extent. Conscience is informed by the chief habit, the grasp of first principles called synderesis. Thus, by synderesis, we grasp and know the fundamental moral principles, inclining us toward the good. Conscience, on the other hand, involves the application of these moral principles to particular cases. Despite their similarities, it should be emphasized that the two notions have some differences. The main habit, synderesis, or the understanding of first principles, informs conscience. As a result, through synderesis, we comprehend and understand the essential moral precepts, which motivate us to act morally. Contrarily, conscience entails the application of these moral concepts to specific situations. According to Smith, Aquinas refers to the practical syllogism put

forward by his master, Albert the Great, in order to emphasize this connection between conscience and synderesis. He claims:

Synderesis, or the practice of basic practical principles, provides the main assumption of a practical syllogism. The reason, either the superior or inferior reason, provides the minor premise. Conscience is the syllogism's conclusion, or more precisely, conscience is the evaluation of the conclusion (Smith, 1998:13).

Aquinas contends that synderesis suggests that all evil is to be avoided (the main premise) as an example of how this. Adultery is wrong (the minor premise), according to the superior reason, because it is against God's law. The syllogism's conclusion, "This adultery must be avoided," then, has to do with conscience. On the other hand, he continues, "This conclusion pertains to conscience independently of time; it pertains to conscience past, present, and future" (Smith, 1998:13).

Subsequently deserves to be emphasized that as conscience is a personal standard of morality, it may make mistakes in its assessment of situations and choice of course of action. According to Aquinas, consciousness errs as a result of a mistake in reason. In any case, Aquinas' interest is not solely focused on whether there is a conscience error, but also on the fact that conscience is a constraining force.

The Binding Force of Conscience

The idea of "bind" refers to placing someone under a duty. It suggests a moral duty in this situation. Consequently, conscience, a moral faculty, evaluates human deeds and also expresses man's moral duty to him. It binds, in other words. As a result, according to H. Sidwick, consciousness is "a moral faculty cognizance of rules absolutely binding, to be obeyed without reference to the agents' apparent interest" (Sidwick, 1964:9).

In addition, Aquinas' singular contribution to the debate on conscience is plainly evident in his conception of the binding power of conscience. He claimed that "conscience is said to incite or to bind" insofar as we evaluate through the conscience whether something should be done or not. Thus, his conscience is binding. He stated how conscience binds and obligates the will because it is the demand of reason. Given this, Copleston states that:

Obligation is the constraint of the free will to carry out the deed required for the accomplishment of the ultimate goal, which is the good that must be understood in terms of human nature and is not hypothetical but absolute. (Copleston 2003, 408)

However, Aquinas uses the example of being physically bound, in which the ability to move somewhere else is taken away, to clarify this issue of conscience being the demand of reason, obliging and binding the will. Smith asserts that Aquinas makes a distinction between two kind of power that can bind us in his *De Veritate*. He referred to the first as a requirement of force and the second as a necessity or incentive under certain conditions.

The former is compared to having one's capacity to move restricted and being bound in chains. The latter is seen to be a more compelling type of force that compels action. Accordingly, the first type of force "can be imposed only on physical action, while the second kind can be imposed on the will as it strives to do what is good and avoid that which is not good" (Smith, 1998:13). In any event, binding a will morally places it under conditional necessity, just as binding a body physically removes its tendency to move. According to Aquinas, this necessity is caused by an agent. He claims that the divine authority serves as the agent in the case of the will.

Therefore, the ruler or governor is in charge of the action that shifts the will. (Smith, 1998:13). He goes on to claim that no one is ever bound by a law other than via understanding of the law. Accordingly, he claims: "Someone is only bound by a ruler's or lord's command if the command reaches him who is commanded, and it reaches him through knowing (Smith, 1998:16). Therefore, conscience is precisely the application of command knowledge to a particular deed. As a result, it is argued that conscience imposes or binds obligations under the authority of divine command. Therefore, being aware of it binds one.

The pursuit of truth is the human intellect's ultimate goal, so to speak, and it always strives to get there. Typically, as it works toward achieving this goal, it makes a number of errors. In light of this, Mondin states: "Even though the truth is the legitimate and particular end of the human mind, there are numerous situations when it does not get at it and falls into error (Mondin, 1975:32). Conscience falls under this concept as well. Although it makes moral judgments

about the rightness and wrongness of actions and also binds, it is still possible for it to make mistakes.

However, Aquinas maintains that one should always abide by the conscience's verdict, even when it is incorrect. Or, to put it another way, "conscience binds, whether true or false." In his *Quodlibetum*, he makes the following claim, which was cited by Omoregbe: "Every conscience, whether right or wrong, whether it concerns things evil in themselves or things morally wrong, whether it concerns things evil in themselves or things morally indifferent, obliges us to act in such a way that whoever acts against his conscience sins" (Omoregbe, 1991:153).

This indicates that defying one's conscience is wicked because, in Aquinas' view, conscience always binds. If that's the case, would that also imply that a false conscience binds? Given that it by its very nature evaluates as good what is bad and as evil what is actually good, it is against the universally accepted standard of morality. Aquinas is consequently confronted with the issue of conscience mistake.

The Problem of Error in Conscience

The fundamental moral principles are applied to specific situations by conscience, as we noted before. However as morality is a personal matter, applying this principle in certain situations may be improper and result in unethical behavior. Given this, G. E. Moore stated that "it is certain as anything that very harmful actions may be done from conscientious motives and that conscience does not always tell us the truth about what actions are right" (Moore, 1968:180). That is to say, since conscience is inherently imperfect, it is not a reliable indicator of what is morally right or wrong. Aquinas maintains that even in that case, one should always follow their conscience because it has binding power.

In his *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas made plain where he stood on the necessity of conscience. He talked about it from the perspective of the human will and its target. He contends that the object of a man's will determine whether his will is good or not. In such case, the question arises: Given that the will submits to reason's rules, what if reason errs by perceiving a course of action that is objectively wicked as good? Does the will turn wicked when it conflicts with that mistaken reason? Aquinas responds in the affirmative to this.

As a result, in his perspective, "since the object of the will is that which is proposed by the reason, from the very fact that a thing is proposed by the reason as being evil, the will, by tending thereto, becomes evil" (Aquinas, 1981:674). According to Aquinas, every action taken against one's conscience is wrong. Does this also hold true for a false conscience? Or does it imply that all morally righteous actions are good deeds?

Aquinas rejects this in response. In his *Quaestiones Disputate*, he claimed that an act must also be objectively good in order to be morally righteous; it is not enough for me to think it is right. In other words, both the subjective and objective components need to be strong. However, for a behavior to be morally repugnant, just one of the two components must be absent. Smith asserts that Aquinas draws the conclusion that "the man who follows an incorrect conscience is not exempt from sin" from this. (Smith, 1998:16)

This result seems at odds with his central hypothesis from the outset and also puts man in a moral bind. So may we conclude that one should only heed their conscience when they believe what they are doing is right? If that were the case, how could conscience determine whether its verdict was in line with what was truly right? In actuality, man is in a moral bind. He commits sin if he ignores his false conscience. He commits sin if he obeys it. This could imply that one will always conduct improperly as long as their conscience is off. According to Aquinas' response in this passage, "a man needs only to put aside his error, and the dilemma is ended" (Smith, 1998:17). As it stands, Aquinas' response is still inadequate.

In order to resolve this "moral predicament," Aquinas posed the question of "whether the will is good when it abides by erring reason" (Aquinas, 1981:675). He responds that this issue is equivalent to asking whether a guilty conscience justifies. He claimed that ignorance was the key since it might sometimes make an action unintentional and other times not. Accordingly, "ignorance removes the character of moral good and evil when it causes an act to be involuntary, but not when it does not cause the act to be involuntary" (Aquinas, 1981:675). On the other hand, ignorance does not make an act involuntary if ignorance is voluntary in itself, either directly or indirectly. Aquinas adds this as his final statement:

When reason or conscience makes a deliberate mistake, whether intentionally or unintentionally, leading to a mistake about what one should know, this mistake of

reason or conscience does not make the will that follows it less bad. The error of reason or conscience, however, absolves the will that follows the mistaken reason from being wicked if it results from ignorance of some condition and without any negligence, making the act involuntary (Aquinas, 1981:676)

Aquinas' earlier theory's moral complication was made clear by this result. Now that we know this, we can conclude that even though an incorrect conscience binds, the will that follows it is only absolved from being bad if the ignorance of the error is unintentional. He remained adamant that conscience binds, regardless of whether it is accurate or not.

In comparison to other medieval philosophers, Aquinas stands out greatly for his conception of synderesis, conscience, and the binding power of conscience. He was able to describe the parallels and dissimilarities between conscience and synderesis. Therefore, it is claimed that both ideas have a positive tendency and are consequently connected. Additionally, they play various responsibilities and are unique from one another as a result. Conscience, as an act, applies those moral principles to specific instances, but synderesis, as a habit, grasps the basic moral principles.

On a more serious note, Aquinas proves that the only circumstance in which a person's wicked intentions can be justified is when their ignorance of their mistake causes them to act involuntarily. In light of this, conscience "binds, whether true or false." All things considered, it could be argued at this point that we have, to a greater extent, clarified St. Thomas Aquinas' teachings on conscience and its legal power. However, a critical assessment of these will give it a better look and, as a result, help to better understand Aquinas' ideas. This is what we'll do in the following chapter before bringing the research to a close.

Synderesis, Syndesis, and the Passion in the Operation of Conscience

The concept of synderesis is a crucial one to examine in Aquinas' theory of conscience. It is a power to some people and reason to others. There are various viewpoints on this issue, to quote Thomas Aquinas. Some claim that synderesis simply refers to a power that is superior to and different from reason. Others contend that it is merely a power that is equivalent to reason (Aquinas 1953:16).

Aquinas responds that "Synderesis is not a power but a habit," to those who believe it to be a power (Aquinas, 1953:18). It's crucial to remark that man's act of thinking shifts from an understanding of things that come naturally to him to a judgment of our grasp of such things in order to make this point apparent. Since there is no need for rational inquiry, this insight arises automatically. Man must have been endowed with certain speculative principles in addition to practical principles since he is capable of understanding both speculative and practical concepts. The first theoretical principle that nature has given to man is a habit rather than a capacity. The behavior is known as "understanding principles," and the first useful principle given to mankind by nature is a unique natural behavior known as "synderesis." Synderesis is a habit that draws a person toward the good and away from the negative. Aquinas said that "synderesis is said to incite to good and to murmur at evil" (Aquinas, 1953:19). Thus, it is evident that synderesis is a habit rather than a capability.

All human virtues and passions are moved by a habit known as synderesis, which comes naturally to everyone. When he states, "In so far as it knows naturally, it is synderesis" (Aquinas, 1953:20), Aquinas confirms this. This does not imply that synderesis refers to a higher or lower reason; rather, it refers to a factor that both have in common. This type of reason works to strike a balance between lower and higher reason, which helps us grasp lower standards like acts of reason and higher reason, which takes us to comprehension of passions, like the obedience of God. Thus, the question arises: What kind of passion is synderesis drawn to? The main purpose of synderesis, according to Aquinas, is to warn against evil and lean toward good. (Aquinas, 1953:20). Hence it is inevitable that it is in every individual.

Evaluation of Thomas Aquinas's Conception on Conscience

This essay has demonstrated how remarkable Aquinas' doctrines are. Aquinas contends that synderesis is the first practical principle nature has given us and by which we can comprehend the fundamental concepts of practical reasoning. In other words, human reason comprehends the basic concepts underlying the natural law through synderesis. This should serve as a reminder that "the good must be done, and evil must be avoided" is the most general statement of both natural law and practical justification.

Given this, it is reasonable to wonder if Aquinas' argument that moral knowledge derives from reason is accurate. Why do we have moral judgments

that conflict with one another if man knows moral principles rationally? Why should people disagree about issues like euthanasia, contraception, and abortion since they violate the moral standard that defends life, for example? Or does it mean that those who believe the aforementioned things are false because they lack morals or logic? Like this, Aquinas describes conscience as the norm of reason that entails the application of knowledge to an action by humans.

Man can therefore perform an action using all of his knowledge. But it becomes evident that while it is conceivable to make mistakes in certain areas, it is not realistic in others when we consider the many sorts of knowledge a person possesses. As a result, since our knowledge is influenced by a variety of causes, mistakes will always be made when knowledge is put into practice. Aquinas, on the other hand, believed that conscience is always binding and that it is evil to act against it.

There is a commonality among all consciences. One must therefore act in accordance with their conscience. Can this also be said of erroneous conscience, as its judgment is opposed to the established moral standard? What becomes of the connected fallacy of the erroneous conscience? To accomplish this, Aquinas stated that the only duty is to make amends (Aquinas, 1981:427). He never discusses the remedies to be applied to stop the error in conscience judgment.

His effort to resolve the issue is therefore adequate. What transpires when someone sincerely believes their assessment is accurate but is unaware that it violates morality? What does it mean to "put off" a mistake that one is not aware they made? It must be assumed that one's conscience must be properly formed in order to avoid committing this error in this situation. By pursuing the truth and defending it after it has been found, the person in question must first get rid of his skeptic mindset in order to create conscience. The truth of ethics can only be grasped by carefully examining the facts.

The Word of God, societal morality, being receptive to criticism, willing to participate in debate, and other knowledge sources all contribute in the formation of one's conscience. In his explanations, Aquinas also tries to explain the vengeful and uncontrollable false consciences. Despite his examination of whether the will is good or bad based on whether it agrees with or disagrees with erroneous conscience, the idea of vincible and invincible erroneous conscience, and how they bind, were not fully addressed. We believe that under

these ideas, both the sure conscience and the unstoppable mistaken conscience, which is ethically right in one's own opinion, must be paid attention to. Thus, it is impossible to choose the first option – a good but defective conscience.

One can banish their skepticism by seeking the truth. Specifically, through the development of a sound conscience. What should those with an irresistible false conscience do, on the other hand, given that it is obvious that they must act incorrectly? For instance, what can be stated about the make-up of the suicide bombers' consciences? What if their actions are consistent with their religious beliefs, thereby establishing a good conscience? They feel compelled to follow their irrational, false conscience. Do they merit condemnation?

Are their activities still morally acceptable if they are found not guilty? What, to put it mildly, ought to be the panacea for vindictive and unstoppable false consciences? These problems need to be addressed right now. We need to keep in mind that while the judgment of conscience is binding, there is room for uncertainty and error in order to handle these concerns. There is no inbuilt guarantee of its accuracy. It is akin to the judgment of someone who, despite having access to sufficient moral knowledge, lacks the virtue required to evaluate if his actions or judgments are in accordance with the norms of objective morality.

As a result, even though there is no guarantee, the conclusion will be correct in most cases. We fully believe that all of the aforementioned situations or problems can be overcome by the virtue of wisdom. It is a quality that can consistently lead to an objectively genuine practical truth—one that is actually helpful. The capacity to use one's wisdom to decide what should be done or left undone is known as prudence. Additionally, it directs a person in the best direction. Prudence, according to Aquinas himself, is the "application of right reason in matters of counsel" (Aquinas, 1981:1384).

It therefore indicates the best course of action to take. As a result, it makes it easier to apply one's moral understanding in real life. It should be remembered that prudence always acts as the will's compass while making judgments and that, without it, human deeds could have terrible repercussions such as disputes, animosity, extremism, etc. However, being cautious can aid in avoiding these problems.

Consequently, it might be argued that someone who is prudent has a reduced risk of making a moral mistake than someone who lacks this trait. The morals of prudence and conscience, we deduce from this, serve as our compass in behavior. To put it another way, the problem of a doubtful and misinformed conscience is solved when the judgment of conscience is included into the judgment of wisdom. Additionally, this judgment of prudence removes the flaws of the judgment of conscience, secures righteous behaviors, and offers certainty of pragmatic truth.

Even while prudence and conscience are different, they do have a lot in common, it's crucial to keep in mind while this is going on. The judgment of prudence, in Noble's words, "causes a person to will it," even while conscience "informs a person of what is morally right in a given situation" (Noble, 1923:55). Additionally, conscience applies those rules to particular situations, whereas the virtue of prudence offers the know-how, direction, and authority needed to motivate conscience to take action. In order for moral standards to exist, there must be the innately understood and essential basic concepts. This is the work of synderesis.

Therefore, the virtue of prudence is capable of controlling any error caused by a false conscience. When the two ideas are juxtaposed, Aquinas' descriptions of prudence and conscience are very similar. First and foremost, both concepts emphasize the use of knowledge to accomplish a certain job. (Aquinas, 1981:437). To put it another way, they both have a close connection to synderesis. Even though there are clear parallels between the two concepts, Aquinas never draws a relationship between the two judgments. Instead, he went about each of the concepts separately.

Were we to deduce anything else from this save the possibility that he believed the concept of conscience to be insufficient to convey the realities involved in the assessment of prudence? He was content to just bring attention to the problem rather than make an effort to prove the evident truth that the virtue of prudence might address the problem of error in conscience. He volunteered to get the error fixed, which we appreciate. Another crucial point to keep in mind is that Aquinas, a Christian philosopher, surely drew influence from religion.

This is made abundantly obvious in his explanation of the binding power of conscience by his conclusion that there is "an agent" that moves the will and that

the authority of this agency is "divine" (Aquinas, 1981:438). God, however, is the opposite. The implication is that morality and conscience are solely at the control of God. The conclusion reached by Aquinas here points to determinism. Because of this, one decides to act in accordance with the divine precept.

If this is the standard, then where is human freedom? Aquinas avoided addressing this. But it's crucial to emphasize that, despite having free will, man is always restrained by the objective morality with which he was born- the dictum that "good must be done and evil avoided."

The conviction that conscience is always legally binding was reached by Aquinas. What happens then, for instance, if we feel compelled by our conscience to participate in a particular action that is illegal under the law? Should we follow our conscience and obey the law, or the other way around? Aquinas was therefore ignorant of the possibility of a disagreement between a person's conscience and decisions made by governmental authorities. It is equally crucial to remember that, in addition to being legitimately compelled to follow one's conscience, one is also obligated to respect divine law and legitimate authority.

However, it ought to not be carried out in a useless way. One is only ethically obligated to obey laws that were enacted with serious belief. Because authority's decisions are congruent with reality as it is, conscience's judgment shouldn't be at odds with those of authority. In any case, the authority helps to grow and change conscience. Even if someone chooses to follow a moral authority, their moral judgments will still be there to determine the circumstances that the authority had in mind when issuing the order. This implies that one's conscience influences moral judgments more than was previously believed. Moral decisions are thus ultimately left to conscience.

The sincerity of conscience must, however, be questioned when it departs from the objective moral standard. This type of conscience must be altered. As a result, while following one's conscience is required, doing so is also morally right. In light of this, we think it is necessary to understand Thomas Aquinas' warning that, even though conscience is always binding, a person who follows it incorrectly is nevertheless susceptible to sin. Finally, conscience, whichever we want to look at it, must be acknowledged as the ultimate, subjective standard of morality.

It would seem that Thomas Aquinas represents the pinnacle of wisdom and insight. He deserves an extended applause for the personality that guides his writing, lectures, and arguments despite the few shortcomings highlighted above. Therefore, the concepts of synderesis, conscience, and the binding power of conscience are only thoroughly explored in his lectures and well-known publications. He has provided us with information about the functions, traits, and links between conscience and synderesis. To conclude every aspect off, he spoke about conscience's capacity to bind, even going so far as to express the age-old problem of how an error conscience binds.

It is actually impossible to blame him totally since he basically gave us everything we needed to understand what the word "conscience" meant. Aquinas' arguments on the aforementioned subjects genuinely provided solutions to the issues that were present at the time. So, in addition to needing to follow one's conscience, one must also make sure that it is formed correctly. Furthermore, the fact that one's conscience is bound does not imply that doing so is a virtue; rather, it indicates that acting against it is bad. It makes sense given that Aquinas maintains that a person who follows an inaccurate conscience is not absolved of sin.

Conclusion

Within reality itself, conscience is a moral standard one holds in their own minds. It often falls short on its sole premise as a result. The concepts of synderesis, conscience, and the binding force of are on the ambivalent side, making it challenging to render correct moral judgments under certain conditions. However, we do wonder if morality would have developed in the absence of consciousness. Although it is not conscience to be comprehended, it is in essence a precondition for morality, especially in Christianity. Aquinas had to build the required groundwork. He distinguished himself from medieval and other philosophers with his contribution on conscience.

He was successful in defining conscience as the application of moral concepts to actual situations. He went much further by making it clear that conscience is a moral faculty that is always binding. One has a moral obligation to follow their conscience as a result. It is not sufficient to meekly follow one's conscience; one must ensure that the conscience is properly constituted.

The majority of the world's governing principles and regulations are heavily impacted by Aquinas' theory on conscience. The Christian faith also places a high weight on his conception of conscience. Therefore, the majority of Christian theories on conscience credit St. Thomas Aquinas. He frequently uses some of his concepts to confront contemporary moral dilemmas. There are clear solutions to these problems in the topics of contraception, abortion, euthanasia, birth control, family planning, terrorism, etc.

The distinctive human expressions that show how deeply the concept of conscience has ingrained into people's psyches. "Do people still have conscience" and "You are bound in conscience to do this or to shun that" are two instances. Etc. Since Aquinas opened the way for us, we now understand what conscience is in great detail. The critical evaluations have also helped us to establish a consistent line of reasoning regarding what the idea of conscience and its immovable power actually entail.

Despite Aquinas' inability to provide guidance regarding how to deal with the error in conscience, one maintains that the virtue of prudence would go a great way toward alleviating the problem of its potential occurrence. As a result, we must be cautious when assessing our actions in the hopes that doing so would lead to more moral behavior. The decision of conscience is instantly guided by prudent judgment. Conscience still serves as the gold standard for morality on a subjective level. One must make sure that their conscience is formed properly in addition to acting in accordance with it. Through this, people will be able to act virtuously rather than viciously.

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