



Mains Marathon

Day 46: Examine the many explanations of conscience put forward by different moral thinkers. (150 words)

25 Aug 2022 | GS Paper 4 | Theoretical Questions

Approach / Explanation / Answer

- Start the answer by briefly defining the term conscience.
- Discuss the different conceptions of conscience by moral thinkers.
- Conclude Suitably.

Conscience, a personal sense of the moral content of one's own conduct, intentions, or character with regard to a feeling of obligation to do right or be good. Historically, almost every culture has recognized the existence of conscience as the voice of god or inner light.

The simplest example of conscience is the personal ethics that keep you from cheating on an exam.

Different Conceptions of Conscience by Moral Thinkers:

- **Intuitionism:** The view that holds conscience to be an innate, intuitive faculty determining the perception of right and wrong is called intuitionism.
 - Darwin hypothesized that conscience evolved to resolve conflicts between instincts, such as between instincts for self-preservation and instincts to protect and cooperate with other human beings.
- **Empiricism:** The view that holds conscience to be a cumulative and subjective inference from past experience giving direction to future conduct is called empiricism.
 - Spinoza wrote that it was necessary to practice and develop reasons to transcend socially conditioned emotions and perceptions.
- **Social Stimuli:** The behavioral scientist, on the other hand, may view conscience as a set of learned responses to particular social stimuli.
 - Immanuel Kant regarded critical reasoning as an important element of conscience, believing that moral truth could be evaluated objectively in light of his 'categorical imperative.'

Despite conscience being an abstract concept and can be termed as subjective morality, it is a necessary trait of character for public functionaries for ensuring ethical action in the spheres where there is no legal obligation upon them to act in a particular way.

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