

Freedom	Sin	Conscience
<p><u>Freedom of Choice:</u> In order to be considered a moral (that is, distinctively human) act, it must proceed from free choice; to some degree, our choices determine our character and our fundamental orientation toward or away from God</p> <p><u>Basic Freedom:</u> However, while it is true that morality (and mortal sin) do affect one's orientation toward or away from God (and therefore one's salvation—the possibility of ultimate union with God [John Paul II's invocation of Mt. 19]), the question is to what degree?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Basis of Moral Priorities? - Imperfect/Tragic Actions? - Structural Sin? <p><u>Nature of Moral Action</u> (for John Paul II, VS par. 78))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unity of body and spirit in each act - subject/object structure for analyzing moral acts (value resides in the subject, nature of the act resides in the object) - specifying the morality/immorality of an act involves analyzing <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intention (mitigates culpability) 2. Circumstances/consequences (affects 	<p><u>Old Model:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - act-centered (isolated beings relating to each other) - sins best understood as inability to overcome the temptations of flesh ("sinning from weakness"²) - adequate to terminal moral problems (think of acts of violence or sexual promiscuity) - important to distinguish what one directly intends from what one tolerates or allows to happen (recall Paul VI, HV, par. 14)¹ - importance of the principle of double effect (which pertain to the question of whether it is morally permissible to perform an action which one can foresee will bring about both good and evil effects) <p><u>New Model:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - centers on the relationship of acts to inter-personal relationships and social structures - new ways of understanding sin: "sinning from strength," "failure to bother to love [or to] see from another point of view"² - necessary to make sense of cumulative moral problems (think of question like economic injustice, environmental degradation, racism, and the HIV/AIDS crisis) - relates to new ways of practicing the sacrament of penance (focusing on relationships and values, not just acts) <p><u>Marciano Vidal on Structural Dimensions of Sin:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trying to figure out how to account for the influence of 	<p><u>Benedict XVI:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recall that for Benedict, conscience must be distinguished from superego, but is also a way of understand experience as a source of moral knowledge - experience always tends toward self-justification, so it is important that one's experience be put in dialogue with tradition (this is the meaning of the importance of the primacy of the informed or educated conscience) <p><u>John Paul II:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Natural Law:</i> "But God has already given an answer to this question: he did so by creating man and ordering him with wisdom and love to his final end, through the law which is inscribed in his heart (Rom 2:15), the 'natural law.' The latter 'is nothing other than the light of understanding infused in us by God, whereby we understand what must be done and what must be avoided. God gave this light and this law to man at creation.'" (par. 12) [also, par. 54] - <i>Witness:</i> some personal inner voice that testifies to us about ourselves (par. 57); conscience functions sort of like an inner bishop, testifying to the truth of the moral law by forcing us to recall how it has been lived in the tradition - <i>Inner Dialogue</i> between the human person and God (par. 58) - <i>Practical moral judgment</i>, determining whether or

¹ "Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good," it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it (18)—in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or of society in general. Consequently, it is a serious error to think that a whole married life of otherwise normal relations can justify sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive and so intrinsically wrong." (Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, par. 14)

² This language comes from James Keenan, SJ, *Moral Wisdom: Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), p. 47-65.

<p>the description of the object and can mitigate culpability)</p> <p>3. Object of the will (<i>only the object of the will, understood as a freely chosen kind of behavior, specifies the morality of an act</i>)</p>	<p>social structures and one's position in a network of responsibilities without renouncing the importance of personal responsibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Still holds the traditional understanding of moral sin to be important (grave matter, knowledge, full consent of the will), but consider that complicity in sinful structures may also indicate one's contempt for/orientation away from God - Typology (still acknowledging subjective culpability and objective good and evil): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Social Repercussions of Every Individual Sin</i>: people's actions can become negative models for others, and can influence that way other view the world (think of how your actions influence young people) b. <i>Collective Sin</i>: when people act together for a common evil; the "convergence of forces and wills toward a common disvalue" (think of the power of legislation to influence public morality) c. <i>Inter-Individual Sin</i>: when sin is expressed through disordered relationships, such that it challenges the ability of the two parties to the relationship to see and bring about the good in the future (think of marriages broken because of betrayal or abuse) d. <i>Social Sin</i>: closely related to the former, but based on networks of disordered relationships based on past sinful models of behavior (think of the effect of divorce on one's marital expectations, or the effect of hazing on expectations for community life)³ e. <i>Structural Sin</i>: "the combination of institutions and practical devices," official and unofficial group policies that present a social context to others that either constrain freedom or present only bad choices (think of ND, or other cloistered neighborhoods) 	<p>not the action being considered conforms to the moral law established by God (par. 59)</p> <p><u>Richard Gula</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Conscience is the whole person's commitment to value and the judgment one makes in light of that commitment of who one ought to be and what one ought to do or not do." (p. 114) - Differentiations (as does Benedict) between conscience (which testifies about the truth of oneself and one's relation to God) and superego (which is the internalization of an external authority) - <u>Three Sense of Conscience</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Capacity</i> b. <i>Process</i> c. <i>Judgment</i>
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³ Compare this to the recently publicized news reports on Bishop Gianfranco Girotti's interview with l'Osservatore Romano, which allegedly specified the following seven social sins: (1) "bioethical" violations such as birth control, (2) "morally dubious" experiments such as stem cell research, (3) drug abuse, (4) polluting the environment, (5) contributing to widening divide between rich and poor, (6) excessive wealth, (7) creating poverty [see March 10 Bloomberg report at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aizloDFbRPRM>]