

The Relevance of God's Voice in Conscience and Its Impact to Character Building

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Abstract: This article aims to assert how conscience works in line with God's voice in human's life. The condition of conscience is formless but speaks and guides human beings to truth. It will bring comfort if it is followed and will shape anxiety if being neglected. Religious reflection indicates that the thing that guides human beings is the voice of God himself. Somehow, conscience could be wrong, as it may not be mature enough to be followed by human beings. The problems continue with similarities and differences between human and God's rationality if conscience is the voice of God. Ethics work in finite and mortal aspects while God is infinite and immortal. The main essence in connection between God's voice and conscience is reflection that comes with matters of universality and particularity. By keep questioning, further considerations could be shaped besides merely saying no or nodding to conscience. Re-examination of human's guidance to life should always be done to support further character building of human beings. This is due to character is not given but constructed by various fixed values and flexible understandings. Character should not find itself in total far right or left of human conscience and God's voice. Human beings should always find balance in between by identifying meanings of profane and sacred values. In conclusion, existence of God's voice in conscience is contestable as there will always be oppositions between worldly and spiritual matters. However, both of them could not be totally omitted and it is advantage of human's rational character to consider those values as ultimate guidance to move forward.

Keywords: Character Building, Conscience, Philosophy, Voice of God.

Introduction

There is a place to hide. It's in our mind. It's in the dark.

It's well-known that we have a fragile heart.

It's deep inside. It has a sound that you can follow.

(Angels and Airwaves-Surrender)

The lyrics of the song *Surrender* from Angels and Airwaves band above shows the voice of human conscience. Conscience is stated in an unknown place but sounds and guides people to the truth (Kahn, 2021). Conscience shows that human is autonomous; capable of having self-determination in realizing deeds. Human has free will, they have desire to do something good or bad. The desire arises not as spontaneous idea, but constructed in human mind beforehand so that humans could acknowledge themselves and are aware of their actions.

If human desires are constructed, then what and who constructs them? Religious reflections state that God shapes human desires but in fact, conscience could be wrong, then may God be wrong either? Besides, if God is omniscient and omnipotent over everything, then why does He allow human to be confused in choosing yet He already knew what human choices are? This is contradictory to the philosophical reflection that humans are free. Then, whose voice sounded in conscience? Religion declares that it is God inside of human; this indicates human's ratio is also God's. Is that true? Is not human limited and God is omnipotent? When talking about God, is it a matter of ethical choice or intrinsically good and bad? Therefore, is the conscience is also God's voice? Then what is the impact of the existence of conscience and God's voice in the formation of human character building? These questions are

discussed in this article by exploring philosophical paths that lead humans to the universality and particularity of conscience and God's voice.

Materials and Methods

The way to answer the question in this paper is by indicating philosophical ideas between the existence of conscience and voice of God. Online and offline scripts are derived from books and journals to understand shown matters. The data analysis includes attaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in references lists. The discourses of the two ideas are mainly included to pinpoint correlations between them and how it could contribute to matter of character building.

Results and Discussion

Moral and Ethical Rationality in Conscience

Humans are reflective creatures in their thoughts and actions. Conscience is a moral value in human rationalities. Humans use ratios regarding moral consciousness in the use of reason, further consideration of everything, and the universality of prevailing thoughts (Poedjawijatna, 1982; Sudiarja, 2008). Along with the ratio, humans are aware of the existence of morals to do good actions for themselves that directly or indirectly shape impacts to other humans. This consciousness is not obtained directly, but through the experience of the conscience itself (Kahn, 2021; Poedjawijatna, 1982). Good deed is ethical either, whereas a rational conscience leads humans to know consciously and willingly towards freedom. Thus, conscience works in three forms; moral consciousness of good and bad, real and authentic ethical actions according to conscience, and the determination of whether an action is good or bad (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017; Poedjawijatna, 1982). In this context, conscience is the presupposed norms and an end of human action as well.

Conscience is a moral phenomenon in human beings. It will only appear when humans face

situations between good and bad choices. Therefore, conscience works whenever humans deal with their hesitation and confusion that may lead to bad things. Conscience lives as *actus potentia* that develops but is inactive in human beings (Bertens, 2005; Kahn, 2021). The indication is that humans tend to be malicious, but their conscience will always bring goodness even though they deny it. Moreover, when humans do bad deeds, their conscience will continue to guide them towards goodness.

Moral in the human conscience is a moral aspect which is both thinking and acting, metaphysical and ethical, and retrospectively and prospectively (Bertens, 2005; Sudiarja, 2008). When humans obey their conscience, then at the same time they are autonomous in their thoughts and actions. Immanuel Kant refers to it as *kategorisch*; obedience to humanity, which is realized unconditionally (Poespoprodjo, 1988; Sudarminta, 2012). Conscience is prudent and thoughtful, not a natural urge equivalent to instinct, because it involves the sensibility of thinking and acting. Because of this human's relative sensibility, human dignity also varies depending on moral rationality (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017; Sudarminta, 2012). This is dualism in humans. The existence of conscience is so universal that applies equally to every human being. Otherwise, its existence is also particular because it depends on the relativity of the maturity of conscience in determining the path of human life.

Ethically, conscience gives guidance to good and humane deeds. It assesses individual actions then shapes responsibility through consideration of conscience in determining the truth according to God, individual subjectivity, and common solidarity. Hence, the conscience in the human conscience is transcendent, personal, and universal (Hansen, 2011; Sudiarja, 2008). The concept is already known but always shows further potential to be explored. It relates to the idea of being transcendent since it points to good and bad indicators (*index*), judging (*judex*), and avenger (*vindex*) to human actions (Churchland, 2019; Poedjawijatna, 1982). This transcendence is interpreted as the existence of God in the human conscience. Conscience is also subjective by

emphasizing the moral goodness of the individual. This aspect emphasizes that the urge of good actions comes from and affects to own human heart itself in moral obligation. Conscience is also universal, not in the terms of human attitudes and behaviors, but in logical and good considerations (Hansen, 2011; Kahn, 2021). This universal rationality then forms the moral point of view of the goodness and badness aspects of an action.

Postures of Human and God in Conscience

Conscience is claimed through moral consciousness within the framework of human ratios. When deliberating or thinking about something, then he or she is conscious and certain that he or she is thinking despite he or she may doubt everything (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017; Poespoprodjo, 1988). Being aware to moral existence also means that he or she is consciously aware about the existence of good and bad values simultaneously. These good and bad values then are directed by conscience towards thoughts and actions. If so, where do these good and bad values come from? It comes from the manifestation of human nature itself (Churchland, 2019; Elgat, 2022). Humans exist in their own purposes and attach to themselves. Without being shown towards certain truths, humans understands the reality of various truths.

In principle, a thing stated to be good or bad depending on whether it will bring good or bad to others if many people do it (Poespoprodjo, 1988; Rakove, 2020). The act of sharing specified to be good because it will bring common solidarity which will further encourage greater values of kindness. A handful of people who share will have a good impact as an example for others to do good deeds. Otherwise, stealing specified to be a bad thing because if everyone does it, then it would make negative impact on society (Rakove, 2020; Sudarminta, 2012). Many people will lose their possessions in microeconomics and it will cause psychological stress and even a downturn in macroeconomics. A few of people who steal need to be punished to contain the deed and not set a bad example for society.

Likewise, conscience lives as a persona attached to a person and a super-personal that seems to be

beyond human (Bertens, 2005; Sudarminta, 2012). Consequently, the human conscience is interpreted through an illuminated heart as *lumen naturale*. From this definition, value of transcendence is known as the value of God himself according to the religion that humans adhere and embrace well. As a result, the conscience is stated as similar as the voice of God (Churchland, 2019; Rakove, 2020). Furthermore, the voice of religion is the voice of God. The relevance is, following religious orders means having morals because they are considered to obey God's morals directly through the revelations received by humans (Hansen, 2011; Tjahjadi, 2009). Humans need to direct their conscience based on religious values that in accordance to God's teachings.

Religion teaches that humans can communicate with God and otherwise, but it would be mistaken to say that listening to the conscience means hearing God speak to humans (Bertens, 2005; Suseno, 2006). Religion is able to presuppose the voice of God because of the interpretation of religion itself towards God through the revelations contained in rituals and dogmas. That interpretation also attaches humans to religion. However, conscience belongs to humans, not religion (Hansen, 2011; Rakove, 2020). Religion only provides a system of thinking towards God's truth; even people who are not religious have a conscience.

Thus, it is not right in case that following the conscience in religious commandments is the only way to the voice of God. No one knows the ultimate truth of God. Religion is only trying to approach it because all human ultimate goals are towards God. Islam and Catholic express this approach as faith in their *aqidah* and dogma (Bukhori, 2014; Tjahjadi, 2009). *Aqidah* and dogma are understood as teachings of faith between Islamic and Catholic religious leaders to be applied to every aspect of human beings. Additionally, it is true that may speak through a revelation from God, but this idea could not be separated from human interpretation of it, both from religious leaders and individuals as well as in its formation and application (Churchland, 2019; Rakove, 2020). That interpretation is also limited because humans are finite and God is infinite. Hence, it is true that

the Islamic religion recognizes the existence of Allah as a *dzat* that exists within itself (Effendi, 2020; Fahimah, 2019). Likewise with the Catholic religion which recognizes the existence of the mystery of God as God's infinite territory unknown to religion or human beings.

Understanding the voice of religion as the voice of God itself can lead to confusion in the human conscience. The human conscience is never wrong. Mistakes occur because of interpretations of conscience, especially because of a tendency towards something that actually triggers doubt to conscience (Simkhada, 2021; Tjahjadi, 2009). Even worse, human actions tend not to prioritize truth but to choose what brings more advantages to them. They think that what religion teaches is the voice of God and must be fully obeyed, whereas in fact a good religion is a religion that is thoughtful (Rakove, 2020; Suseno, 2006). God is absolute, so is conscience. The main mistake lies in the interpretation of religion by individuals that are not so universally rational enough that are not morally right either.

What is done by terrorism or even polygamy based on the narrow fanaticism of certain religions proves this. The doers of those things consider religions as a total way to God, so that what is stated in the Holy Scripture must be applied *letterlijk* without considering reality of other humans who are disturbed by their actions (Rakove, 2020; Simkhada, 2021). Conscience is not only related to the decision of action, but also responsibility of it. By obeying religion alone and ignoring others, humans could lose their clarity of heart towards humanity. Objectively, humans want to achieve God's perfection through religions, but it should be known that humans and religions are finite. The awareness that humans are limited and could not be fully objective is important so that God should not be seen through anthropocentric analogies by associating Himself as a real symbol (Dister, 1988; Hansen, 2011). God is abstract and true, while humans are real and limited in the interpretation of their thoughts, so self-justifications as the most correct ones is not morally justified.

Humans in looking at conscience could not be separated from subjectivity since conscience is

attached to each of them. He or she also could not be objective since any idea is outside of him or herself with various values (Elgat, 2022; Simkhada, 2021). On the other hand, God could not be categorized as subjective or objective, because He is perfect, nihil, and beyond. He could not also be labeled as good and bad predications because humans within their limitations could never fully understand God (Churchland, 2019; Elgat, 2022). In reverse, humans are the ones who embrace God's values in life. God's truth is neither subjective nor objective because subjectivity lies in individual truth and objectivity lies in general truth according to common people (Churchland, 2019; Effendi, 2020).

Nevertheless, the potential of conscience is God's transcendence because the values that exist in subjectivity and objectivity are God's own values. Thus, considering the subjectivity of individual actions and general objectivity is in line with following conscience (Dister, 1988; Simkhada, 2021). Worldly truth is not monolithic, except for God, so humans need to correlate between internal subjectivity and inter-subjective objectivity in the experience of good and bad values (Dister, 1988; Tjahjadi, 2009). It should be done in purpose of making conscience clearer in pointing out what humans should do. This is the same as indicating religions and philosophy since both of them sometimes stay side by side and contradict to each other. Religion through its dogma tends to skip the logic of philosophical trajectories. Philosophy tends to denote certainty in all matters, not just belief in religious faith (Djanarko & Pasopati, 2017; Simkhada, 2021). Religion and philosophy could not be completely right or wrong in viewing the transcendence of conscience. Thus, sharpening both aspects is important in understanding good and bad values alongside with the construction of the choices that may follow hereafter.

The Complexity of God's Morality in Human Ethics

The issue of human conscience related to God's voice indicates a moral complexity in ethics. On one side, conscience is transcendent with the light of God in human nature. Conscience guides humans to ethically act in practical life (Novianti,

2016; Poespoprodjo, 1988). On the other hand, the sharpening of conscience is not spontaneous, but through the experience of knowledge of good and bad values. The problem arises, as understanding good and bad values is not easy. Humans have various values within themselves that are not easy to be chosen, because choosing means tending to something, and this can lead to mistaken interpretations of conscience. Human interpretation in seeking the truth also means determining goodness itself (Novianti, 2016; Simkhada, 2021). The morality of God that is considered to exist in human beings is also difficult to achieve. Humans need to interpret the revelations and religion they receive and it can be wrong either.

Therefore, if ethics is just a practical aspect in determining good and bad aspects, this is contradictory with good and bad choices that humans must choose (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017; Simkhada, 2021). Humans, for example, could not fully choose to be altruistic or selfish, choose tragedy or happiness, because that is a dilemma. Aligning the two is also not easy since it is related to complex individual and social values. Humans are free in their own values and are not free when they are confronted with others values of freedom (Dimmock & Fisher, 2017; Dister, 1988). Even an abstract God must be labeled through human values, which in fact belittles God by making Him fixed and no longer relative.

The explanation regarding the relationship between conscience and God's voice could not be decided by simply following religion. Conscience requires certainty in guiding personal deeds, while religion is relative and can encourage people to commit bad deeds as well (Dister, 1988; Sukmono, 2013). Human interpretation over everything becomes important, not only seeking in the existence of God and human themselves, or the search for a balance between the two of them, but also because humans themselves construct everything. Humans with their interpretations have tried to unravel the mystery of God and human, but no matter how hard they try, human will always stop at their own limitations. This is the virtue of human existence; seek the truth of good and bad, and not just choose it practically

(Suseno, 2006; Tjahjadi, 2009). Morality and ethics are not only related to the reflection of good and bad values that are chosen, but also more than that, morality is a symbol of God in human beings. In so far as, human interprets doubts in determining good and bad values, human could not doubt that they themselves are the values by themselves, that through God's light they are able to give assessment as well as interpretation of everything (Churchland, 2019; Rukiyanto & Sumarah, 2014).

Conscience and Matter of Character Building

The history of philosophy is thick with contestation between science and religion. The debate prolongs until now including aspects of ontology, epistemology, and even its matter of ethics altogether with aesthetics. The essence, the way to find the essence, and how to apply the essence are the practical ways to understand those matters. Indeed, the essence is the fundamental core that has been looked in forwarding tensions for a long time. Somehow, the tensions between science and religion eludes with understandings between concepts of being stable and being conflictual. Being stable means how the fixed essence should be attained to find peace (Elgat, 2022; Sudiarja, 2008). Being conflictual indicates that ideas will never agree to each other due to its crucial differences on essences. The tensions will never end but following alternatives to step back and to examine them both are always probable.

Science and religion are two parts of this profane world as one goes down to earth and another moves to other world. Ontologically, science moves rationally while religion walks spiritually (Sudarminta, 2012; Sukmono, 2013). Both include matter of principals and teaching that could be stable and flexible either. Science works through rational thought and empirical observation of realities. Religions speaks through faith and revelation in which its chronicle could only be understood in itself (Rukiyanto & Sumarah, 2014; Suseno, 2006). Epistemologically, science and religion collide in further ways. While science founds and finds itself through matter of truths, religion indicates dogma as its main principals. Science then also bases itself on matter of progress while religion stays on inherited

traditions (Bertens, 2005; Sukmono, 2013). Ethically, science moves contextually by minding its surroundings consecutively. Religion stands for its conceptual meanings in which some rules are destined to be lived by human beings.

The debate between science and religion above shows that matters of character building are not as easy as what are indoctrinated in the educational aspects. The character is actually about the human beings himself that move ontologically, epistemologically, and ethically (Bertens, 2005; Rukiyanto & Sumarah, 2014). The essence, existence, and practical side of humans are emphasized here. If then there are several indicators in the formation of human character building in general, the aspects should also be considered in more cases that are specific. Precisely what humans understand deeply shows the true character of the self (Pulungan, 2011; Rukiyanto & Sumarah, 2014). Thus, character does not appear as an appearance of the surface, but a deep understanding of the heart towards various problems in life.

The Ministry of Education of Indonesia established eighteen values of character based on national culture ranging from religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hard work, creative, independent, democratic, curiosity, nationalism, patriotism, respect for achievement, friendship, peace, love to read, environmental care, social care, friendship, and responsibility (Djanarko & Pasopati, 2017). These various indications are declared as the truest identity of Indonesia nation. Nonetheless, these values are top-down in nature as dictation from certain authorities to discipline each individual. If so, then the matter of character building is only from the outside as far as each individual adheres to all of the values (Djanarko & Pasopati, 2017; Sukmono, 2013). Each character does not deeply understand the values as a deep form of conscience. This is since each individual discovers these values not from their own understandings, but from the teachings of others as a form of normalizing their lives.

Considering from the dialogues between conscience and God's voice above, character building shall be explored furthermore. In that sense, a character understands him or herself in

accordance to how his heart understands him or herself as a subject who continuously interprets divine values (Poespoprodjo, 1988; Pulungan, 2011). The understanding of religious values needs to be correlated with individual values as well. Religion shall not say that human is completely immoral. Similarly, humans cannot completely negate that beyond-this-world values are unnecessary. Humans live between profane and sacred values, so understanding their positions in dialogue with themselves and with other creatures becomes crucial (Poedjawijatna, 1982; Sukmono, 2013). This is because the character building is not interpreted as an instant thing, but a continuous process by considering aspects of oneself and divine values as well.

The main important point is that humanity needs to strengthen subjectivity as a crucial thing in character (Bertens, 2005; Rukiyanto & Sumarah, 2014). Related to religion, conscience also needs to be directed toward what is good and bad without making humans act like God who can totally determine, demonize, and even punish other people. The character building is clearly stated in the vision and mission of education so that individuals become normal (Dister, 1988; Pulungan, 2011). Even so, this normalization does not need to eliminate human uniqueness, even to the point of eliminating conscience or even the existence of God in His absolute voice (Rukiyanto & Sumarah, 2014; Sudiarja, 2008). Conscience is furtherly required to build a character that is not always nodding to various structures but directs it to follow the heart of each individual.

Considerations need to be continuously strengthened to direct individual characters from dualism that is entirely right or left toward various problems. Likewise, by looking at the tension in aspects of God and religion, subjectivity will be more mature to deal with a problem (Effendi, 2020; Rukiyanto & Sumarah, 2014). Furthermore, there is no single formula suitable for all character buildings. By understanding conscience, good contributions can be explored to encourage continued moderation to review the relationship between God, humans, and religion. Science plays a role in advancing humanity, but religion needs to ethically assess this progress without intending to

eliminate it altogether (Djanarko & Pasopati, 2017; Rakove, 2020). In the character building, judgment and interpretation never make mistakes, but the position of both in conscience needs to be sharpened by continuing to learn about many things. Learning is not only aimed at making individuals to become more normal, but also as a way for humans to understand differences even to the most unique ones.

Conclusions

Conscience and the God's voice are in dialogue with each other, especially in the process of character building. Conscience refers to the down-to-earth self and God's voice indicates a more sacred world. Both need to be considered as far as humans direct their conscience to the truth by looking at more universal and particular realities. This is also important in the formation of character because it operates as the process that enable humans to view the dialogues between subjectivity and God without condemning, negating, or even omitting any of its realities.

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