OCR H573 | INDEPENDENT REVISION

A* Model Essay

Conscience

Religion and Ethics

Is conscience best understood as learned psychological pressure rather than rational moral judgement?

1,538 response words | Complete annotated PDF | Individual topic edition

What is included

A complete original response, an argument plan, paragraph-level AO1/AO2 annotations and source works for further reading.

A* describes the intended style of this teaching model. This is independently written, not an OCR-marked script or a guaranteed grade.

Use this model to study argument and evaluation, then write your own answer. Do not submit it as your own assessed work.

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Argument plan

Is conscience best understood as learned psychological pressure rather than rational moral judgement?

Thesis: Freud convincingly explains why guilt and inhibition often bear the marks of upbringing, but the psychological origin of a conviction does not settle its moral validity. Aquinas's account of conscientia better explains reflective judgement and the need to educate conscience, while neither account alone establishes an infallible guide or an exclusive explanation of all moral experience.

1. Aquinas distinguishes a basic orientation towards good from the fallible act of applying moral knowledge.

Counter-argument: Reasonable people disagree and the theological framework needs independent defence.

Interim judgement: The account explains rational assessment without guaranteeing a correct answer in every case.

2. Freud explains guilt through internalised authority and conflict within the personality.

Counter-argument: A causal explanation of moral pressure does not show that all moral reasons reduce to it.

Interim judgement: The superego is illuminating as an account of some moral experience, but its explanatory reach must be justified.

3. Dissent, self-criticism and moral education reveal reflective capacities beyond passive conformity.

Counter-argument: Even dissent may draw on earlier learned standards rather than an untouched inner faculty.

Interim judgement: Learned content and rational criticism can coexist; origin and validity should be assessed separately.