

RS 35: In Search of the Good

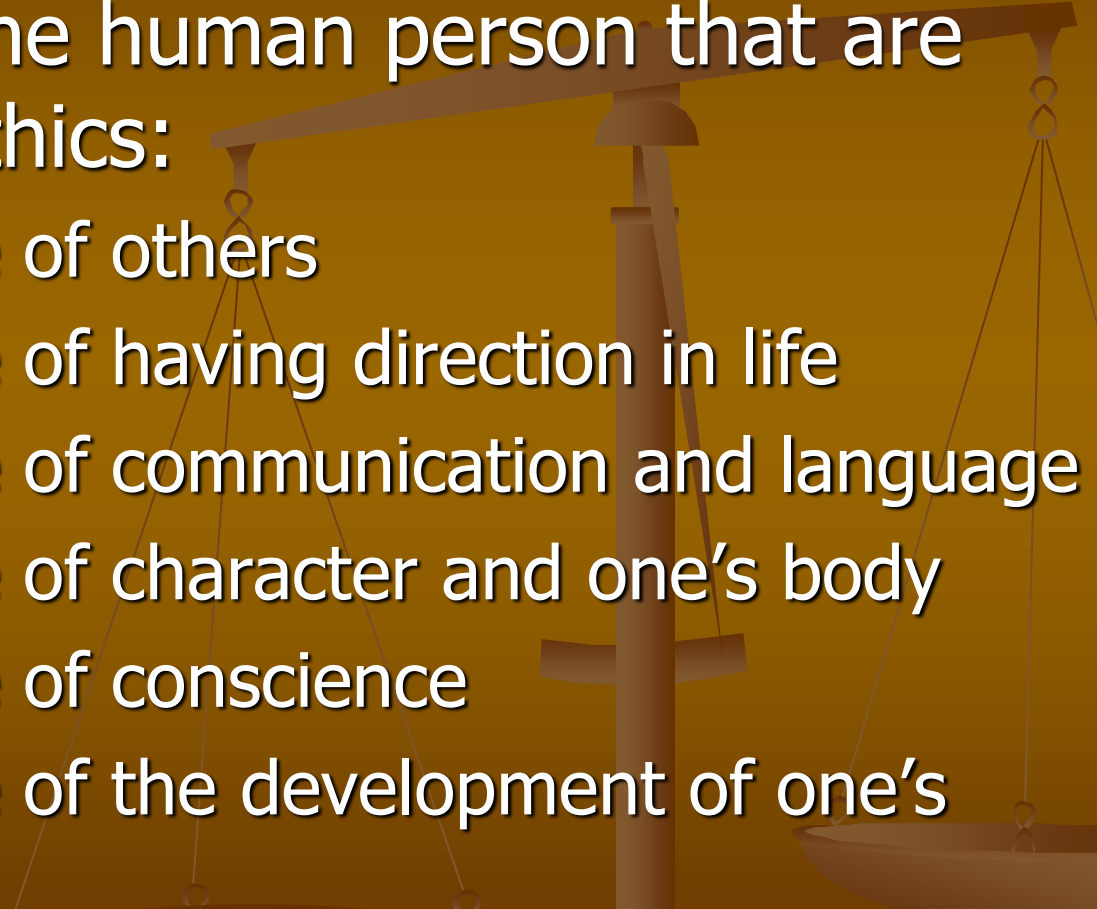


Chapter 3

Conscience: The self in search of the good

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Outline

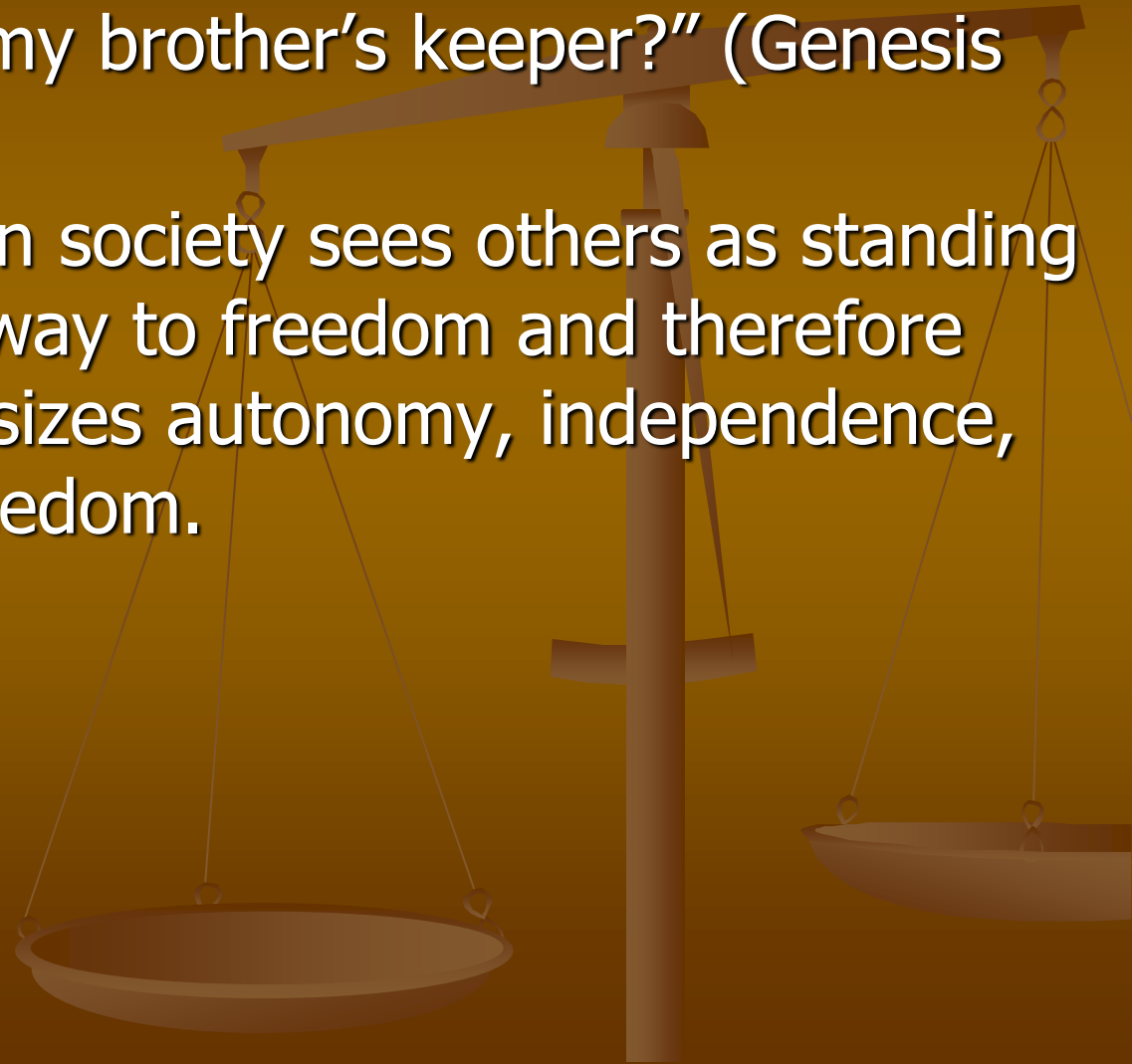
- Six aspects of the human person that are important for ethics:
 - A. The importance of others
 - B. The importance of having direction in life
 - C. The importance of communication and language
 - D. The importance of character and one's body
 - E. The importance of conscience
 - F. The importance of the development of one's conscience
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Conscience: The self in search of the good

A. The importance of others

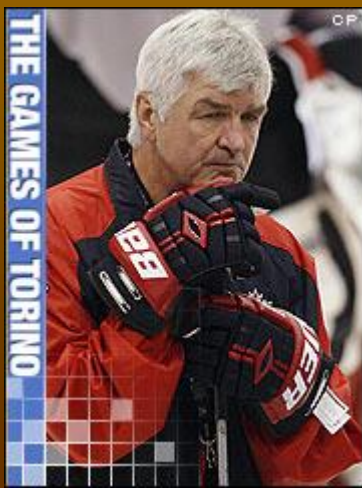


- “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9)
- Western society sees others as standing in our way to freedom and therefore emphasizes autonomy, independence, and freedom.





- Jean-Paul Sartre: considered others to be his “hell” as they restricted his freedom. He felt that he could be a human being without others.
- In contrast, many would see the other as necessary for us to become our true selves, individuals in freedom.
- Ex. “Bottom line is you have to come together as a team. We still were relying on individual skills and we just didn’t get over that hump we needed to get over.” – Pat Quinn after finishing 7th in hockey at the 2006 Olympics.



Narcissus and Eco



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- **Narcissism**: to be self-absorbed

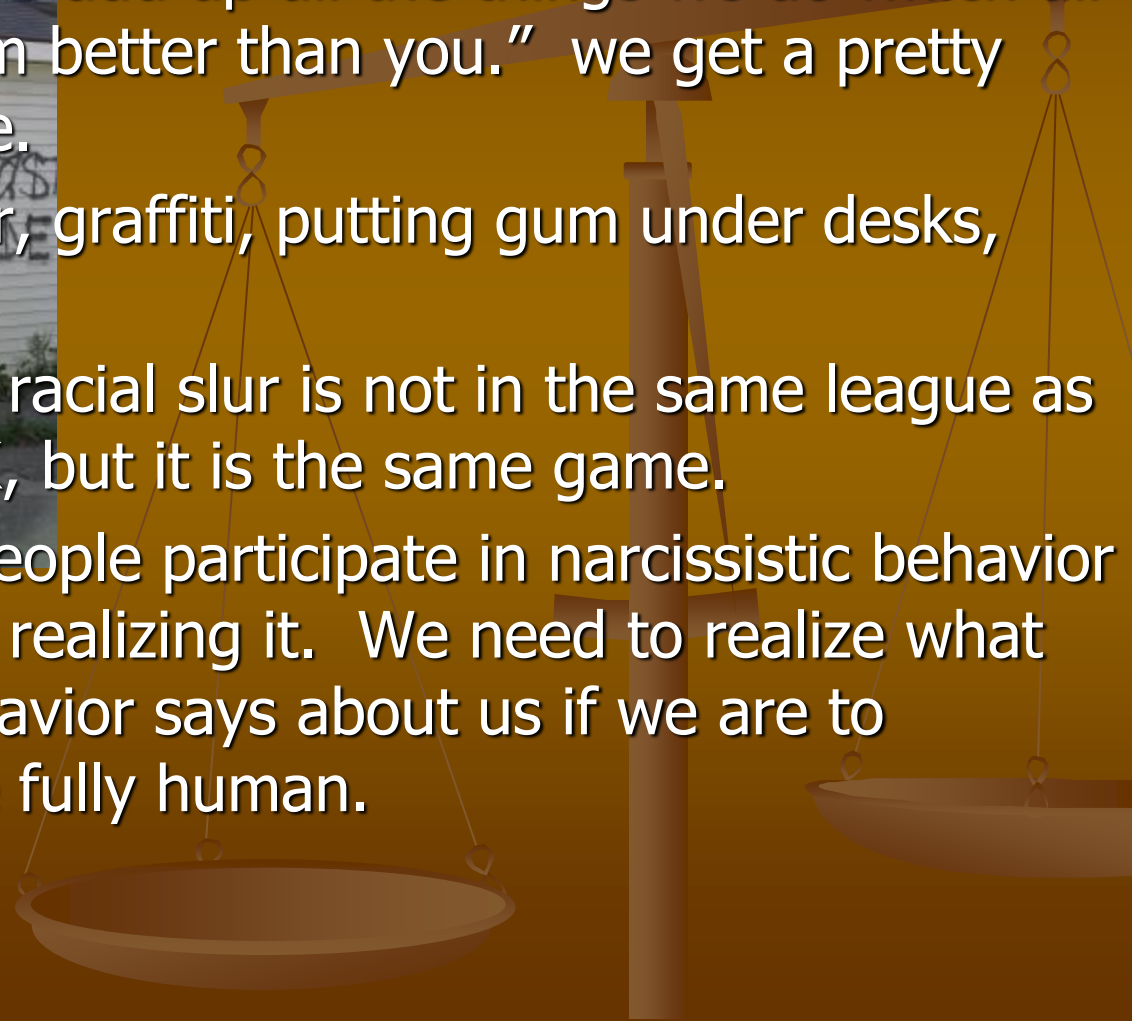
- From the Greek "**narkoun**" - to be numbed

- When we add up all the things we do which all say, "I'm better than you." we get a pretty ugly pile.

- Ex. litter, graffiti, putting gum under desks, etc.

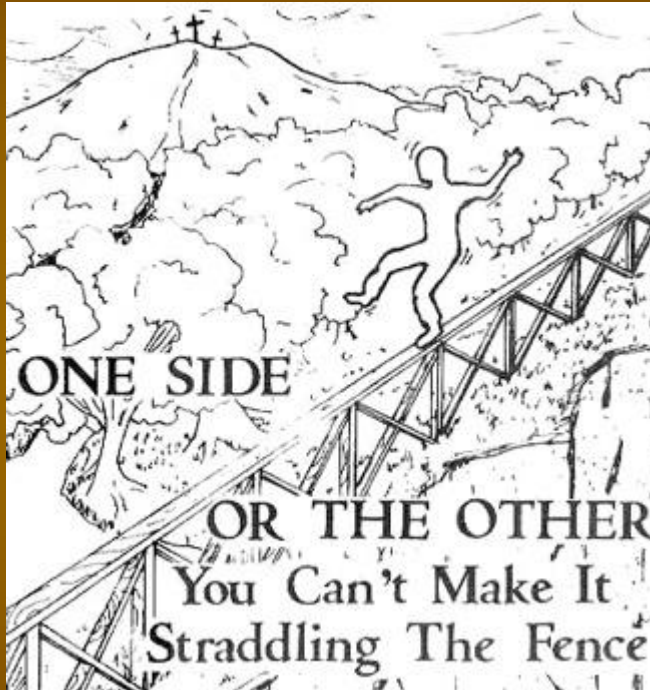
- Using a racial slur is not in the same league as the KKK, but it is the same game.

- Often people participate in narcissistic behavior without realizing it. We need to realize what our behavior says about us if we are to become fully human.



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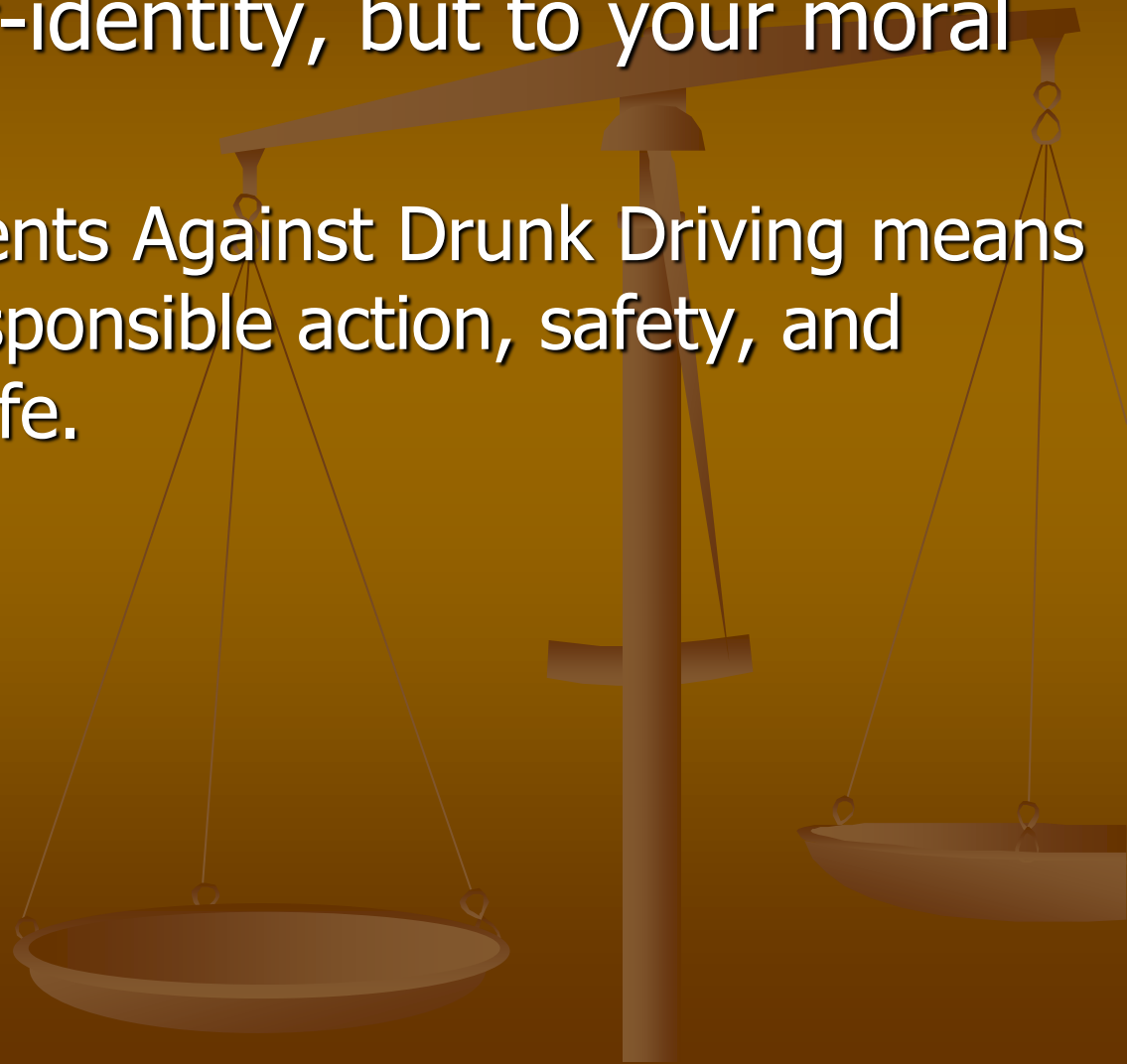
B. The importance of having direction in life



- “I know your works; you are either cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” (Revelation 3:15-16)
- “If you don’t have anything worth dying for, what do you have worth living for.”
- “The most open mind is an empty head.”
- “If you stand for everything, then you are committed to nothing.”

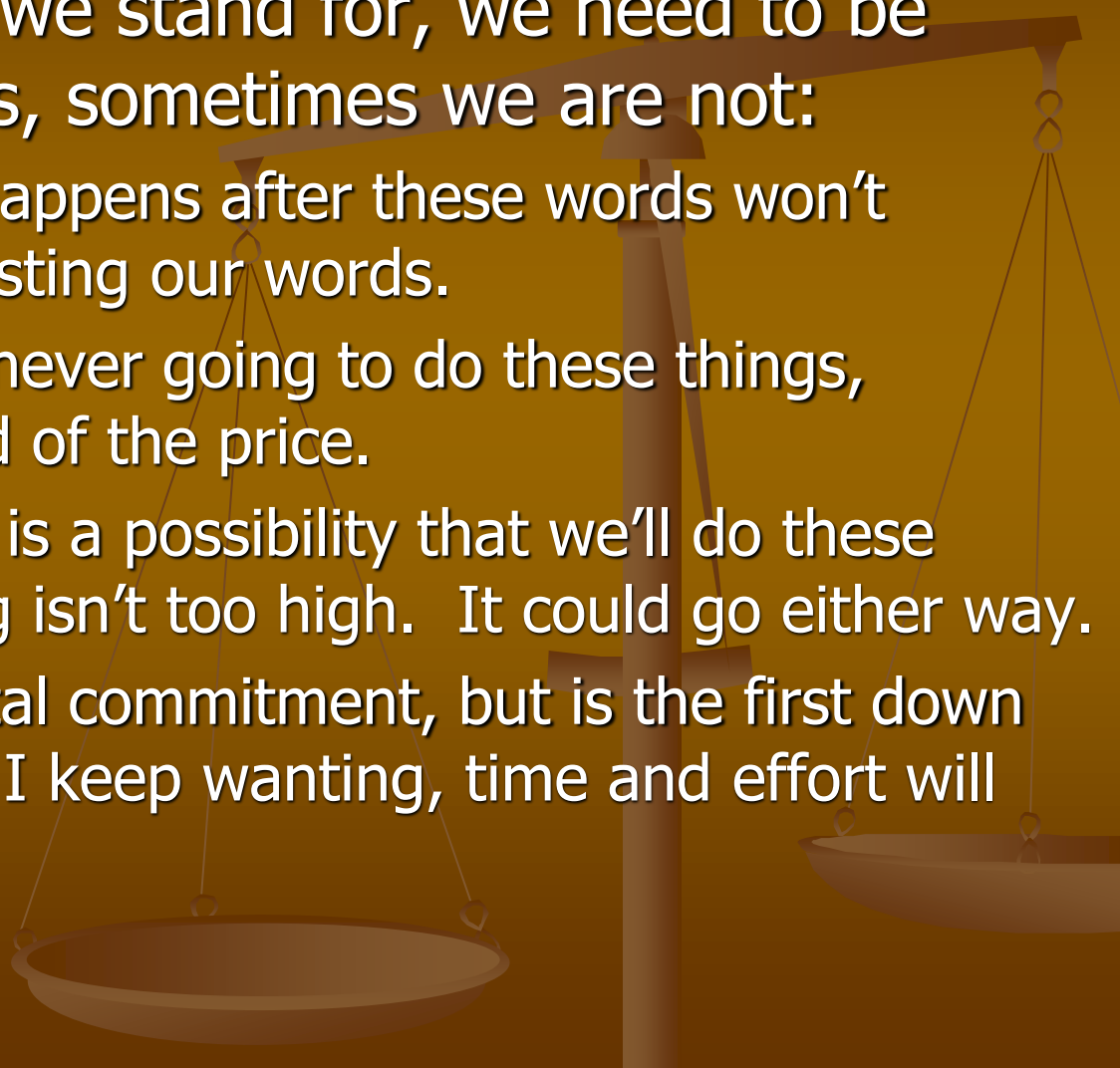
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- Knowing where you stand is essential, not only for your self-identity, but to your moral self.
 - Ex. Joining Students Against Drunk Driving means you stand for responsible action, safety, and preservation of life.



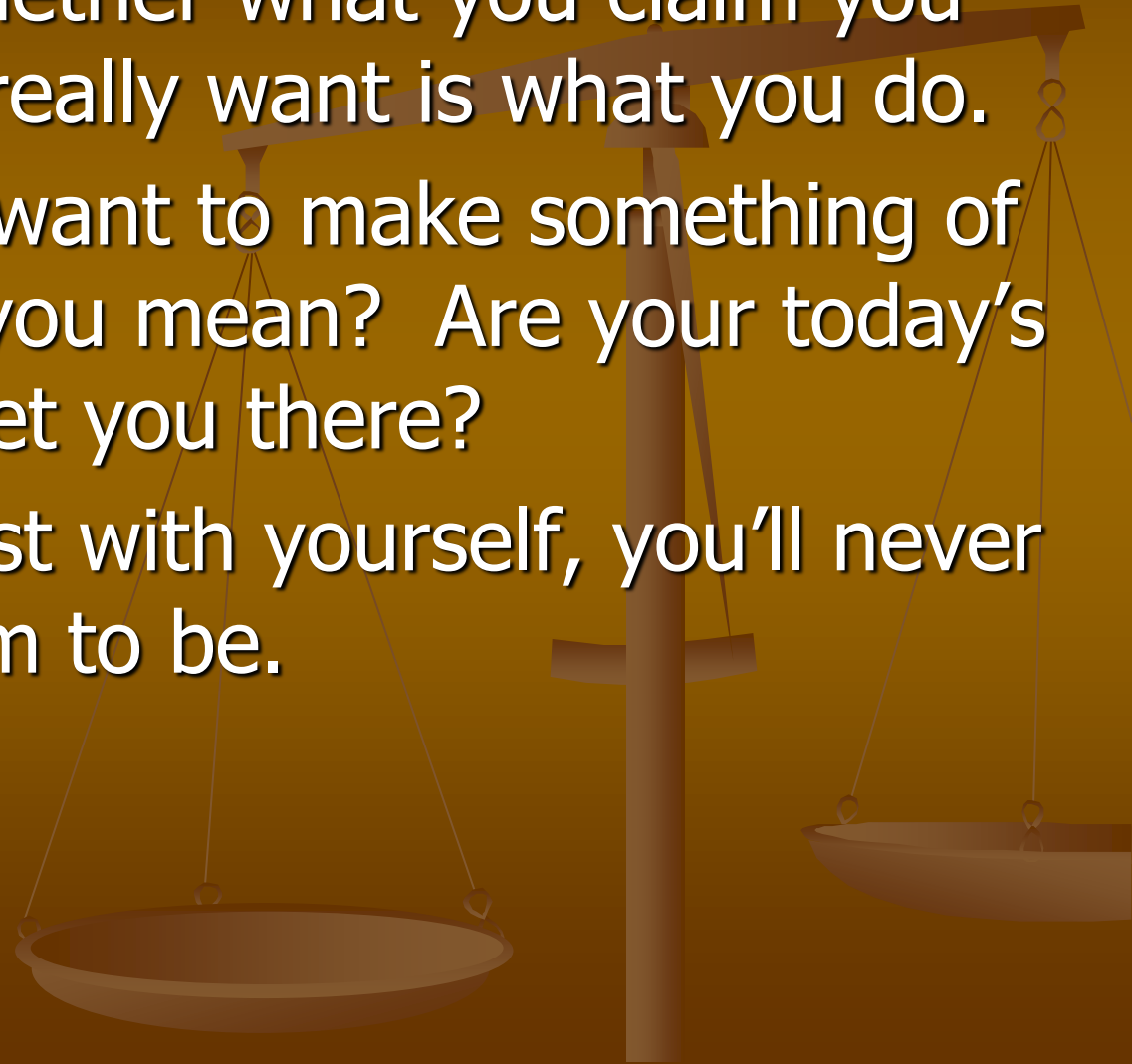
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- When deciding what we stand for, we need to be honest with ourselves, sometimes we are not:
 - “I wish...” whatever happens after these words won’t happen so we are wasting our words.
 - “I feel like...” we are never going to do these things, because we are afraid of the price.
 - “I would like...” there is a possibility that we’ll do these things, if the price tag isn’t too high. It could go either way.
 - “I want...” is not a total commitment, but is the first down payment. As long as I keep wanting, time and effort will follow.



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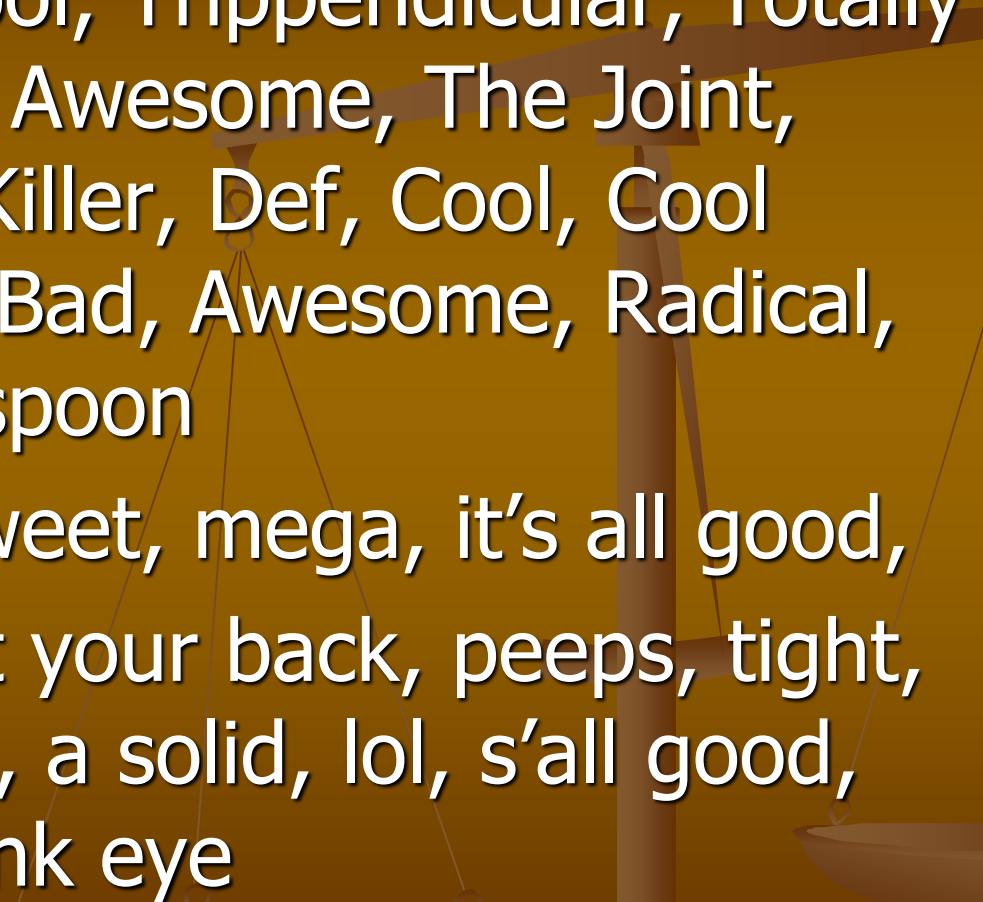
- The test to see whether what you claim you want is what you really want is what you do.
- When you say, “I want to make something of myself,” what do you mean? Are your today’s actions going to get you there?
- If you aren’t honest with yourself, you’ll never be what you dream to be.



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C. The importance of communication and language

- We do not come to our stance in life independently, but is shaped by a community that shares a common language.
- Others have shaped what you value, dream of, and hope for.
- One's identity involves not only his stand on moral or spiritual matters, but also some reference to a defining community (ex. Catholic/Quebecois, etc.)
- Language shares common experiences, like an inside joke is only understood by a few. Similarly, words like "Incarnation", "Trinity", "Eucharist", have a definitive meaning for Catholics.

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- Ex. 1980s – Bargain, That's pretty bogus, "My parents are going away. Bonus!" Wicked, Way Cool, Trippendicular, Totally Tubular, Totally Awesome, The Joint, Rippen, Major, Killer, Def, Cool, Cool Beans, Bitchin', Bad, Awesome, Radical, Gag me with a spoon
 - 1990's – Not, sweet, mega, it's all good,
 - 2000s – I've got your back, peeps, tight, sick, chill, props, a solid, lol, s'all good, s'up, stoked, stink eye

The Trinity in Art







The Old Testament Trinity:

This traditional image, originally painted by Andrei Rublev in 1425, shows us the three visitors to Abraham and Sarah described in Genesis 18. Orthodox tradition identifies the three visitors with the three persons of the Trinity.

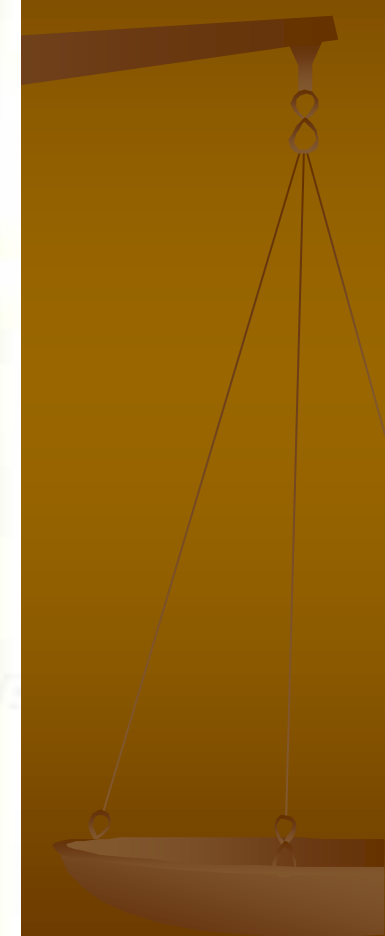
The Father would be the one on the left, to which the Son and the Spirit are bending their heads.

Christian art history places the iconographic style as appearing in the first three centuries of Christianity. Icons are believed to have first been used in peoples homes & did not enter places of worship until the end of the 3rd century AD.

The original painting of The Old Testament Trinity was created in 1411 by Andrei Rublev and shows the three angels who visited Abraham at Mamre and are symbols of the Holy Trinity. In the center is the angel representing Jesus Christ. This is evident from the purple and blue garments. To the right is the angel who represents the Holy Spirit. Both angels bow before the third, who represents God the Father and the senior member of the Trinity.



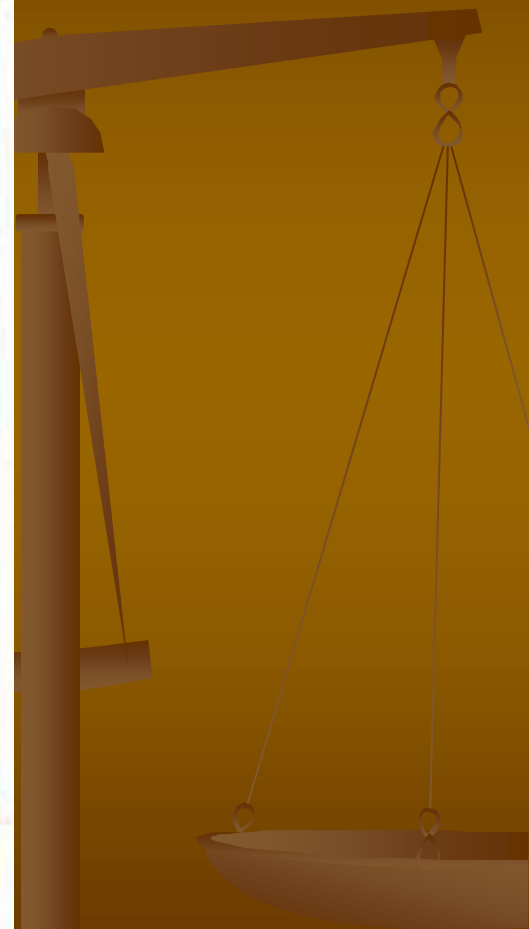








THE CRUCIFIXION BY MICHAEL ANTONIO, 1672



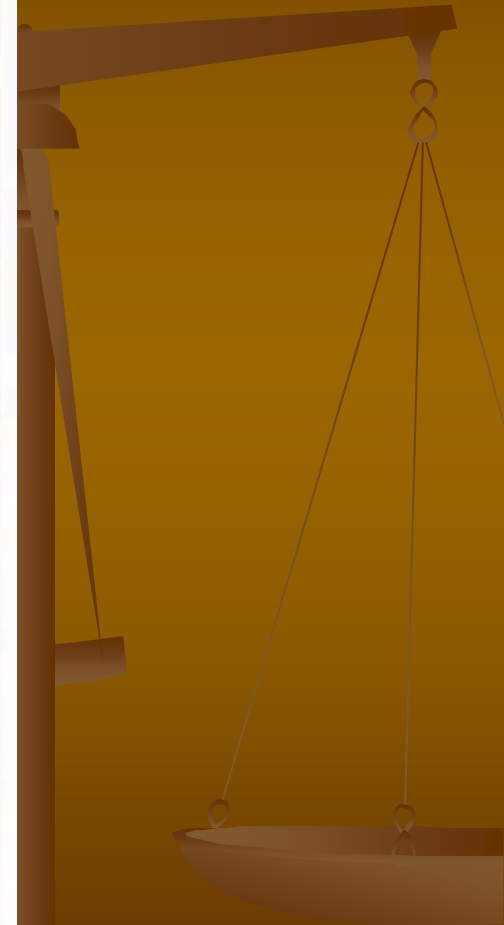




CROMOS Y NOVEDADES DE MEXICO, S.A.



041 Santísima Trinidad (Tres personas)

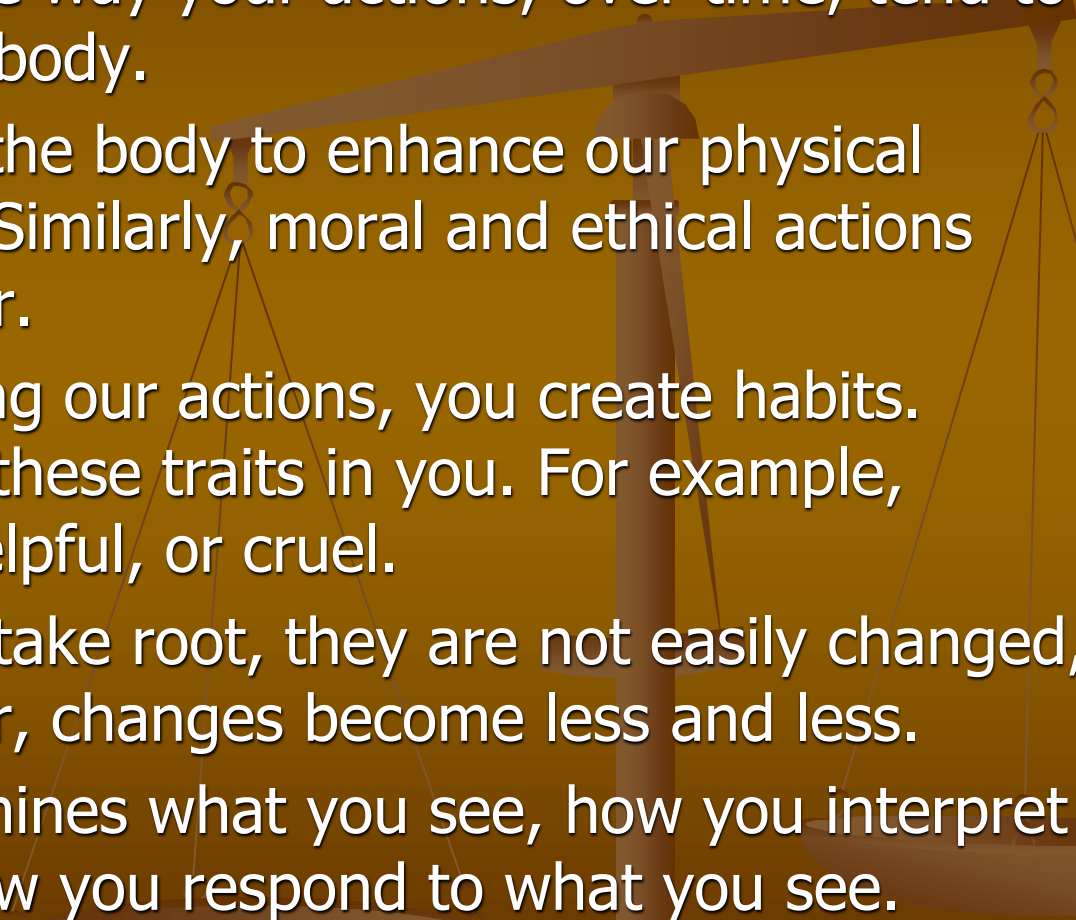






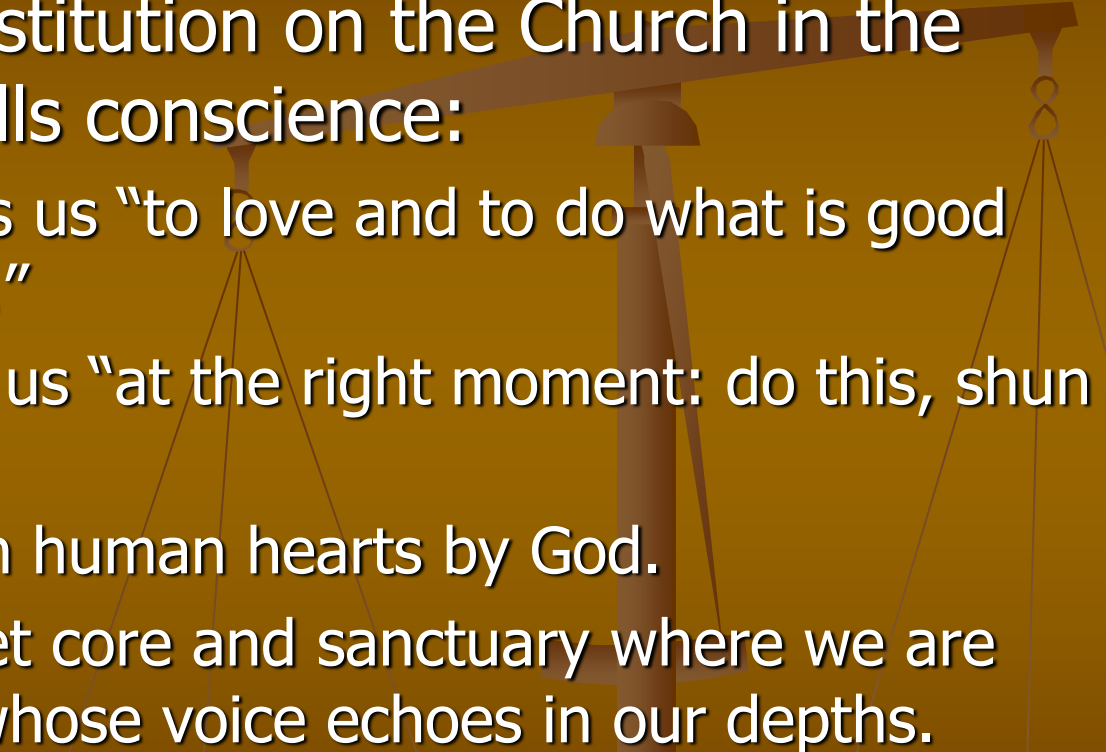
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D. The importance of character and one's body

- Character refers to the way your actions, over time, tend to become fixed in your body.
 - In athletics, we train the body to enhance our physical capacity to perform. Similarly, moral and ethical actions enhance our character.
 - By constantly repeating our actions, you create habits. Others will recognize these traits in you. For example, cheerful, stubborn, helpful, or cruel.
 - Once character traits take root, they are not easily changed, and as you grow older, changes become less and less.
 - Your character determines what you see, how you interpret what you see, and how you respond to what you see.
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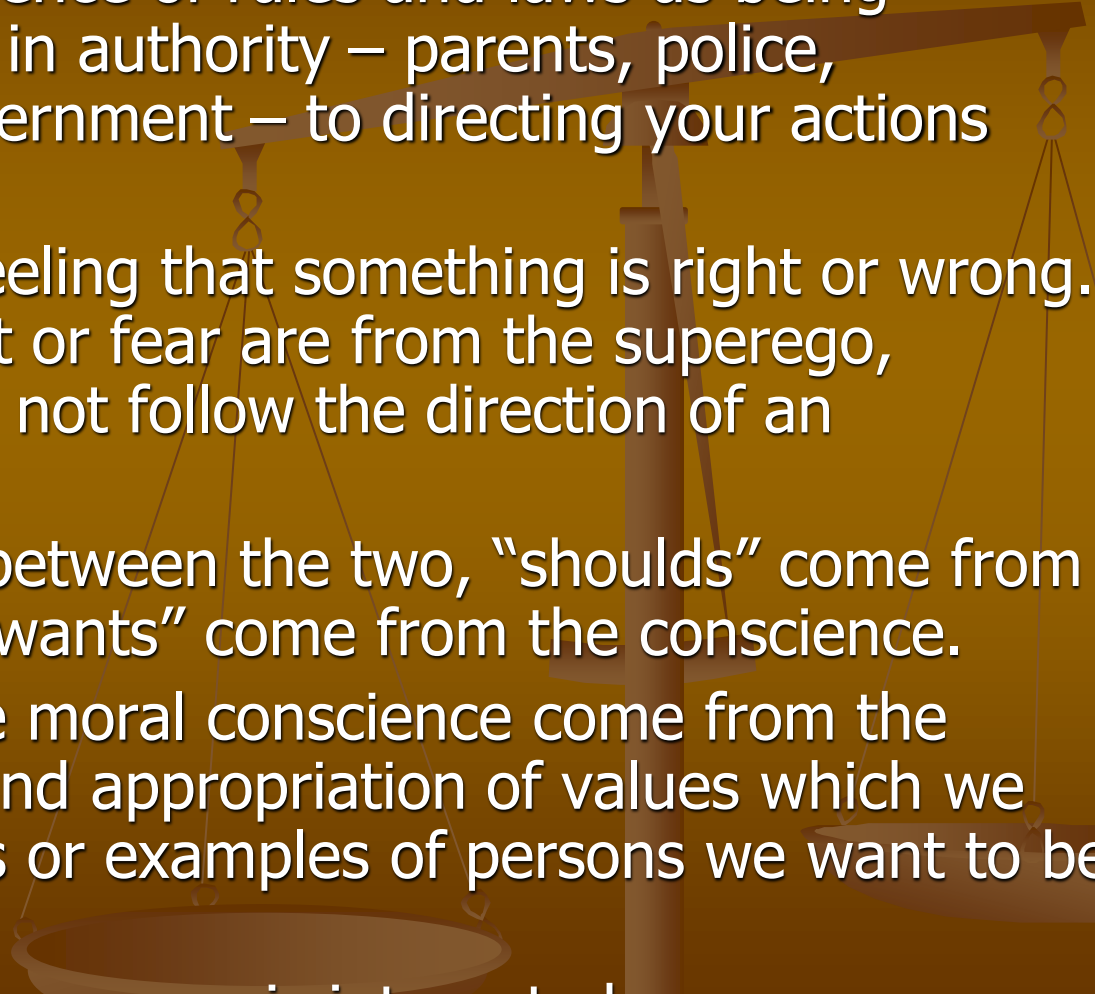
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E. The importance of conscience

- The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World calls conscience:
 - A voice that calls us “to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil.”
 - A voice that tells us “at the right moment: do this, shun that.”
 - A law inscribed in human hearts by God.
 - Is our most secret core and sanctuary where we are alone with God whose voice echoes in our depths.
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■ Conscience vs. Superego

- As people develop a mature conscience, they generally move from the experience of rules and laws as being imposed by someone in authority – parents, police, teachers, priests, government – to directing your actions more from within.
 - Conscience is not a feeling that something is right or wrong. These feelings of guilt or fear are from the superego, resulting when we do not follow the direction of an authority.
 - When distinguishing between the two, “shoulds” come from the superego, while “wants” come from the conscience.
 - The commands of the moral conscience come from the personal perception and appropriation of values which we discover in the stories or examples of persons we want to be like.
 - As you mature, your superego is integrated.
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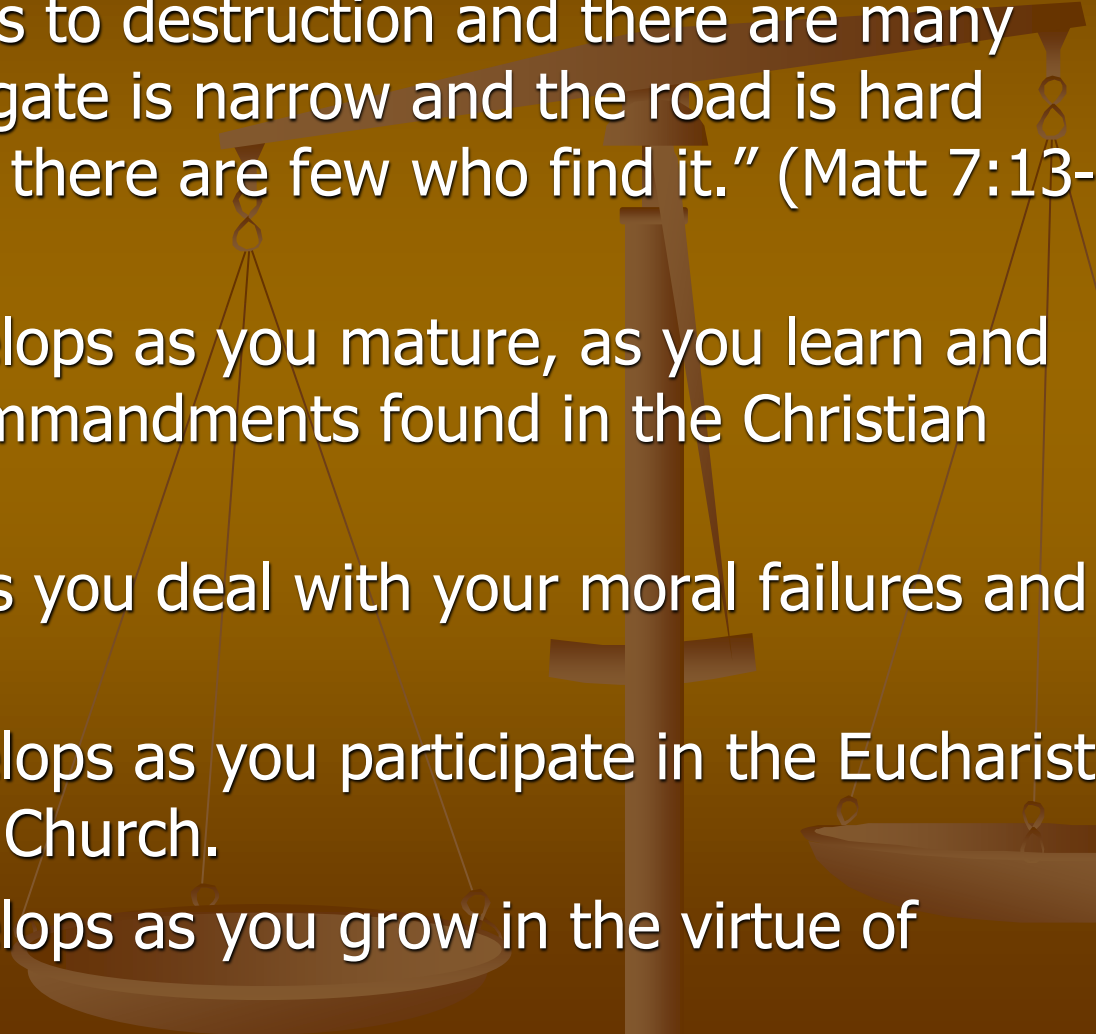
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■ Three senses of conscience:

1. Conscience as a capacity to recognize right and wrong
 - People from all cultures have an awareness of right and wrong.
 - Sociopath and psychopath refers to those who have no conscience.
2. Conscience as a process of moral reasoning
 - Your conscience must be formed and informed, in a lifelong process.
3. Conscience as a judgment
 - Your conscience is incomplete until you make the commitment to do what is right.

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- F. The development of one's conscience
 - "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matt 7:13-14)
 - Your conscience develops as you mature, as you learn and follow virtues and commandments found in the Christian tradition.
 - Your conscience helps you deal with your moral failures and sins.
 - Your conscience develops as you participate in the Eucharist and prayer life of the Church.
 - Your conscience develops as you grow in the virtue of humility.
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Conscience: The self in search of the good

- Symptoms of a misinformed conscience:
 - **Rationalization**: Stealing may be wrong sometimes, but large stores can afford it because they are making huge profits.
 - **Trivialization**: It's no big deal. Everyone else does it.
 - **Misinformation**: My doctor told me that all teenage girls should take the birth control pill to prevent getting pregnant.
 - **The end justifies the immoral means**: I had to steal the chocolate bar – I didn't have any money and I hadn't eaten for 12 hours. I get sick if I don't eat.
 - **Means to an end**: By dropping a nuclear bomb to end the war, we'll end up saving lives.
 - **Difficult to reason**: Having been kicked out of his home and finding himself with no place to go, a teen acts without thinking. He breaks into an empty home to keep warm when he could have asked for help from the police.
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