

Chapter 1

Philosophical Perspectives on Conscience and Conscientious Destinations: An Interview With Alberto Giubilini

Alberto Giubilini

University of Oxford, UK

Giulia Isetti (GI): *Although conscience is a concept that we generally understand on an intuitive level, there is a certain lack of clarity when it comes to having to define it. Could you please give us a brief overview of possible interpretations of this concept and your personal understanding of it?*

Alberto Giubilini (AG): Conscience can mean different things. From a psychological point of view, it is the set of moral beliefs and moral emotions we identify with. Our conscience plays a key role in defining our personal identity and in shaping our feeling of who we are. Consistent with the original meaning of the term (both in Greek and Latin) as sharing knowledge with someone, conscience can be understood as an inner voice coming from some internalised figure. It is as if we had another person inside of us with whom we identify and whom we use as a standard for morality. Historically, this understanding of conscience has been given different readings. For instance, in Rousseau such an inner voice is the product of one's education; in Freud it results from one's upbringing and the influence of parental figures (the superego); in the Christian tradition, it is the voice of God inside of us. But there is also an emotive component in the notion of conscience, as we often talk of the 'bites of conscience'. In this sense, conscience is also a feeling of guilt that we have when we perceive we did something we think is wrong – an aspect that was emphasised, for example, by Kant.

GI: *What is the relationship between self and others when we speak about conscience and what practical implications does this have?*

AG: Conscience is an inner voice and is subjective in the sense that it does not require accounting for one's actions to others, but only to oneself. When you

Destination Conscience, 15–16



Copyright © 2024 Alberto Giubilini.

Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited. These works are published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of these works (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

doi:10.1108/978-1-80455-960-420241002

appeal to your conscience to justify something you did, normally that means you are taking your own conscience as enough for a justification. You don't need to further justify it to others. However, since we are social beings, our morality is inevitably shaped by the society and small and large networks in which we live: family, friends, colleagues, religious groups and our cultural background. In many views, conscience is just the way we internalise the norms that are relevant to our social groups.

GI: *What does it mean for a tourism destination to have a conscience and what would a conscientious destination look like?*

AG: I suppose it means to have a cultural identity and to try to preserve it. Conscience is an inner space made of the core values with which we identify. If geographical places have consciences, such consciences must be the values from which these places derive their own identity. In most cases, these are the cultural values of those who inhabit them or which shaped their histories.

GI: *If we understand conscience as a faculty for indirect moral knowledge, conscience can be considered a relativistic notion whose content changes according to social, cultural, and familial circumstances. Thus, being subjective moral compasses, consciences may be at odds with each other. Starting from this consideration, how can a common understanding of conscience, shared by its inhabitants, guests and economic stakeholders, be achieved by a tourism destination?*

AG: I think by appealing to a notion of respect for local values and norms. This applies to inhabitants and economic stakeholders who can defend the place's identity by not altering its nature and identity for financial purposes. And it also applies to guests, who can enjoy a tourist destination more by appreciating its own identity. This requires respecting it and not expecting it to change just because 'I am paying for my holiday'. After all, often, the reason why places become tourist destinations is precisely their own cultural identity. The appeal of a place would likely be undermined if its cultural identity is not preserved.

GI: *In your opinion, does a conscientious destination appeal to already conscientious tourists seeking meaning in their traveling experience, or does it rather aim to appeal to a broader audience and raise awareness of its own specific concept of conscience? If so, how?*

AG: If by 'conscientious destination' we mean a destination with its own identity based on local cultural values, it appeals mostly to those tourists who can appreciate local cultures, cultural differences and who value cultural identity. But by not altering its nature too much to accommodate tourists' expectations, it can also raise awareness of the importance of such values in those tourists who are less sensitive to them, so that they can learn to better appreciate the local dimension of the places they visit.