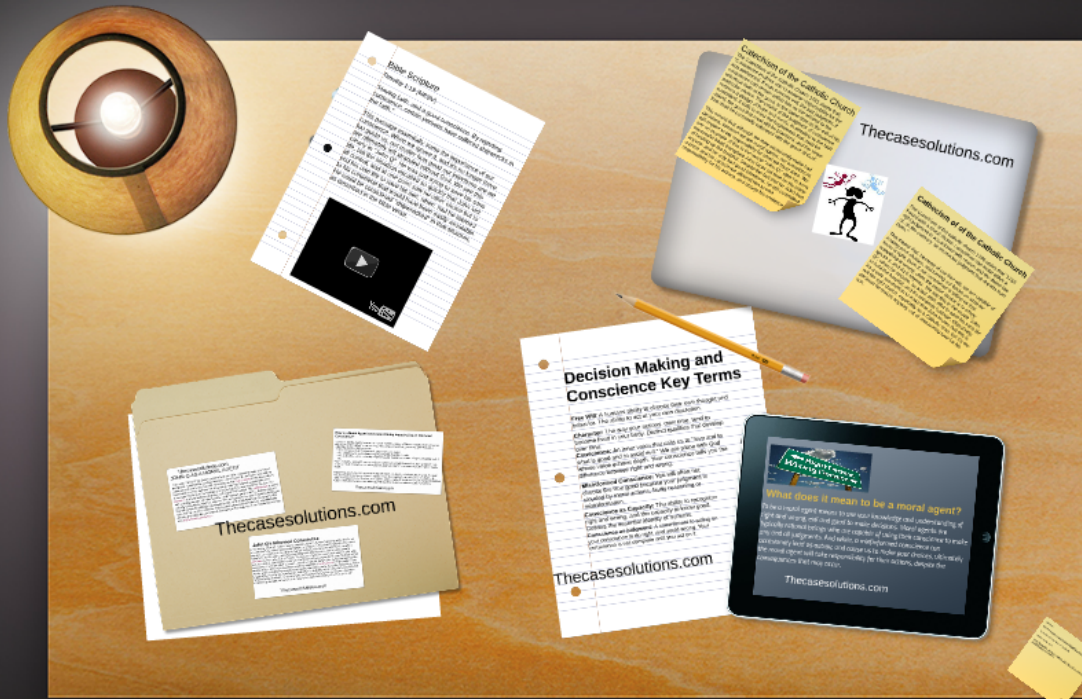


Predicting a Firm's Financial Distress: The Merrill Lynch Co. Statement of Cash Flows

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Decision Making and Conscience Key Terms

Free Will: A humans ability to choose their own thought and behavior. The ability to act at your own discretion.

Character: The way your actions, over time, tend to become fixed in your body. Distinct qualities that develop over time.

Conscience: An inner voice that calls us to "love and to what is good and to avoid evil." We are alone with God whose voice echoes depth. Your conscience tells you the difference between right and wrong.

Misinformed Conscience: You will often not choose the true good because your judgment is clouded by moral actions, faulty reasoning or misinformation.

Conscience as Capacity: The ability to recognize right and wrong, and the capacity to know good. Defines the essential identity of humans.

Conscience as judgment: A commitment to acting on your conscience to do right, and avoid wrong. Your conscience is not complete until you act on it.

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What does it mean to be a moral agent?

To be a moral agent means to use your ability to distinguish between right and wrong, evil and good to make typically rational beings who are capable of making any and all judgments. And while, a mistake occasionally lead us astray, and cause us to act in a way that the moral agent will take responsibility for the consequences that may occur.

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What does it mean to be a moral agent?

To be a moral agent means to use your knowledge and understanding of right and wrong, evil and good to make decisions. Moral agents are typically rational beings who are capable of using their conscience to make any and all judgments. And while, a misinformed conscience can occasionally lead us astray, and cause us to make poor choices, ultimately the moral agent will take responsibility for their actions, despite the consequences that may occur.

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JOHN Q AS A MORAL AGENT

The movie "John Q" is about a man whose son is in desperate need of a heart transplant, however his family's insurance won't cover it, and John is unable to come up with the funds himself. John acts as the **moral agent** in the story, when, faced with no other options, he chooses to hold the hospital at gunpoint, and leverages the lives of his hostages in exchange for a new heart for his son. His **intention** is never to harm anyone, as the gun isn't loaded. His **conscience** allowed him to bring the gun into the hospital, and threaten people with it, but he couldn't actually bring himself to hurt anyone. The only person he ever considers hurting is himself, when he willingly volunteers to die, so that his heart can be given to his son, and he can live a full life. His actions, while well-intentioned, are ultimately wrong, and could be considered, throughout the majority of the movie the actions of a **malformed conscience**.

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How is a Moral Agent's Decision Making Impacted by an Informed Conscience?

Having an informed conscience is each of our individual responsibility as humans, and requires an ongoing effort throughout our whole lives. Your conscience is being informed, and developing constantly, but most notably when;

- You take account of Christian traditions, norms and values.
- You participate in the Eucharist and the prayerful life of the Church.
- You spend time with your family, which helps you develop your sense of right and wrong early in life.

Your conscience isn't just informed and developed by your right choices, but also by your wrongs. When you make mistakes, and when you fail, you learn from it, and won't make the same mistake again.

Depending upon how your conscience was informed and developed, it shapes the way you live your life and make your choices. Those individuals who have worked their whole lives to shape their conscience based on their families, their values, and the word of God have a much stronger foundation to base their choices upon, and ultimately will much more consistently make the right choice.

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John Q's Informed Conscience

In the movie "John Q" John's faith is important not only to him, but to his entire family, as we see that they attend mass every Sunday. And not only that, but his Church also comes together as a community to raise money for Micheal after news breaks that he needs a transplant. So it's safe to assume, that along with other factors, John's conscience is **informed** by God, and by the Church. There is one factor, however, that takes priority over that, and that is John's love for his son. It's that love that causes him to turn his back on his conscience and make what ultimately, from the Catholic perspective would be deemed the wrong choice. John Q's conscience could be considered **misinformed** in the middle of the movie, when he holds the hospital at gunpoint. He believes he is doing the right thing, and is largely influenced by his surroundings, and what he believes to be a hopeless situation. He turns his back on what he knows is right, and ignores the way his conscience has been informed by his faith, in favour of the way it has been informed by the love of his son.

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Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1781 states that; "Conscience enables one to assume responsibility for the acts performed. If man commits evil, the just judgment of conscience can remain within him as the witness to the universal truth of the good, at the same time as the evil of his particular choice. The verdict of the judgment of conscience remains a pledge of hope and mercy. In attesting to the fault committed, it calls to mind the forgiveness that must be asked, the good that must still be practiced, and the virtue that must be constantly cultivated with the grace of God:

This means that although we may occasionally make bad decisions, because we are moral agents, our consciences will require to take responsibility for what we have done. We see an example of this in the movie "John Q," after his sons successful heart transplant John faces jail time for his crime of holding up the hospital. Despite the fact that he didn't hurt anyone, and he only had good intentions, he still committed a crime and his conscience allowed him to take responsibility for his actions, and accept his sentence.



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Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church 1786 states that "1786 Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them."

This means that, because of our free will, we are capable of making poor choices, and turning our backs on what we know is right. Even if our conscience is telling us that something is wrong, often the easier choice is to simply ignore it, and do it anyway. We see this in the movie "John Q", when he decides, as a last ditch effort to save his sons life to hold the hospital, and it's residents hostage. Objectively, it's a safe assumption to make that John knows that this is not the right choice, especially as a Catholic man, but it's the decision he makes anyway, out of unwavering love for his son.