Noor Grewal

DaFoe

APEL

19 January 2022

Pope On-Demand

Making mistakes is a fundamental part of the human experience. Everybody has made a mistake, whether consequential or insignificant, at some point in their life. Thus, making mistakes is easy, but forgiving those mistakes often is not. Alexander Pope, in his long poem *An Essay on Criticism*, wrote that making mistakes is human, however forgiving those mistakes is “divine.” Forgiveness does not usually come easy, and is seen by Pope as something holy, something that should not be taken for granted, because it is a second chance. This can be a shot at redemption for the errors that every person makes, but it can also result in horrible consequences when gifted to the wrong person. While I agree with Pope that the divinity of forgiveness for human mistakes can lead to progression when those people who have erred *want* to contribute to society, some people who make mistakes are beyond saving, and giving them a second chance can have ruinous consequences.

Primarily, second chances can allow people who have a purpose to help society to redeem themselves after making mistakes, and continue to serve society in a beneficial way. Many popular musicians and influencers have been subject to the phenomenon of “cancel culture,” in which their past or present mistakes are exposed to the media world, and their content is essentially boycotted. Examples include artists such as Billie Eilish, Doja Cat, and Lil Nas X, all of whom have been put in the spotlight on social media platforms for harmful or insensitive tweets. These people have made human mistakes like misreading situations or bringing down other people via the internet in their youth, and were given a second chance due to the reach of the music that they make. People are polarized on these issues, therefore some granted the artists the second chance to continue making their music, and all have progressed since then. Billie Eilish has millions of streamers who are touched by her emotional content, and able to relate to her, despite the fact that she has offended people in the past. She was given a second chance. Doja Cat is celebrated for her stage presence and empowering music, despite the fact that she has tweeted slurs in the past. She was given a second chance. Lil Nas X is one of the most popular rappers at the moment, and brings awareness to LGBT rights, despite the fact that he has attacked people online in the past. He was given a second chance. All of these artists made mistakes, were forgiven, and now serve society in positive ways today. Additionally, second chances can serve society by bringing closure to the families of victims of previously unsolved crimes. In many cold cases from before forensic technologies, the Los Angeles Police Department was prone to making mistakes in identifying the victims and perpetrators of vicious murders, taking days to find enough evidence to compile a case. Those days soon became weeks, which became months, which became years, which led to boxes and boxes of cold cases, or unsolved murders. However, when forensic technology was invented, the LAPD was given a second chance at the cases that had physical evidence, and cold cases from decades ago are still being solved today. This is an example of an entire section of our society, the police department, that was given a second chance through science, and which is thus able to serve society better, making less of the mistakes it did in the past. Even influential historical figures such as presidents have made terrible mistakes. George Washington, the first president of the United States, led his troops into a massacre when he gained commanding status. Despite this tragic mistake, he was given a second chance in the American Revolution, and was able to help the country gain independence from British tyranny. This was beneficial because even though his mistake cost lives, Washington the fact that he had made one, and that he was not a deliberate murderer. He had the goal to liberate his country from oppression, and to benefit society, so when he was forgiven, he carried out that original goal without making the same mistake. Second chances, when given to people who *want* to help society progress, can be extremely beneficial, because these people have the mindset to create positive change.

However, some people do not acknowledge the mistakes that they have made, and should not deserve a second chance because they will simply make those mistakes again. There are thousands of plots of books, movies, and television shows where the hero gives the villain a second chance, only to be double-crossed or to see them make the same “mistake.” A prominent example is in the Marvel show *Daredevil*, where the main character is a lawyer named Matt Murdock by day, and a crime-fighting vigilante named “Daredevil” by night. His main enemy is Wilson Fisk, a man who controls almost all of New York through corruption and terror. Fisk goes against Murdock in the law world and the crime world, and makes the mistakes of killing people close to him. When Murdock finally is able to get the upper hand on Fisk, he spares him instead of killing him, offering him forgiveness and a second chance at living a more honest life. Murdock, like Pope, acknowledges that humans make mistakes and that forgiveness is divine. The problem, however, is that Fisk is an example of a person who believes that his mistakes are acceptable actions, and who does not view murder and corruption as bad if it is benefitting him. As a result, Murdock’s forgiveness enables Fisk to escape prison and continue to corrupt and kill innocent people. When somebody does not wish to benefit society, their mistakes are often unforgivable, as giving them a second chance will only let them make more of these mistakes. Hypothetically, if a rapist was caught, tried, and arrested for their crime, they might serve their time, be on parole, and eventually be offered a second chance at living a morally better life and preventing their mistakes from happening again. If they realized the gravity of their actions and how they were harmful, giving them a second chance could be beneficial, as they may want to prevent others from doing what they did, bettering society. On the other hand, in a situation such as the tragic San Diego murders of Amber Dubois and Chelsea King, if the perpetrator does not believe that their actions are wrong, a second chance is just ruinous. Amber Dubois and Chelsea King were subject to the horrible actions of the same man, and he stated on record (after he was finally caught) that he would have simply kept committing atrocities if he was released from prison. He was an example of someone who should not be granted a second chance, as he sought to hurt society and innocent people, not to better it. When a person has a destructive motive or purpose in life, a second chance will allow them to continue fulfilling that purpose and making the same mistakes.

Forgiveness in the form of a second chance is therefore worth granting when the person who has erred is aware of their mistakes, and wants to redeem themselves by helping society progress positively. It is not worth granting to those who have ignoble motives and who do not treat their mistakes as such, because the historical outcome is that they continue to make them, hurting society and its people. While making mistakes is human, forgiving somebody is divine, and forgiveness should thus be granted in the correct situations and treated as something holy.