



Unforgiven

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Even educated minds, who are earnest in their inquiries after the truth, in many cases remain under the power of prejudice or delusion.

John Henry Cardinal Newman

It seems amazing
when it has been shown
that God is so close to our souls
that so few should be aware
of the First Principle within themselves.
Yet the reason is close at hand:
for the human mind, distracted by cares,
does not enter into itself by memory;
clouded by sense images,
it does not turn back to itself through intelligence;
allured away by concupiscence,
it does not turn back to itself by desire
for inner sweetness and spiritual joy.

Thus lying totally in these things of sense,
it can not re-enter into itself
as into the image of God.

St. Bonaventure (1217-1274), from Itinerarium mentis in Deum.

Somehow, there is always something neurotic about the complexity of sin.

Hans Urs von Balthasar, from Bernanos, p 299

It is fair to say that most of us believe we know *ourselves* better than anything else we may know or know of. The cosmologist who solves the most intricate mathematical equations regarding space, or the Physicist whose theories unravel the deep mysteries of the sub-atomic world must of necessity trust his or

her own self knowledge. The understanding that they themselves are fully equipped to unravel any of the complexities science presents must *know* themselves enough to forge ahead and carry on their work. The Delphic aphorism “Know Thyself” is an ancient subjective human appeal. Certainly without a certain degree of self knowledge we couldn’t do much of anything. However, the unitary self does have its constituents. The “self” is a dynamic, living entity always in a state of flux. To know oneself one day is not necessarily to know the exact same self the next. The self is not a summation of being, it is a continuation of being as long as homeostasis (health) persists. Surely though, *being* per se is beyond a self. One could say that human beings exist *in* being while being exists in the person. Being, or *esse*, that is, to be on a grand scale, ultimately is reality. All that is, exists *in* being-itself.

Among the things we know or know of; mind is not a human being, nor is the body of itself. Being has life. Of course, the great argument has always swirled around the origin of life. Was life created, or did it just happen? If one believes it was “created” there has to be a Creator; if one believes it just happened there has to be a reason. In both cases, reason or Creator, the rational being, which we presume we all are, looks for a purpose, a plan, an objective. That’s how we are.

Let us concede that life for creatures began on earth as chemistry, i.e., biogenesis. Even if we all agree that was the case we understand that whatever preexisted, the pre-biotic, was in some way or another the cause of its development. The abysmally ignorant who say there was or is no cause— in effect are clearly denying the scientific understanding their own existence. This is precisely why cosmologists are looking for causes beyond the Big Bang— which they may or may not find. The lazy person simply says “It was always that way” trying to explain the “infinite” which has no explanation. One thing is fairly certain; everything we know of (so far) has an origin. Claiming infinity as “origin” is a strong possibility. If being-itself is infinite with no beginning or end, it is Origin, since everything that is, was and ever shall be is circumscribed by it. As being-itself it has life or *is* Life. Wouldn’t

it be fair to say that although we can't sensibly or mentally grasp the Infinite— we share in its life?

When the oracle at Delphi said “Know Thyself” we might have known it was not all that easy to comply. Socrates said, “*The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing,*” what did he mean by that? Nicholas of Cusa helps us understand what he meant.

Paraphrasing Cusa: When a person becomes wise enough to recognize all he doesn't know, that's the time he will seek the knowledge he knows he doesn't possess. “*The more he knows he is unknowing, the more learned he will be.*” says Cusa. That makes sense. The point also seems to prove that humility is neither stupid nor weak, and that non truth, in terms of knowledge, will be known sooner or later. Many of us have had “eureka” moments when we find out that certain misinformation we've been living with was wrong. Suddenly there's a void and a pathway opens enabling us to find the right knowledge. That is, of course, if we are fortunate enough to know the difference between right and wrong.

If you happen be a “relativist” and there is no particular right and wrong that you hold dear and are willing to fight for, it could be difficult to find new guidelines. Most relativists will find other relativists who will tell them what is right —“relatively” The Stanford Encyclopedia says: “Relativism, roughly put, is the view that truth and falsity, right and wrong, standards of reasoning, and procedures of justification are products of differing conventions and frameworks of assessment; and that their authority is confined to the context that give them rise.” In other words there are no particular hard-truths that need to be followed. The truth in this case stretches like a rubber band until it snaps, whereupon it's knotted together and stretched even more. One wonders just how far the “knotted” truth can be stretched before its elasticity runs out. Is truth not sac-ro-sanct?

Sac-ro-Sanct: (especially of a principle, place, or routine) *regarded as too important or valuable to be interfered with*: synonyms: sacred, hallowed, respected, inviolable, inviolate.

Speaking of being interfered with, the adage “If it ain’t broke don’t fix it,” surly doesn’t apply to mechanical or biological things or we wouldn’t have preventive maintenance or preventive procedures and medicines to maintain equilibrium. It certainly appears that the end of things is obviously programed into the beginning of things. Like Heraclitus we believe everything in the world is in a state of flux. Nothing is forever— except, perhaps, the idea of *forever*. How in the world did that concept get into the mind of mankind? Is the word “forever” a symbol of the notion of hope; imagining the unimaginable; projecting a presumption of infinity into the unknown; a truer reality which incloses everything else? As Dionysius would say: “Where the mysteries of God’s word lie simple, absolute and unchangeable in the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence.”

If one thing is known to be true, there are other things that can be known to be true— if that’s the case, there can be the reality of sac-ro-sanct truth, The Ultimate Truth. Truth itself. If love exists in someone somewhere, there is a possibility that it can exist in others anywhere, and that Love’s existence can avail everywhere, the Highest Love, Love itself. Both truth and love, as highest of principles, never change and remain sac-ro-sanct. There are those who maintain that there is no truth or love that can be called sac-ro-sanct, only psychological possibilities. That may be true in our world leading us to see the inviolability of hope— which is said to “spring eternal in the human breast.” Hope is one of the great virtues that marks us as human. Just as everything else has an opposite, hope has an opposite too. The opposite of hope is despair. It may be good at this point to quote the gospel on the seriousness of the sin of despair. Matthew 12, 30-32 quotes Jesus as saying:

³⁰Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come”.

Most Catholics are familiar with the term mortal sin. Mortal sins deprive the soul of sanctifying grace, i.e. “sharing in the life of God.” They are serious transgressions of God’s law, done freely and deliberately with a clear understanding of what they are. Their result is to deny a soul entrance to heaven. There are particular mortal sins that are so evil that they are said to be sins that “cry to heaven for vengeance”: murder (Gn 4:10), sodomy (Gn 17:20-21), oppression of the poor (Ex 2:23), and defrauding workers of their just wages (James 5:4). Sins against the Holy Spirit are mortal sins that harden a soul by its rejection of the Holy Spirit. Six sins are thought to be in this category. They are *despair*, presumption, envy, obstinacy in sin, final impenitence, and deliberate resistance to the known truth. We’re in pretty deep water here. Our Catholic faith is only based on scripture and tradition, it is not man made or altered. Its only support is the Spirit of Truth descended on the Apostles at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit.

Who would imagine Jesus, the man of mercy, Son of the Most High who forgave his murderers from the cross; those who accused him of blasphemy and framed him as being seditious; could be so intransigent with regard to certain sins, the sins that are purported to “Cry to heaven for vengeance.”? What vengeance would be forthcoming from a loving Father? How could the Savior of the world, whose very purpose is the redemption of mankind, declare that some of us may be unforgiven? The answer to these questions may not be that difficult.

Those of us like Pilate, for whom “truth” is a relative thing may escape this admonition. Ignorance of the truth as it was delivered to us by Christ may simply prove we weren’t listening. Remember: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” Those of us who *have heard* the Word of God from the Spirit of Truth and did not nor would not keep it— could be among the unforgiven. Justice, in this case would have superseded mercy as the *known* truth is denied or disparaged. Every human being has been graced with a conscience, “understood as the voice of the Spirit (God) resounding in the human heart.” Purposely denying

ones conscience would be resisting the “known truth” in one degree or another. With a full understanding of what serious sin is— unwilling to reject it, obstinate in it; impenitent; lost in irretrievable false presumption, despaired.

The Pope as the Vicar of Christ in conjunction with the Magisterium: “Thou art Peter, and upon this *rock* I will build my church.” (Matthew 16: 18) is the authority that lays down what is the authentic teaching of the Church”. For the Catholic Church, that authority is vested uniquely in the pope and the bishops who are in communion with him. “Sacred Scripture and Tradition make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church”, and the magisterium is not independent of this, since “all that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is derived from this single deposit of faith.” (Wikipedia)

It also is important to note that despair has a lot to do with knowing oneself. Despair is generally related to presumption. Let’s paraphrase Henry Dumery, a modern French philosopher (1920-2012) in this context. (When one begins with objectivism, it is necessary to finish with it. To conceive of the sacred as object— one forfeits the right of affirming the sacred as mystery). Objectivism: Selfishness excusing itself as virtue. First propounded by cultic pop-philosopher Ayn Rand (1905-1982). Objectivism prizes narcissistic or "rugged" individualism, self-centered achievement, commerce, industry, etc., as being of prime value over love, faithfulness, generosity, and humility.

In our century most scientists are physicalists, in that sense everything that exists can be known as the “theory of everything” will eventually prove. There will be nothing left to hope for. With the presumption that there is nothing to hope for there is no reason to call anything sacred or mysterious. Hopelessness is despair. Without hope we become worthless. To be human would have no more value than a stone. Meaning is lost as the heart grows cold. What kind of future would there be without anticipation, without the virtue of hope? While working at it, Sincere Science hopes to cure diseases; peacemakers hope to

eliminate violence; Charities hope to alleviate poverty and so on. Only in Faith can we Hope with Love; essentially that *is* the virtuous life.

Directly related to the Delphic call for knowing oneself is the concept of “free will.” “I am my own person.” There are really only two ways of knowing the “self” as free and independent. One way is existential the other conditional. The existential-self is free simply by the unqualified, self-centered existence in which she finds herself. She is because she is. The conditional-self is free because of her dependency on Creation. Considering the elements of right and wrong, good and evil, freedom cannot be totally unconditional. With the “coincidence of opposites” found in Creation freedom is only enabled by the gift of choice. Without *choice* there is no freedom. Only the Source of freedom can claim— “I Am Who I Am”. There is no other. In the Infinite there is Origin, in Origin is Ultimate Being which encompasses us. “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” (John 14: 20).

Mercy, it appears, is not only the work of God. When teaching us how to pray the Lord gave us in a most astonishing petition the power to forgive the sins of those who sin against us. If you have not seen it, we think Viewpoint XVI states it quite well. We will copy it here to close this essay:

VIEWPOINT XVI from <renovabis.com>

The Church teaches that the astonishing petition “forgive us our trespasses” can never be without the equivalent phrase “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” The daunting thought is that an outpouring of God’s mercy cannot penetrate our hearts as long as we have not forgiven those who have hurt us or trespassed against us. Love is not divisible; how can we love God whom we do not see and not love our neighbor whom we do see? The very reason we are able to love at all is because we have been given the grace and the faith to understand the meaning of love in the love of God.

In refusing to forgive, we close our “hearts:” the place of our innermost being, and make ourselves impervious to the Father’s mercy. Yet, the Father loves us unconditionally as his creatures, his children, even when we do not see fit to recognize the ultimacy and supremacy of love, which is God himself in us. He remains with us always, for us to be reconciled with him and with one another. When we blind ourselves to the need for forgiveness, we deny that we are made in the “image of God,” and resign ourselves only to confusion and anxiety where the Spirit of God within us is ignored, and compassion is understood only in regard to ourselves. To feel sorry for ourselves for having been hurt, or having hurt another, either inadvertently or purposively, and to perhaps return a hurt with more hurt, or brooding silence, clearly misses the point.

It is most worldly to despise those who despise us, or to return injury for having been injured, immediately or over prolonged periods. What we may have forgotten is that “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” died with the resurrection of Jesus Christ! To live one’s life suffering the consequences of debilitating un-forgiveness, more or less crowds out peace. No one can be content being continually ill-at-ease without harming one’s self. Obviously injury is painful from where ever or for what ever purpose or reason it comes, especially if we are unaware of a cause. Only the Spirit by whom we live can put us in the same mind of Jesus. Forgiveness then comes from the source of all forgiveness as God in Christ, for those who have trespassed and those who are willing to trespass in return.

Forgiveness is the fundamental condition of the reconciliation of the children of God with their Father, and of human beings with one another. Without forgiveness peace is hardly possible. To forgive from the heart, in the name of Jesus has it’s reward in a personal peace that only he can give us. The inspiration to forgive, even ones worst enemies, is a notion that comes from the grace of God— that extraordinary power of the Ultimate, Unconditioned Good. It is in the “depths of the heart,” that

everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but a heart that submits itself to the Spirit of God, through Christ, is able to turn injury into compassion and hurtfulness into peace. Injury is transformed by the power of intercession. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid." "Yes, I am with you always, even to the end of time."

"Owe no one anything, except to love one another." Rom. 13:8

This petition is so important that it is the only one to which Jesus returns and which he develops explicitly in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy... Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God... Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely" ... etc. The crucial requirement of the covenant mystery is impossible for humans, but, with God all things are possible. Thus Jesus' words of forgiveness, the love that loves to the end, become a reality in our lives and satisfies our most ardent desires when we sincerely live by them. How often are we prone to follow Truth as a person in Christ?

Not many prayers express in precise language the commitment we are are required to give to others. The one Francis of Assisi gave us, with his saintly humility, does exactly that :

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

Every human being, having been born the image and likeness of God, (if we have enough grace to believe that), has the promises of Christ open to them.

“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.”

Pentecost Sunday