

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK; AN ACCOUNT OF MEEKNESS AS A FEMINIST VIRTUE

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INTRODUCTION

There has been a recent increase in arguing for the moral good of negative emotions in feminist ethics. Audre Lorde, Marilyn Frye, and Macalester Bell give accounts of anger, resentment, contempt, and unforgiveness to be considered beneficial to the liberation of the oppressed. Specifically, in Bell's paper "A Woman's Scorn," she argues for moral contempt as a response to the badbeing¹ of sexist individuals and institutions. More recently, in her book *Hard Feelings*, she gives a fuller account of contempt and defends it against common objections. The primary features of contempt are a down-looking judgement and a psychological distancing from the object of contempt on the grounds that he or she fails to meet an important moral standard on the contemnor. Bell contends that the psychological distancing has great benefits of truly holding people accountable to their failure to meet important standards as well as motivating change within that individual.

In response to the growing support of contempt, there is a growing literature of, what Bell calls, an "anti-contempt ethic." Anti-contempt ethics object to contempt and argue for moral alternatives. There are a variety objections to contempt, many of which have been responded to by Bell or others, claiming that contempt fails to give respect due to all persons,² misinterprets moral scenarios,³ or is incompatible with love.⁴ Glen Pettigrove argues that one of the possible moral alternatives to contempt is meekness, but he believes that a fuller account of meekness needs to be developed.⁵ In this paper, I will offer my own

¹ "Badbeing" will be used in this paper a term indicating a corrupt or significantly flawed character. This comes from Macalester Bell's use of the term in *Hard Feelings* and her positioning contempt as a way to respond to someone's failing at who they are, not just what they've done.

² Hill, T. E. (2000). Must Respect be Earned? in *Respect, pluralism, and justice: Kantian perspectives*. 92.

³ Pettigrove, G. (2012). Meekness and 'Moral' Anger*. *Ethics*, 122(2), 341-370.

⁴ Tessman, L. (2014). Review of *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt* in *Hypatia Reviews Online*.

⁵ Pettigrove, G. (2012).

objection to contempt, from a feminist perspective, and take up Pettigrove's urging to develop a fuller account of meekness arguing that it is a moral alternative to contempt as a feminist virtue.

I will argue that contempt is morally problematic in two ways. First, practicing contempt evinces an attitude of superbia towards the object of contempt. This is the same attitude that Bell claims contempt is an apt response to. This manner of responding "in kind" exposes the ill-will of contempt that seeks to harm those who harmed them. Second, contempt necessarily creates or sustains hierarchy by its downward-looking comparative judgement. I will argue from a feminist perspective that the hierarchical relationship is problematic in its systematic privileging of the perspective of the contemnor. Contempt should be avoided if an alternative virtue can be practiced in its place.

There are a lot of inconsistencies within the philosophical discourse on meekness, and I will give a brief overview of this history.⁶ I have chosen to examine the descriptions given by David Hume, Marcus Aurelius, and Jesus of Nazareth because their insistence that meekness is a powerful virtue is compelling. These will serve as the foundation for my account of meekness, and allow me to examine its justification, attitudes and affective elements, relational contexts, and possibility of achieving liberation.

I will contend that meekness is a virtue that regards those guilty of badbeing and wrongdoing in a manner that allows it to respond to the injustices of hierarchy. My account will focus on three features of meekness. First, the role that empathy plays as part of its affective response to the badbeing associated with hierarchy and the unique epistemic

⁶ For a more detailed philosophical history of meekness see Pettigrove (2012).

import it allows. Second, the subversive actions in response to hierarchical roles required by meekness call for revolution. And lastly, the characteristic good-will towards one's oppressors threatens the hegemon. These features allow meekness to fulfill the feminist criteria of justification, while also avoiding hierarchy. Therefore, meekness ought to be endorsed by feminists as a response to badbeing and wrongdoing.

I. CONTEMPT

Historically, contempt has found little favor as a moral practice, at least in part due to its close relationship to disgust.⁷ The intensity of the repulsion for another has been characterized as vulgar and a base response to wrongdoing, not a rational one and certainly not a moral one. However, in "A Woman's Scorn" and later in *Hard Feelings*, Macalester Bell argues for contempt to be categorized alongside anger and bitterness as a useful and justifiable negative emotion for achieving feminist's goals of social change. Contempt is a manner of negatively regarding someone guilty of wrongdoing or badbeing.⁸ Its usefulness comes from the cultivation of contempt as a practice, not merely as an emotional reaction. The practice of contempt is described as "harboring" feelings. The imagery of harboring demonstrates the intentionality of mooring these emotions in oneself, rather than letting the feelings pass through as a temporary reaction to badbeing. Harboring feelings of contempt in response to wrongdoing and badbeing is claimed to be beneficial in subverting sexist norms through insubordination.⁹ The contemptuous person subversively inverts the relationship in which they have been made inferior and makes the formerly superior know

⁷ Bell, M. (2013). *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt*. Oxford University Press. 51.

⁸ Bell, M. (2013), 126.

⁹ Bell, M. (2005). A woman's scorn: toward a feminist defense of contempt as a moral emotion. *Hypatia*, 20(4), 80-93. 81.

their true inferiority. This inversion makes contempt a particularly apt response to what Bell calls the vices of superiority. Contempt enacts a willful, not merely responsive, comparative downward judgment of the perpetrator causing subsequent withdrawal.

FOUR NECESSARY FEATURES OF CONTEMPT

Bell considers four features necessary for contempt: it is a judgment concerning some perceived moral or personal failure or defect; it has a particular way of regarding or attending the object of contempt through an unpleasant affective element; it is a comparative judgment between the persons; and it causes a withdrawal from the object of contempt.

Bell argues that the harmed react with contempt in response to someone's perceived failing to meet a standard of interpersonal relationships that is important to them. The judgement made in light of the perceived moral failing is a globalist judgement, taking the whole person as their object. The globalist judgement of the perpetrator does not merely claim that they have done wrong but that they are a low person. The object of contempt may have a significantly high status in society on many determiners of status. However, their moral failing in an important dimension; humility, for example, allows them to be regarded as wholly flawed, low, and contemptible.¹⁰

The contemnor regards the object of contempt with a characteristic affective reaction and the conscious harboring of superiority. The outward affective reaction is one of, "Looking down one's nose" at the other. This is more than just a response. It is an outward expression of two inward judgments. First, it expresses the judgement of a perceived moral failing. Second, it expresses that the contemptuous now holds the object of contempt to be inferior

¹⁰ Bell, M. (2013). 36.

to themselves, they deserve to be looked down upon.¹¹ This is not a fleeting or partial status of inferiority, but it is a consciously continued global judgement.¹² The claim to relative superiority is a product of the downward comparative judgement which requires one to see a flaw the other that they do not see in themselves.

Feelings of contempt motivates the contemnor to psychologically withdraw from the object. Distancing is often imagined as spatial and the affective response and metaphors for contempt lend themselves to such a visualization, but the ways in which the contemnor creates or maintains distance is not always physical. Active non-association with, and refusing to engage with or take seriously those whom are considered inferior, are ways to withdraw that do not take physical space. Further, Bell claims that the withdrawal characterized by contempt are whatever social actions, coming from the specific motivation and specific context, that threaten the relationship. The way withdrawal threatens a relationship also has the benefits of; modifying the relationship, destabilizing the relationship, bearing witness to an injustice, placing the responsibility for change on the shoulders of the one guilty of moral failure, and opening a path for social change. It is the act of withdrawal that Bell uses to meet the majority of criteria for feminist justification.

FOUR CRITERIA FOR FEMINIST JUSTIFICATION

Feminists¹³ have argued for the moral justification of negative emotions such as anger, bitterness, and resentment.¹⁴ Bell examines their arguments and sets criteria for considering contempt justified. The four criteria that she sets for considering a negative emotion morally

¹¹ Bell, M. (2013), 41-42.

¹² Bell, M. (2013), 40.

¹³ Audre Lorde, Elizabeth Spelman and Marilyn Frye among others.

¹⁴ Bell, M. (2005), 81.

justified are: it subverts sexist norms and constraints; it has epistemic value in regard to providing a correct moral perception and appraisal; it bears witness to injustice; and it leads to possible social change.

REALIZING FEMINIST CRITERIA FOR JUSTIFICATION

Bell argues that contempt is capable of realizing the criteria of feminist justification; subversion, epistemic value of moral scenarios, bearing witness to injustice, and motivating possible social change. Contempt regards those guilty of badbeing with a specific negative affective response that expresses a downward-looking comparative judgement. The affective element contains a feeling of the harm being done to oneself and provides knowledge of the moral failing. The affective response fulfills the feminist epistemic criterion by uniquely, accurately, and aptly perceiving and appraising the moral situation through the emotional response to the perceived harm.

Bell claims that harboring contempt is a particularly apt response to vices of superiority, and without contempt, we would be ill-equipped to respond to such moral failings. These vices will be further examined later, but for now it is only important to know that those guilty of vices of superiority attempt to gain esteem and deference at the expense of someone considered their inferior. The downward-looking comparative judgement responds to such vices by subverting the norm of insubordination. Harboring contempt subverts the accepted determiners of status that make the contemnor inferior by positioning themselves as superior to the object of contempt based on a status they consider important.

The norms of insubordination are further subverted by the contemnor's withdrawal from the guilty. The complex psychological withdrawal, as discussed earlier, subverts the

oppressive relationship and alerts the object of contempt to their badbeing. The loss of intimacy or active non-association with the object of contempt provides reasons for the object to change their character. Social change occurs whether or not the object of contempt has a change of character because the relationship between them has been modified. The distancing destabilizes an oppressive relationship by no longer taking part in it as one once did. If the object of contempt does not undergo the necessary change of character, then they will be properly be viewed as someone to "be avoided altogether."¹⁵ Only after the change in character of the individual or structure can the intimacy that was taken away be returned.

CONTEMPT AS A RESPONSE TO VICES OF SUPERIORITY & SUPERBIA

Bell claims that vices of superiority and attitudes of superbia are most aptly responded to with contempt. "Those who evince vices of superiority see themselves as having comparatively high status, desire that their status be recognized, and often attempt to exact esteem and deference on this basis."¹⁶ Even in cases where esteem and deference are considered merited, it is objectionable to exact the merited esteem and deference.¹⁷ Bell claims that this is particularly vicious when it is done so at the expense or dishonor of others.¹⁸

When the vicious exact esteem and deference at the expense or dishonor of others it is done so with ill will. Ill will characterizes vices of superiority guilty of an attitude which Bell calls superbia. Arrogance and hypocrisy are paradigmatic examples of superbia. The arrogant boasting of oneself or the putting-down of another, even if the statements are

¹⁵ Bell, M. (2013), 127.

¹⁶ Bell, M. (2013), 96.

¹⁷ Bell, M. (2013), 104.

¹⁸ Bell, M. (2013), 101.

accurate, are meant to make the other feel inferior compared to the boaster's superiority. Exacting esteem and deference in this way exhibits an ill will towards the other that is contrary to friendship.¹⁹ The hypocrite uses societal norms concerning merit and esteem to appear especially virtuous. Ill will manifests in hypocrisy often times by condemning the actions of others, dishonoring them, to elevate the hypocrite's status even higher.²⁰ The ill will of superbia makes it particularly harmful to relationships, cutting the guilty off from the possibility of friendship and meaningful intimacy.

Bell argues that contempt aptly responds to vices of superiority and superbia by inverting the hierarchy of status and making the object of contempt feel their inferiority.²¹ A contemptuous sneer is generally not enough to make someone feel a robust sense of inferiority; the vicious relationship must be subverted. The moral failure of the privileged is enabled insofar as the relationship remains stable. The contemptuous regard the object of contempt as not being worthy of being in relationship with, and they distance themselves and actively disassociate with them. This inverts the hierarchy of the relationship, destabilizing it, stripping away the false superiority and making them feel their actual inferiority. Responding to vices of superiority with contempt has the ability to liberate the oppressed from a codependent cycle by destabilizing their relationship with the vicious.²²

Bell's account of contempt shares many features with the attitudes of superbia it is meant to respond to. Contempt necessarily values oneself comparatively above the other,

¹⁹ IBID 114-115.

²⁰ IBID 118-120.

²¹ IBID 129.

²² Dear, G. E., Roberts, C. M., & Lange, L. (2004). Defining co-dependency: A thematic analysis of published definitions. *Advances in Psychology*, 34, 189–205.

fulfilling the first criterion. The contemptuous also seek the recognition of their status. The characteristic withdrawal makes the disparity of status known and felt, meeting the second criterion. However, Bell may respond to this charge by claiming that contempt does not have the characteristic ill will of superbia which exacts esteem and deference at the expense of the object of contempt. Contempt intends for, and makes possible, a positive change in the character of the object of contempt, which displays an interest in the target's well-being, a distinctive characteristic of good-will.²³ Distancing oneself from a harmful relationship, as one characteristically does in contempt, can be considered an act of care. According to Virginia Held, care within a dysfunctional relationship is manifested in modifying the relationship or distancing oneself from the relationship.²⁴ If this is the case, then contempt holds no ill will and does not fulfill the criteria of superbia, but I am not convinced of contemptuous good-will.

THE ILL WILL OF CONTEMPT

Vices of superiority manifest themselves in behavior that seeks or attempts to recognize one's superior status, if it is not already recognized. Bell argues for the serious harm done by vices of superiority:

"We are social beings who gain knowledge of ourselves and our value through interactions with others, and those who evince the vice of superiority disrupt and corrupt the process. People who are put down through negative comparative evaluations or dishonored as part of a process of esteem and deference seeking may come to believe that they really *do* have a comparatively low status even if this is not the case."²⁵

²³ Bell, M. (2013), 115.

²⁴ Held, V. (2006). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford University Press. 49

²⁵ Bell, M. (2013), 131, emphasis is Bell's.

Contempt takes the object of contempt's perceived status of superiority and makes them feel their actual status of inferiority by inverting the comparative judgement and making sure they know their low status through contempt's affective element and withdrawal. As victims who know the harm done by the vices of superiority, the contemptuous cannot place another in a position of inferiority to one's superiority without explicitly intending harm. To make the object of contempt feel the harm they have felt by supplanting the object of contempt atop the hierarchy can be called nothing other than ill will.²⁶ Ill will, alongside the comparative judgement and the attempts to have the status recognized, makes contempt guilty of the very offense it is claimed to respond to; superbia.

Bell defends contempt against such objections by arguing that contempt is a manner of responding "in kind" to badbeing. Responding to superbia with superbia is the best approach to ending oppressive relationships by making the object of contempt feel the harm done by their badbeing, and giving them a distaste for continuing to treat others in that way and motivating a change of character.²⁷ She claims that an anti-contempt ethic would prescribe respectful engagement with those guilty of superbia and remind them that all people are equally due respect. However, she finds this kind of engagement lacking. Attitudes of superbia come with an entitlement and self-deference that insulates them from being affected by the respectful engagements of others. It is distancing, not engagement, that produces an atmosphere of change for the object of contempt. The distancing caused

²⁶ Bell, M. (2013), 130.

²⁷ Bell considers this objection best on pages 128-130, and in doing so develops her most complete picture of how contempt functions as a response to superbia. While Bell does not explicitly characterize contempt as a tit-for-tat response to superbia with superbia the picture she draws of responding with contempt to superbia in the section is the best argument for contempt meeting her criteria for superbia.

by holding them as inferior and not being worthy of deference, esteem, or association provides salient reasons for the object of contempt to change. Vices of superiority must be responded to with distancing, not engagement. I agree with Bell's claim that distancing, rather than engaging, is the proper response to superbia. However, I will now argue that contempt is problematic in how it enacts this distancing, which creates or sustains hierarchy, and that an alternative method of responding to superbia with distance is needed.

II. OBJECTION TO THE HIERARCHY OF CONTEMPT

It is not my project to analyze Bell's criteria for feminist justification of moral emotions. However, I do wish to introduce a further consideration for feminist justification. Bell uses this criteria to argue in "A Woman's Scorn" that contempt ought to be considered a moral emotion for feminists in response to injustices and failures of character such as sexism and racism. As my analysis of her argument for contempt is from a feminist perspective, I will be holding her to this criteria even though it is not central in *Hard Feelings*. On the grounds that contempt is being discussed on its feminist merit, I would like to introduce an additional criterion that is standard in feminist ethics: an act must not condone or lead to future oppression.

There is a wide-range of feminist literature that condemns various forms of hierarchy as oppressive. The subordination of women comes from a historically practiced, and often naturalized, gender hierarchy in the form of a social structure.²⁸ In light of this fundamental feminist position, the work of feminist ethics has been to illuminate oppressive hierarchies and theorize how to be liberated from them. Simone de Beauvoir warned that inverting

²⁸ Femenias, M. L. (1994). Women and natural hierarchy in Aristotle. *Hypatia*, 9(1), 164-172.

structural hierarchy does not liberate but perpetuates oppression when the formerly oppressed become captors.²⁹ Karen Warren claims that value hierarchy is used within a Logic of Domination to justify both and relational oppression of those inhabiting the low end of the hierarchy.³⁰ Hierarchy can be inherited in social practices, customs or values,³¹ a product of economic injustice,³² a product of masculinity,³³ or a result of regarding people as 'others'.³⁴ According to these feminist accounts, hierarchy gives power and privilege to some at the expense of others, and the behaviors that creates or sustains hierarchy is morally problematic. I will now argue that contempt necessarily creates or sustains hierarchy, and then I will give an account of why this particular instantiation of hierarchy ought to be considered problematic by feminists.

HIERARCHY AS A FIFTH NECESSARY FEATURE OF CONTEMPT

Interpersonal hierarchy is a necessary feature of contempt being a product of the comparative judgement and global evaluation, although it is unacknowledged as such by Bell. Her account of the comparative judgement relies on David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* where he claims the contemptuous is required to, "[Apprehend] the bad qualities of someone 'as they really are' while simultaneously making a comparison between this person and ourselves."³⁵ It is required that the contemptuous person regards themselves as superior to the object of contempt because they see a failing or flaw in the other that they do not see

²⁹ De Beauvoir, S. (2012). *The second sex*. Random House LLC. 4.

³⁰ Warren, K. J. (1990). The power and the promise of ecological feminism. *Environmental Ethics*, 12(2), 125-146.

³¹ McIntosh, P. (1988). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. 31-36.

³² Rubin, G. (2009). the "Political Economy" of Sex. *Feminist Anthropology: a reader*, 87.

³³ MacKinnon, C. A. (1982). Feminism, Marxism, method, and the state: An agenda for theory. *Signs*, 515-544.

³⁴ Benhabib, S. (1985). The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controvers and Feminist Theory. *Praxis international*, (4), 402-424.

³⁵ Hume, D. (2002). *A treatise of human nature*. Ed. Norton, D. F. and Norton, M. J. Oxford University Press. 251

in themselves.³⁶ The globalist nature of the judgment made in contempt makes the claim of superiority a claim that one is wholly superior to the other.³⁷

It can be inferred from Bell's account of contempt that it both sustains and is sustained by hierarchy. First, she claims that the practice of contempt sustains hierarchy through upholding the stratification of status.³⁸ Even in supposedly egalitarian societies that do not appear to have rigid stratification between statuses, holding others in contempt affirms that stratification does exist, that one is superior to the other. She then claims that contempt is sustained by hierarchy because without hierarchical status distinctions, contempt could not exist.³⁹ Hierarchy is a central component of contemptuous relationships, a fifth necessary feature of contempt.

However, Bell makes a small exemption, stating that not every instance of contempt takes a position of superiority. She claims that there are relatively rare cases in which one may harbor contempt for a group, such as alcoholics, that they are also a member of. There is still a comparative judgement, but both sides are considered guilty of failing to meet the same standard. This is a form of contempt for oneself and others which regards the others as inferior equals. If the claim to superiority is what makes contempt problematic, then harboring contempt in these instances is permissible. However, limiting justified contempt to these, admittedly, rare cases would strip contempt of its usefulness in responding to most cases of badbeing.

THE IMPOSITION OF PRIVILEGED PERSPECTIVES

³⁶ Bell, M. (2005), 84.

³⁷ Bell (2014) agrees with William Miller that contempt is a claim to relative superiority by quoting him on page 42.

³⁸ Bell, M. (2013), 3.

³⁹ Bell, M. (2013), 38

The claims to superiority in contemptuous relations are not innocent. The downward globalist valuation causes the contemnor to regard the object of contempt as having nothing to contribute, and their attempts to contribute are met with hostility, rejection, disregard, degradation, or active disassociation.⁴⁰ A relationship characterized by treating the contributions of others in such a way can only be characterized as arrogant, agonistic, and adversarial. This causes the perspective of the superior to be self-selecting, and the perspective of the inferior is systematically made silent, becoming marginalized. Having one's voice made silent or being continually disregarded can lead to the marginalized believing that they have no voice, that their perspective does not matter, or that it will only be heard when expressed in an extreme manner. This makes contempt seriously harmful to its target.

The act of being marginalized is obviously harmful to the contemned, but the imposition of a privileged perspective inhibits the contemnor from important knowledge and relationships. Individuals who often find themselves holding others in contempt become unable to form friendships because they have difficulty finding people they deem worth of their association. Their claim to superiority makes it difficult to give the opinions and evaluations of others proper weight. The contemnor possesses a self-selecting perspective that prohibits being open to dissenting opinions about themselves that are necessary for growth.⁴¹ Not sharing the moral failing as the object of contempt does not make the contemnor infallible. It may be the case that the object of contempt is uniquely situated to

⁴⁰ Bell, M. (2013), 50ⁿ quoting Walker, U. "Moral repair: Reconstructing moral relations after wrongdoing." (2006): 226.

⁴¹ Bell, M. (2013), 113

bear witness to the moral failures of their contemnor. But, the contemnor is cut-off from receiving the perspective that they have made marginal, and they cannot obtain the knowledge of oneself that is necessary for growth. The contemnor becomes, “mired in a kind of solipsism⁴²” being unable to form relationships, but also being too arrogant to receive the criticism that they need to change.

MEEKNESS AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CONTEMPT

If contempt is not a justifiable response to badbeing because it creates or sustains hierarchy, then a justifiable alternative response to badbeing is needed. The response must still subvert sexist norms and constraints, have epistemic value in regard to providing a correct moral perception and appraisal, bear witness to injustice, and lead to possible social change. In the following sections I will develop an account of meekness that meets these requirements without invoking hierarchy.

III. HISTORIC ACCOUNTS OF MEEKNESS

Meekness has a mixed philosophical history. In “Of the Standard of Taste,” David Hume considers meekness on par with equity, justice, temperance, and charity, and in the *Treatise*,⁴³ he claims it is a virtue whose good for a community cannot be doubted. Marcus Aurelius bestowed upon meekness a similar quality of purity in its persistent well-wishing.⁴⁴ In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle can be interpreted as saying that meekness is the mean state of angers between the excess of irascibility and the deficiency that has no name.

⁴² IBID

⁴³ I owe a great debt to Glen Pettigrove’s research for my entire project, but particularly his research regarding Hume’s accounts of meekness.

Hume, D. (1777). Of the Standard of Taste, in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985. 229

Hume, D. (1739-40). *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2000), bk. 3, pt. 3, sec. 1, par. 11. Hereafter cited, e.g., as Hume, *Treatise*, 3.3.1.11.

⁴⁴ Aurelius, M. (2013). *Meditations*. Oxford University Press. Book ix 9 & 13

However, this is not the only interpretation of Aristotle, and it can also be argued that Aristotle characterized meekness as the deficiency of anger.⁴⁵ John Stuart Mill⁴⁶ and Frederick Nietzsche⁴⁷ both claimed that meekness is tied to timidity and submissiveness, and that it perpetuates oppression and subjugation; clearly making it a vice. In a historically perplexing contradiction to those who hold meekness as a shortcoming, Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed that the meek are blessed and shall inherit the Earth, as if it were a source of power.⁴⁸ It is unclear if these opposing views come from different stances on virtue and vice, or from a general disagreement on what meekness is.

Meekness is most often associated with the actions it produces, such as patience, being slow to anger, self-control, gentleness, kindness, and forgiveness. Pettigrove characterizes meekness as, "Agent M manifests the virtue of meekness when he or she characteristically responds in a calm and kindly fashion to aggravating treatment."⁴⁹ Associating meekness with the actions it produces is useful, however it is an incomplete picture to what meekness actually is. It gives little indication of what the trait or disposition is that allows for these actions. However, it does inform us that meekness is a manner of responding to aggravation.⁵⁰ This is an important necessary feature that dates back to Aristotle placing meekness as either the virtuous mean or the vice of deficiency that deals with anger. In the historic accounts of meekness, there are a variety of actions that qualify as

⁴⁵ Rowe, C. J., & Broadie, S. (Eds.). (2002). *Nicomachean ethics*. Oxford University Press. 1103b 18-21, 1125b 25-35, and 1126a 1-8.

⁴⁶ Mill, J. S. (1997). *The subjection of women*. Transaction Publishers. 31.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, F. (2010). On the genealogy of morals and ecce homo. Random House LLC. Chapter V, Section 187.

⁴⁸ Matthew 5:5 ESV

⁴⁹ Pettigrove, G. (2012), 345.

⁵⁰ Casaubon, F. E. M. (1673, reprinted in 2005). *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. Cosimo, Inc. Here he lists 32 separate passages that pertaining to what motivates meekness towards offenders in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

calm and kindly responses to aggravation, but lack substantive descriptions of the trait that allows for these responses. I will now look at three historic accounts of meekness and its varied actions to develop my account of meekness.

DAVID HUME

King Charles I is a moral exemplar of meekness for David Hume. In the midst of a civil war, the opposing side gained power and put the king under house arrest. After a less-than impartial trial, he was sentenced to be executed. Leading up to his execution, King Charles I implored Bishop Juxon, "To inculcate his son the forgiveness of his murderers," which the fallen king reiterated himself from the executioners block.⁵¹ The king displayed meekness in his "equitability of character" by forgiving in response to the moral failures of others that led to his drastic change of fortune.

THE QUESTION OF JUSTIFICATION

The case of King Charles I forgiving his murderers brings up the objection that a meek response to moral failings is overly permissive. Forgiving one's murderers does seem extreme, and the justification of whatever virtue, trait or disposition that allows for this is rightfully questioned. If the king's forgiveness is unjustified, then meekness is unjustified.

Norvin Richards gives an account of forgiveness that is the overcoming or abandoning of negative emotions in response to having been wronged.⁵² Both Macalester Bell and Glen Pettigrove have given justificatory theories based on this account of forgiveness. Bell gives the following conditions for justifying the extension of forgiveness; the forgiving agent must

⁵¹Hume, D. (1789). *The history of England: from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the revolution of 1688* (Vol. 8). Printed for T. Cadell and sold by T. Longman. (5): 509.

⁵² Richards, N. (1988). Forgiveness. *Ethics* 99: 77–97: 79.

maintain that the action is wrong; and the one may rightly extend forgiveness if either; a) If the offender attempts to transform themselves; or b) If they express a feeling of shame for their wrongdoing.⁵³ While Bell's account rightly maintains the judgement of the action as wrong, she gives too much power to the guilty party. There is no hope for the harmed to overcome their negative emotions unless the very person who harmed them attempts to change their character or expresses heartfelt shame and regret. This places the harmed in a powerless and pitiable situation, and gives me good reason to entertain another theory of justification for extending forgiveness.

Pettigrove argues that there are three ways to justifiably promote and extend forgiveness focusing on the one affected by the wrongdoing instead of requiring action from the wrongdoer, as in Bell's conditions. The three justified practices for promoting forgiveness are: mitigating our sense of the wrong done; altering our sense of the primary message communicated in the wrongdoing; and triggering empathy that discloses the possibility of reconciliation. Some may object that any of these three practices promoting forgiveness are still unjustified without the wrongdoer first acting. However, because the negative emotions come from perceived harm, injury, or failure to meet an interpersonal standard, the agent is justified in examining and adjusting their perception of the moral scenario. To claim that a person harmed by wrongdoing or badbeing has no need of examining their perceptions for accuracy is granting contempt a level of infallibility that simply does not exist. Therefore, the harmed party is justified in examining their perception of the harm done and the primary

⁵³ Bell, M. (2008). Forgiving someone for who they are (and not just what they've done). *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 77(3), 625-658.

message communicated by the action and thereby overcoming or abandoning the negative emotions associated with being harmed.

BEARING WITNESS TO MORAL FAILING

In the case of King Charles I, the act of forgiveness is what allowed him to bear witness to injustice. Forgiving must maintain that the act being forgiven is wrong. Pettigrove distinguishes between understanding, excusing and forgiving.⁵⁴ He claims that being understanding of the wrongdoing of others leads to justify or excuse them more than it does lead to forgiveness. While the negative emotions may be overcome, forgiveness in these cases is non-applicable because the acts are not retained as wrongs. If the king's forgiveness is as exemplary case of meekness, then meekness will maintain that the act being forgiven is wrong, and in doing so bears witness to the injustice done.

MARCUS AURELIUS

Francis Hutcheson suggests that Marcus Aurelius wrote of meekness being paramount in continuing progress after encountering another's moral failings.⁵⁵ Hutcheson also describes Aurelius embodying meekness as he sought to reform his own character from whatever failings were present. In his *Meditations*, Aurelius describes meekness in three distinct manners. All three descriptions rely on the recognition of a shared condition of fallibility, allowing one the ability to bear the fault in their fellows.⁵⁶ The first description constructs the necessary attitude of the meek based on the shared fallibility, and the second and third descriptions place meekness within two relational contexts.

⁵⁴ Pettigrove, Glen (2007). Understanding, Excusing, Forgiving. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74 (1): 156–175.

⁵⁵ Aurel, R. R. M., & Hutcheson, F. (2008). *[The meditations]; The meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*. J. Moore (Ed.). Liberty Fund. Introduction.

⁵⁶ Aurelius, M. (2013). Book ix 11 & 42

HUMANITY, OPENNESS, AND AN ATTITUDE OF GOOD-WILL

At the beginning of his *Meditations*, Aurelius describes a meek person as being patient and fastidious in their readiness to, "... hear from any man, who offered any thing tending to the common good; an inflexible justice towards all men... and a sense of humanity towards others.⁵⁷" Remaining open to possible positive contributions of those guilty of badbeing expresses an attitude of good-will. Such an attitude comes from empathizing with the guilty and acknowledging the shared fallibility of humanity. According to Pettigrove's account of forgiveness, engaging empathy promotes forgiveness by allowing for the possibility of future reconciliation but still bears witness to injustice by maintaining the wrongfulness of the guilty. Regarding the guilty in this manner of empathy and good-will is a way to remain open to the possibility of the guilty party's positive contribution while still maintaining their wrongfulness.

ADMONISHMENT IN RELATIONS

Aurelius' second and third descriptions combine the characteristic good-will with a subversion of relational norms. The second description places meekness as the virtue suited for the admonishment of those needing instruction but who are continually failing to make the changes that are necessary.⁵⁸ He doesn't give a paradigmatic example of meekness, but I believe one that will serve his description well is a dysfunctional relationship harmed by a serious flaw in one partner's character. Dysfunctional relations, such as those common to addicts and abusers, are hierarchical and exploitive. The addict exploits the care of their

⁵⁷ Aurelius, M. (2013). Book i 13

⁵⁸ "If you can, teach them better. If not, remember that the virtue of meekness was given you to be exercised on such occasions." Aurelius, M. (2013). Book ix 11

partner, and the exploitation is perpetuated by messages and expectations of the carer's responsibility for the addict. Rather than prescribing an increased engagement to aid in the change of character through paternalism, anger, force, or giving ultimatums, Aurelius prescribes a withdrawal and distancing that was characteristic of stoic philosophy. In contemporary psychology, withdrawal from harmful and dysfunctional relationships is a method of avoiding codependency as the guilty is forced to assume the responsibility of changing their character. The guilty are not enabled in their disfunction by having the relationship maintained for them.⁵⁹ The harmed express a refusal to replay the role given to them in the relationship and subvert the status quo by distancing themselves from or no longer participating in the exploitive, abusive, or oppressive relationship. To qualify as meekness, the withdrawing partner must regard the guilty with empathy, acknowledging their shared fallibility and harboring good-will. Empathizing with the guilty does not prohibit removing the stability and intimacy of the relationship which provides a strong reason for the guilty to assess and change their character in a manner that they were previously unable to do.

RESPONDING TO ADVERSARIAL RELATIONSHIPS

In his final description, Aurelius places meekness in the context of an adversarial relationship with one who dominates, demeans, oppresses, despises, contempts, or hates.⁶⁰ He extolled having "kind affections towards them,"⁶¹ not alienating in affection from one akin to yourself, and being good natured toward all out of genuine goodness. This is an odd

⁵⁹ Dear, G. E., Roberts, C. M., & Lange, L. (2004). 205.

⁶⁰ Aurelius, M. (2013). Book ix 9 & 13

⁶¹ IBID

response to such a relationship, but Aurelius is consistent in his description of meekness as both having good-will and being subversive. Among adversaries, good-will is subversive. An adversarial relationship cannot be subverted by responding in kind, and there is no intimacy or stability to end by withdrawing. The most fitting way to subvert an adversarial relationship is by responding with good-will. It fundamentally changes the relationship because someone that good-will is harbored towards cannot be considered an adversary.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

“The meek shall inherit the earth.”⁶² What a perplexing claim. Contextually, the idea of inheriting the earth, or owning any land, was particularly poignant to Jesus’ imperialized Jewish audience. Considering the overwhelming power that the Roman Empire possessed it is difficult to imagine liberation from their subjugation through meekness. The Jewish prophesy of a *Messiah* that would liberate the Jewish people and establish the Kingdom of God was expected to be a warrior prince who would lead the uprising against the Romans.⁶³ A warrior was the only way the people could conceive of being liberated from the Romans. However, Jesus claimed that the path to liberation was meekness, and he gave three examples as to how responding meekly to injustice and oppression was the path to the liberation they sought.

RESPONDING TO UNJUST AND OPPRESSIVE TREATMENT

Three institutions systematically oppressed the Jewish people at the time of his sermon; interpersonal dominance, a corrupt debt system, and Roman imperialism. In

⁶² Matthew 5:5 ESV

⁶³ Newsom, C. A., & Ringe, S. H. (Eds.). (1998). *Women's Bible commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press. Books of Isaiah, Daniel, and Matthew.

response to which, Jesus famously tells his followers to turn the other cheek, give them your cloak as well as your tunic, and go the second mile.⁶⁴ I will argue that these are meek responses meant to liberate from oppression based on Walter Wink's interpretation of Jesus' speech from a socio-political perspective.

"If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."⁶⁵ Wink points out that in Jewish tradition it was unclean to use one's left hand, so when Jesus says after being struck on the right cheek to turn the other, it is assumed that the back of the right hand was used to strike.⁶⁶ Culturally, and even to this day, striking with the back of the hand was not meant to injure inasmuch as it was meant to insult, degrade, humiliate, and put in one's place. It was administered by the superior to the inferior; by the masters to the slaves, by the husbands to the wives, by the parents to the children, from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom. Turning one's cheek prohibited another back of the hand strike without the striker making themselves impure, or being forced to strike with their fist. Striking with one's fist was something only equals did, and it would have been self-deprecating to take the place of themselves on equal ground. Turning one's cheek was an act of insubordination and active non-participation in the unjust hierarchy.⁶⁷

"If anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well."⁶⁸ The second unjust institution was the creditor/debtor system. Loans were being given to the

⁶⁴ Matthew 5:38-41 ESV

⁶⁵ Matthew 5:39b ESV

⁶⁶ Wink, W. (2003). JESUS' THIRD WAY. Liberating faith: religious voices for justice, peace, and ecological wisdom, 441. 443.

⁶⁷ Wink, W. (1987). *Violence and nonviolence in South Africa: Jesus' third way* (Vol. 4722). Philadelphia: New Society Publishers. 16.

⁶⁸ Matthew 5:40 ESV

separate poor at interest rates between 25 and 250 percent allowing the wealthy to seize ancestral land that was otherwise unobtainable. Jewish custom allowed for a creditor to take the tunic, or outer garment, of the debtor as collateral for the day as long as they returned it before the evening so the debtor had something in which to sleep.⁶⁹ This forced the debtor to walk the streets in their cloak, or undergarment. Being forced to spend the day in their cloak was a shameful public display of their poverty and indebtedness. Giving ones cloak as well would have left them naked before their creditor. In the Jewish tradition it was shameful, not for the naked, but for the one who viewed or caused the nakedness of another.⁷⁰ Giving the cloak exposed the failure of the creditor for their predatory practices that gained for themselves esteem and power and acquired wealth and status at the expense of the poor. By stripping themselves of their cloak and exposing their nakedness in response to the debtor system, they strip the cloak of justice and authority away from the oppressive structure and those who profit from it for what they really are. In doing so they are bearing witness to a corrupt system that this is intolerable and must be changed.

“If one forces you to go a mile, go with him two.”⁷¹ The final example of responding to unjust institutions was to that of Roman Imperialism. A Roman soldier could demand any subjected person to carry their packs for up to one mile, beyond that broke the military code.⁷² Carrying the pack a second mile asserted that while the power, authority, and rules belong to Caesar, how they respond is their own. This act of choice, even for a single

⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 24:10-13 ESV

⁷⁰ Genesis 9:20-27 ESV

⁷¹ Matthew 5:41 ESV

⁷² Wink, W. (2003). 444.

instance and only on a single determiner of status, asserted the equality between the Jew and the soldier. The soldier did not have to demand that someone carry their pack, but was free to decide if it would be carried and by whom. The Jew was incapable of turning down the soldier but was free to walk the second mile. This act of free will subverts the hierarchy assumed in the roles of Roman soldier and imperialized person. There is a liberating effect achieved through the subversion and noncompliance of one's assigned subjugated role.

EXPERIENCING LIBERATION

If turning the other cheek, giving your cloak as well as your tunic, and going the second mile are paradigmatic examples of meek responses to injustice, then it is no surprise that meekness has been viewed as perpetuating oppression rather than being liberating. However, acting as if the hierarchy of the relationship does not exist destabilizes the oppressive status quo of the relationship. The destabilization of the oppressive relationship is a form of experiencing liberation before the guilty have succeeded in changing.⁷³

IV. MEEKNESS

From these historic accounts, meekness can be summarized as a virtue that: regards someone guilty of wrongdoing or badbeing; refuses to position oneself above or against the wrongdoer by harboring good-will for the guilty through empathy; and subverts the harmful relationship in a way that alerts the wrongdoer to their moral failure and places the onus of change on them.

AFFECTIVE RESPONSES

Meekness cannot be evinced without empathy, but empathy is not the whole of its affective response. There is an important role of affective responses in feminist ethics and

⁷³ Actions that destabilize oppressive relationships are liberating on their own for both meekness and contempt.

epistemology. In "A Woman's Scorn," Bell outlines Uma Narayan's argument that the emotions experienced in response to oppression provide the oppressed with special moral knowledge. It is knowledge that is unique to the experience of oppression with full knowledge of oppression's emotional cost, the ability to identify the subtler manifestations of oppression, and the ability to recognize oppression in novel contexts.⁷⁴ Responses of anger, resentment, bitterness, and contempt all provide important epistemic import for the oppressed. However, the epistemic import occurs as the immediate response to the experience of harm, and not through the consciously continued practices of such negative emotions.⁷⁵ By providing knowledge of the experience of being oppressed these affective responses are not mutually exclusive with meekness as a practice. They may even be necessary for motivating the subversive actions required by meekness, but that is another project altogether.

If the characteristic empathy of meekness is to be useful to the oppressed, then it must contribute to the special kind of knowledge of the oppressed. Empathy is defined by Martin Hoffman as an affective response more appropriate to another situation than to one's own.⁷⁶ When empathy is a part of the affective response to oppression, it gives knowledge to the experience of the oppressor. An affective response that combines empathy with anger, bitterness, and contempt gives the oppressed knowledge of both the oppressed and the

⁷⁴ Bell, M. (2005). 81

Narayan, U. (1988). Working together across difference: Some considerations on emotions and political practice. *Hypatia*, 3(2), 31-48.

⁷⁵ For those who are oppressed along many dimensions, they may experience these harms at many different points through their day-to-day experience, but they are always felt as a response. Cultivating them beyond their responsive role makes them a practice which lacks the important epistemic import.

⁷⁶ Hoffman, M. L. (2001). *Empathy and moral development: Implications for caring and justice*. Cambridge University Press: 4.

oppressor. Empathizing with one's oppressor, however, may be confused with excusing or dismissing the harm they have done, and this would not be justified. But, empathizing does not necessarily excuse the badbeing, and failing to empathize with one's oppressors has its own drawbacks. The wide-ranging and multidimensional nature of privilege and oppression makes it unlikely that anyone completely lacks the experience of being an oppressor.

Refusing to acknowledge being oppressors has been a criticism of women of Color feminists towards white, middle-class, academic feminists who fail to see how their privileged status comes at the expense of other women. It is therefore important to acknowledge one's own moral fallibility, and experience being an oppressor while concurrently attending to the experience of being oppressed. Attending to both experiences is what enables the meek to harbor good-will towards their oppressors. Bearing witness to the moral failings of the oppressors is not done to shame, demean, or belittle them, but it is done with an attitude of mutuality and good-will that hopes for their positive change.

SUBVERTING AND THREATENING HIERARCHY

There are rigid norms, codes, and expectations of behavior, written and unwritten, that individuals, or groups, are required to perform based on their status within social and relational hierarchies. Those guilty of superbia, sexism and racism use the rigidity of these roles to exact privilege and power from those beneath them. The rigidity of the roles ensure that people remain in their assigned place within the hierarchy. All of society, including oneself, is ever-presently policing obedience to the norms.⁷⁷ However, those who evince meekness will be disposed to act subversively as if the established hierarchy lacks authority

⁷⁷ Bartky, Sandra (1988). "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in *Feminism and Foucault: Paths of Resistance*. Ed. lee Quinby and Irene Diamond. Northeastern Univ. Press: 61-86.

or simply does not exist. Acting outside of the established roles subverts the oppressive relationships that depend on hierarchy. The subversion destabilizes the relationship between oppressed and oppressor. A paradigmatic example of this is Rosa Parks refusing to move to her “place” in the rear of the bus. Acting as an equal with the white community was outside of her assigned role and struck at the heart of her society’s hierarchical structuring proclaiming that the hierarchy had no authority.

Professing the established hierarchy lacks authority is a destabilizing political move. When the norms that form the core of the culture’s social relations are brought into question, the established hierarchies are destabilized. Bringing the norms into question, publicly or privately, is a political statement that threatens the established hierarchy. The condemned forgiving their judges from the executioner’s block questions the legitimacy of the condemnation and threatens hierarchy. The carer leaving the abuser to care for themselves threatens hierarchy by questioning the entitlement of the abuser and their supposed state of dependency. A slave can threaten the hierarchy by turning their other cheek to their master, bringing into question whether the punishment comes from just authority or from a personal fight between equals. Meek actions creatively and aptly subvert social norms bearing witness to the injustice of the established hierarchy.

All subversive actions are threatening, but the attitude carried with them determines, at least in part, what they threaten. If subversion is done with an attitude of hate, then the threat of physical harm will be particularly great. If subversion is done with an attitude of apathy, then nothing in particular will be threatened and it will be seen as easily stifled. An attitude of good-will brings its own threat. An attitude of good-will desires a change at the

very core of the badbeing, not just the harmful practices. This change does not seek to benefit the few or only those who were harmed, but seeks the benefit of all with a sense of mutuality. The cost of the change, however, is not so equal. To demand change at the core of the badbeing is a call for revolution, and revolution always comes at a great cost to those who benefit from the status quo. If the change being demanded represents the core of the hierarchical power, then the hegemon is gravely threatened; i.e. demanding the end of compulsory heterosexuality greatly threatens sexist societies.

MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY

Meekness is related to and often conflated with humility. Humility can even lead one to break social norms, but there are two primary differences between the virtues. First, humility is a manner of regarding oneself as no more highly than one merits. Whereas meekness is a manner of regarding others in response to their moral failing. Second, while an act of humility such as the mayor of San Francisco washing the feet of the city's homeless without fanfare or media attention subverts the expected role of hierarchy, it does not call for revolution. There is no injustice or moral failing being illuminated, so there can be no one held responsible to rectify moral failing. Humility may be a proper response to the revolutionary call of the meek, and meek persons may be required to also be humble, but the two virtues are clearly separate.

REALIZING FEMINIST CRITERIA FOR JUSTIFICATION

This account of meekness clearly fulfills the criteria for feminist justification of subversion, epistemic value of moral scenarios, bearing witness to injustice, and motivating possible social change. My account accomplishes this in three ways. Firstly, by including

empathy in the list of affective responses to oppression, this provides significant benefits in epistemic import. Secondly, the characteristic subversion of hierarchy done with an attitude of good-will bears witness to the injustices stemming from the vices of superiority, sexism, and racism among other forms of badbeing and wrongdoing. Lastly, the destabilization of hierarchical relationships motivates the guilty in such a way that there is the possibility of change.

BURDENED VIRTUE

It is unavoidable that those who enact meekness as a response to injustice may not live to experience the abolishment of their oppression. This may be problematic for meekness to be considered a virtue, if virtue necessarily produces flourishing. I have argued that the subversion of norms enacted by the meek transcends the oppressive relations constituting a moment of expressed liberty. However, multiple forms of oppression intersect and are experienced simultaneously. Expressing liberty against one form of oppression is not equal to being liberated. Lisa Tessman addresses virtue within the struggle for liberation without the realization of fully liberated flourishing in *Burdened Virtues*.⁷⁸ Tessman argues that the relationship between virtue and flourishing is a contingent one.⁷⁹ Thus, virtues ought

⁷⁸ Tessman, L. (2005). *Burdened virtues: Virtue ethics for liberatory struggles*. Oxford University Press.

⁷⁹ Tessman, L. (2005). 160 as well as Card, C. (1985). *Virtues and moral luck* (Vol. 1, No. 4). University of Wisconsin--Madison Law School, which is leaned on heavily by Tessman.

to be assessed based on their ability to enable one's good action, whether or not it achieves flourishing.⁸⁰ The representative hypothetical virtue that meekness fits is characterized as:

"Trait v_3 is chosen because it is judged to be the best trait to cultivate in the circumstances, even though it is not conducive to or constitutive of anyone's flourishing at present; it does, however, tend to enable its bearer to perform actions with the aim of eventually making flourishing lives more possible overall (for the bearer of trait v_3 and/or for others)."

A hope for social change and future liberation is created when the meek respond to oppression, interpersonal or institutional, by bearing witness to and maintaining the wrongness of the oppressive act, placing the onus of change onto the guilty, and motivating the guilty to change through destabilizing the oppressive relationship. This fulfills both conditions of Tessman's hypothetical trait v_3 , and can therefore be considered a burdened virtue.

CONCLUSION

"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the Earth." I have argued for an account of meekness that allows for the powerful and liberatory implications of this claim. The actions produced by meekness are a powerful motivator for possible social change that can liberate people from oppression. As meekness fulfills the feminist criteria of justification, and avoids

⁸⁰ This is a part of a larger project than cannot be sufficiently covered here. However, it is useful to list Tessman's conclusion which offers 4 hypothetical traits to be considered virtuous. The 4 hypothetical traits are: 1) "Trait v_1 tends to enable its bearer to make the right decisions and to perform good actions (given the assumption that these are available); and, having trait v_1 is conducive to or partly constitutes living a good life." 2) "When good actions are unavailable, trait v_2 tends to enable its bearer to choose as well as possible, with the appropriate feelings, such as regret or anguish, toward what cannot be done. Furthermore, that v_2 is a trait that *would* be good - in the straightforward sense conducive to or constitutive of flourishing - if conditions were better and presented a truly good option, for in such case trait v_2 would operate without the encumbrance of a moral remainder, and thus without the negative feelings that attach to it." 3) "Trait v_3 is chosen because it is judged to be the best trait to cultivate in the circumstances, even though it is not conducive to or constitutive of anyone's flourishing at present; it does, however, tend to enable its bearer to perform actions with the aim of eventually making flourishing lives more possible overall (for the bearer of trait v_3 and/or for others)." and 4) Trait v_4 tends to enable its bearer to make the best possible decisions and to perform the best possible actions; and, having trait v_4 is conducive to or partly constitutes living as well as possible, though because trait v_4 carries a cost to its bearer (and perhaps to others), it is only choice worthy when the conditions are present and a good life is unattainable."

hierarchy, the only reason one would choose to harbor contempt over practicing meekness is possessing the ill-will of creating or sustaining hierarchy that harms those who did them harm. Therefore, meekness ought to be endorsed by feminists as a response to badbeing and wrongdoing.