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Forgiveness in Ancient Rome: A review of contemporary forgiveness clementia Caesaris and Senecas De clementia

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FORGIVENESS IN ANCIENT ROME: A REVIEW OF
CONTEMPORARY FORGIVENESS, *CLEMENTIA*
CAESARIS, AND SENECA'S *DE CLEMENTIA*

BY

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Honors in the Department of Classics and the Department
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ABSTRACT

SEDLAK, JAMES Forgiveness in Ancient Rome: A review of contemporary forgiveness, *clementia Caesaris*, and Seneca's *De clementia*.

This thesis explores the question of modern forgiveness in the lives of ancient Romans. Specifically, did their understanding of *clementia* reflect contemporary forgiveness? In the first chapter, I analyze five views on forgiveness and offer my own account. In the second chapter, I explore *clementia* in the life of Julius Caesar during the Roman Republic. In the third chapter, I analyze Lucius Annaeus Seneca's philosophy on *clementia* in Imperial Rome.

I created my own account of forgiveness to provide a basis for investigating and comparing *clementia Caesaris* and Seneca's *De clementia*. I chose Caesar and Seneca because they are two of the most prolific personas responsible for the development of *clementia* in pre-Christian Roman history, the former in practice and the latter in theory. In an attempt to achieve a comprehensive analysis in my research I used primary and secondary sources to understand the philosophy of forgiveness and moral significance of *clementia*. I argue that contemporary forgiveness, as I define it, existed in ancient Rome.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- App. *CW.* = John Carter, trans., *The Civil Wars* (New York 1996).
- Braund, *Clementia* = Susan Braun, trans., Seneca's *De clementia* (Oxford 2009).
- Butler, *Works* = Bishop Joseph Butler, vol. 2, *The Works of Joseph Butler* (Oxford 1896).
- Caes. *BC* = A.G. Peskett, trans., *The Civil War* (Cambridge 1979).
- Caes. *BG* = H.J. Edwards, trans., *The Gallic War* (Cambridge 2006).
- Cic. *De Inv.* = H.M. Hubbell, trans., *De Inventione* (Cambridge 1976).
- Cic. *Ad Att.1* = D.R. Shackleton Bailey, trans., *Letters to Atticus.* vol. 3 (Cambridge 1999).
- Cic. *Ad Att.2* = D.R. Shackleton Bailey, trans., *Letters to Atticus.* vol. 4 (Cambridge 1999).
- Cic. *Pro Marc.* = N.H Watts, trans., *Orations: Pro Milone. In Pisonem. Pro Scauro. Pro Fonteio. Pro Rabirio Postumo. Pro Marcello. Pro Ligario. Pro Rege Deiotaro* (Cambridge 1992).
- Cic. *Pro. Lig.* = N.H Watts, trans., *Orations: Pro Milone. In Pisonem. Pro Scauro. Pro Fonteio. Pro Rabirio Postumo. Pro Marcello. Pro Ligario. Pro Rege Deiotaro* (Cambridge 1992).
- Cic. *Ad fam.* = W.S. Watt, trans., *Epistulae ad Familiares.* vol. 1 (Oxford 1982).
- Coulter, *Caesar* = Cornelia Catlin Coulter, "Caesar's Clemency." *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 7 (April 1931) 513-524.
- Dowling, *Clemency* = M.B. Dowling, *Clemency and Cruelty in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor 2006).
- Durant, *Christ* = Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, vol. 3, *The Story of Civilization* (New York 1972).
- Griffin, *CAC* = Miriam Griffin. "Clementia after Caesar: from Politics to Philosophy." *Caesar Against Liberty? Perspectives on his Autocracy.* ed. Francis Cairns and Elaine Fantham (Great Britain 2003).
- Griffin, *Seneca* = Miriam Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford 1976).

Griswold, *Forgiveness = Forgiveness* (Cambridge 2007).

Hart, *Punishment* = H.L.A Hart, *Punishment and Responsibility: Essays in the Philosophy of Law* (Oxford 2008).

Kekes, *Roots* = John Kekes, *The Roots of Evil* (Ithaca, NY 2005).

Kekes, *Blame* = John Kekes, "Blame versus Forgiveness." *The Monist* 92, no. 4 (2009) 488-506.

Konstan, *BF* = David Konstan, *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea* (Cambridge 2010).

Konstan, *Virtue* = David Konstan, "Clemency as a Virtue." *Classical Philology*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (October 2005) 337-346.

Mueller, *Cruelty* = Hans-Friedrich Mueller. "Imperial Rome and the Habitations of Cruelty," *Veritatis Amicitiaque Causa* (Wauconda, IL 1999).

OLD = P.G. W. Glare, ed. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford 1982).

Plut. *Caes.* = Rex Warner, trans., "Caesar." *Fall of the Roman Republic* (New York 2006).

RRC = Michael H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, Volume I-II (Cambridge 1974).

Scullard, *Gracchi* = H.H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A history of Rome from 133 B.C. to A.D. 68* (New York 1982).

Sen. *De clem.1* = Susan Braund, trans., *Clementia* (Oxford 2009).

Sen. *De clem.2* = John. W. Basore, trans., *Moral Essays*. vol. 1 (Cambridge 1979).

Sen. *De ira* = John. W. Basore, trans., *Moral Essays*. vol. 1 (Cambridge 1979).

Zaibert, *Paradox* = Leo Zaibert, "The Paradox of Forgiveness." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 6 (2009) 365-393.

Zaibert, *PR* = Leo Zaibert, *Punishment and Retribution* (Burlington, VT 2006).

INTRODUCTION

I find it hard to deny that human beings have an unfixable propensity to err. Imperfection is simply part of the human condition. But, just as it is in our power to err, it is in our power to forgive. In the words of eighteenth century poet, Alexander Pope, “to err is human, to forgive [is] divine.”¹ However, while some like Pope consider forgiveness a divine deed, I consider it as equal a part of the human condition. Moral agents have different moral relationships with each other. Some are pleasant while others are grim. Some are deep while others are superficial. Albeit when human beings err, they tend to err against other human beings. In order to fix moral relationships in the situations, we may choose to forgive. We talk about people as victims, offenders, forgivers and repenters. But what really is forgiveness?

Charles Griswold offers a brief answer:

A moment’s reflection reveals that forgiveness is a surprisingly complex and elusive notion. It is easier to say what it is not, than what it is. Forgiveness is not simply a matter of finding a therapeutic way to deal ‘deal with’ injury, pain, or anger – even though it does *somehow* involve overcoming the anger one feels in response to injury. If it were just a name for a *modus vivendi* that rendered us insensible to the wrongs that inevitably visit human life, than hypnosis or amnesia or taking a pill might count as forgiveness. Our intuitions are so far from any such view that we count the capacity to forgive – in the right way and under the right circumstances – as part and parcel of a praiseworthy character.²

¹ Alexander Pope. *An essay on criticism*. By Alexander Pope, Esq.; London, 1758. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale. Union College. 6 Mar. 2012
<http://find.galegroup.com/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=nysl_ca_unionc&tabID=T001&docId=CW116671129&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>.

² *Forgiveness*, xiv.

Forgiveness, as a practice or concept, can permeate multiple disciplines. A common dictionary definition of forgiving is to “cease to feel resentment against on account of wrong committed.”³ This is partially correct; it is missing the moral reasoning behind the act of forgiveness, which is what I plan to discuss. Chapter one aims to establish a working account of forgiveness.

The first part of the chapter will review five different perspectives on forgiveness by Bishop Butler, Leo Zaibert, David Konstan, Charles Griswold, and John Kekes. I have chosen these five because I believe they contribute important elements to a discussion on forgiveness. My goal in reviewing each account is to create my own account of modern forgiveness and argue against the paradigm view, that forgiveness is a conditional, bilateral phenomenon.⁴ I hope to provide compelling answers to how we forgive and why we forgive. I will also discuss the desirability of different forms of forgiveness and why the other accounts fail to capture the essence of forgiveness. Ultimately I discuss why my account of forgiveness is reasonable to adopt. Whenever I mention forgiveness, I am referring to ‘contemporary forgiveness.’

Despite extensive research on forgiveness over the centuries, forgiveness in ancient Rome has remained relatively uncharted territory for philosophical exploration. Perhaps one of the main reasons for this lack in scholarly exploration is that forgiveness simply did not exist.⁵ Or perhaps scholars have been misled to believe such a thing. Nonetheless, I believe the issue of forgiveness in ancient Rome remains inconclusive and

³ *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1971) s.v. “forgive.”

⁴ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, xv.

⁵ David Konstan deals with this question at great length. He makes his position very clear in the opening preface by claiming that “the modern concept of forgiveness, in the full or rich sense of the term, did not exist in classical antiquity, that is, in ancient Greece or Rome... it played no role whatever in the ethical thinking of those societies” (*BF*, ix). His work inspired me to write this thesis.

intriguing. Forgiveness may have very well existed in ancient Rome if we make some general assumptions about the kind of people the Romans were.

Let us make some basic assumptions. The Romans were moral agents with a moral awareness. That is, they had a concept of what ethical behavior meant. However, being a moral agent with a certain moral character may not jointly suffice for practicing forgiveness. So what else can we assume about them? The Romans were human beings with nearly identical motivations for self-preservation in a moral community. In other words, the act of moral rehabilitation is critical to an individual's capacity to function in a society with norms and order. I believe we have the same relationship to the moral norms and order of society today. I find this sense of moral realignment to a community characteristic for all rational moral agents. Again, these are just preliminary considerations but they may encourage the reader to adopt an open-minded approach to my query.

The above considerations alone do not warrant this investigation. Forgiveness is represented by several words in the ancient languages. These words are sprinkled throughout ancient texts so we may postulate that the authors of said texts had an understanding of forgiveness. But was it the understanding of forgiveness we have today? That is the question the second half of the paper explores. My search through textual evidence leads me to argue the ancient Romans possessed an understanding of forgiveness in thought. The evidence I analyzed did not support forgiveness in practice.

For the Greeks, the closest equivalent to forgiveness is *sungnômê*. Some meanings include to sympathize, forgive, pardon, or excuse.⁶ In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle claims *sungnômê* occurs when external forces drive one's will (in the case of

⁶ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 3.

involuntary or forceful situations such as when one is held at gunpoint and ordered to do something). In such cases, the individual is absolved of blame from doing wrong.

Aristotle suggests *sungnômê* can also occur when one follows one's *epithumia* (natural desire), which is common to all men, like pleasure and pain.⁷ In a general diagnosis of Aristotle's work Griswold claims that Aristotle leaves no room for *sungnômê* in his "ethical perfectionist" ideology and neglects forgiveness as a virtue; *sungnômê* as forgiveness doesn't have much ethical significance.⁸ Nonetheless, we will be focusing on forgiveness as translated into Latin, after Aristotle wrote on the topic.

The English translation for *ignosco ~ ignoscere ~ ignoscov ~ ignoscotum* is: "to forgive (a person or offence)." Numerous authors use it: Cato, Cicero, Plutarch, Livy, Caesar, the list continues.⁹ Even though this translation is a direct match for the English word, 'forgive,' I am not focusing on it in my project. Words like *ignosco*, *lenitas*, and *clementia* (arguably synonymous) all adopt a unique meaning in which context they are supplied. For example, *lenitas* in one context may be more the equivalent of *clementia* and vice versa. I am focusing on *clementia* because of the prominent players responsible for giving it such a comprehensive reputation in ancient Rome. I am referring to Julius Caesar and Lucius Annaeus Seneca. Clemency translates to "a disposition to spare or pardon, leniency; complaisance."¹⁰ While *clementia* may not be the most precise translation of forgiveness, its usage in ancient texts and scholarly commentary provide the insight I am seeking. Caesar's prose offers a perspective on Roman mercy in practice

⁷ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-10.

⁹ *OLD*, 824.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 336. Also, for those who think contemporary forgiveness entails a change of heart in the wrongdoer and victim, it is difficult to find textual support. The Latin word *paenitentia* means "regret for one's actions, change of mind or attitude" (*OLD*, 1282). David Konstan mentions that Robert Kaster "remarks after an exhaustive study of the Latin *paenitentia* and related words, the idea of 'a change of heart that leads one to seek purgation and forgiveness' was unknown to pre-Christian Romans" (*BF*, 11).

while Seneca's work offers a perspective on Roman mercy in theory. The analysis of each and whether they reflect contemporary forgiveness will be the purpose of chapter two and chapter three, respectively.

For matters of clarification I reckon 'ancient Rome' to correspond to the years between the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Empire (circa 100 B.C. – A.D. 100). This time frame was not chosen for any specific reason with respect to the development of forgiveness. I am choosing the works of Caesar and Seneca because they write at the end of the Republic and early Empire, respectively. I am aware that this is a very limited study considering the extent of ancient Rome; I concede this flaw.

I will also be discuss forgiveness as a virtue and *clementia* as a virtue. However, it may come up sporadically when appropriate. M. B. Dowling writes *clementia* came to be that by which a man's character was measured (in the Roman world).¹¹ While clemency as a virtue is an important consideration to take in mind, I argue we ought to understand *clementia* as a moral phenomenon because it became part of the common Roman ethic; it wasn't merely a characteristic. Furthermore, I argue it has a moral foundation. I also believe it is a mistake to think of forgiveness as a virtue.

I conclude this paper by arguing textual evidence supports my theory of forgiveness existed in ancient Roman thought.

¹¹ Dowling, *Clemency*, 2.

UNDERSTANDING FORGIVENESS: A REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY FORGIVENESS

Revenge is a kind of wild justice, which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out; for as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law, but the revenge of that wrong putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing over it, he is superior; ... This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well.¹²

Forgiveness can mean different things for different people. We may forgive our neighbor for forgetting to water our plants while we go on vacation, forgive a deceased one for some prolonged, unaddressed wrongdoing, forgive a criminal, and so on. Forgiveness can be defined across different disciplines. For example, political forgiveness can be the President pardoning a criminal; economic forgiveness can be freeing one of debt. Despite the wide understanding of forgiveness, only a small portion of such acts count as moral forgiveness. In other words, they have a genuine, moral backing. The goal of this chapter is to review five different perspectives on moral forgiveness and develop my own account. I will argue why my account of forgiveness is more reasonable to adopt despite its unique character. I propose forgiveness is the forswearing of revenge in order to maximize one's well-being after an injury. It is an unconditional, intrapersonal phenomenon by the victim, for the victim.

Among scholars who write on forgiveness, David Konstan and Charles Griswold construct conditional accounts of forgiveness. Their accounts underscore the importance of the wrongdoer and victim partaking in moral reflection. Hence, their accounts are

¹²Francis Bacon, *The Essays*, ed. Samuel Harvey Reynolds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 34.

interpersonal. Others like Bishop Joseph Butler and Leo Zaibert understand forgiveness differently Butler understands forgiveness into the way in which we deal with resentment. Zaibert's account involves the victim of an injury "deliberately refus[ing] to punish" through an intrapersonal mental process.¹³ The latter two accounts attempt to reconcile resentment and forgiveness whereas Konstan and Griswold consider forgiveness to mean the abolishment of resentment, or at least the commitment to such; they also contain threshold conditions for forgiveness. These conditions make up the paradigm account of forgiveness:

1. The willingness – whether in fact, or as imaginatively reconstructed by a suitable qualified third party – of the victim to try to lower her pitch of resentment, as well as her ability to do so to some minimal degree, and forswear revenge (this of course assumes that the victim does or would feel resentment for the injury done; if not even that is felt, then of course (1) fails to come into play at all);
2. The willingness – whether in fact, or as imaginatively reconstructed by the victim (picture the victim being presented with the offender's death-bed letter of contrition, for example, that supplies a basis for reframing her view of the offender) – of the offender to take minimal steps to qualify for forgiveness;
3. That the injury be humanly forgivable.¹⁴

John Kekes presents an argument for the incompatibility of forgiveness and reasonable blame. I plan on using his work to help argue against why the standard paradigm view should indeed be the standard view of contemporary forgiveness. By the end of the chapter I hope to have established a working definition of contemporary forgiveness. Then, I will explore the question if contemporary forgiveness (as I define it) existed in ancient Roman practice or thought.

¹³ Zaibert, *Paradox*, 368.

¹⁴ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 115.

Before we dive into the different views on forgiveness it is important to make some preliminary remarks on preconditions and definitions. Forgiveness is a form of reconciliation between moral agents in conflict.¹⁵ Moral agents have the capacity for responsibility, guilt, self-awareness, and deliberation. These are traits of moral cognition that allow for moral reconciliation and rehabilitation. We do not consider animals or other non-moral agent entities capable of forgiving or being forgiven; they neither form nor deliberate moral thoughts with an awareness of doing so, humans do. I find this point unobjectionable and do not need to expand on it further.

So what sets the stage for forgiveness? There must be a blameworthy wrongdoer. If A were to forgive B, A does so because A finds B to be guilty of committing some offense. If A were to not find B blameworthy of said offense, A would have no logical grounds for forgiving B. Forgiveness presupposes the forgiven agent has done wrong and is responsible for it.

But what does it mean to do something wrong? Furthermore, to what extent can moral agents be held responsible for their actions? I do not wish to dive too deep into this discussion because it can create a lengthy digression. To do something wrong is to transgress another individual's autonomy. In most cases this is intentional but it need not be. Furthermore wrongdoing may or may not cause harm. A bank robber, who believes the bank teller pressed the emergency 911 button, pulls the trigger on the gun he is pointing at the teller. The gun misfires because it jams. Had the gun not been jammed, the bank robber would have 1) deliberately chosen to injure the teller and 2) physically harmed the teller. In the scenario given, the robber only deliberately chose to injure the

¹⁵ Konstan, *BF*, 2: “[the sense of forgiveness] is one that involves a commission of a wrong and a certain kind of foregoing in respect to the wrongdoer.”

teller but he still did something wrong because the act of ‘holding up’ the teller is transgressing her autonomy.

Furthermore, to we conceive of wrongdoers as individuals who are blameworthy when they act with *mens rea*.¹⁶ Having a guilty mind means that an individual intends to do wrong without any mitigating circumstances, i.e. the bank robber. If the act were unintended, then the act may be easily excused or absolved in some other non-forgiving manner. But it is plausible to blame someone for an unintentional wrongdoing as well. An individual is blameworthy in as much as she is responsible for her action. She is certainly responsible for her action if she intended for it to happen. Furthermore, she is responsible for an action if she intentionally allows said action to happen, without actually intending it.¹⁷ Konstan offers a different perspective on blameworthiness. He states “to be responsible for something in the sense of having a causal relation to the outcome is not all that is meant by modern writers who insist on the acknowledgment of culpability [as a precondition for forgiveness]. What is demanded at the very least is regret... the wish that one had not performed the act and that the outcome were different” (*BF*, 9).¹⁸ Later on I discuss why this is unnecessary.

¹⁶ Hart, *Punishment*, 36: while *mens rea* is defined as an “intention to commit an act that is wrong in the sense it is legally forbidden” forgiveness need not be concerned with only illegal wrongdoings. The moral analogy of *mens rea* is pertinent to our discussion of blameworthiness.

¹⁷ Kekes, *Roots*, 59: “Choice is not the pivot on which responsibility turns, not because the pivot is something else, but because there is no pivot... lack of choice does not preclude the assignment of responsibility.” For example, Adolf Eichmann intentionally carried out orders to send thousands of innocent people to their deaths yet he claims he was just doing his job. Regardless, he is responsible. Although some may chalk up Eichmann’s failure to recognize the consequences of following orders to negligence, it is not implausible to consider this quasi-act of negligence a form of *mens rea* and thus blameworthy. Hart states “I think there is much to be said in favour of extending the notion of ‘*mens*’ beyond the ‘cognitive’ element of knowledge and foresight, so as to include the capacities and powers of normal persons to think about and control their conduct. I would therefore certainly follow Stephen [Sir James Fitzjames Stephen] and others and include negligence in *mens rea* because, as I shall argue later, it is essentially a failure to exercise such capacities” (*Punishment*, 140).

¹⁸He goes on to claim that “the demand [for forgiveness to occur] is for a deeper awareness, which includes the acknowledgement that what the offender did was morally wrong, complete with the rejection of such

So far I have discussed the object of forgiveness: the blameworthy wrongdoer. Furthermore, we can forgive someone whom we *perceive* to be a blameworthy wrongdoer too. The wronged individual, the person to whom an injury or harm was directed, must perceive the wrongdoing they suffered. Forgiveness is a moral phenomenon in response to a specific perceived wrongdoing. If the teller does not believe the robber was the one to shoot her, it makes no sense for her to forgive the robber for shooting her. On the flip side of this scenario, let us say the teller believes the robber harmed her when he in fact did not. Let us assume the robber's accomplice shot her instead. Can she still forgive the robber for shooting her? I suggest the teller can. Just as one is able to conjure false anger or resentment toward another, one is able to forswear it or somehow get rid of it. This presents an important point; should forgiveness be defined within intrapersonal or interpersonal parameters? If it is intrapersonal, the reasoning I gave seems to stand. If it is interpersonal, the robber would have to somehow qualify for his forgiveness (per the second threshold condition of the paradigm view). But this may not work because the robber would be repenting for something he did not do. If we believe forgiveness is an interpersonal phenomenon, then we need a condition where "the acquisition of a new self... must nevertheless be revealed to the injured party, if forgiveness to be granted; for forgiveness depends on the conviction that the offender has truly had a change of heart."¹⁹ If we believe forgiveness is an intrapersonal phenomenon, then this condition is simply unnecessary.

behavior in the future: not simple regret but remorse." This will be a major point of contention when his full account of forgiveness is discussed later on. Is this actually necessary for forgiveness? Also, how do we ensure the wrongdoer has achieved 'deep awareness' through regret or remorse?

¹⁹ Konstan, *BF*, 10: This will be the central tenet of his account.

I will also be talking about resentment and revenge as responses to being wronged. These two reactive attitudes express moral judgment and emotional response to a wrongdoing.²⁰ I understand resentment as the overarching reactive attitude to being wronged. Revenge is the most extreme form of resentment where victims simply want to ‘get back’ at their offenders. While resentment is not the only reactive attitude to being wronged, it is necessary for forgiveness to occur. If the victim felt no resentment toward her offender, why else would she forgive them? The point of forgiveness is to negate resentment. I will discuss the different degrees to which we can do this.

With resentment in mind, Butler’s view on forgiveness is a fitting place to begin my analysis. He claims there are two types of resentment: “sudden or and settled.” He elaborates by saying “sudden anger is often instinctive...” and that “... it cannot... be imagined, that these instances of this passion are the effect of reason: no, they are occasioned by mere sensation and feeling.”²¹ For example, I may summon a burst of anger in response to slamming a car door on my finger. In this scenario, resentment erupts involuntarily and is produced devoid of reason (toward the car door slamming on my finger). Butler claims that “settled anger is properly a resentment against injury and wickedness... [settled anger] is never occasioned by harm, distinct from injury; and its natural proper end is to remedy or prevent only that harm, which implies, or is supposed to imply, injury or moral wrong.”²²

²⁰ For more clarification on reactive attitudes: Strawson, P.F. *Freedom and Resentment, and Other Essays* (New York: Methuen, 1980) 14-15.

²¹ Butler, *Works*, 139.

²² *Ibid.*, 140-44: It can be easy to fall into confusion as Butler interchanges multiple words. Nevertheless, “settled anger” is a response to a intentional wrongdoing and cannot derive from “harm.” Harm is distinguished from injury; the latter is deliberately directed from one moral agent to another while the former is basic physiological damage, like a car door slamming on one’s finger.

Griswold states “the temporal projection of self into the future is one important way in which sudden and deliberate anger are distinguished (*Forgiveness*, 23). Settled anger is the form of resentment that involves moral judgment by reflecting on an injury; it aims to hold the wrongdoer in moral contempt. Griswold sums up resentment in the following way:

Resentment, then, is a moral sentiment in the sense that it is aroused by the perception of what we (the spectator to the scene, or the victim) take to be unwarranted injury. It is therefore not just a ‘raw feel’ but embodies a judgment about the fairness of an action or of an intention to do that action.²³

Resentment is not limited to the parties involved; it can be “felt on behalf of another...typically referred to as indignation (sympathetic resentment).” In making a moral judgment about the unwarranted injury, the victim or sympathetic resenter can develop resentment as a catalyst for retribution. The desire for retribution can often lead to disproportionate punishments or irrational and immoral actions. Butler, thus, suggests a way to prevent such things from happening to the victim or the sympathetic resenter.

In the following Sermon, Butler discusses the importance of moderating and controlling resentment toward a wrongdoer. He states: “the precepts to forgive, and to love our enemies, do not relate to that general indignation against injury and the authors of it, but to this feeling, or resentment when raised by private or personal injury” (*Works*, 151). It is imperative for an individual to moderate their resentment because “unchecked resentment is not a stable basis for assessing whether or when punishment is due, and

²³ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 26: He goes on to suggest Butler’s view of resentment “is a reactive as well as retributive passion that instinctively seeks to exact a due measure of punishment.”

cannot by itself assess whether it has attained the appropriate pitch.”²⁴ Unchecked resentment is dangerous. For example, a wife who murders her husband after coming home to find him committing adultery failed to moderate her resentment, giving in to what Butler calls an ‘abuse’ of resentment.²⁵ Abusing resentment constitutes letting the negative emotions build and get the better of our moral judgment.

So, Butler claims that “it must be understood to forbid only the excess and abuse of this natural feeling [resentment]” and that one need not renounce resentment all together (*Works*, 152). The excess of resentment is revenge. Resentment aims to do good (by holding the wrongdoer in moral contempt). So, there seems to be a necessary balance to draw because when individuals act on revenge they put themselves and others in peril.²⁶ The balance is forgiveness. Butler urges us to seek forgiveness by forswearing revenge.²⁷ A victim can continue resenting their offender while forgiving them; these two moral actions are compatible. In other words, we can continue to hold offenders in moral contempt when we have given up the desire to exact revenge on our offenders. Butler says we forgive because we love our enemy by seeing the traits of imperfection in each other. He writes: forgiveness is “absolutely necessary, as ever we hope for pardon of our own sins, as ever we hope for peace of mind in our dying moments (*Works*, 167).

²⁴ Ibid., 31. Griswold goes on to say that “Butler underlines, as one of the greatest abuses of resentment, the *partiality* of perspective the emotion can engender in its owner...Rightly focused, it is the legitimate response to injury.”

²⁵ Butler, *Works*, 144.

²⁶ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 31: “[revenge] is the most dangerous because it expresses the emotion in actions designed to cause pain and misery, and because its character as a vice easily escapes us.”

²⁷ Butler, *Works*, 158: “We may therefore love [show benevolence to] our enemy, and yet have resentment against him for his injurious behavior towards us. But when this resentment entirely destroys our natural benevolence towards him, it is excessive, and becomes malice or revenge. The command to prevent its having this effect, i.e. to forgive injuries, is the same as to love our enemies; because that love is always supposed, unless destroyed by resentment.”

Prima facie this appears counterintuitive; how can one resent and love their enemy? Butler suggests we love our enemy not in the sense a husband and wife love each other by sharing feelings of intimacy but instead love each other by treating others justly. Loving our enemy means not dehumanizing offenders as incapable of basic human integrity. In other words, Griswold states “forgiveness is ‘love’ in the sense that it affirms our commonality, as human beings, with the morally worst among us” (*Forgiveness*, 34). Since we all have the propensity to err, we should forgive; victims may one day find themselves in the shoes of an offender committing similar crimes.

How exactly does Butler suggest we forgive? How does one come to moderate one’s resentment towards a wrongdoer? According to Butler, we can only come to forgive our wrongdoer by “having the same feeling as a good man not injured... he [the victim] ought to be affected towards the injurious person [wrongdoer] in the same way any good men, uninterested in the case, would be...”²⁸ In order to become uninterested in the injury, Butler seems to suggest individuals should separate their perception of justice into two realms: public and private. The public sphere of justice calls for penalties carried out by a sovereign enforcing social norms. The private sphere of justice is between a victim and her offender.²⁹ I think these two realms of justice are what constitute Butler’s second component of forgiveness: “the moderation of resentment as judged appropriate by the “sympathetic good man and informed objective observer.”³⁰ In other words, we resent wrongdoers by making some kind of normative, moral judgment about their behavior and we want to see them punished in a way that upholds justice. However, we

²⁸ Butler, *Works*, 160.

²⁹ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 32.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36. Butler doesn’t explicitly distinguish the private and public sphere of justice; this is how I am interpreting the perspectives of the “sympathetic good man” and informed objective observer.” However, my interpretations could be inaccurate.

do not let our resentment toward them develop into revenge and punish them ourselves. We leave punishment to the public sphere of justice, for example the criminal justice system.

Butler's account is unusual because it reconciles forgiveness and resentment, what we may intuitively believe are two diametrically opposed moral entities. His account contains some flaws. First, Butler's account fails to clearly distinguish at which point resentment turns into revenge.³¹ If we do not know where this threshold exists, judging when we have sufficiently moderated our resentment is at best a mystery. Second, exacting revenge may not be acting irrational and abusing resentment.³² Why can't one control one's resentment in a careful, cold-calculated plot of revenge? It is plausible to believe such feats occur. A Butlerian could respond to this by saying this not does love our enemy or acknowledge our common tendency to do wrong. I have two responses to this: 1) this is basically saying the wrongdoer is precluded from blame since they are 'human' and couldn't change the fact that they have a tendency to err. This is an insult to morality since it neglects the fact that people should be accountable for what they do for the sake of public welfare and order; 2) in no way can I come to love someone who has developed monstrous motivations to harm others, nor should I.

Consider morally callous, evil individuals like Charles Manson, who has left an impact on history such that merely hearing their names makes us cringe, rattling our innermost moral sentiments. How are such individuals capable of being forgiven under Butler's account? It is difficult to tell. I contend that these individuals forfeit their claim to shared human sympathy when they commit such horrendous crimes against humanity.

³¹ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 35.

³² Butler, *Works*, 152.

Charles Manson, *did not* feel, hurt and live as a common human being by plotting the brutal murders of innocent targets. Had he felt, hurt and lived like a human being he wouldn't have done what he did.³³ Butler fails to give a clear reason why we should still love our enemy in these situations.³⁴ However, he may say that these people should simply be punished, without any debate:

It is necessary for the subsistence of the world, that injury, injustice and cruelty should be punished; and since compassion, which is so natural to mankind, would render that execution of justice exceedingly difficult and uneasy; indignation against vice and wickedness is, and may be allowed to be, a balance to that weakness of pity, and also to anything else which would prevent the necessary methods of severity.³⁵

Despite my criticisms, I agree with Butler on a fundamental point: forgiveness is the forswearing of revenge but when punishment is obviously the answer to reconciling moral conflicts, we ought to punish. Moral monsters may simply fall outside the reach of forgiveness (their actions preclude them from such under the third threshold condition in the paradigm view, i.e. their actions are unforgivable). They may also fall outside the reach of forgiveness because they are incapable of having a change of heart.³⁶ However, Zaibert's account can render such moral agents forgiveable.

³³ Manson and his "so-called Family" brutally murdered seven innocent people. During the first night of the rampage one man, perhaps the luckiest of them all, was shot four times. One pregnant woman was stabbed sixteen times. Another woman was stabbed for a total of twenty-eight times after failing to escape the attacks. Another man was struck over the head thirteen times, shot twice and stabbed fifty-one times. The last victim for that night was a man, stabbed seven times, who was hung from a rafter with the rope tied around the neck of the pregnant woman at the other end. The next night a man was stabbed twelve times, punctured fourteen times with a double-tined fork and had the knife used to stab him lodged into his throat. During the second night of murders, a woman was tied up in a bedroom and stabbed forty-one times. The murderers wrote words like "death to pigs" and the misspelled "healter-skelter" with blood-drenched towels. These were the "infamous Tate-LaBianca murders" (Kekes, *Roots*, 66-67).

³⁴ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 72: "Butler does not explain here why that fact [that moral monsters are still moral agents capable of happiness or misery] would obligate us not to treat a person in certain ways [not loving them]."

³⁵ Kekes, *Blame*, 489.

³⁶ See Griswold (*Forgiveness*, 72-98) for a discussion on "Moral monsters, Shared Humanity, and Sympathy" and "The Unforgivable and Unforgiven."

Zaibert's account in *The Paradox of Forgiveness* emphasizes forgiveness is an intrapersonal moral phenomenon that need not be communicated to the wrongdoer. Thus, a moral monster can be forgiven independent of fulfilling any acts of repentance or reconciliation. Zaibert coins "pure" forgiveness as "absolute forgiveness, unrelated to any transaction or mutual undertaking between the wrongdoer and injured party" (*Paradox*, 382). In contrast, other views contend forgiveness is feasible only when the wrongdoer and her victim fulfill respective responsibilities in a bilateral process. For example, the paradigm account of forgiveness calls for the repentance of the wrongdoer.³⁷ Zaibert's account proposes unconditional forgiveness as follows:

- (1) A believes that X is wrong,
- (2) A believes that X is an action of B,
- (3) A believes that B is a moral agent,
- (4) A believes that there are no excuses, justifications or other circumstances which would preclude blame.
- (5) A believes that the world would have been a better place had B not done X.
- (6) A believes that the world would be a better place if something would happen to B, something which would somehow offset B's Xing.
- (7) B's having Xed tends to make A feel something negative, i.e., a reactive emotion, like outrage, indignation or resentment.

A forgives B (as a pure mental phenomenon) when, in addition:

- (8) A believes that the world would in fact be a worse place if A did something to B in response to her wrongdoing, and thus A deliberately refuses to try and offset B's wrongdoing.

A forgives B (in the communicative sense) when, finally:

- (9) A communicates to B, or to someone else that she has forgiven (in the sense of a pure mental phenomenon) B.³⁸

³⁷ Konstan, *BF*, 11.

³⁸ *Paradox*, 387.

Zaibert's account involves deliberation on moral judgments and reactive attitudes. As seen in (7), A expectedly feels a deep negative conviction towards B, i.e. resentment. And it isn't until (8) when A pursues the mental act of forgiving B by forgoing any action on her own part to counter B's wrongdoing. I take this to be analogous to the Butlerian view where the injured party forswears revenge. Furthermore, the act of forgoing revenge is a private act independent of any conditions. Here, one might interject: wait! Zaibert's account is conditional. In fact, there are nine of them. This is failing to understand that Zaibert's account is unconditional in the sense that the victim need not depend on the offender doing anything to warrant her forgiveness. His account is intrapersonal. We see a component of interpersonal forgiveness in (9) where the victim may express her forgiveness. However, this step isn't required.

While (6) and (8) seem contradictory, they aren't. (6) is concerned with forswearing punishment similar to forswearing revenge.³⁹ It would not make sense to still want to punish someone after forgiving them. The very act of forgiving is to no longer want to punish. (6) acknowledges the fact that the offender ought to be punished. (8) is the decision by the victim that she should not be the agent to do it, or 'offset B's wrongdoing.' I understand this to be similar to a victim allowing the state (e.g. public sphere of justice) to carry out punishment.

Butler and Zaibert's accounts emphasize intrapersonal forgiveness centered on the victim. Zaibert makes this very clear by laying out nine steps and this is why I am drawn to it. Both versions also allow for continued resentment after forgiveness. This is

³⁹ Zaibert, *Paradox*, 389: The relationship between the two conditions is "to an extent understandable that it may appear odd, since this is, I submit, the root phenomenon giving rise to all the versions of the paradox of forgiveness: the forgiver believes that if a certain bad thing would befall the wrongdoer, this would be an acceptable state of affairs, and yet she refuses to bring about this state of affairs herself."

important because it seems hard to believe that our emotional psychology is designed to simply ‘turn off’ resentment after we forgive. It just doesn’t seem to work like that.

Despite being attracted to his account, I think Zaibert misunderstands the function forgiveness plays in our lives. I do not think he is correct in claiming we refuse to offset a wrongdoing because we come to realize the world would be a worse place if we carried out said offsetting. So what if the world is a better place? Does it change anything about the way live our lives? It wouldn’t change anything about our natural tendency to err. This is praiseworthy and holistic but we forgive for purely selfish reasons. I will elaborate on this point more later on when I present my account.

So far we have reviewed forgiveness in its intrapersonal unconditional form. This emphasizes forgiveness is the forswearing of revenge (punishment for Zaibert) and it need not involve communication to an offender, i.e. it is unilateral.⁴⁰ I will now flip to the other side of the coin.

Konstan endorses what some may consider the popular, contemporary view of forgiveness in his book, *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of A Moral Idea*. Aside from the preconditions we discussed earlier, Konstan presents three key conditions for forgiveness. These conditions pertain to the forgiver, forgiven, and the relationship between them.⁴¹ First, the forgiver cannot treat “the offense as negligible or unworthy of

⁴⁰ I take forswearing revenge (Butler) and forswearing punishment (Zaibert) to be analogous for all intended purposes of creating an intrapersonal, unconditional core for forgiveness. I think Zaibert would allow this since he writes “ I admit it that it is difficult to distinguish punishment from revenge, but, rather than uncritically embrace venerable distinctions, I will argue that the standard arguments purportedly showing ‘obvious’ differences between these two phenomena are not good” (PR, 4).

⁴¹ The terms forgiver and forgiven may be used interchangeably with injured party/ victim and wrongdoer/offender, respectively.

attention.”⁴² Again, the victim must acknowledge her injury by believing it occurred by the agent whom she intends to forgive.

Secondly, the offender needs to acknowledge her wrong. One issue with this is the following: how genuine does the recognition need to be? Someone could simply say they recognize their wrongdoing even though they do not care enough to actually do so, arguably the case with psychopathic murderers. The point is, it may be harder than one thinks to clearly reach a point where the offender has genuine deep awareness, transformation of the self within the wrongdoer, not necessarily regret but *remorse*.⁴³ Konstan goes on to argue remorse is the gateway emotion for repentance. In other words, once the offender shows remorse then the possibility of repentance can actually begin. This in turn leads to the conviction that the offender has truly had a change of heart, setting the stage for the third condition.⁴⁴

The third condition also relies on the offender. Specifically, this boils down to whether or not there is indeed a change of heart in the offender, willingness on behalf of the offender to recognize and repent their wrongdoing. If this is achieved, the victim attempts to recognize and retract her resentment in response. Both acts constitute forgiveness as a “dyadic relationship.”⁴⁵ The following quote sums up Konstan’s view well:

Forgiveness in the principal modern acceptance, let it be recalled, is not reducible to the appeasement of anger, which may be achieved by compensation, acts of self-abasement, the offer of plausible excuses for one’s conduct, and other means; rather, it is a bilateral process involving a confession of wrongdoing, evidence of sincere repentance, and a change of heart or moral perspective – one might almost say moral identity – on

⁴² Konstan, *BF*, 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, *BF*, 9.

⁴⁴ Konstan, *BF*, 11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

the part of the offender, together with a comparable alteration in the forgiver, by which she or he consents to forego vengeance on the basis precisely of the change in the offender.⁴⁶

Konstan's view on forgiveness is similar to the description of the paradigm view Griswold presents so I will save further criticisms and praises until after I discuss Griswold's work.

In his book, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration*, Charles Griswold suggests forgiveness is giving up moral sentiments associated with revenge but moderating resentment to an appropriate level (not giving in to the abuses of resentment according to Butler).⁴⁷ Resentment needs to be proportionate or less than the degree of the injury "but the concession [to resent] holds only if the resentment is felt *for a time only*" (*Forgiveness*, 42). In other words, forgiveness requires a commitment on behalf of the forgiver to reach a clean state of mind, in which resentment is completely relinquished. Furthermore, we need a "trustworthy report that resentment is in fact moving out the door – all under conditions where the offender has taken the appropriate steps" (this is showing a willingness to repent, Konstan's second condition). 'Forgiveness' may refer to that process or to the end state."⁴⁸ I take a "trustworthy report" to mean genuine acknowledgement on behalf of both the victim and offender. For smaller injuries the end state may be reached quickly; for more substantial injuries, achieving the end state may require more time.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁷ *Forgiveness*, 41: "My point is that the moral sentiment(s) given up by forgiveness must embody the features evident in resentment, for the context to which the relevant sentiments respond have the features stipulated (a responsible agent inflicting unwarranted injury, etc.).... There is something right and wrong about this view.

⁴⁸ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 42.

Griswold describes forgiveness as a multi-step process with a specific goal: the abolition of resentment. In his words, we can recognize lingering resentment after forswearing revenge “only so long as there is commitment to its continued abatement” (*Forgiveness*, 43). Hence, forgiveness is a continuum. Forgiving X for doing Y means moderating resentment towards X to the degree of Y but forgiveness may not complete. Relinquished resentment is the destination while moderated resentment, the forswearing of revenge, is simply a pit stop.⁴⁹ Griswold suggests more conditions constitute perfected forgiveness.⁵⁰ These conditions create a rehabilitative relationship between the victim and offender; the offender depends on the victim to be forgiven while the victim depends on the offender to forgive.⁵¹ The following six conditions are for the offender.

The first two conditions pertain to the wrongdoer acknowledging the need for a change in moral standing. The offender must acknowledge that she was indeed responsible for the wrongdoing and the offender must be able to demonstrate that she no longer wishes to “stand by herself as the author of [said wrongdoing].” A sadistic criminal can take responsibility for murdering children while remaining to feel content as the author of such heinous acts. This person cannot be forgiven. The individuals who can exercise genuine moral reflection and feelings of remorse can be forgiven. Second, the offender must sincerely renounce the deeds done and repudiate the idea that it is possible for her to commit the same wrongdoing again in the future if given the chance.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid., 43: “Indeed, if moderated resentment *is* still warranted all things considered, the forgiveness is impossible or premature. Forgiveness does not attempt to get rid of warranted resentment. Rather, it follows from the recognition that the resentment is no longer warranted.” Warranted resentment is like lingering resentment. It is not the resentment forgiveness aims to address; the resentment of revenge.

⁵⁰ Perhaps it is best thought to think of forgiveness *being* achieved in these circumstances.

⁵¹ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 49.

⁵² Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 49.

The third and fourth conditions mark the beginning of the wrongdoer's change. The offender admits regret for having done the wrong *and* in some way communicates said regret (i.e. conditions one and two) to the victim. Then the wrongdoer must commit to the change she just expressed (i.e. the third condition). The fourth condition entails the wrongdoer fulfilling acts of contrition. Wrongdoers cannot simply say to their victims they will seek repentance and a change of heart. In other words, the offender must 'walk the talk.'⁵³ Some examples may be attending self-help classes, doing philanthropic work to illustrate a new and improved moral character etc.

The last two conditions describe a narrative of wrongdoing on behalf of the offender's moral experience, from the wrongdoing to repentance. In other words, the offender is able to explain how she has come to cope with the wrongdoing, and what she is doing to live a morally improved life after it. The wrongdoer must be able to sympathize with the victim and fully understand what it feels like to be in the victim's shoes (the fifth condition). Once this is done, the offender needs to culminate the previous conditions into a moral narrative, a narrative that illustrates understanding of the act and what is being done to fix it.⁵⁴ Until these conditions have met, it is neither wholly right nor genuine for the victim to forgive the offender. Meeting these conditions ensures the victim that the offender can be forgiven in response to the specific wrong they committed.

As a whole these conditions qualify forgiving an offender but what does the victim have to do to complete the process? The victim also has six conditions to meet.

⁵³ Ibid, 50.

⁵⁴ Griswold (*Forgiveness*, 99) describes the narrative as: "(i) the organization of events into a pattern or whole with beginning, middle, and end – plot, in short; and (ii) the perspective of the narrator on events and on the perspectives of the agents or actors – a point of view implicit or explicit in the telling. A narrative is normally a unifying – and in that way meaning making – discursive enterprise."

We have indirectly talked about three of them: forswearing revenge, moderating resentment, and making a commitment to abolish resentment altogether. Conditions four through six are as follows: 4) the victim evaluates the wrongdoer's success in fulfilling the offender's conditions; 5) the victim comes to trust the offender has made sincere acts of contrition and demonstrated appropriate remorse and is aiming for a morally improved future. Steps four and five lead the victim to see herself in a new light that entails "dropping any presumption of decisive moral superiority, and recognizes instead the shared humanity of both parties."⁵⁵ Here, Butler's plea to love thy enemy resonates. Lastly (sixth step), the victim needs to somehow express to the offender her willingness to forgive the offender, even if the act of forgiveness will not be complete for a long time. This whole process, the mutual commitment to moral reformation, is what Griswold dubs the "paradigm case of forgiveness."⁵⁶

The paradigm view of forgiveness is closely related to Konstan's account.⁵⁷ They share three core tenets: moral reflection by the offender to a change their ways, moral reformation on behalf of the victim by forswearing resentment in its entirety, and the communication of both to each other. Furthermore, the "transformations that the offender and victim undergo are mutually dependent, in our paradigm case of dyadic forgiveness,

⁵⁵ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 58.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 110. It is important to note that Griswold does not only endorse this account. He explains that this is the *ideal* form of the paradigm forgiveness (*Forgiveness*, 56). However, the threshold conditions mentioned are absolutely necessary for forgiveness to occur.

⁵⁷ This is the view he uses in his review of contemporary forgiveness in antiquity. As a reminder to the reader, he concludes contemporary forgiveness did not exist. You will soon see why I disagree. Here it is again: "Forgiveness in the principal modern acceptance, let it be recalled, is not reducible to the appeasement of anger, which may be achieved by compensation, acts of self-abasement, the offer of plausible excuses for one's conduct, and other means; rather, it is a bilateral process involving a confession of wrongdoing, evidence of sincere repentance, and a change of heart or moral perspective- one might almost say moral identity – on the part of the offender, together with a comparable alteration in the forgiver, by which she or he consents to forego vengeance on the basis precisely of the change in the offender" (*BF*, 21).

and they are asymmetrical.⁵⁸ For the remainder of the discussion I will refer to the Griswold/Konstan view as the “paradigm account.”⁵⁹ This will be contrasted with the Butlerian/Zaibert account. I will dub this the “unconditional account.”

The unconditional account is merit-worthy for a couple of reasons. First, this makes the discussion of forgiveness credible for “we frequently forgive while still experiencing *some* anger.”⁶⁰ It is more than plausible that individuals who have been harmed still resent their offender degree after forgiveness has occurred and this can vary depending on the severity of the inflicted injury. Second, this approach to understanding forgiveness would preserve the intuition that complete forgiveness absolves resentment when other virtues are exercised over time. For example, I can forgive my lover for infidelity in the sense that I no longer want to exact revenge on her but it would take time and healing for us to mend the relationship. This would require virtues like trust, self-confidence, sympathy etc. But the paradigm account can rationalize these things too. However, the paradigm account has more flaws than strengths. I will discuss them now.

The paradigm account fits our intuition that forgiveness is a morally beautiful thing by improving the moral character of two individuals. Forgiveness guides both the offender and victim to living better lives. But can’t our intuition be wrong about such a thing? And even if a belief fits our intuition, what makes it reasonable? Furthermore, let us assume it is a morally beautiful thing that leads moral agents to live better lives. Like my criticism of Zaibert before, the act of forgiveness doesn’t change the fact that human

⁵⁸ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 47.

⁵⁹ Konstan, *BF*, 16: “I have concentrated on what Griswold calls the ideal or “paradigm” type [of forgiveness] because it represents a clearly recognizable sense of the term in modern society, even though it carries with it a considerable freight of related moral concepts [the required conditions], and because it is forgiveness in this sense that is, I shall argue, missing in the classical Greek and Roman ethical repertoire.”

⁶⁰ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 42.

beings are prone to err and the world still remains their playground. It is not guaranteed moral agents will learn anything from forgiving that will prevent them from doing wrong later on in life.

The paradigm case may also be praiseworthy because it involves the cooperation of two agents.⁶¹ Perhaps it is important to involve the offender in the forgiving process because then it is genuine and meaningful for the victim to forgive. From a pragmatic standpoint, the offender's ability to meet their respective conditions seems doubtful from the beginning. Nonetheless, I can see how the offender can be expected to meet such requirements when a wrong between two loved ones or two friends occurs. They may have too much on the line (e.g. their relationship) to simply neglect fulfilling their responsibilities in the forgiving process. However, strangers brought together in a relationship that is wholly defined by one inflicting an injury on the other have nothing to lose if they choose not to meet the conditions of forgiveness. In such cases the offender shouldn't be expected to meet any requirements. Furthermore, an offender who does wrong because it aligns with their moral character may be more unlikely to illustrate deep awareness when self-reflection is called for. Also, deep awareness can mean different things to different people; how is one to know one has achieved it? Above all, it is unclear why the offender needs to play any role at all in the victim's deliberation to forgive?

The third strength of this account is its clear-cut structure. While it may have been confusing to follow at times, this account can be printed into a 'check-list' for the offender and victim. This would make the process much easier for both parties. Yet while

⁶¹ Konstan, *BF*, 7: "forgiveness cannot... be construed as a mere act of dismissal of the wrong, irrespective of the attitude of the offender. We cannot simply forgive on our own, without recognition of the party to be forgiven... Forgiveness takes two agents..."

it is clear, it simply asks for too much from both parties. I am not saying meeting all conditions cannot be done; but it is a significant feat to accomplish. With that said, it is plausible to believe the paradigm view, even in its threshold form, fails more often than it succeeds.

I have mentioned that the paradigm case is too demanding but I have some other criticisms. This account fails to give good enough reasons why forgiveness needs to be communicative and interpersonal. A person may forgive a deceased member of their family. A dead person cannot communicate. Defenders of the paradigm view may claim that forgiveness is possible but only in the “subjunctive” where the “injured party may work out a simulacrum of forgiveness by gathering data that help explain why the offender acted so badly.”⁶² In other words, if the offender were alive, they would have reflected and repented the way in which the living victim believes thru her ‘simulcrum.’ This is speculative at best and it doesn’t account for individuals choosing to forgive the deceased. It is important to note simply letting go of resentment towards the deceased after a long time is not forgiveness. This is merely making room to cope with the resentment towards them. Forgiveness is all about making a free-willed choice. And we often make free-willed choices to forgive disregarding the offender, as is the case with forgiving the deceased.

I endorse the unconditional account because it doesn’t need to deal with these issues. Forgiveness understood as an unconditional, intrapersonal act is simpler, yet this doesn’t diminish its meaning. Since I am not in full support of either Butler or Zaibert’s account I will offer my own. I argue forgiveness is forswearing revenge for the well-being of the victim. This is an act done by the victim, for the victim. Hence, it need not

⁶² Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 120.

be communicated and there are no conditions. But before I present my account I wish to explore forgiveness further and discover its natural function for human beings.

Why do different people forgive? The upstanding moral citizen who forgives out of morally praiseworthiness forgives their wrongdoer to receive moral praise from others (despite how self-interested this may sound). The devout churchgoer forgives to bring herself one step closer to the principles of their religion. Those simply seeking moral revival from past wrongs forgive their offender to move on with their life. None of these are accurate reasons why we actually forgive. We forgive to fulfill a purpose. While a hammer is pointless if it does not fulfill its intended purpose to strike nails, forgiveness would be pointless if it did not do fulfill its intended purpose to rehabilitate the victim.

Victims rehabilitate themselves from an injury by maximizing their well-being in response to said injury. Well-being is the state in which one is at peace of mind. Now it may be delusional to believe perfect peace of mind can be achieved since we live in a world with a variety of physical and mental threats. However, in order to preserve what well-being remains or regain any lost well-being (from injuries) a victim can choose to forgive. My well-being is most maximized when I forswear revenge because by forswearing revenge I am bringing myself closer to peace of mind. One may ask, why can't victims pursue other means to achieve this well-being via peace of mind? For example a victim can punish the wrongdoer herself or turn her cheek in moral indifference. If a victim chooses one of these paths she simply chooses not to forgive. And this is acceptable. Furthermore, couldn't it indeed be in my well-being to exact revenge? In harming the victim, the offender somehow and to some degree manifests a threat to the victim's well-being. By exacting revenge, the victim not only 'settles the

score' but can neutralize the offender as a future threat. This seems to be in the victim's well-being.

One problem with revenge is the following. Pursuing revenge and endorsing the resentment associated with it can actually inhibit peace of mind. It can sustain suffering by making vengeance the focal point of living and sustained suffering is contrary to peace of mind. And even if vengeance isn't the focal point of living, there would seem to be a significant amount of negative baggage we carry with us if we were plotting or plotted revenge (having to deal with the aftermath of revenge). Revenge is obsessive while peace of mind is undisturbed. A person seeking revenge lives a life lamenting past wrongs and wasting energy trying to satisfy an insatiable hunger. How would one know if revenge maximized one's well-being? Their revenge is not guaranteed to bring them closer to peace of mind.

One objection to this view is the objection I gave earlier to Butler claiming acting on revenge is an abuse of resentment and compels one to act irrationally. Exacting revenge can actually be quite pleasing and it can be done in a very orderly manner. So, why should I still forswear it? Forswearing revenge presents itself as the simplest way to achieve peace of mind. Just forswear revenge. Some philosophers may have a problem with this answer because it is disrespectful to those victims who have suffered devastating injuries by simply urging them to forgive.⁶³ For example, it is ridiculous to encourage a Holocaust survivor to forgive the Nazi party; to do so would be a morally

⁶³ Kekes claims that "an equally unpromising answer is that forgiveness is good because it relieves us of destructive emotions such as resentment, bitterness, anger, hatred and indignation... Moreover if we forgive for this reason, we do it for our sake, and the forgiven wrongdoer is irrelevant to the process... The message of this view is: forgive, it will make you feel better; forgive often, it will make you feel better and better," (*Blame*, 488-89).

callous and insolent act. I would have to agree; forswearing revenge isn't that simple in these scenarios.

But my second answer to this question is: well then, don't forswear revenge. Forgiveness may help one achieve peace of mind but under no circumstances should it be compelled. Furthermore, I am not saying victims must forgive to achieve peace of mind. I am saying when victims do forgive victims do so in an effort to maximize their well-being. Moral indifference or an appropriate emotional response (non-vengeful resentment) to a wrongdoing lay outside the boundaries of forgiveness. Non-resentful responses to wrongdoings lead Kekes takes to argue that the "standard view is mistaken, therefore, in supposing that the reaction to being wronged must be resentment. The reaction is blame, and those who have been wronged can reasonably blame wrongdoers without the danger that this will lead to immorality."⁶⁴

At this point I would like to clarify my view on forgiveness. I do not think resentment *must* be the reaction to being wronged. However, I do think in order for a victim to forgive she must first feel resentment towards her offender. Forgiveness is a remedy that treats resentment. Blame is simply the diagnosis of the symptom; it answers the questions: who ought to be resented and for what? In other words, we react maliciously towards offenders because we develop resentment towards them only after identifying them as responsible for the offense. This is placing the blame, or making the diagnosis.

I bring this up because our emotional response to a wrong follows blaming someone for said wrong. It is reasonable to believe this because in order to respond emotionally to a wrong we need to know who is to blame and if that act was in fact

⁶⁴ Kekes, *Blame*, 492. The immorality Kekes refers to is similar to Butler's abuse of resentment.

wrong. I would not resent A before believing he is the author of the injury inflicted upon me. Furthermore, I would not resent A if A did not perform towards me “undeserved, unjustified, and nontrivial harm.”⁶⁵ I bring up blame and forgiveness because Kekes claims the two (reasonable blame and forgiveness) are incompatible and I am drawn to his work because I agree with many of his criticisms on the standard view of forgiveness (e.g. Konstan’s view).⁶⁶

I will now offer my account. I argue forgiveness is a unilateral phenomenon that a victim performs for the sake of maximizing their well-being in response to a specific moral injury.

- 1) Sometimes moral agents inflict unwarranted harm on each other.
- 2) Victims of (1) *can* react by:
 - a) Holding the offender responsible for the action and
 - b) Believing the action of the offender was wrong by making a moral judgment about it, i.e. blaming them
- 3) Victims who perform both acts of (2) *can* come to express emotional discontent toward the offender in vengeful resentment.
- 4) Vengeful resentment sustains the moral suffering of the victim’s injury by reminding her of the injury for the sake of exacting revenge.
- 5) Sustained moral suffering is contrary to one’s moral well-being

⁶⁵ Kekes, *Blame*, 492.

⁶⁶ On a side note: I think we have reason to criticize Kekes’s notion of reasonable blame. And if his notion of reasonable blame is flawed then his argument on blame being incompatible with forgiveness is flawed. But suppose Kekes were to grant my notion of reasonable blame to be valid. He may still argue that “reasonable blame rightly holds it against wrongdoers that they have done wrong whereas forgiveness involves the refusal to hold it against them” (*Blame*, 501). I think this concept of forgiveness is incorrect.

6) The simplest way to prevent or resolve (5) *can* be to forswear vengeful resentment.

7) The victim forgives her offender by choosing to do (6) in acknowledgement that she is maximizing her moral well-being in response to the specific wrongdoing.

There are a few parts of my account that I wish to explain further. Due to the imperfect nature of human beings, (1) is very plausible. We see, read about, and hear about people inflicting unwarranted harm on each other all of the time. Victims often respond by holding offenders accountable and blaming them for their wrongdoings. This is what (3) discusses. However, (3) does not hold that a victim must react in these two ways. As per earlier discussion, victims of wrongdoing can act in moral indifference or fail to perceive their offenders as culpable etc. But when victims do perform both acts and come to blame their offenders, victims can develop vengeful resentment towards their offenders. Unless the victim is a moral saint, or moral a pushover, depending on one's take, it is reasonable that the victim will form some type of resentment towards the offender. Their resentment can come in different degrees. The degree of resentment results from the ingredients at play, e.g. the degree of the perceived wrongdoing and the personal emotional toll the injury had on the victim. Ingredients vary for different people. The point is that blaming alone does not lead to vengeful resentment but it is necessary for one to have the desire for revenge. If it weren't, how would one know whom to exact revenge on and why? Furthermore, vengeful resentment is the resentment that fuels a desire for revenge. I understand vengeful resentment to be the precursor to an inevitable act of revenge unless forsworn.

So let us say that the victim has come to develop vengeful resentment towards their offender, i.e. the desire for revenge. What is next? The victim can pursue revenge but then she would no longer be able to forgive her offender. By pursuing revenge the victim would already have chosen *not* to forswear revenge. Thus it is then logically impossible to forgive. However, the victim can choose to forgive her offender by forswearing vengeful resentment. This would entail entirely abandoning her desire for revenge. By doing this, the victim willingly chooses to not pursue revenge. Not only does she willingly choose to not pursue revenge, she does so in order to maximize her moral well-being in response to the injury she suffered. However, keep in mind one's overall well-being may greatly increase as a result of revenge. For example, let us say my father entitled me to his entire estate and his immense wealth in his will. My father wrongs me and the ingredients are right where I develop vengeful resentment. I hire a hit man to fulfill my desire for revenge. This would certainly bring me well-being in the form of wealth but this would also stain my moral well-being by keeping the unwarranted harm I suffered in mind and it makes the inherited wealth come with negative moral baggage. As I will discuss in the next chapter, Caesar practiced mercifulness to increase his overall well-being but he did not forgive in response to moral wrongdoings for the sake of maximizing his moral well-being. Hence I will argue he was not a forgiver.

I will take the time now to discuss why I think non-vengeful resentment is important and why it need not be foresworn altogether to constitute forgiveness. Like Butler claims, “the good influence which this passion [non-vengeful resentment] has in fact upon the affairs of the world”⁶⁷ is that it punishes the offender by making use of the feelings of indignation about “the fairness of an action or of an intention to do that

⁶⁷ Butler, *Works*, 148.

action...and it is a reactive as well as retributive passion that instinctively seeks to exact a due measure of punishment.”⁶⁸ We ought to punish wrongdoers for their wrongs simply because they deserve it. Furthermore, punishment is necessary for our morality as a community; “morality aims at human well-being by maintaining a system of conventions in order to come as close as the contingencies of life allow to individuals getting what they deserve and not getting what they do not deserve.”⁶⁹ So I try to make room for punishment (interpersonal private punishment, not legal punishment by the state) into my account of forgiveness by claiming interpersonal punishment can derive from non-vengeful resentment. Whether or not wrongdoers are punished by the state is outside interpersonal punishment. Non-vengeful resentment enables the victim to punish the offender appropriately, in a moral, proportionate way. For example, I may give the offender the ‘cold shoulder’ when I see her to express my moral contempt with her.

One may point out that pursuing interpersonal punishment as just noted above seems very much like sustaining suffering from an injury and thus contradicts maximizes one’s moral well-being. In fact punishment of this sort sounds like “someone who claims to have forgiven – excepting perhaps the letting go of lingering resentment – but then keeps reminding the offender of her misdeeds. This is a form of manipulation, even humiliation. Forgiveness would then have metamorphosed into an instrument of revenge; yet forgiveness is, in part, the forswearing of revenge. The same is a fortiori true of the incompatibility between such behavior and accomplished forgiveness.”⁷⁰ Despite this observation, there is an important distinction to make between the sustained suffering of

⁶⁸ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 26. These aren’t Griswold’s original thoughts. They are an interpretation of Butler’s.

⁶⁹ Kekes, *Blame*, 504.

⁷⁰ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 53-54.

an injury through revenge and the sustained suffering of an injury through non-vengeful punishment. It seems difficult to believe the latter is sustained suffering in that compromises one's peace of mind. Revenge has an intensity that punishing an offender in the aforementioned way lacks. Furthermore, punishing a wrongdoer through non-vengeful resentment testifies to the milder degree of the wrong, i.e. did the victim really suffer to begin with?

Nonetheless, this issue raises an important question: how bad do we want to punish our wrongdoer? If we answer with positively then we will make exceptions and 'harass' the offender on occasion for the sake of punishing. If we answer negatively, then interpersonal punishment cannot coexist with forgiveness. But like I discussed earlier, punishment is the glue to our moral system; when the state or other third-parties do not punish wrongdoers it is left up to the victim to carry it out. But the victim is stuck in a difficult dilemma if they also wish to seek forgiveness. This issue also underscores an important distinction to make. Does the forgiver insist on punishment after he or she forswears vengeful resentment rather than punishing herself? In other words, is the non-vengeful resentment after forgiveness actually the desire to see the offender punished?

Punishment is vital to supporting our system of morals. Victims can forgive or punish their offenders. By punishing offenders, victims contribute to supporting our system of morals. In forgiving they leave punishing their offenders up to the state, some third party or no one at all. It is reasonable to believe cases, and many of them, exist where punishment is left to the third option. Is this what we really want? Probably not, but my account makes it difficult to reconcile punishment via ill feelings and forgiveness. Thus, I am inclined to tweak my account and say non-vengeful resentment manifests

itself in the desire to see the wrong go punished but isn't punishment per se. It seems like I cannot have my cake and eat it too.

Let us return to the victim's well-being. It is not in the victim's well-being to sustain his or her suffering (from his or her injury). Vengeful resentment makes the victim focused on exacting a type of immoral punishment although it may be justified. For example, an enraged husband can go after and kill the homeless villainous man on the street for mugging his wife on her way home from work. I would consider that justified yet immoral. Vengeful resentment is somewhat of a broken record player, replaying the injury for the victim. Sustaining unnecessary suffering is contrary to maximizing our well-being. The most reasonable way to solve this dilemma of revenge is to forswear it.⁷¹

One may have already criticized my explanation of forgiveness as too simplistic, lackluster and overly self-interested, diminishing the value of forgiveness for what it ought to represent. In other words, we like to think of forgiveness as a moral rehabilitative project between individuals- we get a warm, fuzzy feeling that forgiveness is a morally beautiful thing when it manifests itself in the paradigm view. My critics are correct but I want to make something clear. Forgiveness is as complicated as we make it.⁷² It would be wonderful if forgiveness actually grounded itself in the ideal form but it need not. Furthermore, paradigm forgiveness is more complicated to achieve. However, this is not to claim paradigm forgiveness does not occur between victims and their

⁷¹ Again, the victim can react differently than resentment and thus forgiving her offender but I am advocating a quasi-cost-benefit analysis in arguing why forgiving is advantageous.

⁷² We desire the paradigm account because we find it appealing to us since it may reaffirm the fibers upon which our moral community rests. However, our desirability for this phenomenon to occur skews our vision when we look at the fundamental practice of forgiveness – separated from moral ideals – as fulfilling its basic function of rehabilitating the victim from an unwarranted offense to a better life.

offenders. Instead, we too comfortably get used to the idea that this is the way forgiveness is but this is mistaken. And I think Konstan makes this mistake too. Thus, we should take forgiveness for what it is in its basic function for moral agents and simply appreciate when more is accomplished.

I advocate for a morally pragmatic approach to understanding forgiveness.

Forgiveness is the act of forswearing vengeful resentment to maximize one's moral well-being after suffering a moral injury. However, there are numerous reasons one may have to forgive and these reasons do not necessarily pertain to maximizing one's well-being in response to suffering a moral injury. I would say these reasons are not genuine forgiveness. The boyfriend who forgives his unfaithful girlfriend just to 'get back' with her because he misses their sexual relationship isn't forgiving his girlfriend. He is making room for the suffering he has endured by fabricating a veil of forgiveness, which falsely reestablishes the status quo of their relationship. With this being said, my account of forgiveness is strict.

Paradigm forgiveness is more difficult to achieve by virtue of it having more steps and conditions to meet. It seems contrary for humans to choose paradigm forgiveness when they can choose a simpler method. It is complex in that both the victim and offender must meet required conditions *and* communicate their success to the other for forgiveness to occur. For this reason, I think it is overly ambitious to think of forgiveness as a dyadic relationship involving a change of heart for both parties.⁷³ Furthermore, it is still unclear why forgiveness needs to be communicated to the offender. I forgive X for

⁷³ In suggesting a new way to understand forgiveness I try not to neglect the complex nature of forgiveness. Forgiveness is certainly complex in practice. And I suggest it is conceptually more complex in so far as we make it. This is my major concern: we are overlooking its basic nature.

Y. I willingly cease resentment towards X and abstain from exacting revenge so I can have peace of mind after the wrong I endured. Why does the offender need to know this?

Under the paradigm perspective we may say this communicative component is essential for the wrongdoer to complete his or her change of heart. However, that is the case only if we understand forgiveness as a bilateral process for the victim *and* wrongdoer. But isn't forgiveness an act *for* the victim alone? Isn't it more reasonable that forgiveness is an act performed by the victim, for the victim in order to maximize her moral well-being after suffering an injury? Griswold and other defenders of the paradigm account may disagree with this point because if the offender fulfills his/her respective conditions, "forgiveness is commendable because it is what the offender is due" (*Forgiveness*, 69). It would be a woeful mistake for us to believe the offender is due forgiveness. It simply doesn't follow that the offender ought to be forgiven upon fulfilling conditions of repentance. And by saying the offender is due something makes it seem like the victim may do wrong in not forgiving the offender after the conditions are met. However, let's remember who the real offender is. The offender should do things like repent regardless. The offender was in good standing in a moral community before her wrongdoing and needs to somehow earn her standing back.

So far I have suggested forgiveness need not be defined in the paradigmatic sense. Forgiveness is the moral phenomenon by a victim to maximize her moral well-being after suffering a moral injury. When we stipulate more conditions for such a grandiose notion of forgiveness we lose sight of this simple function. I hope this discussion on forgiveness has better defined what kind of moral phenomenon we actually deal with in our daily lives and how we ought to proceed in understanding it. The preconditions for forgiveness

are basically indisputable. A moral agent must be blameworthy for an offense towards a victim. The victim must perceive their alleged offender to be blameworthy for the inflicted injury. Also, there cannot be any mitigating circumstances precluding responsibility or warranting excuse or other types of dismissal. And while emotion need not be necessary in the moral reaction to a wrong, individuals who feel resentment in response to moral wrongdoing are the ones capable of forgiving.

We have seen two genres of accounts that tend to conflict on very core levels. The unconditional account proposes forgiveness is a unilateral moral phenomenon that forswears revenge with the *possibility* of having forgiveness communicated. The paradigm account proposes forgiveness is a bilateral moral phenomenon that communicates a change of heart between the offender and victim. In addition, I have offered an explanation to why individuals forgive and on whom the responsibility of forgiving falls.

Some may consider my account to be an instance of “imperfect” forgiveness.⁷⁴ This type of forgiveness is non-paradigm but still meets the “threshold conditions for forgiveness.” These conditions include: the willingness of the victim to lower her pitch of resentment and forswear revenge, the willingness of the offender to qualify for forgiveness, and that the injury humanly possible to forgive.⁷⁵ To reiterate Griswold’s point: “only when all three [conditions] are met does forgiveness come off at all (*Forgiveness*, 115).” This is what I have been arguing against. The bulk of my argument attacks the second condition because it is unnecessary and ungrounded. The better way to understand forgiveness is as an intrapersonal, unconditional moral phenomenon. I think I

⁷⁴ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, Ch.3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

provide a better reason for conceiving forgiveness as an intrapersonal moral phenomenon by the victim, for the victim. Victims forgive to maximize their well-being in response to the injury they suffered, not for an overall change in moral attitude towards the wrongdoer. Furthermore, the repentance of the offender *post factum* should not change the resentment felt by the victim in response to the specific wrongdoing; however, it may affect their moral attitude towards the offender as a whole.⁷⁶ The victim chooses how to deal with her resentment independent of the wrongdoer's actions.

Another issue with my account may be the following: it lacks the change of heart we find intuitively praiseworthy and beautiful. First off, since my account disregards the offender, her change of heart is moot. Second, the victim, in choosing to forswear vengeful resentment, certainly has a change of heart. The victim chooses to not do anything immoral to the offender by exacting revenge. While this is not the morally beautiful act of forgiveness we would like to see, the victim still undergoes a change of heart in recognizing the offender as an agent to whom immoral revenge should not be directed. Furthermore, why does the change of heart in forgiveness need to be beautiful? Does telling ourselves forgiveness is intrinsically beautiful in its own right help wipe away the 'ugliness' in our world? We can tell ourselves it does as much as we want but at the end of the day forgiveness is best thought of as the unilateral moral phenomenon victims exercise in order to maximize their moral well-being after suffering a moral wronging.

⁷⁶ I am borrowing one of Kekes's arguments (*Blame*, 502). I think he is correct in arguing that "Reasonable blame [resentment] is always specific... [offenders] are blamed [resented] for having done wrong. Their subsequent punishment or suffering [repentance] does not make it unreasonable to blame [resent] them for the wrong they have done... My point is that the specific moral attitude of blaming [resenting] them for the wrong remains unaffected, and that constitutes a good reason for blaming [resenting] and against forgiving [via the paradigm view] for the specific wrong they have done." All brackets were included to supply the reader with an understanding of how this idea works in the context of my view.

I hope to have established a plausible, compelling account of contemporary forgiveness. Now I would like to begin analyzing forgiveness in ancient Rome. The conclusions that follow are greatly influenced by account just given. Julius Caesar is the next topic for discussion. Caesar is a unique case for studying *clementia* because he devastated many tribes in the Gallic Wars, relentlessly challenged his political rivals in Rome yet coveted the persona of *clementia Caesaris*. When I examine *clementia Caesaris* I will search for evidence that meets 1) the preconditions for contemporary forgiveness and 2) my account of forgiveness. I will discuss other accounts along the way. So the question is, did Julius Caesar forgive as we do today?

PERNICIOUS POLITICS: AN EXAMINATION OF JULIUS CAESAR'S CLEMENCY

*meus vero discipulus qui hodie apud me cenat valde amat illum quem Brutus noster sauciavat. et si quaeris (perspexi enim plane), timent otium;... autem hanc habent eamque prae se ferunt, clarissimum <virum> interfectum, totam rem publicam illius interitu perturbatam, irrita fore quae ille egisset simul ac desiste<re>mus timere, clementiam illi malo fuisse, qua si usus non esset, nihil ei tale accidere potuisse.*⁷⁷

Clementia Caesaris is arguably one of the most influential maxims from Roman antiquity because of the impact it had on Rome during the Republic and the imprint it left on Roman politics for years to come. As Plutarch notes, Caesar's clemency moved the Roman people to great lengths, enough for them to dedicate a temple of Clemency to him and (*Caes.* 57.1, *App. CW.* 2.106) circulate coinage depicting this honor (*RRC* no.480.21). However, even though Caesar's character was defined by his clemency, "it is commonly supposed that Julius Caesar's celebrated clemency toward his fellow citizens was perceived by his contemporaries not as a virtue, but rather as a manifestation of his tyrannical power."⁷⁸ Many of Caesar's contemporaries considered his clemency analogous to "rubbing salt in the wounds of his defeated enemies."⁷⁹ As the opening quote describes, arguably his clemency brought upon his demise.

Nonetheless Caesar had a profound impact on Roman politics by taking the common act of granting clemency in Roman public law (*Dowling, CC*, 16-18) and

⁷⁷ Cic. *Ad. Att.* 2, 14.22.1: "As for my pupil who is dining with me this evening, he is greatly attached to the person in whom our friend Brutus put his knife [Caesar]. And if you want to know (it's plain as a pikestaff to me), they [the Republicans] are scared of peace. Their theme and slogan is that a great man has been killed, that the whole state has been plunged into chaos by his death, that all he did will be null and void the moment we cease to be afraid, that clemency was his undoing, but for which nothing of the sort could have happened to him."

⁷⁸ Konstan, *Virtue*, 337.

⁷⁹ Konstan, *Virtue*, 337.

elevating the “restraint on clemency to the status of a policy.”⁸⁰ Furthermore, *clementia Caesaris* as a political tool became the subject of panegyric expression (Cic. *Pro Marc. Pro. Deiot.* passim, and *Ad fam.* 15.15.2). In a *Caesarian* letter Cicero writes: *O clementiam admirabilem atque omnium laude, praedicatione, litteris monumentisque decorandam!* (*Pro. Lig.* 2.6).⁸¹ Perhaps Cicero was able to speak so effectively about clemency because he had already studied the topic. Some of Cicero’s work earlier in his career (*De Inv.* 2.164) suggests this: *eius [temperantia] partes continentia, clementia, modestia... clementia, per quam animi timere in odium alicuius inferioris concitati comitate retinentur.*⁸² *Clementia* attracted Roman bluebloods as it became important during the Gallic and Civil Wars.

At first glance we may begin to think *clementia* has an interpersonal moral undertone similar to paradigm forgiveness since it was used in sparing senators from prosecution (the case of Quintus Ligurius noted). But in order to grasp the full potential of *clementia*, I will analyze Caesar’s work and what his contemporaries had to say about them. Understanding Caesar’s clemency is fascinating because it evoked reverence from the Roman people and provoked animosity from the Senate yet it was mostly targeted toward his aristocratic peers. The aim of this chapter is to grasp an understanding of *clementia Caesaris* in the Roman Republic and decide whether or not *clementia* in this

⁸⁰ Konstan, *Virtue*, 340.

⁸¹ “O marvelous clemency and worthy to be adorned by every commendation and advertisement that literature and historical record can supply!” Cicero opens this letter by praising Caesar for his clemency. He follows it by offering an argument why Quintus Ligurius (whom Caesar wishes to prosecute for bearing arms against him during the Civil War) should be spared. Cicero’s eloquence compels Caesar to acquit Ligurius. Ligurius will eventually repay Caesar by participating in the conspiracy against him (*App. CW.* 2.113).

⁸² Griffin, *CAC*, 160: “a sub-division of *temperantia*, i.e. as the self-control needed where this provocation to hate someone inferior.”

context of ancient Rome reflects contemporary forgiveness. I hope to convince the reader that textual evidence does not illustrate Caesar practicing contemporary forgiveness.⁸³

Let us begin with what Caesar had to say about himself in *De Bello Gallico*. Caesar recounts his first act of clemency when the Gallic leader Diviciacus begs for it. Speaking for the Bellovaci and the Aedi, Diviciacus urges Caesar to *ut sua clementia ac mansuetudine in eos utatur* (BG 2.14.5).⁸⁴ Caesar accepted this plea on the condition that his *sescentos obsides poposcit* be satisfied (BG 2.15.1); such demands were met. Here we see an act of transactional clemency after a battle; to the victor (Caesar) went hostages and weapons and to the loser went protection under Caesar's rule. This is an act of economic clemency since Caesar spares the lives of the Gallic people yet takes hostages and strips them of their weapons, rendering them vulnerable to neighboring Gallic territories. Had it been pure clemency, he would have let them go without concessions. His act of mercy derives from *Caesar honoris Diviciaci atque Aeduorum causa* (BG 2.15.1).⁸⁵ It would also be hard to claim Diviciacus earned clemency for his tribe; Caesar merely regards the practice of *clementia* as a standard "expression of a man's *virtus* on the battlefield."⁸⁶ In this example we see a mutual recognition of respect, despite the inferior status of one (the loser), and granted clemency as a condition of post-battle negotiations.

It would be hard to argue that this is a case of forgiveness, regardless of how one wants to look at it. In Butler's view, it would have to satisfy the notion of forswearing revenge. Some may say the Gauls were guilty of an immoral act, waging war on the

⁸³ I am studying Caesar to answer this question because there is a substantial amount of work on him claiming he did forgive others throughout his life.

⁸⁴ "beseech you to show your mercy and kindness towards them."

⁸⁵ "the respect he had toward Diviciacus and the Aedui."

⁸⁶ Dowling, *Clemency*, 17.

Romans, and thus Caesar probably felt resentment, even a desire for revenge in response.⁸⁷ First, we do not have any textual evidence that Caesar felt this way and it is more plausible that Caesar considered the engagement with this Gallic tribe just like any other day of fighting a war. Hence, I find it difficult to believe he felt ‘wronged’ and resented the Gauls. Second, the Gallic Wars were fought *in* Gaul. If anything, Caesar wronged them by invading their territory seeking *dignitas* and military glory.⁸⁸ So I say this was not an instance of forswearing revenge because there was no initial moral wrong. Furthermore, it does not fall under the unconditional or my own account of forgiveness.⁸⁹

This example also fails the paradigm account. The paradigm account’s basic conditions are: 1) the victim must acknowledge the wrong done by believing in it occurring 2) the offender needs to acknowledge their wrong done through a change of heart and 3) both parties share a change in perspective of the other.⁹⁰ Let us assume the Gauls have committed the wrong of waging war on Caesar. Diviciacus addresses Caesar as repenting his wrong. He begs Caesar to show mercy on his people because he knows what will come of his people’s fate if he does not. Let us also assume Diviciacus is not only illustrating regret but remorse. Let us also assume the remorse is genuine and it is well communicated to Caesar. So it seems that both parties acknowledge the wrong done and now are seeking reparations. But do they wish a change of heart in the matter?

Regardless of how one looks at it, Caesar has not been wronged in the sense that Diviciacus committed some moral wrong towards him. And thus no change of heart or

⁸⁷ Sen, *De clem.1*, 34: “By waging war, the conquered enemy were thought to have committed a wrong against the victor. According to the rules of ancient warfare, they might expect to be obliterated.”

⁸⁸ Accumulating *dignitas* and military glory paved the path for political success. It gave an aristocrat status. Caesar (*BC* 1.9.2) writes *sibi semper primam rei publicae fuisse dignitatem vitaeque potiore* or “I have always reckoned the dignity of the republic first and preferable to life.”

⁸⁹ Remember that the unconditional account is, as Zaibert puts it, “wholly aneconomic” (*Paradox*, 384).

⁹⁰ I think this accurately describes the gist of the paradigmatic view (discussed in Ch. 1). Let me remind the reader this is Konstan’s view (which I disagree with).

perception (of each other) is warranted. My point is that Caesar could not have used *clementia* as a *moral* remedy because he did not suffer a *moral* injury.

The next tribe Caesar encounters meets a most unfortunate end. The Aduatuci sent deputies to Caesar for peace; Caesar writes: *si forte pro sua clementia ac mansuetudine, quam ipsi ab aliis audirent, statuisset Aduatucos esse conservandos, ne se armis despoliaret* (BG 2.31.4).⁹¹ Had he taken their arms the Aduatuci would become vulnerable to the vengeful locals. In short, they would not be able to defend themselves. So, Caesar responds: *se magis consuetudine sua quam merito eorum civitatem conservatum... sed deditiois nullam esse condicionem nisi armis traditis...quod Nervii fecisset facturum finitimisque imperaturum ne quam dediticiis populi Romani iniuriam inferrant* (BG 2.32.1); then the Aduatuci surrendered most arms.⁹² However they sneakily preserve some arms and attack Caesar's forces the next night. The Aduatuci are defeated in a brief battle and fifty-three thousand persons are sold into slavery (BG 2.33.6). We see Caesar, once again, opening peace talks with his enemy by allowing them to surrender their arms for clemency. When peace talks fail he punishes them by selling them into slavery.

It is at best unclear how we would begin arguing this example as indicative of forgiveness. This example seems to exclude a crucial component: a genuine moral transgression. Again, I think it is wrong to believe Caesar felt morally wronged especially since this engagement occurred under the circumstances of war. However, let us assume

⁹¹ "That if haply of his mercy and kindness, whereof they heard from others, Caesar decided to save the Aduatuci alive, he would not despoil them of their arms."

⁹² "To this Caesar replied that he would save their state alive rather because it was his custom than for any desert on their part, if they surrendered before the battering-ram touched the wall; but there could be no terms of surrender save upon delivery of arms. He would do... what he had done in the case of the Nervii, and command the neighbours to do no outrage to the surrendered subjects of Rome."

Caesar did wish to exact revenge on the Aduatuci for their surprise attack (this act of betrayal ‘wronged’ Caesar). I find it hard to believe selling fifty-three thousand people into slavery is an act of forswearing revenge or punishment.⁹³

Caesar’s reflection on the rebellion led by Vercingetorix, at Uxellodunum in 51 B.C. (Coulter, *Caesar*, 518) also mentions his clemency. Caesar knew severity might be necessary to quell this rebellion. However, he felt this wouldn’t jeopardize his reputation.⁹⁴ Confident in his reputation as a merciful commander, Caesar was not reluctant to punish his enemies in the following fashion: *itaque omnibus qui arma tulerant manus precidit vitamque concessit, quo testatior esset poena improborum* (BG 8.44.2).⁹⁵ *Clementia Caesaris* clearly does not come into play here. However we do see *clementia*’s far-reaching influence among Caesar’s contemporaries.⁹⁶ The fact that he allegedly did such a cruel thing and was still considered merciful attests to the success Caesar had in constructing *clementia* to his wartime persona. What else can we say about these incidents during the Gallic Wars?

We can say they were acts of forgiveness but not the kind this paper is concerned with. M.B. Dowling asserts there is a central component in clemency that “it must be earned by the suppliant and not solely through the act of supplication itself” (*Clemency*, 19). Like some contemporary accounts of forgiveness (i.e. the paradigm view) we get the

⁹³ Keep in mind, these numbers may not be entirely accurate.

⁹⁴ Caes. BG. 8.44.1: *Caesar, cum suam lenitatem cognitam omnibus sciret neque vereretur ne quid crudelitate naturae videretur asperius fecisse....* or “Caesar’s clemency, as he knew, was familiar to all, and he did not fear that severer action on his part might seem due to natural cruelty.”

⁹⁵ He “cut off the hands of all who had borne arms, to testify more openly the penalty for wrongdoers.” It is important to note that Caesar did not write Book VIII of *De Bello Gallico*. This could be why we read about such a detailed, ruthless act of punishment contrary to *clementia Caesaris*. In his previous books, Caesar more or less may have crafted his words in favor of bolstering his reputation with the Romans. However, just because we hear less detailed accounts of brutality and violence doesn’t mean such incidents didn’t exist.

⁹⁶ Really, we see how Caesar believes his reputation has taken shape among his contemporaries (he is the author). Perhaps, he is mistaken.

sense that *clementia* is a phenomenon that occurs between two agents. However, *clementia* in ancient Rome marked one agent as the superior punisher in the right and the other agent as the inferior wrongdoer (Konstan, *Virtue*, 339). And if we were to draw a parallel line to modern forgiveness we may say the victim is superior to their offender. In other words, doing wrong to another *de facto* diminishes the offender's moral status. This dynamic of the relationship acknowledges what we have discussed so far as supplication and I think this is rightly so.⁹⁷ Moral reason grounds forgiveness. Political advantage grounds supplication. Caesar's acts during the Gallic Wars were for political advantage. And as far as the evidence shows, they lacked moral motivation too.

The examples of *clementia* in *Bellico Gallico* illustrate this act as political forgiveness at best, like pardon used in modern times by the President. It is a mistake to think these were acts of moral forgiveness. The aforementioned cases exhibit a warmonger in the skin of a man, who when necessary used brute military force to accomplish his tasks for the sake of glory and political gain. When he didn't harshly punish defeated enemies he subdued them with mercy. His clemency proved as powerful a tool than any sword. Placated tribes would more likely adhere to his rule rather than face annihilation (Coulter, *Caesar*, 523). Caesar was relentless in his pursuits; it just so happen to be that he did not always have to resort to bloodshed to achieve them; and this does not make him a forgiver, at least in the Gallic Wars. Evidence from the Civil Wars suggests little else.

⁹⁷ Konstan (*BF*, 13) describes this process as follows: first the suppliant must approach the supplicand...second, the suppliant is expected to make certain gestures or verbal appeals... third, the suppliant makes a case for deserving a positive response from the supplicand... finally, the supplicand evaluates the plea and decides whether or not to honor it... but clemency in these situations is not so much forgiveness as gentleness or mildness: the person in a position of power lets the offender or offenders off as a special grant of generosity ...in the way that Caesar... did with many of his opponents."

As we have seen, *clementia Caesaris* during the Gallic Wars was primarily motivated by political desire thru a military stratagem. It lacked the moral significance essential to forgiveness. But when we turn to look at *clementia Caesaris* in the Civil War from 49-45 B.C. we read about Caesar's clemency in a new light; a light that illuminates Caesar with his fellow Romans, not the menacing tribes of Gaul. Perhaps we would see a more humane Caesar who was driven by morals when dealing with his fellow Roman statesman. It seems nice to think Caesar did forgive his political enemies, former comrades and allies. But Roman politics was pernicious politics, especially the way Caesar played.

Caesar neglected to comment on his clemency throughout the Civil Wars in the similar fashion to the Gallic Wars.⁹⁸ However, this doesn't mean he wasn't merciful; in fact, Caesar's clemency was the topic of aristocrat discussion; for some, it was the topic of praise. For example, Cicero delivers a moving speech to the Senate in 46 B.C. regarding one of his friends whom Caesar is aiming to prosecute from the Civil War. Cicero claims he had to reemerge into politics because Caesar's clemency was too great of a cause not to: *tantam enim mansuetudinem, tam inusitatam inauditamque clementiam, tantum in summa potestate rerum omnium modum, tam denique incredibilem sapientiam ac paene divinam tacitus praeterire nullo modo possum (Pro Marc. 1).*⁹⁹ We can better understand the political context of this quote if we consider the relationship between Caesar and Cicero as the Civil War was concluding. Will Durant writes:

To Cicero, who had trimmed his wind to every sale, he [Caesar] offered not only pardon but honor, and refused nothing that the orator asked for

⁹⁸ Griffin, *CAC*, 160.

⁹⁹ "For such humanity, such exceptional, nay, unheard-of clemency, such invariable moderation exhibited by one who has attained supreme power, such incredible and almost superhuman loftiness of mind I find it impossible to pass by in silence."

himself or his Pompeian friends; he even forgave, at Cicero's urging, the unrepentant Marcus Marcellus. In a pretty speech... Cicero acclaimed Caesar's 'unbelievable liberality,' and admitted that Pompey, victorious, would have been more vengeful.¹⁰⁰

Griffin gives us further insight to this example writing that "it was demonstrably the situation, not the word, that men like Marcus Marcellus and Cato resented, the situation in which Caesar had acquired power over his equals by civil war and clearly intended to keep that power for some time afterwards" (*CAC*, 160). So what do we make of this?

Let us assume Marcellus was blameworthy for his wrongdoing and all preconditions are met in this situation. Caesar's act does not fit the paradigm account because Marcellus did not repent, hence violating the second condition. Does Caesar's clemency satisfy the unconditional account or my own? Cicero had to persuade Caesar to grant Marcellus clemency. Caesar thus forgave Marcellus because of Cicero, not because he chose to forswear revenge or keep his well-being in mind. Furthermore, sparing Marcellus meant keeping another one of Caesar's political enemies alive and able to conspire against him. It was contrary to his well-being. For these reasons, it is difficult to believe Caesar actually forgave Marcellus. Cicero claimed the Roman people were *huius insidiosa clementia delectantur* (*Ad Att.* 8.16.2), or "delighted with his [Caesar's] artful clemency."¹⁰¹ However, some, like Cicero, probably knew better to buy whole-heartedly in to it and how to use it.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ *Christ*, 195.

¹⁰¹ Konstan (*Virtue*, 337) translates this as "treacherous clemency," which offers a different perspective on what Cicero means. Dowling (*Clemency*, 23) writes: "the clemency of Caesar had a real attraction but was regarded with distrust."

¹⁰² In two other letters to Marcellus (*Ad fam.* 4.7.3 and 4.9.4) Cicero describes this event without using the word *clementia*. Perhaps Cicero used the word in the presence of Caesar, playing up *clementia* as a persuasive device. Cicero (*Ad Att.* 1, 9.16.1) also once wrote: *recte auguraris de me... nihil a me abesse longius crudelitate... nihil ehim malo quam et me mei simile esse et illos sui*. "Caesar detests cruelty and nothing is more pleasing to him than being true to his nature." Just some food for thought, Caesar (*Ad Att.* 2,

Caesar utilized clemency as an effective weapon during his conflict with Pompey. He claims to have treated the soldiers of Pompey's army kindly, ordering his own men to see to their needs. He even acknowledged any defector's previous ranks held under Pompey in his own army (*BC.1.77*). When Caesar arrives in Alexandria he learns Pompey has been killed. While in tears for his fellow Roman, he promises to spare the lives of Pompeians out of honor (*Plut. Caes. 48*). To what extent he felt remorse for the state of affairs that led to Pompey's death is arguable. Durant writes: "Caesar turned away at horror [from the sight of Pompey's severed head] and wept at this new proof that by diverse means men come to the same end (*Christ, 186*). Perhaps Caesar's performance was aimed to build on the *clementia Caesaris* persona. Nonetheless, in Cicero's correspondence with Atticus, Caesar's letter to Oppius and Cornelius illustrates his interest in granting clemency to his enemies (the Pompeians) at the onset of the Civil War in contrast to Sulla's cruel policies a generation prior.¹⁰³ So perhaps the decision to pardon Pompey's followers after hearing upon his death serves the same political strategy. I think the textual evidence only suggests this. It would be speculation to say Caesar felt remorse, decided to forgive Pompey and show it by forgiving his men too. But why did Caesar weep? I think he wept because Pompey was an honorable man who met a dishonorable death.¹⁰⁴

14.1) once wrote to a friend: "He [Cicero] is the most easygoing of mankind, but I don't doubt he detests me."

¹⁰³ Cic. *Ad Att.1, 9.7C*: *temptemus hoc modo si possimus omnium voluntates recuperare et diuturna victoria uti, quoniam reliqui crudelitate odium effugere non potuerunt neque victoria ditius tenere praeter unum L. Sullam, quem imitaturus non sum. haec novus sit ratio vincendi ut miseracordia et liberalitate nos muniamus*. This was either a clever strategy on Caesar's part or very convenient as Dowling (*Clemency, 20-4*) writes this shift [showing *clementia* to fellow citizens] was effective in the context of Sulla's proscriptions and unprecedented cruelty a generation prior.

¹⁰⁴ Durant writes "The general [Pompey] was stabbed to death as he stepped upon the shore [of Alexandria], while his wife looked on in helpless terror from the ship in which they had come" (*Christ, 186*).

Bellum Alexandrinum presents more evidence against Caesar practicing forgiveness. In this book, the King of Lesser Armenia appears before the Senate (Caesar in attendance) for supplication, begging *ut sibi ignosceret* (67.1) because he was coerced to fight on the side of Pompey. After deliberation, Caesar grants him clemency. This example is nearly identical to the cases in the Gallic Wars. These were is act of non-moral forgiveness (e.g. pardon). These acts are translated differently, with the same general meaning.¹⁰⁵ So in our analysis of *clementia Caesaris* in the context of war forgiveness turns out best understood as a pardon.¹⁰⁶

As I have shown, we do not have substantial textual evidence to argue Caesar practiced moral forgiveness. Additionally, we often have to speculate. These texts do not elaborate on the specific feelings of resentment, revenge and repentance for the characters in the commentaries. These are things we need to know to make better judgments about whether or not they practiced forgiveness. For example, we simply do not know if Caesar truly felt remorse upon hearing Pompey's death. It is plausible to think he sought to forswear revenge on his political adversaries, like Pompey, but to believe his actions were not politically motivated is to not understand Caesar's character.¹⁰⁷

One thing we can confirm is Caesar's role in *clementia*'s conceptual transformation.¹⁰⁸ He took a common concept and molded it to the shape of Roman

¹⁰⁵ Konstan, *BF*, 55: "In war, *ignoscere* is sometimes more or less equivalent to showing 'clemency' (*clementia*), humaneness (*humanitas*), or pity (*miser cordia*)."

¹⁰⁶ Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ Dowling (*Clemency*, 27) writes: "Clemency in Roman thought was the deliberate forgiveness of a punishment that was deserved, a leniency in which the strict requirements of justice were put aside for reasons of humanity or political advantage. Cicero believed that the clemency that Caesar advertised sprang from the latter motivation... We do not know what motivations Caesar privately acknowledged himself..."

¹⁰⁸ Braund writes (*Clementia*, 34-36) writes that he made three crucial shifts. First, he established *clementia* as a "personal benefaction rather than a benefaction of the Roman state." Second, Caesar demonstrated

politics as he saw fit. By granting *clementia* to his enemies during the Civil War he won the hearts of the people yet cultivated an unknown hostility against him by the Roman Senate. *Clementia Caesaris* became an unprecedented technique in solidifying power in Roman affairs; it was propaganda.¹⁰⁹ Clemency started as virtue of the Roman state practiced by generals but then it moved to the political arena. So far I have discussed negative findings on whether or not contemporary forgiveness materialized in Caesar's practice of *clementia*. The examples of *clementia Caesaris* above fall short of forgiveness for a variety of reasons: Caesar was never morally injured, if he was morally injured he neglected a change of heart (in the paradigm sense), *clementia Caesaris* was utilized as a means for supplicating enemies, and clemency bound the pardoner and pardoned to a hierarchal relationship for life (a type of patron-client relationship), which is contrary to the point of paradigm forgiveness.¹¹⁰ However, I have yet to really test my account.

My account of forgiveness is intrapersonal and need not be communicative. It calls for foreswearing revenge at one's wrongdoer for the sake of maximizing one's well-being with respect to the injury suffered. I have already established why Caesar did not practice forgiveness during the Gallic Wars. There were no moral, interpersonal transgressions. The Gallic Wars were motivated by Caesar's quest for *dignitas* and upward mobility in the political arena. In defending their land, the Gauls should not be seen as wrongdoers. The burden of attack was on Caesar once he crossed into their territory. One may say that Caesar, like other Romans, felt morally injured from previous

clementia to his fellow Roman citizens, marking, thus, the move into the political sphere. Third, Caesar managed to elevate *clementia* from the human domain to the divine, establishing what we refer to today as *clementia Caesaris*.

¹⁰⁹ Dowling, *Clemency*, 24-26.

¹¹⁰ Dowling (*Clemency*, 17) writes: "The donation of clemency implied the superiority of the donor and the willing subjugation of the recipient [for life]." Cf. Griswold's fifth step in the paradigm account. Basically, the victim does not seek moral superiority over the forgiven offender.

attacks the Gauls made on Rome (e.g. the sack of Rome in 390 B.C.) and thus the Gauls should be held in moral contempt. First, if this were in any case true, the Gallic Wars would still be an act of revenge. In the end, the extent of Caesar's involvement north of Italy depended on his dream coming true, conquering all of Gaul (Durant, *Christ*, 175).

The closest Caesarian act to forgiveness (under my account) is his proclamation of clemency to the Pompeians following Pompey's death in Alexandria (Plut. *Caes.* 48). Plutarch's description of Caesar's reaction may encourage us to consider Caesar's clemency toward the Pompeians as modern forgiveness because it has moral significance. As noted earlier, it is hard to believe Caesar would shed tears, or be portrayed as shedding tears, if the situation had no moral bearing on him whatsoever. If we assume Caesar blamed Pompey for certain offenses throughout the war it is reasonable to believe Caesar felt some type of resentment towards him through the civil struggle.

Did Caesar feel vengeful resentment toward Pompey and his men from battling against them? Caesar's *De Bello Civile* does not provide us with any indication as to what kind of emotional, moral response Caesar had to Pompey during the war or even if he felt resentment at all. Furthermore, we do not even know their reactive attitudes toward each other. Caesar is the only authority on their personal correspondence.¹¹¹ Perhaps Caesar saw his struggle with Pompey as a necessary evil amidst war.¹¹² We can at best guess how Caesar felt but, in addition to the textual evidence we have, it is more reasonable to think Caesar felt appropriate resentment towards Pompey. The war wasn't personal; it was a matter of saving Rome during civil strife and that was anyone's taking.

¹¹¹ Durant, *Christ*, 185.

¹¹² Ibid., 180-181: "he [Caesar] did not relish a war against his fellow citizens and his former friends. But he saw the snares that had been prepared for him, and resented them as an ill-reward for one who saved Italy [from the death of the Republic]."

Clementia Caesaris was contemporary forgiveness. I have discussed reasons why all accounts of forgiveness fail to capture it. Despite *clementia* being regarded as a virtue and an indication of mild temperament (Konstan, *Virtue*, 337), *clementia* was deployed to push a self-interested political agenda. Caesar narrates *De Bello Gallico* and *De Bello Civile* for the Roman people in an attempt to promote himself as a kind, generous political figure. It should be no surprise that he writes of sparing his enemies, promising their well-being and providing Rome with stability and security. We are analyzing *clementia* in the context of war and political struggle, which makes our exploration difficult; modern forgiveness, regardless if one wishes to accept my account, is a phenomenon that occurs between interactions on a personal level.

But perhaps we are limited in our conclusions because we do not know how Caesar truly thought about his acts of clemency. For example, in his own mind he could have been thinking his clemency towards the Pompey's men following his death was indeed forgiveness in some way. This raises an important issue. The ancient texts we analyze offer limited perspectives. While these perspectives portray Caesar as an unforgiving man, perhaps he thought he was a very forgiving man. However I think regardless of what Caesar thought he was not practicing forgiveness as a moral remedy to a moral wrongdoing. He certainly increased his well-being by granting clemency throughout his career, e.g. he accumulated a tremendous amount of wealth and form a cohesive clientele system, but he did not seek moral rehabilitation from moral wrongs his opponents aimed at him. Nonetheless, this is what I think the textual evidence suggests.

Caesar marked the beginning of *clementia*'s transformation. Braund (*Clementia*, 33) writes from this point in time *clementia* begins to expand "its field as Republic

becomes Principate, from the military sphere into the political sphere, and later in the empire into the ethical sphere, where it shapes the early Christian concept of mercy that persists to our own time.” Durant sums up the infantile steps of *clementia*’s growth under Caesar’s wing:

He had forgiven all surrendering foes and had condemned to death only a few officers who, defeated and pardoned, had fought against him again. He had burned the unread correspondence he had found in the tents of Pompey and Scipio. He had sent the captured daughter and grandchildren of Pompey to Pompey’s son, Sextus, who was still in arms against him; and he had restored the statues of Pompey which his followers had thrown down... He bore silently a thousand slanders, and instituted no proceedings against those whom he suspected of plotting against his life.¹¹³

This was the man whom I argue did not forgive. After Caesar’s death in 44 B.C.

clementia was used less frequently until “only toward the end of the reign of Augustus that the leader of the Roman state begins consistently to advertise his *clementia* as proof of the quality of his rule.”¹¹⁴ *Clementia* became the epitome of the ruler, the next subject of exploration: Lucius Annaeus Seneca’s writing on *clementia* during the reign of Nero. The question remains, did contemporary forgiveness exist in ancient Rome? In Caesarian practice it did not, but what about in Seneca’s philosophy?

¹¹³ Christ, 194-195.

¹¹⁴ Dowling, *Clemency*, 28.

FORETOLD FORGIVENESS: AN EXAMINATION OF CLEMENCY UNDER
LUCIUS ANNAEUS SENECA

*Interim, dum trahimus, dum inter homines sumus, colamus humanitatem.
Non timori cuiquam, non periculo simus detrimenta, iniurias, convicia,
vellicationes contemnamos et magno animo brevia feramus incommode.
Dum respicimus, quod aiunt, versamusque nos, iam mortalias aderit (De
ira 3.4.3).¹¹⁵*

Death was upon Romans of all classes during the Roman Empire. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Seneca the Younger, identifies the character of his contemporaries as corrupt and flawed (Mueller, *Cruelty*, 167). Seneca writes:

We are mad, not only individually, but nationally. We check homicide and isolated murders; but what of war and the much-vaunted crime of slaughtering whole peoples? There are no limits to our greed, none to our cruelty.¹¹⁶

Cruelty was a staple in Roman life. When Nero, at age 16, succeeded the throne in A.D. 54, the way of life would not alter much. At first his rule appeared to promise peace and comfort but eventually it turned dark, violent and erratic. Perhaps it was his fate to follow the footsteps of his predecessor Claudius. Seneca, Stoic philosopher and educator of Nero during his youth, had for some years advised the Emperor and the state (Durant, *Christ*, 302). After Nero had his mother, Agrippina, assassinated, he was no longer the pawn to a petticoat government (Scullard, *Gracchi*, 305), allowing him to rule Rome as he so desired. Seneca worked to promote Nero to the Roman people, despite ‘tarnish[ing] his record by condoning the worst of Nero’s crimes, ‘letting much evil pass in order to have

¹¹⁵ “Meanwhile, so long as we draw breath, so long as we live among men, let us cherish humanity. Let us not cause fear to any man, nor danger; let us scorn losses, wrongs, abuses, and taunts, and let us endure with heroic mind our short-lived ills. While we are looking back, as they say, and turning around, straightway death will be upon us.”

¹¹⁶ Seneca (*Ep.* 95.30) writes: *non privatim solum sed publice furimus. Homicidia conpescimus et singulas caedes: quid bella et occisarum gentium gloriosum scelus? Non avaritia, non crudelitas* (Mueller, *Cruelty*, 166).

the power of doing little good” (Durant, *Christ*, 303). Seneca focused on writing speeches and essays, among other political feats, one of which was *De clementia* when Nero was just eighteen.¹¹⁷

Similar to Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, *De clementia* was a guideline to imperial success. Seneca addresses *De clementia* to Nero in the opening lines: *scribo de clementia... institui, ut quodam modo speculi vice fungerer et te tibi ostenderem perventurum ad voluptatem maximam omnium (De clem. I, 1.1.)*.¹¹⁸ Scullard writes *clementia* was to contrast Nero’s administration against Claudius’ harsh reign (*Gracchi*, 305). Despite his attempt to edify Nero’s rule, Nero chose tyrannical violence and retaliation as his means to achieve his ends as Emperor (Dowling, *Clemency*, 195). For example, he brutally persecuted Christians for the terrible fire in A.D. 64 (Scullard, *Gracchi*, 310). Meanwhile, feeling disgraced and enslaved to the Emperor, Seneca began to withdraw from political life but even he could not hide from Nero’s ruthlessness; Seneca was eventually forced to commit suicide in 65 A.D. by the orders of his obstinate pupil (Durant, *Christ*, 303).

De clementia has a three-pronged approach. It critiques proper kingship, it is a panegyric publication and it promotes morals.¹¹⁹ Even though the work was addressed to Nero, Seneca “intended for his work to be accessible to a larger audience” (Dowling, *Clemency*, 196). Seneca’s work recognized *clementia* as a symbol the “good ruler displays and earns his elevation by [its] exercise...and that exercise of *clementia* is

¹¹⁷ Braund, *Clementia*, 3.

¹¹⁸ “I have taken on the task of writing about clemency, Nero Caesar, so I can act as a kind of mirror and give you a picture of yourself as someone who will attain the greatest pleasure of all.”

¹¹⁹ Braund, *Clementia*, 17-23. For my purpose here, I wish to extract as much insight from the third element because it better reflects forgiveness in the moral context. However, the other two are also important to consider.

acknowledged by the *corona civica*.”¹²⁰ As with Caesar, we see this word used for its political potential.¹²¹ However, Seneca guides the discussion on *clementia* into a philosophical arena as it prompts discussion on morality. While some other writers have given thought to *clementia* in its philosophical dress (Cic. *De Inv.* 2.164) treatises like this were uncommon.¹²²

In what follows I discuss Seneca’s theory on *clementia*. This will entail understanding *clementia* for the larger audience Dowling suggests exists and understanding it differently for Nero the emperor. The latter is similar to *clementia Caesaris* (political ‘forgiveness’) so the former will be more significance to this project.¹²³ Seneca contrasts “the morality of *clementia*” with the “immortality of cruelty” to cultivate a holistic ethic of *clementia* for the Romans.¹²⁴ As in the previous chapter I will test this ethic of *clementia* against the notion of contemporary forgiveness I developed.

Seneca defines *clementia* as the following:

temperantia animi in potestate ulciscendi vel lenitas superioris adversus inferiorem in constituendis poenis. plura proponere tutius est ne una finitio parum rem comprehendat et, ut ita dicam, formula excidat; itaque dici potest et inclination animi ad lenitatem in poena exigenda (De clem.1, 2.3.1).

¹²⁰ The *corona civica*, civic crown, was at first awarded to the Roman who saved a fellow-citizen’s life in battle but it eventually became identified with the capacity of the emperor to save other citizens’ lives by showing mercy and kindness (Braund, *Clementia*, 44.)

¹²¹ Keep in mind, a successful rule for Nero meant success for Seneca’s administration. By using *clementia* to keep the relations between the Senate and the *princeps* civil (Seneca was sympathetic to the Senate), the general outlook on the Empire was positive and this gave people the perception of a better state of affairs, despite the fact that “the emperor’s autocracy was no less than it had been in the past...” (Scullard, *Gracchi*, 306).

¹²² Dowling writes: “it was under Nero that the first philosophy of clemency was described by Seneca” (*Clemency*, 169).

¹²³ I quote forgiveness because this can just be considered as pardoning and not forgiveness as we come to understand it in moral theory. However, Griswold discusses political pardon as a “sibling of forgiveness” (*Forgiveness*, xviii). One may wish to argue it is still a form of moral forgiveness but for our sake let us proceed with the difference in the effect of political and moral forgiveness.

¹²⁴ Dowling, *Clemency*, 195.

Clemency is ‘restraint of the mind when it is able to take revenge,’ or ‘the leniency of the more powerful party towards the weaker in the matter of setting penalties.’ It is safer to propose several formulations, in case a single definition is not comprehensive enough, and so to speak, loses its case. So clemency can also be defined as a tendency of the mind towards leniency in the matter of exacting punishment (Braund, *Clementia*, 143).

Unfortunately Seneca does not elaborate much more on the definition but this will suffice in comparison to contemporary forgiveness. First it is necessary to decide which interpretation above best suits our purpose. The second version should be dismissed on the grounds that it reflects *clementia Caesaris* (forgiveness in the political realm.) It consists of settling issues like Caesar did; the superior party imposes a lenient penalty on the defeated enemies and this is typically the case in supplicating defeated enemies or subordinating political rivals. The first and third versions are more pertinent. The third emphasizes punishment while the first emphasizes revenge. However, both interpretations involve the ‘restraint’ or ‘leniency’ to moderate their reactions (punishment and revenge, respectively). I take the verbs to be synonymous since they both involve reducing resentment to prevent exercising extreme, or unnecessarily more intense, retaliatory action on the offender.

Seneca also distinguishes *clementia* from quasi-synonyms and its antonyms. Braund organizes these distinctions nicely: “*clementia* is not the same as *miser cordia* (see *De clem.* 2.4.4-2.6.4 n.) or *mansuetudo* (see 1.7.3 n.) or *moderatio* (see 1.2.2 n.) or *indulgentia* or *lenitas* (see 2.3.1 n.) or *comitas*. The actions denoted by *venia* (see 2.7, 2.7.1, 2.7.3 nn.) and *parcere* (see 1.1.4, 1.5.1, 2.7.2 nn.) and *ignoscere* (see 2.7, 2.7.3 nn.) are not straight matches either. The opposite of *clementia* is not *severitas* (see 2.4.1 n.)

itself another virtue) but *saevitia* (see 1.25-26, 2.4.2 nn.) *crudelitas* (see 1.2.2, 1.7.3, 1.25.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3 nn.), and *feritas* (see 2.4.2 n)” (*Clementia*, 39).¹²⁵

Seneca builds his concept of clemency off of its opposing features to cruelty. Mueller elaborates “cruelty is, according to Seneca, viciousness and savagery (*atrocitas*) in punishing as well as an inclination of the spirit towards harshness. Cruelty, like other vices, arises from the emotions (*Ep.* 85.10)... The motivation for such cruel behavior is pleasure” (*Cruelty*, 168). He also highlights that the ruler has a larger propensity for cruelty since his actions can affect a wider scope of individuals thru political punishment and war. The private citizen, while also capable of cruelty, is nowhere close to exercising the potential cruelty of a ruler. And thus cruelty, in Seneca’s analysis, is thought to rest on unequal power (*Cruelty*, 167-168).

In *De ira* Seneca further distinguishes clemency from cruelty. Dowling writes “clemency takes less work than anger and that people who are clement have better reputations and more often get what they want.” Aside from the political gains of using *clementia*, “the pleasures of granting clemency are superior to and more secure than the awful pleasure in the suffering of others that cruelty provides” (*Clemency*, 203-204). Seneca asks *quid est animi quiete otiosius, quid ira laboriosius? quid clementia remissius quid crudelitate negotiosius?* (*De clem.1*, 2.13.2). Seneca stresses the point that the pursuit of anger and cruelty is exhausting while granting clemency is quick and energy-

¹²⁵ OLD defines these terms (in order as they are presented above, excluding *clementia*) as: “tenderness-heartedness, pity, compassion (1118); mildness, clemency (1074); moderation (as a quality of persons), self-control, moderation in the use of (1121); kindness, esp. on the part of a superior, favour, bounty, or sim (888); mildness of character or behavior, gentleness (1016); friendliness, considerateness, courtesy, graciousness (360); forgiveness, pardon (2029); to refrain from inflicting injury, etc. be merciful, spare (1295); to forgive (a person or offense ellipt. or absol.) (825); strict and uncompromising conduct in dealing with offenders, sternness, severity; an instance of sternness (1750); savageness of conduct of character, barbarity, cruelty (1678); cruelty, savagery, inhumanity of a person (462); and barbaric and savage state of men (687). Seneca seems to be offering a unique view on forgiveness, these definitions overlap and intertwine yet he claims they do not fully capture *clementia*.

saving; the latter is what leads to a better life.¹²⁶ Seneca also advocates clemency over cruelty because the latter corrupts the mind (2.5.3). Dowling writes “clemency counteracts this perversion and keeps us true to ourselves... We thus benefit ourselves as much as those we spare. This is a startling development in Roman ethics, that mercy not only is of utilitarian benefit to the pardoner and to the spared [as seen in its political power] but actually has a profound effect on the moral worth of the donor” (*Clemency*, 205).

Seneca gives due consideration to why the Emperor specifically ought to grant clemency. These reasons are pragmatic (Dowling, *Clemency*, 192). Seneca stresses that the emperor who grants clemency lives in a more prosperous and orderly state: *remissius imperanti melius paretur* (*De clem.1*, 1.24.1).¹²⁷ However, Seneca acknowledges there is a line that needs to be drawn in distinguishing how merciful the ruler is. Granting too much mercy can lose its intended effect: *non tamen vulgo ignoscere decet; nam ubi discrimen inter malos bonosque sublatum est, confusion sequitur et vitiorum eruption;* *itaque adhibenda moderatio est, quae sanabilia ingenia distinguere a deploratis sciat* (*De clem.2*, 1.2.2).¹²⁸ If the correct dosage of clemency is given, one can bring safety to the state; “cruelty toward a few generates fear in all, and this fear might very well spur peaceful men to violent action. A policy of mercy forestalls this danger” (Dowling,

¹²⁶ Dowling (*Clemency*, 204) notes that philosophically the argument is not “convincing because often cruelty can be quite casual and incidental, the punishments that Seneca has in mind are rooted in the public world of law, not philosophy; the routine punishments of the amphitheater, the crucifixions, burnings, and maimings of convicted criminals. These indeed did take energy, expense, and planning.” I agree with Dowling that the argument is not convincing but I think Seneca raises a point I emphasize in my account of modern forgiveness: forgiveness aims to prevent the victim from sustaining the psychological effects of an injury she suffered much like Seneca’s point that the process of pursuing cruelty is contrary to well-being.

¹²⁷ “The more tolerantly he rules the more easily he commands obedience.”

¹²⁸ “Nevertheless, pardoning ought not to be too common; for when the distinction between the bad and the good is removed, the result is confusion and an epidemic of vice. Therefore, a wise moderation should be exercised which will be capable of distinguishing between curable and hopeless characters.”

Clemency, 197). Seneca has some kind of threshold in mind. Prevalent mercy will not deter citizens from doing wrong and they will in turn take advantage of a clement ruler. On the other hand, too little mercy can make the people think the ruler is a tyrant and thus despise him for his cruelty. So, *clementia* is form of public policy.

It is also a form of nutrition. Seneca argues clemency is in the best interest of the emperor because granting clemency improves the practitioner's health, i.e. the emperor's health. Just like the citizens are extension of the Emperor, he ought to take care of them like he would his own body:

Nam si, quod adhuc colligit, tu animus rei publicae tuae es, illa corpus tuum, vides, ut puto, quam necessaria sit clementia; tibi enim parcis, cum videris alteri parcere. Parcendum itaque est etiam improbandis civibus non aliter quam membris languentibus... (*De clem.1*, 1.5.1).¹²⁹

However, we do not see a morally compelling reason to grant clemency. This seems to be another one of Seneca's political analogies to persuade Nero why he ought to grant clemency more: for preserving social order. But this may sound similar to 'maximizing one's well-being' and thus analogous to keeping one's body healthy. If I argue for this analogy then I am basically admitting the moral reasons we forgive are really motivated by health reasons. However for the sake of analogy to the state, I can see why Seneca prescribed the Nero's malady of cruelty with clemency.

Seneca gives more reasons why one ought to grant clemency. He goes on to claim *clementia* "elevates the soul to a higher plane of virtue" (Dowling, *Clemency*, 200).

Seneca writes that, ultimately, practicing *clementia* is good for the well-being of the practitioner: *quotiens nulum inveneram misericordiae causam, mihi peperci* (*De clem.1*,

¹²⁹ "You are showing mercy to yourself when you seem to be showing it to someone else. So you should show mercy even to citizens who deserve condemnation just as you would to ailing limbs.

1.1.4).¹³⁰ That is, the victim should grant clemency for her own sake. Furthermore, a healthy state of mind is one that does not give in to the propensity for cruelty.¹³¹ Seneca claims it is harder for a ruler to use reason because cruelty is an “expression of the irrational mind; clemency is proof of the rational mind.”¹³² We thus ought to grant clemency for a moral reason: it is good for the practitioner’s well-being since it can elevate her to a higher level of virtue and preserve her rationality. Hence, Seneca has three basic moral reasons for showing clemency: 1) it elevates one’s soul; 2) it makes the practitioner a happier and better man; and 3) it preserves the rationality of the practitioner.

Now let us return to the question posed earlier: do either the first or third interpretation of *clementia* fully fit my view of forgiveness (i.e. they do not just share similar definitions).¹³³ By definition alone, the first interpretation of *clementia* is identical to modern forgiveness, i.e. forswearing revenge is restraining resentment. However, this alone does not complete the analysis. If it did then forswearing revenge alone would be all that forgiveness is about but I advocated for more than that. I advocated for forswearing revenge *to maximize the moral well-being of the victim in response to a moral injury*. We do not simply forswear revenge because then we can forswear revenge on a whim and this is not forgiveness. Forgiveness is a choice with moral backing.

¹³⁰ Dowling writes that Seneca is interested guiding Nero to become a “better and happier man.” (*Clemency*, 199)

¹³¹ Remember, the practice of cruelty indicates a corrupt mind (similar to Butler’s views). “Real clemency in a position of supreme power, consists of the most real control of the mind and <of an all-inclusive love> of human-kind <as love of oneself>, of not being corrupted by any desire or by natural impetuosity...” (Braund, *Clementia*, 115). In Seneca’s words: *haec est in maxima potestate verissima animi temperantia et humani generis comprehendens ut sui amor non cupiditate aliqua, non temeritate ingenii* (*Clem.* 1.11.2).

¹³² Dowling, *Clemency*, 199-200. Seneca explains cruelty in more detail in *De irae* but also in *De clementia*. (2.4.1-3).

¹³³ To remind the reader, the first interpretation is ‘restraint of the mind when it is able to take revenge’ and the third is ‘tendency of the mind toward leniency when exacting punishment’ (Braund, *Clementia*, 143).

However, some may find well-being in pursuing revenge but if that occurs than forgiveness is no longer possible. I have given this issue due consideration in chapter one.

I find it hard to deny that the three reasons for showing clemency given above, combined with Seneca's first interpretation of *clementia*, amount to forgiveness. I discussed well-being as attempting to achieve the most peace of mind in response to an injury. These three reasons do just that. I understand the first reason to mean bettering oneself in the form of moral enlightenment, not creating a hierarchy of inferior wrongdoer and superior forgiver. I understand the second reason an undeniable indication that this refers to well-being. How else can this be construed? I understand the third reason to contribute to peace of mind, the source of well-being. Irrational individuals are not at peace of mind. However, are the reasons Seneca gives related to moral injury? If Seneca isn't referring to clemency as a response to moral injury then our perspectives will not coordinate. Moral wrongdoing is one of the basic preconditions of contemporary forgiveness. The third interpretation stands for similar reasons and I will explore Seneca's thoughts on clemency versus punishment to make sure.

Seneca brings the first book of *De clementia* to a close by contrasting *clementia* with punishment. Seneca assumes the role of punishment is to correct wrongdoers and the best way to correct them is to impose more lenient punishment. While it seems counter-intuitive, Seneca claims harsh punishment backfires on the state since this will enrage the people. Dowling suggests Seneca believes that harsh punishment can also create a cycle of repeating crime and is ultimately ineffective. Furthermore, too much punishment is detrimental because it portrays society as littered with criminals, undermining the state's sense of security (*Clemency*, 198-99). Seneca, thus, believes punishment is necessary for

the rehabilitation of wrongdoers but that punishment must be exercised wisely; we ought to show offenders *clementia* instead of punishment for the stability of the state.¹³⁴ Seneca sums this is by stating:

*Civitatis autem mores magis corrigit parcitas animadversionum; facit enim consuetudinem peccandi multitudine peccantium, et minus gravis nota est, quam turba damnationum levat, et severitas, quod maximum remedium habet, adsiduitate amittat auctoritatem (De clem.1, 1.22.2)*¹³⁵

Seneca goes on to claim that in society which punishment is not as frequent, the community members will develop a stronger sympathy for moral cohesion. And thus such members will act accordingly for the public good (*De clem.1, 1.23.2*).

Seneca believes there is no glory from punishment. He writes *nulla regi gloria est ex saeva animadversione (quis enim dubitat posse?), at contra maxima, si vim suam continent, si multos irae alienae eripuit, neminem suae impendit (De clem.1, 1.16.3)*.¹³⁶

Here we see practicing *clementia* as a means to achieving glory and the *dignitas* that marks honorable Roman men (i.e. the case with Caesar). Being the granter of clemency is a position of power. According to Seneca, anyone can take the life of another but one can only show mercy to an inferior: *vita enim etiam superiori eripitur, numquam nisi inferiori*

¹³⁴ Even if we assume Seneca is correct in saying too much punishment or too harsh punishment begets more crime and instability in the state, why does he think the Roman emperor, or individuals in general, need to grant wrongdoers *clementia*? This may presuppose a false dichotomy that the Roman emperor can only punish or show mercy. Aren't there other ways a ruler cannot punish a wrongdoer while not showing clemency? Seneca doesn't seem to address this. On a separate note, I do not agree with Seneca that we ought to show clemency rather than punish. However, I think Seneca is strictly referring to state punishment here.

¹³⁵ "The sparingness of punishment is more effective in correcting public morality. The existence of a large number of criminals in fact creates a habit of criminality. The stigma is taken less seriously when it is weakened by a plethora of condemnations, and severity, which provides the most efficacious corrective, loses its impact by repeated use."

¹³⁶ "A king gets no glory at all from savage punishment— after all, who doubts that he is capable of that? By contrast, the greatest glory is his if he restrains his powers, if he rescues many people from other people's anger and exposes no one to his own anger."

datur.¹³⁷ I think Seneca expresses this as a matter of socioeconomic status and privilege in Rome: *servare proprium est excellentis fortunae* (*De clem.1*, 1.5.7) as the politics of *clementia*.

So far the discussion on *clementia* versus punishment has not offered us much insight into whether or not Seneca had moral injuries, interpersonal conflicts, in mind. Perhaps we can find the answers in a few other parts of his work.

For the everyday Roman, clemency is acknowledged in its “reciprocity” (Dowling, *Clemency*, 201). Seneca implies a principle of commonality in *clementia*. We all have the “propensity to do wrong and [at one point in our lives] the need to receive mercy at some point;” this underscores the notion that “a man who displays an inclination to clemency is more worthy to receive mercy than is the man who lives a cruel life.”¹³⁸ Butler’s emphasis on loving our enemies reflects this principle. However, I will reiterate why it is a bad reason. To justify forgiveness on these grounds is to essentially supposing “against ample evidence to the contrary that people have no control over what they make of their upbringing and experiences and that different people will be affected in the same way by similar upbringing and experiences.”¹³⁹ And if they had no control over their wrongdoing, they ought to be excused, not forgiven. Also, the common humanity argument drastically fails to account for morally heinous agents that commit terrible crimes.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Dowling, *Clemency*, 200.

¹³⁸ Dowling, *Clemency*, 201.

¹³⁹ Kekes, *Blame*, 503.

¹⁴⁰ This was one of my major criticisms against Butler’s account in Chapter One.

Clementia became a matter of morality for the common man as it “permeated Roman life.”¹⁴¹ Seneca writes to Nero and addresses the importance of rulers granting clemency for an effective, lasting rule; his work also “has completed the development of the ethic of clemency from a quality seen primarily as opportunistic and tainted, as it was regarded after Julius Caesar’s death, to a sublime quality, to an ethic essential to the nature of the good man” (Dowling, *Clemency*, 205). And I think the nature of the good man extends to the Roman people, not just the emperor. Furthermore, I think it extends to the moral realm of the Roman people. In other words, Seneca transformed *clementia* into a way people can conceptualize moral rehabilitation from moral wrongdoing.¹⁴² *De clementia* emphasizes the ruler for two reasons: 1) it was written for one and for his praise and 2) what more confirmation would the Roman people need to practice *clementia* if their ruler was the epitome of it? In other words, by making the ruler the face of *clementia*, Seneca gave the Roman people a role model for practicing forgiveness.

I have argued for why my account of forgiveness captures Seneca’s work on *clementia*. The paradigm account fails to capture it because there is no textual evidence that supports *clementia* was conceived as an interpersonal, conditional moral phenomenon. More specifically, it neglects the change of heart component. My account succeeds in capturing *clementia* (under Seneca’s philosophy) because forgiveness is an intrapersonal, unconditional account. However, my findings are sure to be criticized. I will reflect on possible criticisms now.

¹⁴¹ Dowling, *Clemency*, 217.

¹⁴² Also, I am not so sure there would even be another context in which Seneca wishes to promote *clementia*. In other words, if he isn’t writing for the general public of Rome to be forgiving in their responses to moral wrongdoing then what is he writing for the public to be forgiving for?

Seneca and I would promote forgiving because it is good for our moral sake; moreover that “it relieves us of destructive emotions, such as resentment, bitterness, anger, hatred, and indignation.”¹⁴³ In this instance, forgiving disregards the recipient and focuses on preventing oneself from being corrupted by cruelty. While some may argue this reasoning is flawed because it misses the point of forgiveness (Kekes, *Blame*, 489) as a good in so far as it involves the wrongdoer, I suggest the ‘good’ in forgiveness is whether the act of forgiving fulfills its purpose. Like I have argued earlier, the purpose of forgiveness, in sheer understanding of moral reparation, is to maximize well-being in response to injury. And whether this be “elevating one’s soul” or not being corrupted by vengeful resentment. Seneca’s work seems to have the same message.

But again, the most common argument against my claim (and what I take to be Seneca’s) is that it may indeed be in our well-being to act cruel and avenge our offender. This may bring the victim to some sort of psychological equilibrium, which in effect contributes to them feeling pretty good about ‘settling the score.’ I stated earlier that I concede this point and I admit we ought not *always* seek to forgive. However, I think there is a distinction that might be made here. It is in our self-interest to exact revenge but this will limit us from achieving potential well-being. Exacting revenge is ultimately contrary to our well-being because it brings a type of moral baggage. This moral baggage may become clear to the victim when they give a cost-benefit analysis of the revenge plot. However, it is difficult, probably impossible to predict how exacting revenge or granting clemency will affect one’s well-being in the future. Furthermore, choosing cruelty over clemency conditions people in line with the propensity toward acting

¹⁴³ Kekes, *Blame*, 488.

harshly. And a propensity towards acting in this way makes our tendency to err that much more likewise.

Another criticism may be that I have entirely missed the point of *clementia* and I am building it up to be something it isn't, i.e. *clementia* is strictly a virtue. One of the primary aims of *De clementia* is to discuss "why *clementia*, the most appropriate *virtue* for man, is particularly important in a ruler."¹⁴⁴ Konstan writes that "*clementia* was by its nature 'the virtue of a superior to an inferior'" (*Virtue*, 339). If this were true, then it would be difficult for me to equate forgiveness and *clementia* because I agree with Kekes; "forgiveness cannot possibly be a virtue because virtues are character traits and forgiveness is not. Forgiveness is an event in people's lives that may be unique, rare, or uncharacteristic.... A character trait that prevents reasonable response to moral injury and leads people to refuse to hold wrongdoers accountable cannot possibly be a virtue."¹⁴⁵

Griswold may offer a slightly varied objection. He may say that upon completion of the necessary conditions we ought to forgive because it is the thing to do and "forgivingness is a virtue... Forgivingness is a virtue that both expresses and promotes the ethical excellence of its possessor (*Forgiveness*, 69)" But say one forgives habitually because it is their character to do so; isn't this actually a vice? There are times in which we *really should* punish individuals and by facilely forgiving them we are actually "colluding in the violation of moral requirements" our community upholds for stability.¹⁴⁶ Griswold may say that "in spite of common parlance, one cannot be too forgiving (for one is then not forgiving but doing something else). To exercise the virtue is by definition to feel and to act just as one should given the particulars of the situation

¹⁴⁴ Griffin, *Seneca*, 143.

¹⁴⁵ *Blame*, 492-493.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 493.

(*Forgiveness*, 17).” However, isn’t this a definitional stop? In other words, Griswold, or a supporter of his, cannot simply dismiss the possibility of forgiving too much when having the virtue of forgivingness makes forgiving a habit. It is essentially precluding one from criticism by claiming immunity from the slippery slope of forgiving frequently out of character and not out of the analyzing the specific circumstances wrongdoings.

So then why does Seneca promote *clementia* as a virtue? I think he certainly does this *and* he promotes *clementia* as forgiveness. Seneca certainly depicts an honorable ruler as one who possesses *clementia*. However, Seneca writes *si quando misso sanguine opus est, sustinenda est manus, ne ultra, quam necesse sit, incidat* (*De clem.*2, 1.5.1).¹⁴⁷ This acknowledges the moral choice on behalf of the practitioner of *clementia*. If they have a choice, then it is reasonable *clementia* is an event and not merely a character disposition. For if it were only a virtue, then rulers would be granting *clementia* habitually because it is in their character to do so yet Seneca calls for a balance of *clementia* (*De clem.*2, 1.2.2.). So, perhaps we should think of *clementia* in two distinct contexts for two different audiences; one as a guide for the Roman *princeps* and the other as an ethic for the common Roman.

In conclusion, Seneca’s *De clementia* foretells contemporary forgiveness. In other words, his work reflects forgiveness as we know it today. His definition of *clementia* calls for restraint in exacting revenge or leniency when imposing punishment. My account deems modern forgiveness is forswearing vengeful resentment. Furthermore, both accounts emphasize the victim, or practitioner of *clementia*, forgiving to maximize their well-being in response to an injury. Even though Seneca does not describe this

¹⁴⁷ “If there should ever be need to let blood [punish], the hand must be held under control to keep it from cutting deeper than may be necessary.”

verbatim, the textual evidence suggests the reasons for granting clemency involve maximizing one's well-being. He also supplies reasons why the ruler should forgive. Also, even though I have argued contemporary forgiveness materialized in Seneca's work, I am not comfortable concluding contemporary forgiveness materialized in practice; the textual evidence was lacking in this examination. It is important to note that the textual evidence also does not explicitly claim *clementia* was meant to be the moral remedy to moral wrongdoing. However, are there really any other better ways of understanding his work? Finally, while forgiveness should not be considered a virtue, *clementia* can be understood as both a virtue for a successful ruler and moral event for the Roman people. Seneca's philosophy foretold contemporary forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored contemporary forgiveness in ancient Rome. In doing so, I analyzed the practice of *clementia* by Julius Caesar and the philosophy of *clementia* by Lucius Annaeus Seneca. These two topics interested me because these figures were responsible for influencing the concept of *clementia* in ancient Rome in significant ways. This project had two major parts.

First, I wanted to explore different perspectives on contemporary forgiveness and develop my own account. By no means have I exhausted the different perspectives on forgiveness; there are many. My choices reflect what I take to be a fundamental divide in thought on forgiveness: one side believes it is an interpersonal, conditional moral event while the other side argues for an intrapersonal, unconditional view. The former exists as the paradigm sense of forgiveness, explained by Griswold and endorsed by Konstan. I argued against this view (with the help of Kekes) while trying to establish my own understanding of forgiveness. My understanding reflects many elements Zaibert and Butler include in their work on forgiveness.

My account of forgiveness is humbling in the sense that it attempts to call forgiveness for what it truly is, regardless of how we desire it to be. I argue it is a way in which humans deal with suffering from moral injury. My account of forgiveness advocates an intrapersonal moral phenomenon by the victim, for the victim. Victims of moral wrongdoing forgive to maximize their well-being in response to the injury they suffer. I have distinguished appropriate resentment from vengeful resentment as ways in which victims can respond to personal injury. I attempt to reconcile the desire to punish

with the desire to forgive by saying it is permissible to want an offender punished via expressions of non-vengeful resentment after the victim forswears revenge. Punishing wrongdoers is essential to our system of morals and it may be better for victims for them to maximize their moral well-being by exacting revenge or other immoral acts of punishment. Hence, I concede victims will choose to punish rather than forgive their offenders. This is why I do not argue victims *ought* to forgive.

I have argued that the paradigm is unreasonably bilateral and conditional. First, the repentance of the offender does not need to change the victim's resentment triggered by the specific wrongdoing. Ultimately, the victim chooses how to deal with her resentment independent of the wrongdoer's actions. If she chooses forgiveness, she will forego the pursuit of vengeful resentment. If she does not choose forgiveness, she can seek revenge (among other responses). Hence, I have argued against the second threshold condition in Griswold's review of paradigm forgiveness, namely, there is a willingness of the offender to take minimal steps in qualifying for forgiveness. This is why I also argue against forgiveness as a communicative act.

Critics may argue my account fails to capture the essence of forgiveness, the change-in-heart among the parties involved. This is an unnecessarily fabricated part of forgiveness. Again, why does a victim need to communicate his or her forgiveness to the offender? And why does an offender need to qualify for forgiveness by expressing remorse? It is ultimately the victim's choice in how she wishes to proceed in her moral rehabilitation. Furthermore, a victim as well as offender can have callous or indifferent responses to such expressions. And these individuals shouldn't be precluded from participating in forgiveness.

My conclusions rest on whether or not I have adequately established my account of forgiveness. If the reader agrees with my description of forgiveness, then the reader may be compelled to agree with the claims I make about *clementia* and forgiveness in ancient Rome. This brings me to the second part of my project: searching for traces of forgiveness in ancient Rome.

My first case study presented me with no strong evidence. In this case I discussed the differences between political forgiveness and moral forgiveness, or supplication and forgiveness. *Clementia Caesaris* was a political weapon used to subdue defeated enemies and supplicate political rivalries. It was a machine to solidify rule both inside and outside Rome; Caesar was its mastermind. This did not replicate modern day forgiveness. *Clementia* in this context misses the point of moral forgiveness; namely, forgiveness aims to maximize the well-being of the victim in response to an injury. *Clementia Caesaris* had no moral rationale. And even if it did, the political motivations trumped the morality driving it. Caesar's clemency was an example of pardon. And even what seems to be a strong case of forgiving his deceased former friend can be written off as something else. While one may argue the tears Caesar wept expressed remorse for Pompey's death, this scenario does not fit my account of forgiveness because there was no evidence for personal injury. Caesar may have lamented because an honorable Roman met a dishonorable death. On the issue of Caesar being a forgiver, he was simply a warmonger turned politician who eventually succumbed to his own pernicious politics.

My second case study presented me with strong enough evidence to argue forgiveness in ancient Rome materialized in Seneca's philosophy on *clementia*. When

Seneca enters the Roman political scene *clementia* undergoes a philosophical transformation. Dowling explains the transformation of nicely:

With Seneca's creation of a philosophy of clemency, *clementia*, became a quality of men in general, demonstrable even by slaves toward their superiors, an inherently human quality and, paradoxically, a sign of the superior self-control and strength of the grantor so that the extension of clemency conferred status on the giver. In all these aspects, the nature of *clementia* has changed from the dangerous grants of Julius Caesar. The reception of imperial clemency, while never something that raised one's prestige, at least was not seen as political suicide (*Clemency*, 217).

I argued Seneca's definition of *clementia* and justification for showing it both align with my account. The best-fitting interpretation of his definition was restraint in having revenge. The other interpretation entailed a tendency to be lenient in exacting punishment. I argued with this is also fitting to my account. They both involve the forswearing of vengeful resentment. Seneca offers three reasons, among others, why one should forgive. These reasons also align with my account. One should show clemency because it elevates one soul, contributes to one being a better and happier man, and preserve one's rationality, e.g. a calm state of mind. I argue all of these reasons culminate into maximizing one's moral well-being. The last part of this task involved finding evidence that Seneca wrote about granting *clementia* to maximize one's well-being in the context of moral injury. I admit I did not find any concrete textual support, but I still argue why this is the best way to understand the *clementia* in this context. However, just because Seneca wrote about *clementia* in philosophical prose does not mean it was a customary practice. Also, I have only used one treatise to support my thesis. Hence the matter is not nearly conclusive but I think I have offered the reader good reason to think twice about doubting the notion of contemporary forgiveness in *De clementia*.

Nonetheless one may argue that *clementia* is simply a virtue and that I have unfairly built something out of nothing. I understand Seneca's *clementia* as more than a character trait for a successful, benign ruler. As Dowling notes above, *clementia* became an "inherently human quality," which even slaves displayed towards their masters. Since *clementia* permeated the social boundaries of Roman life, I am inclined to think it was not just a virtue but also the foretelling of contemporary forgiveness. Furthermore, I suggest *clementia* has an amoebic nature; it serves different purposes in different contexts. *Clementia* the virtue for rulers was one way in which it was emphasized and *clementia* as an act of contemporary forgiveness was another. Perhaps many scholars have easily overlooked *clementia* as a manifestation of modern forgiveness because they do not understand *clementia* having different meanings in different contexts.

David Konstan has written extensively on forgiveness in antiquity. His negative conclusions prompted me to undertake this project. I have learned the way in which we define things greatly determines the way in which we can use them. We define forgiveness in almost diametrically opposed ways and have come to argue different perspectives on this issue. Nevertheless, I hope to have presented an insightful project that guides the reader through a fresh understanding of forgiveness, an exciting exploration of *clementia Caesaris*, and a fruitful exploration of *clementia*'s philosophical roots to see that modern forgiveness did exist in ancient Rome *thought*.

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