

Steven C. van den Heuvel *Editor*

# Historical and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope



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Editor

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*Editor*

Steven C. van den Heuvel  
Department of Systematic Theology  
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit  
Leuven, Belgium



ISBN 978-3-030-46488-2 ISBN 978-3-030-46489-9 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9>

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# Preface

Recent decades have seen an upsurge in the interest in “hope,” among scholars of various disciplines. Hope is an ambiguous phenomenon—the word has many associations. Yet its core is simple: hope denotes a *desire* (we hope for something) and it involves a *probability* (the chances of the attainment of the desire have to be somewhere between zero and one).

While most scholars agree with these two basic facts about the phenomenon of hope, there is a lot of diversity concerning the precise structure of hope; there is also debate about the value of hope. Regarding the *structure* of hope: it is often considered to be a virtue, leading to rich debate on how exactly this virtue is constructed and at what it is (or should be) aimed. Yet there are also those who do not consider hope to be connected with the passions, but primarily with rational expectations concerning the future—Immanuel Kant offers an influential example of such a view.

There is also extended debate over the *value* of hope, going back all the way to ancient Greek philosophy where Western reflection on hope began. The Greek myth of Pandora’s jar is well known; while it has often been interpreted as a condemnation of hope, the myth is enigmatic—it can also be interpreted as a positive endorsement of hope. This ambiguous attitude to hope has persisted, with various nuances, throughout the ages up until the present day. For some, “hope” signals passivity and resignation from the urgent tasks of life, whereas for others it describes the vital strength necessary for progress in human history, as well as for individual flourishing.

Research into hope has had its ebbs and flows historically; for several decades, the research had been clearly in flow, and it is particularly noteworthy that this flourishing of research into hope is interdisciplinary. While once it was primarily theologians and philosophers who thought about hope, in recent decades it has emphatically been psychology—in particular the research tradition of positive psychology—that has been at the forefront of new thinking on hope. But other disciplines, too, such as health care, ecology, political science, and economics increasingly recognize the importance of hope as an important motivation for

human behavior and are contributing to the theory of hope from their unique vantage points.

This volume seeks to contribute to this evolving and multidisciplinary study into the phenomenon of hope in two particular ways. First, recognizing the importance of the centuries-old reflection on the topic, the first part of this book offers historical perspectives on hope. While it looks to the past, this part of the book still offers novel perspectives, as it focuses on often-overlooked theories and developments and challenges established views. Second, this book seeks to document the state of the art of current research into hope, in a number of disciplines, eight in total. Importantly, this volume does not simply present the selected historical and multidisciplinary perspectives as unconnected chapters. Rather, as a result of a productive dialogue among the authors, the volume is a deliberate attempt to overcome inward-looking and reductionist tendencies and to arrive at an integration of the perspectives presented here.

Every book, by necessity, has its limitations—and this volume is no exception. This book presents a Western approach to hope—it deals with the history of Western thinking on hope, and when theological views on hope are discussed, these are Christian theological views. Nevertheless, insofar as hope has been described as springing eternal in the human breast, it is anticipated that many of the lessons drawn from this project will find echoes and parallels across a broad range of cultures and religions.

## Overview of the Volume

This volume has two main parts. The first part focuses on hope in historical perspective, while the second part describes the *status quaestionis* of hope theory in a number of disciplines. The field covered in the first part is vast, reaching back all the way to Pre-Socratic philosophy. It is not the goal of this volume to cover this vast period, or be in any way complete in describing the rich nuances in hope concepts that have been developed. Rather, it is to provide some perspectives on hope that have been developed in different historical eras. This part of the book has five chapters.

In the first chapter, philosopher Scott Gravlee writes about “Hope in Ancient Greek Philosophy.” He notes that while hope was acknowledged as important in ancient Greece, current philosophical investigations into the way it was perceived have been few and far between. In his chapter, Gravlee seeks to contribute to this investigation. With the important myth of Pandora’s jar as a backdrop, he begins with some remarks on Pre-Socratic philosophy. He then goes on to extensively examine Plato’s conceptualization of hope. His main claim in this section is that Plato ultimately holds a *positive* view of hope. Thirdly, he focuses on Aristotle’s rich theory of hope. Taken together, these perspectives show that it would be unjust to overlook the philosophy of hope as developed in ancient Greek philosophy (as is

often done); rather, this rich thinking on hope can be a valuable resource for contemporary perspectives on hope.

The second chapter focuses, as the title indicates, on “Early Christian Thinking on Hope.” The chapter is written by Martin Webber and Kobus Kok, two New Testament scholars; they start out by noting that there is often a division between the research done on the classics and the research on hope in studies of early Christianity. In their chapter, Webber and Kok seek to overcome this division. They do so by developing a “bottom-up” approach; in particular, they focus on the New Testament’s first letter to the Thessalonians (the earliest known New Testament document), in which hope is an important topic. Their investigation of this one particular letter reveals a number of interesting things; what is important in the context of this book is the discovery that the concept of hope found in 1 Thessalonians is not unrelated to accounts of hope in the classical world. Webber and Kok show, for example, that both this letter and the Greco-Roman philosophy of that time had a clear eye for the communal implications of hope, rather than just focusing on the effect of hope on the individual.

Taking a leap from the classical world, the third chapter focuses on “Hope as a Virtue in the Middle Ages.” Written by Andrew Pinent, from the University of Oxford, this chapter examines the integration of hope into virtue ethics during a period in which human aspirations were radically transformed following the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Pinent focuses especially on Thomas Aquinas’ theological account of the virtue of hope, and he seeks to illuminate this account by drawing on novel, contemporary insights from experimental psychology, notably the metaphor of joint attention or second-person relatedness. On this account, God is not just the distant and ultimate object of the virtue of hope, but also what Pinent calls “one’s present co-attending subject.” On this interpretation, there can at least be a tacit awareness of God’s presence in this life, strengthening and encouraging the believer with a foretaste of the promised object of hope. Although God is no longer so widely recognized as fulfilling these roles in modern Western secular societies, Pinent concludes by pointing out that some of the structural patterns of this medieval account of the virtue of hope and its associated passion continue to be highly significant.

The fourth chapter represents another leap, namely into the modern era: it details “Enlightenment Views of Hope” and is written by Claudia Blöser, from the Goethe University, Frankfurt. In this chapter, Blöser describes the thinking on hope by a number of key Enlightenment writers, namely René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch de Spinoza, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. This investigation leads her to a number of important observations. For one thing, she notes that all the Enlightenment thinkers she investigates—with the exception of Kant—treat hope as one of the passions and offer definitions of hope that can be seen as precursors to the contemporary standard account of hope (see Chap. 6).

Kant is the exception: he does not treat hope in the context of empirical psychology, but rather argues for what Blöser calls the *rationality* of hope: the kind of hope that Kant envisages does not require a probability estimate, since it is grounded in the certainty of faith.

The fifth and final chapter in this part of the volume is entitled “Post-Kantian to Postmodern Considerations of (Theological) Hope.” The author, Ronald T. Michener, is a theologian who specializes in postmodern theological perspectives. In his chapter, he starts out by summarizing the Enlightenment project; he sees it primarily as an attempt to detach philosophy (including the philosophy of hope) from its Christian origins. In contemporary postmodern philosophers, he again discerns room for a theologically rooted account of hope. Michener argues that this renewed openness to theology is influenced by three important precursors of postmodern thought, namely Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Gabriel Marcel. He details their (theological) accounts of hope and then proceeds to indicate how they influenced, and are similar to, the accounts of hope offered by three contemporary postmodern thinkers, namely John D. Caputo, Richard Rorty, and James K. A. Smith. Based on this account, Michener argues that the main difference between modern and postmodern accounts of hope is that while modern accounts of hope made claims to neutrality, the postmodern accounts of hope that he outlines recognize the essential situatedness of human hopes, making them *particular*, rather than objective or neutral.

The second part of this volume provides a number of interdisciplinary perspectives on hope. Here, too, a choice is made of a number of disciplinary perspectives on hope—eight in total. These chapters approach hope from the perspectives of philosophy, theology, psychology, economy, conflict studies, health studies, ecology, and development economics.

Chapter 6 presents the first discipline: philosophy. The author, philosopher Michael Milona, discerns two sets of questions that are central to the contemporary philosophy of hope, namely questions concerning the *nature* of hope and questions concerning the *value* of hope. He engages both sets. Concerning the nature of hope, he outlines the current standard account of hope, which contains two necessary conditions, namely (1) for it to denote a desire (people hope *for* something) and (2) for it to be *possible but not certain* (it can neither be a complete certainty nor a complete uncertainty). While presenting the standard account, Milona also describes the various challenges formulated against it by philosophers—he also points to a number of proposed modifications and additions to the standard account. Secondly, he focuses on the value of hope; he describes how some accord instrumental value to hope, whereas others talk about fundamental hopes. Yet others seek to enrich the philosophy of hope by moving beyond mere individual considerations, focusing attention on social and political hopes. There is great diversity in how philosophers talk about the value of hope, Milona notes, concluding that in assessing concrete forms of hope, practical wisdom, as well as interdisciplinary dialogue, is vital.

The next, seventh, chapter, discusses “Hope in Theology.” It is written by David Elliot, who is recognized for his research on hope. The first part of this volume already indicated the extent to which Christian theology contributed to the conceptualization of hope. In his chapter, Elliot delves back into this rich history, with the aim of restating hope as a theological virtue with relevance for our world today. According to him, the Christian virtue of hope provides ultimate meaning and purpose, promising eternal beatitude. Nevertheless, he says, this does not lead to



the degrading of our current life—he points to the medieval saints as well as to Martin Luther King as examples of people who combined a firm belief in the kingdom of heaven with passionate commitment to social justice in the here and now.

The author of the eighth chapter is Anthony Scioli, a clinical psychologist and a leading hope theorist. His chapter, “The Psychology of Hope: A Diagnostic and Prescriptive Account,” is divided into two sections. He begins with a survey of psychological reflections on hope, dating back to 1656. Three historical periods are identified, culminating in the modern science of hope which emerged in the middle of the twentieth century. Scioli reviews the major contributions of psychologists as well as psychiatrists and nursing professionals. He describes various questionnaires developed to measure hope and reviews the tendency in psychology to equate hope with goal attainment. The latter half of his chapter is a critical appraisal of psychologically oriented hope research. Drawing on concepts in the philosophy of science as well as the classic insights of Francis Bacon, Scioli offers some prescriptive suggestions for advancing the science of hope. He cautions that hope, the ultimate prospective emotion, is particularly vulnerable to “myth loading” via cultural and sociopolitical forces. He concludes with a summary of work in progress that is being conducted in his hope lab.

The ninth chapter is entitled “Hope in Economics.” It is written by two researchers connected to the Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organisation, namely Emma Pleeging and Martijn Burger. They note that “hope” has not been a major topic of research in economics, a discipline that has strongly tended toward rationality, perceiving the human being to be a *homo economicus*. However, recent decades have seen the rise of new, heterodox, perspectives on economics; the new discipline of behavioral economics is especially important in this regard. The research done on hope and economics suggests that hope plays an important role in economic life; positive expectations of the future are correlated with increases in innovation, productivity, and entrepreneurship, among others, while a lack of hope is correlated with apathy and myopia. Burger and Pleeging also warn against overly optimistic forms of hope, as they can easily lead to disappointment and reckless behavior. When it comes to the future of hope research in economics, they make a plea for more refined instruments for measuring hope, particularly as it is a useful predictor of future economic behavior.

The following chapter, “Hope During Conflict,” focuses on the role of hope in the relatively new interdisciplinary social science field of “peace and conflict studies.” It is written by Oded Adomi Leshem and Eran Halperin, who both work at the Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Reconciliation Lab, housed at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an example of intractable disputes, they describe the result of a large-scale survey on hope for peace which they devised and carried in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. An important finding is that Palestinians (whose sociopolitical circumstances are hard) have greater hope for peace than Israelis (whose sociopolitical circumstances are rather benign). They also find that those who are more hopeful are more supportive of peacebuilding efforts. When this does in fact lead to the advancement of peace,

hopes will further rise—this then becomes a cyclical process. Based on these findings, they conclude that hope is not just an obvious result of a successful peace process, it is also one of its sources.

Next is the chapter “Hope in Health Care,” written by Erik Olsman, associate professor of chaplaincy studies at the Protestant Theological University, in the Netherlands. He wrote his dissertation on hope in palliative care. His chapter is a synthesis of 73 review studies on hope in health care—this is important, as this chapter provides the first overview of studies made of hope in the context of health care. Olsman goes beyond merely gathering the research: he provides clarity by conceptualizing hope in three ways, namely: (1) as an expectation, (2) as resilience, and (3) as a desire. The chapter highlights the importance of relationships for patients—inspiring relationships with peers can increase their hope, whereas loss in relationships (as well as losses in other areas) negatively impacts hope. What also emerges from the analysis of the 73 review studies is the ethical dilemma between truth and hope: while health care providers want to nurture and maintain a patient’s hope, they also want it to be a realistic hope. Olsman concludes his chapter by suggesting that the ethics of hope should not be limited to this binary contrast between truth and hope. One of his suggestions for future research is not to just focus on the patients’ hope but to include the hope of health care providers as well.

The twelfth chapter is entitled “Ecological Hope,” written by the well-known Christian ecologist Michael Northcott, who is currently guest professor at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven. He starts out by engaging in the debate over the root causes of the ecological crisis. He rejects the common accusation that Christianity is to blame for this crisis, arguing instead that it is the Enlightenment rejection of the agency of nonhuman beings, as well as of ecosystems, that is to blame—consequently, he considers the solution of the ecological crisis to be the rediscovery of agency in those other than humans. He makes the point that Christianity can be of help here; he argues that Christian eschatology, as presented in the Bible and elaborated by later Christian thinkers, espouses a vision of friendship and cooperation between humans and otherkind. Northcott then focuses on some concrete examples of ecological habitat restoration, in which humans and non-humans work together, mirroring and anticipating the vision of “ecological reconciliation” he talked about earlier. Relating to existing research on the connection between hope theory and ecology, he makes the point that these “practices of hope” are important in that they help give shape to a different social imaginary, in which concern for the earth and for otherkind has central roles.

The thirteenth and final chapter is entitled “An Ontology of Human Flourishing: Economic Development and Epistemologies of Faith, Hope, and Love.” It is written by Jan van Vliet, Professor of Economics at Dordt University. In his chapter, he also focuses on the role of hope in behavioral economics, as Pleeging and Burger did in chapter nine; in doing so, Van Vliet focuses particularly on the context of development economics. There, hope can be a vital force for the alleviation of poverty, as the action research of Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo shows, and which van Vliet describes. Van Vliet has long worked on the intersection between Christian theology and economics, and in this chapter, he approaches the topic of hope in development

economics from this perspective. Like Elliot, in his chapter on the theology of hope, van Vliet emphasizes the importance of linking “earthly” hopes to an ultimate horizon. He employs the horizon of Christian eschatology, emphasizing that such a linking is not necessary for there to be passionate concern for the poor nor for involvement in the alleviation of their plight, particularly through the stimulation of ambitious yet reasonable hopes.

## Research Context

This volume is one of the results of the interdisciplinary research project “Driven by Hope,” which has been ongoing since 2016. The goal of this project is threefold: (1) to study the multifaceted phenomenon of hope conceptually, (2) to contribute to the measuring of hope, and (3) to contribute to the growth of healthy, positive hope in diverse and concrete contexts. These goals have been met: the conceptualization of hope has led to the identification of seven dimensions of hope; in measuring these, the *hopebarometer* has been developed, a seven-dimensional measuring instrument, compiled from other, already existing, scales-tests. This hopebarometer has been used since 2016 to measure the hope of the Dutch population every year, up until 2019. During this time, the project was jointly carried out by the Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organisation and the Institute of Leadership and Social Ethics, a research institute of the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit (ETF), Leuven (Belgium), with full funding from the Goldschmeding Foundation for People, Work, and the Economy. Recently, the research has been organized in the Netherlands Hope Research Institute, an independent entity,<sup>1</sup> which will carry this research further.

As editor, I would like to thank first of all the authors for their willingness to commit to this joint project. Most of the authors were able to participate in a “writer’s conference,” which I organized at the ETF in Leuven, Belgium, from June 17 to 18, 2019. During this conference, the participating authors presented drafts of their chapters to each other and we had discussions based on these presentations. This meeting really helped to enrich our understanding of hope and influenced the subsequent chapters, particularly by making them more geared toward interdisciplinarity. The relaxed and summery setting, aided by a guided tour of Leuven and a barbecue, proved particularly enabling in this regard and I want to thank the staff involved at ETF involved for their work in making this conference possible.

I also want to thank the external experts who reviewed chapters for this book, as well as the staff at Springer for their kind and competent work in preparing the volume for publication. Special thanks goes to Kay Caldwell, who provided language editing with her usual skill and dedication, as well as to Cees Tulp, for his involvement in the formatting of the manuscript. Last but not least, I want to express

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<sup>1</sup>See [thehopeproject.nl](http://thehopeproject.nl)

my gratitude to the Goldschmeding Foundation for People, Work, and the Economy for carrying the publication costs for this Open Access publication.

It is my hope that, through the historical and multidisciplinary perspectives offered here, this book will contribute to the further understanding of hope as an essential human capacity, with the possibility of transforming our human societies.

Leuven, Belgium  
February 2020

Steven C. van den Heuvel

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Jan van Vliet

# Editor and Contributors

## About the Editor

**Steven C. van den Heuvel** (Ph.D.) is Associate Professor in the Department of Systematic Theology at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit (ETF), Leuven (Belgium), as well as Extraordinary Researcher of the Faculty of Theology at North-West University, South Africa. He first studied Pastoral Ministry at the Christelijke Hogeschool Ede, the Netherlands. He then went on to study Theology and Religious Studies at the ETF, receiving his Th.M., in 2010, followed by his Ph.D. in 2015, as part of a joint doctorate with the Theologische Universiteit Kampen, the Netherlands. His dissertation was entitled *Bonhoeffer's Christocentric Theology and Fundamental Issues in Environmental Ethics* (Wipf and Stock 2017). Since then he has co-edited and contributed to books about leadership as well as social ethics, including *The Challenges of Moral Leadership* (Peeters 2016), *The End of Leadership? Leadership and Authority at Crossroads* (Peeters 2017), *Increasing Diversity: Loss of Control of Adaptive Identity Construction?* (Peeters 2018), *Theological Ethics and Moral Value Phenomena: The Experience of Values* (Routledge 2018), *Driven by Hope: Economics and Theology in Dialogue* (Peeters 2018), and *Leading in a VUCA-World: Integrating Leadership, Discernment and Spirituality* (Springer 2019). In addition, he has published articles in various journals and regularly presents papers at international academic conferences.

## List of Contributors

**Claudia Blöser, Ph.D.** Goethe University Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany

**Martijn J. Burger, Ph.D.** Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organisation, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Department of Applied Economics, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

**David Elliot, Ph.D.** Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, USA  
Von Hügel Institute at St Edmund's College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

**G. Scott Gravlee, Ph.D.** University of Mount Union, Alliance, OH, USA

**Eran Halperin, Ph.D.** Psychology Department, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

**Steven C. van den Heuvel, Ph.D.** Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

**Jacobus (Kobus) Kok, Ph.D.** Research Center for Early Christianity, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

**Oded Adomi Leshem, Ph.D.** Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel  
Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Reconciliation Lab, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

**Ronald T. Michener, Ph.D.** Department of Systematic Theology, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

**Michael Milona, Ph.D.** Ryerson University, Toronto, ON, Canada

**Michael Northcott, Ph.D.** Religion and Ecology at the Indonesian Consortium of Religious Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

**Erik Olsman, Ph.D.** Section of Spiritual Care & Chaplaincy Studies, Department of Practices, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, The Netherlands

**Andrew Pinsent, Ph.D.** Faculty of Theology and Religion, Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

**Emma Pleeging, Ph.D.** Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organisation, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

**Anthony Scioli, Ph.D.** University System of New Hampshire's Keene State College, Concord, NH, USA  
University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI, USA

**Jan van Vliet, Ph.D.** Dordt University in Sioux Center, Sioux Center, IA, USA

**Martin I. Webber, Ph.D.** Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium  
Research Associate at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa



**Part I**  
**Historical Perspectives on Hope**

# Chapter 1

## Hope in Ancient Greek Philosophy



G. Scott Gravlee

*Because of the things we have enunciated, Simmias, one must make every effort to share in virtue and wisdom in one's life, for the reward is beautiful and the hope is great.—Plato, Phaedo 114c–d*

*A coward is a pessimistic sort of fellow, for he fears everything. But a courageous man is the very opposite, because confidence implies hopefulness.—Aristotle, NE 3.7, 1116a3*

**Abstract** This chapter aims to illuminate ways in which hope was significant in the philosophy of classical Greece. Although ancient Greek philosophies contain few dedicated and systematic expositions on the nature of hope, they nevertheless include important remarks relating hope to the good life, to reason and deliberation, and to psychological phenomena such as memory, imagination, fear, motivation, and pleasure. After an introductory discussion of Hesiod and Heraclitus, the chapter focuses on Plato and Aristotle. Consideration is given both to Plato's direct comments on hope and to the narrative contexts of his dialogues, with analysis of Plato's positive and negative representations of hope, hope's relationship to reason, and Plato's more psychological approach in the *Philebus*, where hope finds a place among memory, recollection, pleasure, and pain. The chapter then reviews Aristotle's discussions of confidence, hope, and courage, observing that although Aristotle does not mention hope as a virtue, he does note its importance to human agency and deliberation and as a foundation for the further development of virtue. The chapter concludes that discussions surrounding hope in ancient Greek philosophy are rich and challenging and can serve as a lively stimulus to further exploration of the concept of hope.

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G. S. Gravlee (✉)

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Mount Union, Alliance, OH, USA

e-mail: [gravlegs@mountunion.edu](mailto:gravlegs@mountunion.edu)

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S. C. van den Heuvel (ed.), *Historical and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9_1)

## 1.1 Introduction

Acknowledgement of the importance of hope—and its ability to both comfort and betray us—can be found in the earliest Greek literature. However, while there is a growing body of scholarship on hope that draws from classical Greek literary, artistic, and historical sources (Caston and Kaster 2016; Chaniotis 2012; Kazantzidis and Spatharas 2018), scholarship on hope that engages with ancient Greek philosophical texts has been much less extensive. In this chapter, I aim to illuminate some ways in which hope was significant in the philosophical work of classical Greece. The philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and others emerged amid a robust ancient Greek concern with hope, and so they share some of the traditionally ambivalent Greek views on the value of hope. But these philosophical approaches also add something new. Although they provide us with few dedicated and systematic expositions on the nature of hope and its place in a good human life, these philosophies nevertheless offer important steps towards an increasingly sophisticated set of views relating hope to the good life, to reason, and to psychological phenomena such as memory, imagination, fear, motivation, and pleasure.

## 1.2 Early Greek Literature and Presocratic Philosophy

To begin, it will be helpful to recognize the complex context in which Greek philosophy comes to the topic of hope. Perhaps the best known of the early Greek references to hope is found in the story of Pandora, as told by Hesiod in *Works and Days* (lines 50–105; see also *Theogony*, lines 565–615). After Pandora’s jar is opened, a host of evils escape, with only Ἐλπίς remaining.<sup>1</sup> Hesiod’s characterization of Ἐλπίς is notoriously open to interpretation. It is unclear whether the presence of hope in the jar implies that it is also an evil, or whether the fact that it remains behind suggests it was meant to be a good, a consolation for the accompanying evils. Earlier in the story, Zeus describes his gift broadly as “an affliction in which they will all delight as they embrace their own misfortune” (57–58, West trans. 1988)—a common critique of hope, and an expression that captures the ambiguities at the core of the story. Both *Works and Days* and the *Theogony* version of the story illuminate connections between suffering and comfort, gain and loss, and in this sense the central symbols of the myth—including Ἐλπίς—are likely to be deliberately ambiguous.

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<sup>1</sup>The language itself adds complexity to the Greek history of hope. The Greek term typically translated as *hope* is ἔλπις (*elpis*). However, ἔλπις by itself often indicates not a hope for good, but simply *expectation* or *anticipation*, which could be for either good or evil (Plato, *Laws* 644c–d; see also Cairns (2016, pp. 17–24); Kazantzidis and Spatharas (2018, pp. 5–7)). When referring specifically to hope, classical Greek writers sometimes employ modifications such as εὐέλπις (hopeful) or ἔλπις ἀγαθῆ (good hope), but sometimes the meaning must be taken from the context.

This ambiguity or duality is characteristic of many references to hope in early Greek stories and poetry (Cairns 2016; Day 1991). Among the playwrights, Sophocles is often cited: “Wandering hope brings help to many men, but others she tricks” (*Antigone* 616, Wyckoff trans., in Grene and Lattimore 1954). Even Solon’s *Prayer to the Muses* 33–36, which is generally considered a warning against “empty” or “light-weight” hopes, permits the metaphor of lightness to also function as a *lightening*, in the positive sense of alleviating a burden. As this suggests, the relief and comfort of hope is often paired in Greek literature with its unreliability. So although Bacchylides of Ceos in his *Olympian Ode for Hieron—Chariot Race* calls hope “treacherous,” he also advises us to “have two predictions in hand” when looking to the future (lines 75, 78–81, Lattimore trans. 1960). Not only should we be wary of hope’s allure and unpredictability, and so expect to live only one more day, but we should at the same time foster the thought of prospering for many more years.

This ambivalence surrounding hope in early Greek literature corresponds to themes in the philosophy of Heraclitus, the Presocratic thinker most well-known for his embrace of paradox and opposition. Heraclitus uses the term ἐλπίς in two fragments:

Unless he hopes for the unhoped for [ἐλπῆται ἀνέλπιστον], he will not find it, since it is not to be hunted out and is impassable. (22B18)

Things unexpected [οὐκ ἔλπονται] and unthought of await humans when they die. (22B27, McKirahan trans., in Curd 2011)

Post has argued that these two fragments are a reflection of Heraclitus’ overall philosophy, in which hope plays a “central role” (2009, p. 229).<sup>2</sup> The significance of hope in Heraclitus has two aspects. First, many of the Heraclitean paradoxes revolve around a tension between hiddenness and revelation that parallels our experience of hopefulness. Hope arises in situations where we do not know what will happen, and yet hope is not simply ignorance. To hope is to not know but to act as if one knew, to be motivated or sustained by an imagined knowing of an unknowable future, or to have what Pettit calls “cognitive resolve” in the face of uncertainty (2004, p. 159). This dual nature of hope, which sits between the known and the unknown, mirrors Heraclitus’ claim that the world, like a harmony, is “composed of things at variance” (B8), and it connects back to themes which permeate the Pandora story. Pandora’s jar itself is a mechanism for concealment and subsequent disclosure. Hope almost reveals itself along with the other contents of the jar, but ultimately remains hidden under the edge of the lid. Hope is like an oracle (and like the sayings of Heraclitus), which “neither speaks nor conceals but gives a sign” (B93). This half-hidden aspect of hope creates curiosity and attraction, which can mislead, but which can also serve as important principles of human motivation.

<sup>2</sup>As McKirahan’s mixed translations suggest, whether ἐλπίς in these fragments signifies hope or mere expectation is a matter of some debate (Wheelwright 1959, pp. 131–132, 137–138; Kahn 1979, pp. 210–211; Freeman 1948). Post provides a broad framework for understanding ἐλπίς here as hope, and his approach introduces important themes, including not only the dual nature of hope, but also the relation of hope to rationality, trust, motivation, and the afterlife.

Second, Post argues that Heraclitus employs a methodology of hope. B18 states that in order to discover what is hidden we must “hope for the unhoped for.” But how is this possible? How can we hope to understand the workings of nature, which “loves to hide” (B123), and the mysteries that follow death, which are “unexpected and unthought of” (B27)? If we would follow the advice of Democritus, one of the few other Presocratic philosophers who directly addresses ἐλπίς, we would hope only for what seems rational or understandable, for “The hopes of right-thinking men are attainable, but those of the unintelligent are impossible” (68B58, Freeman trans. 1948; see also B185, B292). Heraclitus takes a different tack. We are to seek out that which is unforeseen and unattainable, and so laudable hope is not connected to rationality. Instead, Post argues, hope is connected to trust. As Heraclitus points out, “Divine things for the most part escape recognition because of ἀπιστίη [‘unbelief’, McKirahan; ‘lack of trust’, Freeman]” (B86). Instead of opening ourselves to the “common” principle that explains and governs the world, we live as if we had our “own private understanding” (B2; see also B89), closing ourselves off from the world and returning to our own familiar thoughts. We will never find the unexpected unless we hope for it (B18), trusting in an outcome and in possibilities we cannot foresee and that are unfamiliar.<sup>3</sup> In this way, hope and trust work together to enable us to expect the unexpected (B18), and to open us to a revelation of the divine (B86). Among the most unexpected and divine mysteries of human existence is death and the potential afterlife (B27), which, as Post states, is “an ultimate object for hope” (2009, p. 233), and which we will see is also an important locus for hope in Plato.

### 1.3 Plato

The dramatic form of Plato’s dialogues suggests two complementary approaches to understanding Plato’s views on hope. First, we can identify texts where Plato directly comments on hope. In addition to a number of brief passages in the *Laws* and elsewhere, Plato provides a more extended account in the *Philebus*, where he examines hope as a kind of pleasure and links it to memory and imagination. Second, the narrative contexts in which Plato’s philosophical expositions are embedded mean that a more complete understanding of Plato’s views will require us to look at how he uses the concept of hope in the dramatic contexts of his dialogues.

Although I will ultimately argue that Plato holds a positive view of hope, we should first recognize where Plato was also part of the more skeptical or ambivalent Greek tradition. In the *Timaeus* creation story, for example, Plato describes ἐλπίς as having been placed together with passion (θυμός: anger, spiritedness) in the trunk of the human body, both thereby being physically separated from human reason, but

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<sup>3</sup>For a more recent discussion of trust and openness in relation to hope, see Webb (2013, esp. pp. 399–401).

each being distant from reason in opposite ways (69d–e). While passion (θυμός) is stubborn and hard to sway, an emotional state which isolates us from outside influences, hopes are easily influenced (“easily led astray”, 69d) and involve an emotional investment in the future which leaves us susceptible to manipulation.<sup>4</sup> In the *Laws*, Plato likewise associates hope with an intellectual fault, pairing it with opinion (ἐλπίδων καὶ δόξης, 864b), linking them together with ignorance (863b–c), and describing them as unreliable guides regarding the good—both ἐλπίς and δόξα aim at the good, but miss.<sup>5</sup> Thus, hope may lead people to act wrongly when they pursue something that is falsely thought to be good. Such ignorance (like pleasure and passion also) “often prompts every man to take the opposite course to the one . . . which he *really* wishes to take” (863e, Saunders’ emphasis, in Cooper 1997).<sup>6</sup>

As Plato states earlier in the *Laws* (863b–d), ignorance varies in its seriousness. As forms of ignorance, so also do hopes and opinions. At one end of the spectrum, hope misdirects our efforts, but does not corrupt our character or threaten the social order—as in the case of Socrates himself, who was deceived by the “wonderful hope [θαυμαστῆς ἐλπίδος]” he had concerning the writings of Anaxagoras (*Phaedo* 98b). In other cases, hope accompanies a confidence which exacerbates an arrogant character (*Laws* 649b). When this is joined with the power to carry out one’s intentions, the faults of hope enter the most serious category, where ignorance fueled by “impractical expectations [ἀμηχάνου ἐλπίδος]” (*Republic* 494c) becomes a source of “serious and barbarous wrongdoing” (*Laws* 863c). Plato notes that “it is among these men that we find the ones who do the greatest evils to cities and individuals” (*Republic* 495a).

Foolish and unrealistic hopes can lead to harmful ambitions, but they can lead to destructive behavior in the opposite way as well—through the nurture of idleness and apathy. To illustrate this, Plato draws a parallel between political and medical hopes. Citizens who are not adequately educated or governed tend to adopt laws which repeatedly need to be amended. Because they avoid addressing the need for more fundamental political improvements, such citizens,

live like those sick people who, through licentiousness, aren’t willing to abandon their harmful way of life. . . . Their medical treatment achieves nothing, except that their illness becomes worse and more complicated, and they’re always hoping [ἐλπίζοντες] that someone will recommend some new medicine to cure them. (*Republic* 425e–426a)

Such hopes support unsustainable behavior which may be perilous in both medical and political contexts.

<sup>4</sup>Translations of Plato will follow those in Cooper (1997), with occasional modifications.

<sup>5</sup>The association of hope with passion and with opinion may reflect Greek ambivalence on another issue: whether hope is more like an emotion or a cognitive state. On this issue, see the Introductory to Kazantzidis and Spatharas (2018), and Notes 10 and 15 below.

<sup>6</sup>Martin, commenting on Groopman (2003), likewise identifies false hope as that which “interferes with the hopeful person’s engagement with and ability to pursue her own values” (2008, p. 50).

### 1.3.1 Building a Positive Platonic View of Hope

One common feature among Plato's negative portrayals of hope is its association with ignorance or a lack of reason. But of course not all hopes are false or irrational, and there are a number of places where Plato closely connects hope with rational justification and philosophical argument. This is especially evident in the narrative contexts of the *Apology* and the *Phaedo*.

In his final *Apology* speech, between the initial exhortation to “reflect in this way, too, that there is good hope [πολλὴ ἐλπίς] that death is a blessing” (40c), and the concluding encouragement to the jury to “be of good hope [εὐέλπιδας] as regards death” (41c), Socrates presents an argument specifically intended to show that these hopes are rational. For our purposes, the persuasiveness of the argument itself is not of primary importance. Indeed, any doubt we might have about the argument is integral to the conclusion that we can *hope* (but not be certain, 42a) that the afterlife is good. What is important is that Socrates puts forward an argument at all, that his hopefulness is given rational justification. We have here a picture quite different from the *Timaeus*. Hope in the *Apology* is not simply wishful thinking or an irrational emotion, but it is the result of thoughtful reflection—and so it appears that the boundary between hope and reason, which in the *Timaeus* was set by the gods who made us, is not so fixed after all.<sup>7</sup>

Even for those familiar with the *Phaedo*, it may be useful to demonstrate the extent to which hope permeates the dialogue and how closely it is connected with reason and argument. Socrates opens the *Phaedo*'s “apology” (or defense) as follows:

[L]et me try to make my defense [ἀπολογήσασθαι] to you more convincing than it was to the jury. . . . Be assured that, as it is, I expect [ἐλπίζω] to join the company of good men. This last I would not altogether insist on, but if I insist on anything at all in these matters, it is that I shall come to gods who are very good masters. That is why I am not so resentful, because I have good hope [εὐελπίς] that some future awaits men after death. (63b–c)

And soon after:

I want to make my argument before you, my judges, as to why I think that a man who has truly spent his life in philosophy is probably right to be of good cheer in the face of death and to be very hopeful [εὐελπίς] that after death he will attain the greatest blessings yonder. (63e–64a)

The tone here is one of characteristically Socratic caution regarding philosophical matters. Socrates claims no knowledge, and he will not insist that what he says is true or certain, but he will give reasons (a “defense”, an “argument”) for his hopes. The first set of reasons is intended to show that the body is a hindrance to knowledge acquisition and that therefore the philosopher should look forward to the liberation

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<sup>7</sup>The other consideration given at the end of the *Apology*, Socrates' observation that his divine sign has not opposed his actions in court (40a–c), is not so much a reasoned argument as it is an expression of trust. Indirectly, this trust provides another kind of reason to hope (as in Meirav 2009).

of the soul from the body. In concluding these arguments, Socrates again uses the language of hope and links it to his argument:

It seems likely that we shall, only then, when we are dead, attain that which we desire and of which we claim to be lovers, namely, wisdom, as our argument shows. . . . And if this is true . . . there is good hope [πολλή ἐλπίς] that on arriving where I am going, if anywhere, I shall acquire what has been our chief preoccupation in our past life, so that the journey now ordered for me is full of good hope [ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος]. (66e–67c)

The second set of reasons Socrates gives for being hopeful in the *Phaedo* consists of the series of arguments for the immortality of the soul that form the central part of the dialogue (70c–107a). Following Socrates’s lead, Cebes phrases the goal of these arguments in terms of hope:

If indeed [the soul] gathered itself together and existed by itself . . . there would then be much good hope [πολλή ἐλπίς καὶ καλή], Socrates, that what you say is true; but this requires a good deal of persuasive argument [παραμυθίας] and trust [πίστεως]. (70a–b)

Cebes’s claim, confirmed by Socrates, that holding a philosophical hope for the survival of the soul will require “a good deal” of persuasion and reassurance,<sup>8</sup> contrasts with Plato’s characterization in the *Timaeus* of hope as “easily led” into place. These philosophical hopes require more persuasion, are more closely connected with reason, and are therefore more stable than the hopes described in the *Timaeus*. At the conclusion of Socrates’s second set of arguments, Cebes does indeed say that he is persuaded, but Simmias’s more cautious response (107a–b), commended by Socrates, reminds the reader that Plato does not intend the arguments in the *Phaedo* to produce certainty, but to provide a rational foundation for a philosophical hope.

With these things in mind, let us return to the question of the evaluation of hope. We saw earlier that one feature of Plato’s critique of hope was an emphasis on its irrationality. Yet now we have seen that Plato closely ties Socratic philosophical hopes to rational argument. Since Socrates functions in the *Apology* and the *Phaedo* as a positive model of hopefulness, reason, and moral integrity (*Phaedo* 118a), we might conclude that Plato, like Democritus, considers hope to be commendable or virtuous—a risk worth taking (*Phaedo* 114c–d)—when the outcome is probable or likely, as determined by a process of philosophical justification. Perhaps it is only unlikely hopes that should be discouraged, since they will be virtuous neither intellectually nor (recalling the arrogance and licentiousness of *Republic* 494c and 426a) from the standpoint of practical action.

Promising as it seems, this approach will not be enough to characterize positive hope in Plato. This is because there are passages in which Plato makes positive mention of *desperate* hopes, that is, hopes which are irrational in the sense that they are quite unlikely to be fulfilled. In the *Laws*, for example, Plato describes the

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<sup>8</sup>The Greek terms παραμυθίας and πίστεως have a range of overlapping meanings which can include reassurance, encouragement, and explanation. On the significance of trust (πίστις) in the *Phaedo*, see Miller (2015).



response of the Athenians when they found themselves in a desperate military situation during the Persian invasions:

No one, they thought, would come to help them. They remembered the previous attack . . . no one had assisted the Athenians then. . . . [and] they expected [προσεδόκων] the same thing to happen this time. . . . They could think of only one means of salvation, and it was a thin and desperate one; but there was simply no other. Their minds went back to the previous occasion, and they reflected how the victory they won in battle had been gained in equally desperate circumstances. Sustained by this hope [ἐλπίδος], they began to recognize that no one but they themselves and their gods could provide a way out of their difficulties. All this [together with the fears that coexisted with this hope] inspired them with a spirit of solidarity. (*Laws* 699a–c)

Here, ἐλπίδος (in contrast to προσεδόκων) clearly marks a desire for an *unlikely* future good. And yet, Plato suggests, this desperate hope played a positive role in helping to sustain the Athenians and inspire them to action. Thus, although desperate hopes are likely to be false or misleading, such hopes are sometimes fulfilled (as on the “previous occasion” here), and even if they are not, they still may have beneficial psychological and practical effects.

Desperate hopes can be held not only in the context of battle, but also, and perhaps more importantly for Plato, in the context of philosophical discourse. At *Republic* 453d, responding to Glaucon’s request to explain the social arrangements of the model city, Socrates compares this daunting task to the predicament of Arion, who despite a similarly daunting situation was rescued from the sea, according to Herodotus, by a dolphin: “Then we must swim too, and try to save ourselves from the sea of argument, hoping [ἐλπίζοντας] that a dolphin will pick us up or that we’ll be rescued by some other desperate means.” Socrates here encourages his friends to engage in the difficult tasks of philosophy with an attitude of perseverance and hope. As in the *Laws* passage above, Plato indicates that even desperate hope can have a positive value. It spurs us on to challenging philosophical work which we might otherwise avoid out of a sense of philosophical despair.<sup>9</sup>

In both the *Laws* and *Republic* passages, the function of desperate hopes is a practical or moral one. Such hopes are justified not by the probability of their fulfillment, but by the effect on the ones hoping. Unlike the hopes of the licentious medical patient (*Republic* 425e–426a), these hopes motivate the agent to act courageously.

So, where do we stand? The positive role of desperate hopes should not lead us to conclude that reason is unimportant. Rather, we should recognize that reason plays multiple roles in the formation and justification of hopes, and that assessing the likelihood of realizing the object of hope is only one of these. Indeed, more important to Plato may be a second, broader, role for reason, that of helping us to

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<sup>9</sup>See also *Meno* 86b–c. Although hope is not mentioned explicitly in the *Meno*, it is clear that Socrates is arguing against epistemological despair and in favor of a philosophical hope the positive value of which comes primarily from its effect on the agent’s moral character and from its ability to motivate us to action—we will be “braver and less idle” (*Meno* 86b). An appeal to pragmatic benefit appears also in Plato’s approach to trust in the *Phaedo* (Miller 2015, pp. 163–170).

form the aims of our hopes. Although in a sense such aims are determined by desires, Plato argues that these desires should be guided by a reason that “has calculated about better and worse” (*Republic* 441c; see also 441e, 442c; *Meno* 77b–78b).<sup>10</sup> My suggestion, then, is that Plato’s texts provide us with three components relevant to the evaluation of hope, the first two of which reflect the two roles of reason just mentioned:

1. The predictive rationality of the hope (its probability or attainability)
2. The moral rationality of the hope (its integration into philosophically justifiable aims related to the good; its metaphorical “direction”)
3. The motivational power of the hope (its ability to sustain us and spur us to action).

Indeed, if we look more carefully at several of the passages where Plato critiques hope, we find that the missing rationality is not only of the first “predictive” kind, but is often more fundamentally of the second “moral” kind. So in the *Timaeus* (69d–e), pleasures and pains are criticized for the direction in which they move us, tempting us towards evil or causing us to flee what is good. That hopes are “easily led astray” (69d) is also a directional metaphor, naturally understood to mean that our hopes are easily influenced to aim at the wrong objectives. The *Laws* passage (863b–864b) also places emphasis on direction. Hope and opinion miss their aim at the good not only because they may aim too high (at something unattainable), but also because they are not aimed in the direction of the good in the first place (863e, 864b). Hoping well is not only about whether or not the hope is likely to be fulfilled. It is also about whether or not the hope is directed towards a good or worthy aim. Indeed, the latter is likely to be of more concern to Plato than the former, inasmuch as he consistently emphasizes the importance of moral character over concerns about external goods or outcomes. As Plato argues extensively in the *Republic* (Books 2–4), it is better to be just than to be unjust, even if the practical or external outcome does not reflect the goodness of one’s character. It seems, therefore, that Plato would be more concerned about a poorly directed hope than about an unlikely hope. Indeed, in the *Republic* even reason itself is judged by Plato to be “either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned” (518e–519a).

Another way to conceptualize the “direction” of one’s hopes is to talk in terms of what one desires or loves. What we love affects what we hope for. Plato links hope and love together in the *Phaedo*, where we are reminded that the philosopher is a lover of wisdom who, like other lovers, orients their hopes towards the object of their love:

Many men, at the death of their lovers, wives or sons, were willing to go to the underworld, driven by the hope [ἐλπίδος] of seeing there those for whose company they longed, and being with them. Will then a true lover of wisdom, who has a similar hope [ἐλπίδα] and knows that he will never find it to any extent except in Hades, be resentful of dying and not gladly undertake the journey thither? (*Phaedo* 68a)

<sup>10</sup>Kahn (1987) argues that reason itself incorporates a desiderative aspect. Compare Cairns’ observation that opinion (δόξα) has an affective aspect (2020, p. 20).

Love not only provides direction here, but it also works together with hope to motivate action. The lover is “driven” or carried by their hopes to seek that which they love—in the case of a philosopher, to seek wisdom, or a vision of Forms (*Symposium* 210d–212b). As Aristophanes concludes in his *Symposium* speech, in moving the lover in the direction of the beloved, with the aim of uniting them together, “Love promises the greatest hope of all [ἐλπίδας μεγίστας]” (193d).

As we have seen in this section, philosophical hope is tied to a rational process of determining what is likely and of discovering the good, and it is tied to the motivation and aims of a lover of wisdom. This is underscored by Plato’s consistent portrayal of Socrates as a hopeful figure (*Euthyphro* 15e–16a; *Phaedo* 98b; *Republic* 453d; *Philebus* 61b).<sup>11</sup> Hope and hopefulness are characteristic of the Socratic practice of philosophy, and they are central to the character of the Socratic philosopher, and to Socrates in particular. In these ways, the hopes expressed by Socrates in the *Apology* and the *Phaedo* are “fundamental hopes” in the sense put forward by Blöser and Stahl (2017)—they are constitutive of the practical identity of the one hoping, such that “losing hope would require giving up important aspects of their identities” (p. 346).

The ancient Greek approach to hope was traditionally cautious. However, although Plato does voice concerns about hope, his overall attitude towards hope is positive. Hope is built into Plato’s positive portrayal of a life of philosophy. What might account for this shift in attitude? One important consideration relates to the trustworthiness of what Meirav (2009) identifies as “external factors” that distinguish hope from despair. More archaic Greek frameworks often characterized these external factors (typically the gods or fate) as unknowable or uncontrollable, and as Cairns notes, this “shared outlook that emphasized the limitations of human beings’ abilities to influence their own lives for the better” contributes to a “broadly pessimistic assessment of *elpis*” (2016, p. 43; see also p. 39). In contrast, Plato placed more emphasis on the intrinsic rewards of human virtue, and where he did not, he is more trusting of external influences on human affairs. So, as Socrates argues in the *Apology*, a good person cannot be harmed in the ways that matter most (30c–d, 41c–d), and the benefits of being just in the *Republic* are defined primarily intrinsically (444d–445b). In this sense, external factors play less of a role in the good human life. Yet even when our well-being is impacted by external factors, these are regularly characterized as broadly trustworthy. So, in the *Republic*, Plato re-conceptualizes traditionally capricious deities as good and unchanging (379a ff.), and in the *Apology* Socrates characterizes the gods as “upright” and “true judges” (41a; see also 41d; *Phaedo* 63b–c; *Philebus* 40b). Besides the gods, Plato discusses a second external locus of trust: reason itself (*Phaedo* 89c–91c).<sup>12</sup> When arguments

<sup>11</sup>Forte, commenting on *Philebus* 61b, also notes that, “Plato’s intention is for Socrates to serve as an example of true hope” and that “the life of philosophy is one of true, pure hopes” (2016, p. 290, 293).

<sup>12</sup>Carpenter (2006) argues for the fusion of these two loci of trust, noting that Plato’s view of god is highly rationalist in nature, roughly equivalent to mind or intellect (*Philebus* 28d–30d).

appear to mislead or contradict, Socrates notes, people are tempted to believe that, “there is no soundness or reliability” in them (*Phaedo* 90c). In contrast, Socrates argues that we “should not allow into our minds the conviction that argumentation has nothing sound about it.” Instead, we should continue to trust in reason and move forward, believing “that it is we who are not yet sound and that we must take courage and be eager to attain soundness” (90d–e).<sup>13</sup> Thus, Plato is able to have a more positive attitude towards philosophical hopes, to the extent that they are entrusted to the integrity of the philosopher’s own virtue, to the fair oversight of just and reasonable gods, and to the ultimate reliability of reason itself.

### 1.3.2 *Plato’s Psychology of Hope*

Besides these evaluative attitudes towards hope, Plato also provides the beginnings of a “psychology” of hope, situating hope within a broader set of theories about the soul (*psychê*) and its activity. Plato’s most extensive direct discussion of hope along these lines is found in the *Philebus*. Here, Plato considers the relative value of a life of reasoning and understanding on the one hand, and a life of pleasure on the other, ultimately critiquing the claim that pleasure is the highest good. Hope in the *Philebus* finds itself in the midst of a host of related phenomena, including pleasure and pain, sensation and perception, memory, despair, and desire, and this complex context enriches the ancient Greek conception of hope.<sup>14</sup>

The relevant set of claims in the *Philebus* is as follows: Pain is the disruption of a creature’s natural harmony or balance, often described as a process of emptying. Pleasure then is the corresponding restoration or filling (31d). Examples of pain include hunger, thirst, and the effects of extreme heat and cold (31e–32a), while pleasures are those processes (eating, drinking, cooling down, warming up) that restore an organism’s balance. However, there is a more complex kind of pleasure: *Hopes*, Plato says, are pleasures that occur even though the relevant processes of restoration or filling have not yet happened. That is, hopes are pleasant even when they are not yet fulfilled. As Socrates paradoxically puts it, “the hope before the actual pleasure will be pleasant [πρὸ τῶν ἡδέων ἐπιζόμενον ἡδύ]” (32c).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>For further discussion of this *Phaedo* passage, see Miller (2015). For a more general discussion of the connection between trust and hope, see McGeer (2008).

<sup>14</sup>I discuss in this section aspects of the psychology of hope in the *Philebus*, without further discussion of the evaluation of hopes, for which see, e.g., Frede (1985, esp. pp. 178–179), who argues that hopes can be evaluated from both an “intentional” standpoint (based on what we are hoping for) and from a “propositional” standpoint (as being true or false).

<sup>15</sup>Compare Philo of Alexandria (d. ca. 50 CE): “hope is . . . a joy before a joy” (*QG* 1.79). Kazantzidis and Spatharas (2018, pp. 11–14) include this Philo passage as evidence for a contrast between Stoic accounts of hope as an emotion (or a “preliminary” emotion, *προπάθεια*) and the more cognitive accounts of hope found in Aristotle and in Plato’s *Laws*.

Because hopes are pleasant independently of the physical process of restoration, hopes must be pleasures “that the soul experiences by itself, without the body” (32c). Although all pleasures ultimately occur in the soul (35d), Plato makes a distinction between pleasures that *originate* in the body and are transmitted via perception to the soul, and pleasures that originate in the soul itself (Hackforth 1958, p. 61, 112; Frede 1992, p. 441). A pleasure such as hope that originates in the soul “depends entirely on memory” (33c), which is a “preservation of perception” (34a). The idea here is that, after memory preserves an initial perception, the soul, by recollecting (ἀναμνησκῶ) what has been preserved, is able to reproduce that perception in the soul, even though the body is not currently undergoing any such experience. In this way, the recollected memory of a previous perception of filling (pleasure) is able to produce in us a current experience of pleasure, even when our body is not currently being filled. This is how hopes can be pleasant even when they have not been fulfilled (compare also Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.11, 1370a27–b27).

Memory is a key aspect of Plato’s psychology of hope. Besides explaining the pleasure of hopes, memory also *directs* hopes (and in fact all desires as well, 35d). For Plato, desires are always directed at a remembered experience of filling, a past point of “contact” with what would restore our current emptiness (35b–c). As Frede states it, specific desires such as thirst are possible only because we have a “memory of the previous experience of fulfillment” (1985, p. 164). This creates a puzzle, which Plato raises but does not resolve, about how people can desire or hope for things they have never experienced. Plato appears to deny that such hope is possible (35a). In explaining this, Frede provides the example of a newborn infant, who “cannot distinguish between hunger and stomach-pain,” suggesting that a newborn with such perceptions cannot have a directed desire to eat food or to be given medicine, because he does not have the past experience to “know what he needs” (1985, p. 164). Without memory, the infant does not know what to hope for.

Aside from the case of the infant, Plato’s view here might seem implausible. Clearly, people do in fact hope for things they have never experienced. Indeed, one might think that Plato would have been better served by connecting hopes more generally to imagination, rather than specifically to memory, since, as Day notes, “the object of . . . hope is sometimes something which is wholly imaginary, the like of which [the person hoping] has never perceived before” (1969, p. 95) Day (1969).

In Plato’s defense, several things might be said. First, it seems that what is required in order to lend direction to our hopes is simply that we have a memory that is relevantly *similar* to what we currently hope for. To use one of Plato’s own examples, the Athenians desperately hoping for victory in the *Laws* remembered how the previous victory “had been gained in equally desperate circumstances” (699b). Obviously, the Athenians could not have a memory of winning *this* battle, but they could have a memory of a previous victory in relevantly similar circumstances. Second, the Athenians need not have been personally present at the previous victory in order to have a memory of it. This is because desires and hopes can be conveyed to someone by another person, and memories can be socialized through storytelling, histories, and mythologies. Plato acknowledges this when he writes in the *Laws* of “the hopes [ἐλπίσιν] that every man should live by,” exhorting each

person to “remember all this advice and never spare any effort to recall it vividly to his own mind and that of others” (732c–d; see also *Phaedo* 66b). Plato grants here that we can recall memories to the minds of others, that memory is not only an individual effort but is the responsibility of the community (and that part of what we should remember is to be hopeful). Thus, an individual can draw from cultural or social memory in order to create and direct a hope for something they themselves have never directly experienced.<sup>16</sup> This social approach to memory can help to explain a number of hopes expressed in the Platonic dialogues, including especially the hopes Socrates expresses regarding the afterlife, where Plato regularly uses mythology and storytelling as a way of recalling social or cultural memories in order to ground and direct hopes.<sup>17</sup> In some cases, such as the myth of Er (*Republic* 614b–621d), the narratives of the afterlife which Socrates offers are even reputed to be based on the memories of a specific person, socialized or made collective by their retelling.<sup>18</sup>

Such stories, when they are presented as memories, have the advantage of being able to sustain hope better than stories presented as mere imagination or conjecture. This is because when we view an object of hope as merely imaginative or conjectural, our sense of the *possibility* of fulfillment will be tenuous, and what would otherwise be a hope is likely to remain a mere wish or desire. However, if we think of a story as a memory, then such a wish can more easily be transformed into a hope, because our sense of what is possible is buoyed by the belief that *it has happened before*. In the case of the Athenians at *Laws* 699, it is the memory of previous victory in “equally desperate circumstances” that allows the Athenians to think that victory is possible, by reminding them that it happened in similar circumstances in the past. Without that memory, the Athenian response would have been a mere wish, rather than a desperate, but real, hope. If this is granted, then we can say that personal and social memories contribute to hope in at least three ways: by making hope pleasant as our soul makes contact with the object of hope through memory, by providing direction for our hope in this same way, and by showing us that the attainment of the object of our hope is possible.

Through the concept of memory, it is also possible to link the psychological discussion of hope in the *Philebus* to Plato’s broader approach to philosophy itself. Plato argues in the *Meno* (80d–86c) and the *Phaedo* (72e–76d) that the acquisition of philosophical knowledge is essentially a process of remembering or recollection (ἀνάμνησις). Connecting this with the *Philebus* suggests that philosophical recollection may play an important role in enabling and directing philosophical hope, that the philosopher is able to be characteristically hopeful because the whole process of

<sup>16</sup>For an excellent discussion of what he calls “shared memory” (pp. 51–52), see Margalit (2002, esp. Chap. 2 and pp. 94–104). See also below on philosophy as a social practice of remembering.

<sup>17</sup>On myth as both memory (μνήμη) and recollection (ἀνάμνησις), see Latona (2004).

<sup>18</sup>Er, the “messenger” of the story (614d), is specifically “forbidden to drink from the water” which causes forgetfulness (621b).

doing philosophy is itself a process of remembering.<sup>19</sup> In light of the importance of dialogue as a spur to philosophical recollection (*Meno* 85c–d; *Phaedo* 73a), along with Socrates’ self-description as a “midwife” who helps others to recollect (*Theaetetus* 148e–151d), it might be added that, for Plato, philosophical recollection is often a *social* process of remembering—and so also a social process of hoping.<sup>20</sup>

The *Philebus* is a complex and relatively technical dialogue, and there is much scholarly discussion of precisely how to understand Plato’s claims, especially regarding true and false pleasures (and therefore regarding true and false hopes). One final matter is worth mentioning. Some scholars have argued that Plato’s comments on hope in the *Philebus* should be understood as applying only to *confident* hopes. So Frede has argued that “Plato does not speak of *any* kind of hope but of those where there is a definite expectation that they *will* be fulfilled” (1985, p. 170, original emphasis). Elsewhere, in order to distinguish hopes from mere “daydreams,” Frede argues that hopes must “anticipate future states of affairs as facts” (Frede 1992, p. 445). In addition, Frede understands the *pleasure* of Platonic hope as being tied to one’s confidence in the outcome, rather than simply to the recollection of a memory (1985, p. 165).<sup>21</sup> Although Frede’s view is widely accepted, there are good reasons to suggest that it is not the whole story. Vogt, for example, in considering what we picture to ourselves when we hope, argues that “the kinds of agency-imaginings Plato discusses are not predictions” (2017, p. 45). Vogt views hopes as motivational, and she notes that “attitudes involved in motivation are different from prediction” (p. 45 n. 33).<sup>22</sup> More discussion of this issue is needed, but for our purposes here, we should simply note that adopting Frede’s view would narrow the range of hopes affected by Plato’s comments in the *Philebus*.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.4 Aristotle

Aristotle, like other ancient Greeks, had a complex view of hope. Because Aristotle is a key early source for virtue ethics, many later thinkers have used Aristotelian models to describe hope as a virtue. However, Aristotle himself does not consider

<sup>19</sup>Forté appears to make a similar suggestion in his discussion of hope and the pleasures of learning (2016, pp. 291–294).

<sup>20</sup>On the importance of the social process of “building a community” of hope, see McGeer (2004, pp. 108, 125–126). Compare also *Laws* 732c–d, quoted above.

<sup>21</sup>One consequence of this view would be that desperate hopes could not be pleasant.

<sup>22</sup>Presumably, then, what would distinguish hopes from daydreams is not that hopes involve assertions or predictions, but that hopes involve motivations. Along these lines, compare Frede’s approach with Pettit (2004), for whom substantial hopes “consist in acting as if a desired prospect is going to obtain” (p. 158). The commitment in Pettit is in terms of action, not belief (p. 162).

<sup>23</sup>More recently, Cairns (2020) has argued that the broad semantic range of ἐλπίς, along with its use in varying contexts in the dialogue, makes “the specific phenomenon of hope more difficult to pin down” (p. 19) in the *Philebus*.

hope in this way. In fact, the most extensive Aristotelian discussion relating hope to virtue is a series of considerations meant to show that hopefulness is *not* a virtue. Nevertheless, hope does play an important positive role in Aristotelian ethics, contributing to practical deliberation and to the development of virtue. In addition, Aristotle's observations regarding the psychology of hope continue to add sophistication to the Greek understanding of hope.<sup>24</sup>

### 1.4.1 Hope, Courage, and Confidence

As with Plato, we will begin with Aristotle's doubts about hope. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle contrasts hopefulness with the virtue of courage, observing that hopefulness can lead to confident actions which appear to be courageous, but are not motivated in the proper way. For example, when faced with stormy seas, both sailors and a courageous person are "fearless." On the one hand, a courageous person who lacks a sailor's experience, and has thus given up on being saved, will continue to be fearless regardless of the expected outcome. On the other hand, sailors are "hopeful [ἐὐελπίδες] because of their experience" (*NE* 3.6, 1115b3–4).<sup>25</sup> That is, the skill and experience of sailors (and also mercenaries, *NE* 3.8, 1116b6 ff.) leads to hopeful confidence in a good outcome, and because they therefore have little fear to face, they also have little occasion to exercise the virtue of courage.

Aristotle mentions two other kinds of non-courageous confidence relevant to the discussion of hope. First, there are those who are hopeful not because they are skilled, but because "having won many victories over many people," they inductively conclude that they are likely to succeed in the present case as well (*NE* 3.8, 1117a9–12). Such people act confidently due to "having been fortunate often" (*EE* 3.1, 1229a19). Second are those who act confidently due to ignorance of the danger at hand. Such people, Aristotle says, are "not far removed from the hopeful ones [τῶν εὐελπίδων]" (*NE* 3.8, 1117a23). However, while the first two types of hopefulness involve some self-confidence (1117a24) due to skill or good fortune, this third type of near-hopefulness is based simply on ignorance of the circumstances. In all of three of these cases, because those involved are confident of a good outcome—that they "will suffer no harm" (1117a14)—there is simply no occasion to exercise the virtue of courage.

Despite these distinctions between hopefulness and courage, Aristotle does acknowledge connections between them, through the concept of confidence. Two passages help to illustrate this connection. First, at *NE* 3.7, 1116a3, Aristotle states

<sup>24</sup>For a more extended discussion of the main points in this section, see Gravlee (2000). Other observations regarding hope in Aristotle can be found in Kazantzidis and Spatharas (2018, pp. 6–7, 11–14, 23). Cf. also Cairns (2020), whose discussion of both Plato and Aristotle highlights the semantic challenges of eliciting a psychology of hope from sources in ancient Greek philosophy.

<sup>25</sup>Translations of Aristotle will generally follow Barnes (1984) or Ostwald (1962), with occasional modifications.



that, “A coward is a pessimistic [δύσελις] sort of fellow, for he fears everything. But a courageous man is the very opposite, because confidence implies hopefulness [εὐέλπιδος].” Here, if we add the implicit premise—that courageous people are confident—to the explicit claim that confident people are hopeful, we get the stated result that courageous people are hopeful (the “opposite” of a pessimist).<sup>26</sup> Second, speaking of young people, Aristotle states in *Rhetoric* 2.12 that, “Their hot tempers and hopeful dispositions [εὐέλπιδες] make them more courageous than older men are; the hot temper prevents fear, and the hopeful disposition creates confidence” (1389a26–28). Here, Aristotle states that hopefulness creates [ποιεῖ] confidence, and this serves in the passage as an explanation for how hopefulness can make a person more courageous. In both passages, confidence serves to connect hopefulness with courage.

In order to reconcile these last two passages with the previous distinctions we saw between hope and courage, we need to pay special attention to what one is hoping for, that is, to the *direction* of one’s hopes. Courageous people can be hopeful, and even confidently so, but if we follow *NE* 3.6 and 3.8, they will have no occasion to exercise the virtue of courage when they are confidently hopeful regarding the outcome of their circumstances. Instead, as Duff (1987) has suggested, a courageous person, in acting courageously, must direct their confident hopefulness towards the intrinsic value of their actions or goals. Such actions and goals Aristotle broadly characterizes as τὸ καλόν, what is “noble,” and a courageous person acts for the sake of the noble (*NE* 3.7, 1115b23; *NE* 3.8, 1116b3, 1116b31, and throughout), although they are likely to also have in mind more specific ideals that guide and direct their choices.

In addition to keeping clear both the distinctions and the connections between hopefulness and courage, we should keep in mind that hopefulness and confidence are also not precisely the same (although in the passages discussed above Aristotle’s focus is on confident hopes). The distinction between hopefulness and confidence can be approached in Aristotle via the concept of distance. So, Aristotle notes that “Confidence [is] the expectation [ἐλπίς] associated with an appearance of safety being nearby. . . . We feel it if we can take steps . . . to cure or prevent trouble.” (*Rhetoric* 2.5, 1383a15–21). In contrast to this, Aristotle acknowledges that hopes can be either for what is near or what is far. So, we may have near hopes such as those of the sailors, who feel confident that they can “take steps” to avoid shipwreck, or we may have more distant hopes such as those we have for a child’s life: “When we do call a child happy, we do so by reason of the hopes [ἐλπίδα] we have for his future,” which can be known only after “a complete lifetime” (*NE* 1.9, 1100a3).

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<sup>26</sup> “[T]he courageous are confident, but not all those who are confident are courageous” (Protagoras, in Plato’s *Protagoras*, 351a). This is consistent with Aristotle’s views.

### 1.4.2 *Hope, Fear, and Deliberation*

According to Aristotle, hopefulness and confidence, although not the same, are characteristically found together. But hope has a similarly close relationship with fear. When we are resigned to our fate, such that we are genuinely without hope, like “those who have grown accustomed to terrible things, already having suffered everything and being coldly indifferent to the future” (*Rhetoric* 2.5, 1383a3), we also do not fear. Hope and fear both depend on our sense that the future is open, that there are possibilities, and when the future seems closed, or as the future transitions into the present and the past, both hope and fear are transformed—either fading into resignation, being redirected towards other goals, or being converted into the exercise of a courageous virtue which does not depend on outcomes.<sup>27</sup> For fear to be felt, Aristotle says in *Rhetoric* 2.5, “it is necessary that some hope [ἐλπίδα] of salvation remain” (1383a7). When the future appears open, when there is still hope, then there is also apprehension concerning that future: “And the sign of this is that fear makes one deliberate, and yet no one deliberates concerning things that are not hoped for [τῶν ἀεπιπίστων]” (1383a3–8, my modification of Freese 1926).<sup>28</sup>

In this last passage, not only are hope and fear connected to each other, but they are also both connected to deliberation. Fear spurs deliberation, Aristotle says, and deliberation presupposes hope. However, although both hope and fear underlie deliberation, there is reason to think that hope plays the primary role. To see this, we can begin by observing that not only fear, but also confidence, can spur deliberation. So, in the case of the sailors, we can say with Aristotle that it is their confident hopefulness that enables them to “take steps” to prevent shipwreck. However, even where Aristotle claims that “fear makes one deliberate”, he also makes it clear that in such cases both fear and deliberation are dependent on hope (1383a3–8). Thus, hope is the common factor involved in both confident and fearful deliberation. While fear does spur deliberation (and so it is not merely passive), so also does confidence, and both sources of deliberation are underwritten by hope. In this sense, hope is more fundamentally tied to deliberation than fear is.<sup>29</sup> This is

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<sup>27</sup>Thus, a courageous person at sea, who has lost hope for their life, is also “fearless . . . though not in the same way as sailors are” (1115a34–b2).

<sup>28</sup>It is partly this relationship between hope and fear that raises concerns about hope in post-Aristotelian philosophies, such as Stoicism, that were oriented towards *ataraxia* (tranquility, freedom from disturbance). Seneca, a later Roman Stoic, writes that, “Fear follows hope. Both belong to a mind that is hanging in suspense, a mind made anxious by expectation of the future” (*Ep.* 5.8, quoted in Rutherford 2003). On the significance of an open future for deliberation, see Aristotle, *De Int.* 9, 18b26–33: “if . . . everything is and happens of necessity . . . there would be no need to deliberate or to take trouble.”

<sup>29</sup>Here, we should keep in mind the distinction made earlier between hope and confidence. We deliberate about “what we believe might be attained through our own agency” (*NE* 3.3., 1113a9–12). So, confident deliberations will consider immediate steps we can take towards a hoped-for outcome (or a courageous action) that is “near”. Regarding more “distant” hopes, if the object of hope is unpredictable or outside our immediate control, we can still deliberate, but not

further supported by the observation that hope and confidence are more broadly characteristic of Aristotelian deliberation, motivation, and desire, for “in every case the mover is the object of desire, but the object of desire is either the good or the apparent good . . . that is achievable in action” (*DA* 3.10, 433a27–30, Irwin and Fine trans. 1995; see also 433b16, and *NE* 1.1, 1094a1–3). Fundamentally, for Aristotle, it is hope for the good, rather than fear of suffering, that moves us.

Given this, we can pause briefly to consider a point of comparison with Plato. I have argued that hope is closely tied to Aristotelian *deliberation*. Vogt (2017), in her discussion of the *Philebus*, has argued that hopes are also tied to Plato’s concept of agency, but via *imagination*. In the *Philebus*, Plato describes imagination as a painter who creates images in the soul (39b). These images, when they concern the future, “are really hopes” (39e). Excellent hoppers, Vogt argues, are those who not only are skilled at imagining scenarios that are attainable and rendered with appropriate detail, but who also react with pleasure to imagined scenarios that genuinely constitute a good human life. Once good “imaginative agents . . . dream of things that they can take some steps to bring about” (Vogt 2017, p. 47), they then can turn to a more Aristotelian deliberative approach (in line with Aristotle’s observation that hope motivates deliberation), in order to pursue their hopes. In these distinct but complementary ways, both Plato and Aristotle emphasize the important role of hope for human agency.<sup>30</sup>

For the most part, the cases of Aristotelian deliberation and agency considered so far have been rather immediately concerned with things like physical safety (shipwreck, for example). However, it should be emphasized that for Aristotle good deliberation is an important part of both becoming and being a virtuous person, that is, of living a flourishing human life (*NE* 6.5, 6.9, 6.12–13, throughout). Recognition of this role for deliberation will enable us to better appreciate the significance of hope for Aristotle. Guided by practical wisdom (*φρόνησις*) and experience—and motivated by hope—good deliberation helps us to become more fully virtuous by recommending actions that will shape our “natural” capacities for virtue into more established character traits (*NE* 6.12, 1144b4–7).

This hope that motivates character change is more typical of the young than of the old, as we see in Aristotle’s comments connecting hope with the natural virtue of *megalopsychia*—being high-minded or “great-souled.”<sup>31</sup> Young people, Aristotle says,

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directly about the object of hope itself. Instead, we deliberate about our responses to various outcomes, or we consider intermediate steps about which we are more confident.

<sup>30</sup>So Vogt suggests that, “Agency-imagination may be something that good agents are good at, similar to the way in which Aristotelians think that good agents are good at deliberation” (2017, p. 46; see also n. 35).

<sup>31</sup>*Megalopsychia* is, Aristotle says, “the crown, as it were, of the virtues: it magnifies them and it cannot exist without them” (*NE* 4.3, 1124a1–3). That Aristotle has in mind here (1389a16–34) the natural virtue—an inborn trait not yet developed into a full virtue—is indicated by his emphasis on inexperience.

are trusting [εὐπίστοι], because they have not yet often been cheated. They are hopeful [εὐέλπιδες]; nature warms their blood as though with excess of wine; and besides that they have as yet met with few disappointments. . . . They are high-minded [μεγαλόψυχοι], because they have not yet been humbled by life and they are inexperienced in the force of necessity; moreover, there is high-mindedness in thinking oneself worthy of great things, a feeling which belongs to one who is hopeful [εὐέλπιδος]. They would always rather do noble deeds [τὰ καλά] than useful ones. (*Rhetoric* 2.12, 1389a16–34)

Aristotle mentions here two factors that contribute to hope and that connect it to trust and to *megalopsychia*. The first is a youthful lack of experience. Youthful hope, trust, and *megalopsychia* are all the result of not having encountered disappointment. This is the hope of good fortune, mentioned in the previous section. Second, Aristotle also suggests a physiological explanation for hopefulness, connecting it to warmth, which may be natural or may be induced by wine (*NE* 3.8, 1117a15; *EE* 3.1, 1229a20; *Problems* 30.1, esp. 954a12–955a29; see also Plato, *Laws* 649b). In addition, due simply to their age, young people are oriented towards an open future (*Rhetoric* 2.12, 1389a21–25).<sup>32</sup> Together, these factors provide a foundation for a hopeful disposition which grounds the natural virtue of *megalopsychia*. If to this we then add Aristotle’s view that hopefulness provides a foundation for practical deliberation and agency—including deliberation that transforms natural character traits into more mature virtues—then we are led to an understanding of hopefulness in Aristotle that places it at the very core of the development of virtue.

## 1.5 Conclusion

In both what I have considered here, and in what I have not, there is much room for further scholarship on hope in ancient Greek philosophy. The philosophical history of hope often fast-forwards through ancient Greece. I have tried to show that this approach misses a rich and challenging philosophical discussion. Ancient Greek philosophy—especially as found in Plato and Aristotle—provides a set of critiques, proposals, case studies, and frameworks surrounding hope that are deep and complex, and which can serve as a lively stimulus to further exploration. Discussions of hope are bound together with reflection on many of the most significant aspects of human life: the mysteries of death, the cultivation of virtue and the human good, and the search for knowledge and understanding. Hope is connected to pleasure, trust, love, and courage. Hope sustains and motivates us, serving as a foundation for human agency. And although hope itself is not treated as a virtue, it underlies the

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<sup>32</sup>The comparative hopelessness of the old is tied to their “cold” physiology, to their experience with disappointment, and to the fact that their character traits have been rendered inflexible by long force of habit (*Rhetoric* 2.13, 1389b20–1390a9; *NE* 3.5, 1114a17–22). Nevertheless, Aristotle does sound a hopeful note for older people, suggesting elsewhere that the guidance of law can continue to be a positive influence on character development throughout one’s life (*NE* 10.9, 1180a1–4).

imagination and deliberation needed to move towards ethical self-improvement and human flourishing.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>I wish to gratefully acknowledge the reviewers, commentators, and participants who helped to improve this essay in its earlier forms.

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**G. Scott Gravlee** (Ph.D.) is Associate Professor of Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Mount Union, Alliance, Ohio, USA, where he teaches courses in the history of philosophy, ethics and medical ethics, and aesthetics. He earned a joint Ph.D. in Philosophy and Humanities from Stanford University and a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Washington in Seattle. He is the author of “Aristotle on Hope” (*Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 2000), and he is currently working on a variety of projects in the areas of hope, peace studies, bioethics, and philosophy for children.

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# Chapter 2

## Early Christian Thinking on Hope



Martin I. Webber and Jacobus (Kobus) Kok

*... neque solum cum laetitia vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi (Leg. 2.14.36)*  
*... we accept not only to live rationally with joy, but also to die with a better hope. (Text from <http://thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/leg2.shtml#36>, accessed December 6, 2019. See Aubert (1961, p. 213) for the context of the citation. All English translations are from the authors unless otherwise indicated.)*

*Οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, περὶ τῶν κοιμωμένων, ἵνα μὴ λυπῆσθε καθὼς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα. (1Th 4:13)* (All citations of the Greek New Testament are from Aland et al. (2012) unless otherwise indicated.)

*We do not want you to be ignorant, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, lest you grieve as the rest who do not have hope.*

**Abstract** Recent classical studies on hope have sought to correct a long-standing overemphasis on negative aspects of hope in antiquity, setting up possible correlations with early Christian and New Testament studies. These studies, however, have focused more on the contemporary relevance of hope and the particular emphases of certain texts, without taking into account classical advances. This chapter proposes a more integrative model to make up for this lack. The chapter consists of three elements: a “bottom-up” approach, comprehensive textual analysis, and consideration of possible ancient frames. The aim is to facilitate understandings and nuances of hope. This model is then applied to the letter of 1 Thessalonians, arguably the earliest preserved Christian text. The results show to what extent the letter shares

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M. I. Webber (✉)

Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Research Associate at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

e-mail: [martin.webber@etf.edu](mailto:martin.webber@etf.edu)

J. (K.) Kok

Research Center for Early Christianity, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

other developing conceptions and contexts related to hope, and how it specifically differs from them, with concluding observations for further study.

## 2.1 Introduction

The above citations illustrate two different perspectives on hope in the early imperial period of the Roman Empire arising in different sociological contexts. The first comes from Cicero, *De Legibus*, a political treatise written ca. 52 BCE. He extols the benefits of the Eleusinian mysteries, at least in part. The second occurs in a letter from the Apostle Paul to an early Christian community in Thessalonica, written about a century later (ca. 50 CE<sup>1</sup>). He reassures them regarding members who have died.

This chapter aims to assess recent research on the subject of hope in classics as well as theological and biblical studies, with a view to advancing our understanding of ancient perspectives. It begins by reviewing that research, showing that important gains have been registered, without much evidence of interaction between these two disciplines and with little methodological consensus (Sect. 2.1). Drawing on these gains, it then proposes a more integrative model analysing and correlating these (Sect. 2.2). It then applies this model to a specific case (Sect. 2.3) and concludes with observations for further study.

### 2.1.1 *Classical Research on Hope*

Recent studies on hope in classical studies have treated hope as an emotion as well as recognising the contextual complexity of the concept. Two in particular merit mention. The first, a collection of essays written to honour the classical scholar David Konstan, notes at the outset that “little has been written about the positive emotions in antiquity” with most recent studies focusing on negative ones: “the number of studies is plentiful, its range gives a lopsided impression, as if the ancients were interested in only negative emotions” (Caston and Kaster 2016, p. 1). This work seeks to redress the balance.

The second, later and broader in scope, launched De Gruyter’s supplementary series on Ancient Emotions (Kazantzidis and Spatharas 2018a, b) in its Trends in Classic series. It aims to explore “Greek *elpis* and Latin *spes* in ancient literature, history, and art” (Kazantzidis and Spatharas 2018a, b, p. 1). The introduction to the volume presents difficulties of definition, nuances, and to what extent ancient perceptions and conceptions differ from or correspond to modern ones. It classifies

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<sup>1</sup>See Hoppe (2016, pp. 63–64) and Malherbe (2000, pp. 71–75).



the “main semantic varieties of *elpis*” as follows: (1) “mere expectation” versus expectation of good or evil, (2) “neutral, propositional *elpis*”, and (3) “desiderative and motivational *elpis*” with examples and implications of each variety. It then goes on to note semantic shifts from *elpis* to *spes* due to increasing Stoic influence, echoing findings of some of the book’s constituent pieces. This implies that *spes* takes on more affective connotations than *elpis* and may be paired with different terms. After tracing this development in philosophical texts, the authors observe “By the time we reach Augustan Rome, religious belief in hope becomes increasingly ingrained in popular and cultic morality” (p. 26), becoming appropriated to the ideological ends of the regime. Thus they conclude, among other things, that “*spes* was exploited by the Romans to a considerable degree; such exploitation, alongside the emphasis placed on its divine qualities, indicates that, in contrast with the philosophical scepticism which surrounds the concept, the Romans did think of ‘hope’ also in a positive way” (p. 27). This framing of Greco-Roman concepts around hope represents a shift in interpreting how the ancients understood hope, not merely or predominantly as negative, but also with positive implications in societal and religious experience. It also demonstrates the effect of various societal, political, and religious contexts in developing ancient perspectives.

Two essays in the volume reflecting this shift have particular relevance for this article because of their potential resonance with early Christian contexts, those of Laurel Fulkerson (2018) and Angelos Chanoitis (2018). While Fulkerson primarily analyses the comic presentation of hope and the gods, along the way she offers two broader insights into classical Roman practice and understanding. First of all, she reminds the reader of the extent of worship of the divinity *Spes* in the late Republican period, drawing attention to a mid-third century dedication of a temple to her, with clear political and military associations. Along with other temples built and dedicated during this period “we can probably conclude that the gods selected for temple worship are those that appeal to the Roman people as a whole, or at least to the elite. Temples, then, are certainly political as well as religious events” (Fulkerson 2018, p. 163). A second observation comes at the conclusion of her article where she draws attention to “an ambiguity in the ancient treatment of hope” different from modern Western perspectives. This suggests a tendency to distinguish between what she terms “good” and “bad” kinds of hope. This tendency may explain, for example, the “very nuanced treatment of *elpis*” by the historian Polybius (second century BCE). “Or so I would explain his use of compounds of *elpis* (*euelpis*, *duselpis*, and the like), which seem to indicate a desire to securely distinguish between two kinds of hope,” one more rational and the other more circumstantial (Fulkerson 2018, p. 167). Naturally, the question remains whether active worship of *Spes* and ambiguity over hope persisted into the early imperial period. Reference to this as a possible frame for interpreting early Christian (here Pauline) statements about hope should not be overlooked.

That question is partly answered in the affirmative by the essay of Chanoitis reviewing Greek epigraphic evidence (Chanoitis 2018). While he never cites an

inscription evoking or naming *Spes*,<sup>2</sup> he effectively traces development of hope and related concepts from the classical through to the Hellenistic and early imperial periods as reflected in inscriptions. His results may be summarized as follows (from Chanoitis 2018, pp. 362–363): (1) hopes and expectations are connected with “cognition and judgment” whether in the case of an athlete, untimely death of a child, recruitment of guards (in Tomis), or curses related to various trades. In these cases, peoples “have hope.” (2) Hope appears around 100 BCE “for the first time. . . in public documents in the context of negotiations between unequal partners.” Here Chanoitis notes these expressions of hope as showing increasing community and societal dependence on benefactors, especially the emperor. Patrons are those who “are hope.” (3) Religious contexts reflect further development in the direction of “unconditional faith that may even defy reason” particularly in narrative accounts of miraculous healings, whether attributed to unknown deities or, for example, to Asclepius, among others. These people “receive hope” given to them by an external power. All of these formulations, with differing or parallel connotations, appear in early Christian texts, as will be shown later.<sup>3</sup>

These brief glimpses into ancient views of hope reflect complex views and associations. (1) Religious contexts evoking hope ambiguously exist in classical, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. (2) Hope is viewed as both “positive” and “negative” or “good” and “bad”, depending on a number of variables. (3) Expression of hope is more than “merely” an emotion. (4) Hope, particularly in inscriptions, may be tied politically (and socially) to a benefactor, ultimately the emperor. (5) Parallel to that development, hope comes to be expressed in some religious contexts as a “given” from an external force or power.

### 2.1.2 *Biblical and Theological Studies*

Like their counterparts in classical studies, biblical and theological scholars in recent research tend to focus on insider interests. Regarding hope, that means either a synthetic treatment addressing a larger theological issue related to hope, often eschatology, or a study focusing on hope as presented in one particular document or context. The first type of study is represented by various writers. Kurt Erlemann (2014) has produced a monograph synthesizing New Testament data and concepts of hope to respond to contemporary concerns or uncertainties. This is equally the specific concern of Klaus-Peter März (2013). Even where Erlemann engages specific

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<sup>2</sup>For this, see rather the essay of Andrew Stiles (2018) which gives evidence of continued care for the temple mentioned in Fulkerson’s article. Based on the writings of Cicero, Stiles concludes “it seems probable that *spes* continued to be seen as a goddess in society more generally” (Stiles 2018, pp. 263–264, note 17).

<sup>3</sup>Chanoitis notes (2018, p. 362) that “Christianity promoted further the transformation of *elpis* from reasonable expectation to expression of dependence by associating *elpis* with unconditional faith,” citing some later inscriptions.

texts, his primary interest seems to lie not in understanding hope in relation to its ancient contexts, but what meaning remains for readers today. More balanced in this regard is the volume edited by Jan van der Watt on New Testament eschatology (van der Watt 2011), but there, too, the (intrinsic?) relationship between hope and eschatology is assumed. See for example the “Preface” by van der Watt: “Eschatology focuses on specific events related to and expected at the ‘end of times.’ . . . Hope is created (through, for instance, prophecy or prediction). . .” (van der Watt 2011, p. vi). A slightly different tack has been taken by two other scholars, yet again with an agenda set by contemporary questions. Matthew Hoskinson (2010) studies New Testament hope texts to arbitrate a centuries-old debate about the “assurance of salvation”, as the title of the book indicates. David Neville confronts claimed tension between the peaceable mission of Jesus and a counter-emphasis on violent judgement or vengeance in five New Testament books (Neville 2013). Françoise Mies offers an exception to this pattern. Noting an apparent lacuna in the treatment of hope in Old Testament studies, she responds by proposing a broader biblical framework for renewed study of hope (Mies 2010, see the introduction, p. 705). Although limited in scope by its aim—to prepare future research on the theme throughout the Bible (Mies 2010, p. 705)—her proposal receives further attention in the following section on methodology. Other “hope” studies treat particular texts or books, most recently that of Christian Grappe (2018), who focuses on the book of Hebrews.<sup>4</sup> This narrow approach offers more occasions to interact with the context of the text in question, and sometimes with other relevant (ancient) texts. Grappe, for example, traces development of the “eschatological dimension” of hope from certain Old and Intertestamental Jewish texts to Hebrews (Grappe 2018, pp. 119–125). Overall, however, these studies give the impression of a closed, in-house conversation that appears oblivious to the larger historical and linguistic contexts in which views on hope are investigated.

## 2.2 Methodological Observations and Approach

The above review of recent studies on hope and related concepts from the perspectives of classical, and then from that of biblical scholars, leads to certain methodological questions. First, what evidence counts in examining hope in antiquity? Both classical and biblical studies tend to exclude or at best minimize the value of the texts of “the other” in their investigations, although linguistic and temporal overlap is evident. And indeed, as the opening reference from the Apostle Paul indicates, “our hope” is sometimes contrasted with “their (lack of) hope.” Similar differentiation occurs among philosophical schools (for example, Epicureans versus Stoics), and the outlook regarding hope in (particularly funerary) inscriptions is varied (see

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<sup>4</sup>Similarly Langford 2013 (on 1 Peter), Nelavala 2016 (on the parable of the vineyard and labourers), and Wright 2012 (on Revelation), among others.

Aubert 1961; Van Menxel 1983; and Chanoitis 2018). Given these differences, might it not be preferable to adopt what Kadlac terms a “bottom-up” approach to hope when comparing texts, and thus openness to differing perspectives in “other” relevant texts? In his words “my aim is to be somewhat more neutral with respect to the context in which virtuous hope might occur. . . I thus approach hope from the ‘bottom-up’ as opposed to the ‘top-down’ in an effort to examine what can be said about hope as individuals tend to experience it in their daily lives” (Kadlac 2015, p. 338, n. 3, citing Barilan 2012, p. 167).

A related question then arises of how to relate various types and layers of data. In her recent reflection, Mies (2010) proposes a multi-faceted approach to framing a biblical study of hope. After anchoring it philosophically (pp. 705–706), she names three key elements for consideration: (1) orientation of the reflection, (2) modes of expression to examine, and (3) the role of reason in relation to hope (pp. 706–708). Regarding the first, hope is oriented on two axes, one temporal and the other relational. The temporal axis is the more complex, taking into account hope both as act, movement, or intention and hope as an object or end in view. The relational axis implies faith or confidence in another, hence the expression “to hope in.” The character of the opposite of hope, despair or the absence of hope, temporally closed and self-referential, is also important here. In a given text, hope (or its opposite) may be expressed in three modes: in direct language, via symbols or metaphors, or in actions. This model offers a more comprehensive, if demanding, analysis of texts and contexts than is often articulated, in either group of studies surveyed above. Thus hope may well be expressed, for example, in the teachings of Jesus, whether through symbolic language in parables or by his acts of healing, even though ἐλπίζω [I hope] and ἐλπίς [hope] are never used of him in the canonical Gospels, a fact mentioned by Mies (2010, p. 716), but long ago observed by Joseph de Guibert (de Guibert 1913) and subsequent studies (including Spicq 1991). Finally, as already noted in some classical studies ([reference above]) hope and reason are connected in the sources, with the latter serving as support or motivation for the former (as one factor in distinguishing between “positive” or “negative” hope, say, for Polybius).

A third methodological issue relates to the contextual nature of the evidence, as we are mainly dealing with texts. As Ehrensberger reminds us: “Thus, the reading of a text, particularly, one like the Pauline letters, which emerges from a context and time not our own, requires a framework of reference and understanding which precedes this very same reading” (Ehrensberger 2007, p. 4). In other words, texts need to be located in, or correlated with, certain contexts in order to be properly interpreted.

These three concerns suggest the outline of our approach to reading and interpreting hope in the case study which follows. To the extent possible we adopt a “bottom-up” approach without prejudging the evidence. We will be sensitive both to the double orientation (temporal and relational) and various modes of expression of hope, not neglecting, where it occurs, the role of reason. For this particular case thirdly we propose and briefly evaluate some available contextual factors that could facilitate understanding of the text.

## 2.3 First Thessalonians as Case Study

In this section we will exegetically investigate through close reading as case study the earliest New Testament document known to us, namely the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. We focus on this New Testament text for various reasons. (1) Written to a predominantly if not exclusively non-Jewish audience (see Hoppe 2016, pp. 53–54; Míguez 2012, pp. 56–71; and Malherbe 2000, pp. 65–66), it facilitates a more bottom-up approach to hope, with less direct Jewish influence. (2) At least three recent studies claim hope as a central or recurring theme of the letter (Luckensmeyer 2009; Míguez 2012; and Milinovich 2014). (3) It contains limited examples of at least two of the three modes of expression of hope identified by Mies (lexical/semantic and metaphorical). (4) Historical Christian reception of the text also includes the thematic importance of hope (Thiselton 2011, noting at least nine references to hope among commentators from patristic until recent times). (5) Finally, various options of critical contextual correlation have been proposed to explain some of the letter's references to hope.

### 2.3.1 Lexical and Semantic Considerations

A starting point for lexical and semantic analysis recognizes the importance of identifying relevant semantic domains to be researched and words or expressions belonging to them. Cross-referencing Spicq (1991) and Louw and Nida (1989) yields the following linguistic matrix:

ἀναμένω, περιμένω, προσδέχομαι, ἐκδέχομαι: to remain in a place and/or state, with expectancy concerning a future event—“to await, to wait for.” (L-N § 85.60); ἀπεκδέχομαι: to await eagerly or expectantly for some future event—“to look forward eagerly, to await expectantly.” (L-N § 25.63); γρηγορέω: to remain awake because of the need to continue alert—“to stay awake, to be watchful.” (L-N § 23.72); ἐκδέχομαι; ἐκδοχή: to expect something to happen, often implying waiting—“to expect, expectation.” (L-N § 30.53); προσέχω, ἐπέχω: to be in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately—“to pay attention to, to keep on the lookout for, to be alert for, to be on one's guard against.” (L-N § 27.59); ἐλπίζω, ἀπελπίζω: to expect, with the implication of some benefit (L-N § 30.54), προελπίζω: to hope in a prior manner, either beforehand or prior to someone else (L-N § 25.60).<sup>5</sup>

Application to 1 Thessalonians identifies the following texts to analyze (with corresponding domains): 1:3 (ἐλπίζω, L-N 25.59, 61, 62); 1:10 (ἀναμένω, L-N 85.60); 2:19 (ἐλπίζω); 4:13 (ἐλπίζω); 5:6, 10 (γρηγορέω, L-N 23.72) and 5:8 (ἐλπίζω). Thus

<sup>5</sup>The antonymic expression for despair ἀελπίστος ἐχειν [to be in despair] and the substantive ἀπόγνοια [despair] do not occur in the NT, although the condition of being without hope is mentioned twice: 1 Th 4:13 and Eph 2:12, see below.

these terms are grouped under basically three domains by Louw and Nida: “To hope, look forward” (25.59–64), “Sleep, waking” (23.66–77, in this case the latter), and “Remain or stay in space” (85.55–64, in this case “with expectancy of a future event”). What does Paul communicate regarding hope in each case?

1:3 and 1:10. In the first context (1:3) one notes the following associations: (1) ἐλπίς with πίστις [faith] and ἀγάπη [love], marking the earliest surviving Christian example citing hope as a virtue (see Rom 5:1–5; 1 Cor 13:13; Col 1:4–5); (2) also qualified by τῆς ὑπομονῆς [of endurance], a term semantically related to ἐλπίς elsewhere by Paul (Rom 5:4; 15:4<sup>6</sup>); (3) followed by a genitive designating the object of hope τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [in our Lord Jesus Christ] without however explicating here how that is understood (see similarly Col 1:27; 1 Tim 1:1; 1 P 1:3), that is, whether present or future; (4) taken up again at the end of the letter (5:8) via a military metaphor, to which we return below. The second (1:10) is more straightforward. It confirms by reports of others (1:8) both the past conversion of the Thessalonians through Paul and the double purpose of that conversion (a) present: to serve (δουλεύειν) the living and true God (1:9), and (b) future: to await (ἀναμένειν) the coming of the Son of God “from heaven.” The first reference underscores the relation between the readers and the wider society, connected to a relation with Christ, the second focuses exclusively on the vertical relation with God and Christ.

2:19. This use of ἐλπίς comes closest to an emotional expression, since it refers directly to the readers along with other positive epithets, first in another triad (ἐλπίς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος [hope or joy or crown]) and then immediately, in a parallel sentence, a pair of terms (repeating χαρὰ but adding δόξα [glory]). The intervening clause ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ [before our Lord Jesus when he appears] orients the first occurrence, as with 1:10 above, towards the future.<sup>7</sup> Standing in parallel with the second χαρὰ, designation of the readers as the δόξα<sup>8</sup> of Paul requires a present temporal reference. Thus regarding hope one notices in these first two passages both temporal and relational axes and, to the extent that Paul recalls earlier instruction, the role of reason in his remarks. These associated terms reflect an emotional relationship to Paul.

4:13. This passage presents the sole negative reference to ἐλπίς, via the expression ἐλπίδα (μη) ἔχειν [(not) to have hope], in the letter. This expression occurs

<sup>6</sup>See also de Guibert (1913, pp. 566–569), for similar LXX and other NT associations.

<sup>7</sup>This may also be the case with mention of στέφανος [crown], see 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 1:12; 1 P 5:4.

<sup>8</sup>Malherbe (2000, p. 186) notes a similar manner of one person describing another by Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* 1.1.1 [ca. 430] and particularly Seneca [ca. 63–64 CE] of Lucilius, *Epistle* 20.1, also there linked to joy and hope: “Si vales et te dignum putas qui aliquando fias tuus, gaudeo; mea enim gloria erit, si te istinc ubi sine spe exeundi fluctuaris extraxero.” [If your health is good and you consider yourself worthy of becoming at last your own master, I rejoice. For the glory will be mine if I can drag you from the waves among which you are being tossed, with no hope of getting out.] (Text from <http://thelatinlibrary.com/sen/seneca.ep2.shtml>, accessed December 13, 2019).

seven times elsewhere in the New Testament. Of those, (1) one has no clear object in view (Rom 15:4), (2) others refer to present and or temporal expectations (2 Cor 3:12; 10:15), (3) one is semantically parallel to 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (Eph 2:12), and (4) three have God or Christ as object, two in the context of the Second Coming (Acts 24:15; Hb 6:18 and 1 Jn 3:3). Thus it is plausible that Paul here refers to the future Parousia, a reference that becomes more explicit as the passage unfolds (effectively from 4:14–5:11).<sup>9</sup>

Understanding of this passage depends on the response to three questions: (1) Why does Paul assume the readers are grieving (μὴ λυπήσθε)<sup>10</sup> about those who have died (οἱ κοιμώμενοι)<sup>11</sup>? (2) Who are the “rest” (οἱ λοιποὶ, see 5:6, 20)? (3) In what sense do they lack hope?

Taking each of the questions in order: (1) Paul does not deny the possibility of grieving over loss (see Rom 12:15). It is the manner of grieving that concerns him (καθῶς). After mentioning other possible reasons that the readers might be grieving (Epicurean-like thinking, influence of Gnostic teachers, or lack of earlier Pauline instruction on the resurrection of Christians), Malherbe (2000) suggests (p. 284) the difficulty lay in bringing “the apocalyptic expectations of resurrection and Parousia together into a systematic view”. Paul may have feared that upon the death of loved ones, the Thessalonians might grieve as non-Christians grieved.<sup>12</sup> The challenge that Paul had, was how to encourage the Thessalonians by bringing together two notions, the eschatological resurrection<sup>13</sup> and the Parousia (Malherbe 2000, p. 284). Paul had to do so, because he had to counter erroneous apocalyptic discourses which seem to have circulated in the midst of the faith community (1 Th 5:1–3).

We also see in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, written circa 54–55 CE, that Paul addressed the importance of the resurrection and the implication it had for those who had already died. Schnelle (2009, p. 347) correctly remarks that by the time Corinthians was written, there seems to have been many cases where people had died before the expected Parousia (cf. 1 Cor 7:39; 11:30; 15:6, 18, 29, 51). Nevertheless, Paul maintained a high expectation of the imminent return of Christ (1 Cor 7:29). In fact, it seems that Paul believed that he would still be alive when Jesus Christ returned (cf. 1 Th 4:17; 1 Cor 15:51–52 [πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα]). In 1 Corinthians 15:17–19 he says: “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be

<sup>9</sup>See further on 4:13–18 the 19-page excursus of Luckensmeyer (2009, pp. 192–211), citing recent studies to date. “Parousia” refers to the final return of Christ to earth at the end of time.

<sup>10</sup>Use of μὴ is standard with non-indicative forms. With ἵνα it indicates negative purpose (Perschbacher 1995, p. 105).

<sup>11</sup>For Jewish precedents referring to death as sleep, see Hoppe (2016, p. 261, n. 176). He notes also that D. Luckensmeyer (2009, p. 213 ff.) gives pagan and Jewish examples, so the readers could have understood the reference.

<sup>12</sup>For such reactions see Van Menxel (1983, pp. 152–156) and Chanoitis (2018, pp. 352–257).

<sup>13</sup>See in this regard also 1 Corinthians 15:19.

pitied” (NIV). Here Paul may also be reacting against some form of a radical realized eschatology (Malherbe 2000, p. 369).

In the first century, several discourses circulated in Judaism that speculated on what would happen at the end of days to those who are still alive and to those who had already passed on (e.g. 4 Ezra 13:24; Pss Sol 17:44). In 4 Ezra 5:41–45 (cf. also 2 Bar 30:1–3), we see that certain Jews believed that the living and the dead would arrive simultaneously on judgement day. Malherbe argues that Paul draws on this kind of discourse and provides a new perspective. For the first time in Early Christian writings, he brings Parousia and apocalyptic resurrection expectations together. However, these notions already existed in the Pre-Pauline, Christ-following movement. The problematic challenge in Thessalonica was that people who Paul refers to as being false teachers preached a calming message of peace and security in the contemporary age, which Malherbe says, was “derived from apocalyptic speculation about times and seasons” and which “would defer the Parousia or at least lessen the sense of crisis associated with an expectation of the immanent end.” When the notion of the Parousia was deferred, it had an impact on identity, ethos, and hope in the sense that the apocalyptic awareness was softened and lost its urgency. The Thessalonians fell into a form of grief and despair directly associated with a displaced sense of hope, displaced due to a new understanding of identity with reference to the Parousia.

(2) The second question may be answered by reference to its other occurrences in the letter (5:6, 20). These can only be those who are “outsiders” (that is, ignorant of Pauline instruction about the resurrection. They are, metaphorically speaking, those who “get drunk” and “sleep” at “night,” a description of outsiders (see 4:12 τοῦς ἕξω).

(3) More difficult to answer is how these outsiders would have been understood by Paul as “not having hope.” Among numerous proposed answers, three are presented here.

(a) Many scholars in their commentaries on 1 Thessalonians 4:13 are using examples to suggest that, outside of Christianity, there existed a general hopelessness as evident in literary and epigraphic data. For instance, F. F. Bruce (1982, p. 96) refers to Theocritus (*Idyll* 4.42) “hopes are for the living; the dead are without hope” (ἐλπίδες ἐν ζώοισιν, ἀνέλπιστοι δὲ θανόντες). The difficulty with this view is that it neglects a wide range of data and research, some recent, some less so (see above and Hoppe 2016, p. 262, n. 184) showing that belief and hope in an afterlife was widespread in the classical, Hellenistic, and early imperial periods.

(b) Malherbe (2000, pp. 281–283), however, confirms indirect evidence supporting non-Jewish belief and hope in the afterlife, most notably in the writings of Plutarch. This, as well as the above data, suggests a certain selectivity on the part of (some) biblical scholars in reading ancient Greek and Latin evidence. As already noted, he argues that such “lack of hope” was due either to lack of or misunderstanding of Pauline instruction relating to the apocalyptic events and the (delayed) Parousia of Christ.

(c) A related but nuanced alternative explanation is offered by Richard Ascough (2004). Considering similarities between the Thessalonian Christian community and voluntary associations, he links these to the social implications of funerary practices. As he notes with supporting evidence “[b]urial and group belonging cannot be



separated” (Ascough 2004, p. 518). Furthermore, “Certain voluntary associations are implicated in the social construction of fictive kinship” (Ascough 2004, p. 520), comparable to language used by Paul in 1 Thessalonians. He, like Malherbe, also points to evidence that for many non-Jews, death was not considered the end, but hope persisted. “Some non-Christians did hold onto a hope for postmortem reunion with loved ones” (Ascough 2004, p. 522). If one accepts his insight of the community importance attached to burials and group belonging and, with Ascough, supposes that for the readers death of community members may have threatened or disrupted this sense of solidarity, Paul may in part intend to reassure the living members of the group that this solidarity, although temporarily disrupted, was not the final word and that the dead remained part of the community. Thus all would benefit from the promised hope of reunion with the Lord (1 Th 4:17). Options b and c are not mutually exclusive and have the advantage of taking into account a broader range of ancient evidence than that of option a. Furthermore, they highlight the relational dimension of hope between Paul and his readers.

Míguez also stresses a gap between believer and unbeliever in understanding about the future, rather than what he terms a simple “religious difference” over beliefs in the afterlife (Míguez 2012, pp. 134–135): “Those without hope are those who ignore the realization of the *parousia*, those who lack an alternative vision, those who see only the circularity (or at most, the linearity) of history and ignore the possibility of a historical rupture, the dialectics of the unexpected—in political terms, of revolution, but in Pauline terms, of the messianic” (p. 135, emphasis original).

5:6,10. Twice in this section of the letter Paul appeals to the readers to join him in “staying awake” (γρηγορέω). For our purposes, the question is on what temporal axis this appeal should be situated—present and/or future. This depends, in part, under which semantic domain these occurrences are situated.<sup>14</sup> Relationally, however, a clear contrast is marked between the expected comportment of the readers and that of “the rest,” that is, those outside the community:

Readers and Paul	Outsiders
υἱοὶ φωτός. . .καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας [sons of light. . .and sons of day] (v. 5)	[υἱοὶ] νυκτός. . .σκότους [(sons of) night. . .darkness] (vv. 4–5)
γρηγορῶμεν [let us be alert] (v. 6)	καθεύδουσιν <sup>15</sup> [they are sleeping] (vv. 6–7)
νήφωμεν [we are/let us be sober] (vv. 6, 8)	μεθύουσιν [they are drunk] (v. 7)

<sup>14</sup>Louw-Nida identify three interpretations of this verb in NT usage: “stay awake” (23.72) and “be alive” (23.97) as “Sleep, Waking,” and “be alert” (27.56) as “Be ready to learn, Pay attention.” Metaphorical pairing suggests “stay awake” but also may include “be alert,” as both καθεύδω [I sleep] and γρηγορέω [I am alert] represent states of ζάω [I live] for Paul (5:10).

<sup>15</sup>In this connection we note a double use of the metaphor for “sleep.” On the one hand, it refers to those who have already died (4:13–15; 5:10), but who nevertheless still belong to the community. On the other, it characterizes those unaware of the coming “revolution” or disruption, in the terms of Míguez (5: 6–7), the “rest” or outsiders.

Persistent use of the present tense in the above contrast shows that Paul intends to refer to the present conduct of readers versus outsiders. It constitutes, according to Míguez, a “decision concerning the future. . .made in the present, not in the sense that in the future they will receive the award for the performance of today, but because in this the future is anticipated” (Míguez 2012, p. 150).<sup>16</sup> Again Paul makes an explicit link between faith, hope, and love, the three virtues which have characterized their behavior up to now (compare 1:3 and 5:8), but this time via a military metaphor (θώραξ, περικεφαλαία), discussed in the following section. Of the three, hope occupies the most prominent position of emphasis (Malherbe 2000, p. 298). And as this part of the letter shows, for Paul hope operates relationally on different levels and with different types of connections or oppositions.

This overview of language and linguistic associations over hope in 1 Thessalonians has led to the following partial conclusions: (1) Regarding the temporal axes, they concern both the present and the future of Paul and his readers. (2) Relationally, Paul reserves hope for his readers, insofar as they have understood his (reiterated?) teaching regarding the Parousia and its role in safeguarding and/or restoring community solidarity. (3) Hope is expressed in various ways in a continuum from affection to “reasoned expectation.” (4) “Maintenance,” or retention of the kind of hope promoted in the letter, depends on the one hand on the reader’s maintaining ethical boundaries in relation to outsiders and, on the other, on future divine initiative. To this extent, full realization of hope lies beyond the reach of the readers.

### ***2.3.2 Symbolic and Metaphorical Language Related to Hope***

As already noted, in addition to specific language about hope or its absence, 1 Thessalonians also includes different metaphorical or symbolic references to hope, principally of three types: family or kinship language, the stark contrast between light and darkness, and a specific metaphor related to military attire.

#### **2.3.2.1 Family Language**

Family or “kinship” language employed by Paul pervades the letter. As Meeks observes “both the number and intensity of the affective phrases in the Pauline letters are extremely unusual” (Meeks 1983, p. 86). These include, among others, Paul as a gentle nurse caring for children (1 Th 2:7), with affectionate attention (2:8), how much he missed and longed to see them (2:17), as expressed in the following section of the letter (2:17–3:11), a section on brotherly affection (4:9ff), and an

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<sup>16</sup>According to Hoppe (2016, p. 304) a watchful attitude also characterizes the morally aware (and presumably responsible) person in Philo and Plutarch.

engagement with their grieving over those who had died (4:13–5:11). No fewer than 17 times in a few paragraphs he addresses them as ἀδελφοὶ (for the first time in 1:4 and the last in 5:25), more than in any other Pauline letter except 1 Corinthians. Although such language was not uncommon in Greek associations (see Ascough 2004, p. 520; Meeks 1983, p. 87), here combined with the change in the readers' social situation, it functions as part of forging their new community identity, including confession of the one God as Father (5x: 1:1,3; 2:11; 3:11,13). "Within the immediate task of Paul and his associates...confession of the one God had as its primary implication the consciousness of unity and singularity of the Christian groups themselves." (Meeks 1983, p. 169). Concerning the relational dimension of hope, this would serve to redress a situation "where they had been ostracized by their natural families" as is often supposed (de Villiers 2011, p. 327).

### 2.3.2.2 Light Versus Darkness

The prevalence of this dualistic metaphor in the ancient world makes it difficult to posit an origin for Paul, whether in Judaism or in Graeco-Roman thought.<sup>17</sup> As suggested above, its primary function in 1 Thessalonians is to strengthen the boundary between the readers and outsiders, with a view to promoting hope via ethical conduct. Echoes of a similar dualism are often cited in relation to the Qumran texts (Hoppe 2016, p. 301; Míguez 2012, p. 151; Malherbe 2000, p. 294). Noteworthy in the above named collection is the essay of Loren Stuckenbruck (Stuckenbruck 2011), coordinating such dualism with human nature in four second-Temple Jewish documents that antedate Qumran. As with 1 Thessalonians, these dualistic structures "played an important role in demarcating the identities of groups who saw themselves in religious conflict with either the conventionally wicked or with specific opponents. Ethical, cosmological, and anthropological dualisms were developed and deployed for this purpose, often in combination" (Lang et al. 2011, p. 13). The resemblance in strategy between these texts and 1 Thessalonians is remarkable.

### 2.3.2.3 Military Attire in 1 Thessalonians 5:8

Would it be going too far—or too simplistic—to follow initially the suggestion of Míguez that here Paul posits "a contrast with the arms of the Roman soldier, on which "the peace and security" (on which see further below) of the empire are based"

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<sup>17</sup>See the most recent relevant essays in Lang et al. (2011) although not specifically socially and ethically focused.

(Míguez 2012, p. 151)? Similar metaphors appear elsewhere in Pauline literature (see especially Rom 13:12 and Eph 6:11–17).<sup>18</sup> In Romans the reference is more general (τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός [weapons of light]), yet also connected to the metaphor of light and darkness, and linked to ethical exhortation (Rom 12:13–14). However, in Ephesians the number of weapons named and their function are different, as well as their associations. In 1 Thessalonians, the θώραξ [breastplate] is πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης [of faith and love], but in Ephesians τῆς δικαιοσύνης [of righteousness], while the περικεφαλαία [helmet] in one case (Thessalonians) is ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας [hope of salvation], yet in the other (Ephesians) “merely” τοῦ σωτηρίου [of salvation]. Furthermore, both the danger and the types of weapons differ in the two contexts. For the readers of Thessalonians, the immediate threat comes from outsiders ignorant of the coming judgment (1 Th 5:1–3), while in Ephesians it is supernatural evil (Eph 6:11–12). By contrast, Satan is mentioned only once in 1 Thessalonians (2:18), somewhat cryptically. Comparative analysis of the use of the metaphor in all three contexts brings to light the specific emphases of the text under study: hope as virtue, along with love, and faith, faced with diametrically ethical opposition, with a view to obtaining deliverance at the Parousia.

These three groups of metaphors share a common function in relation to hope: to strengthen the community’s new identity and focus relationships both internally and in dependence upon God, for the present and for the future.

Thus whether through specific expressions, conceptual associations, or metaphorical language and symbols, Paul references hope in 1 Thessalonians in various ways. For him, in temporal terms it includes present and future dimensions. Relationally, it concerns both insiders (among Christians) and, somewhat more negatively outsiders, as well as the vertical relationship with God and Christ. Surprisingly, Paul does not in this letter directly relate hope to reason.<sup>19</sup> The one question remaining is what frame might be most helpful for furthering our understanding of how hope functions in the letter.

## 2.4 Framing 1 Thessalonians in Context

Taking a step back from close analysis of the text, we now turn to look at some proposed frames for the letter. This part of our study takes as a point of departure the expression “peace and security” (εἰρήμη καὶ ἀσφάλεια, 1 Th 5:3), relating it in turn to hope, Epicureanism, Roman imperial ideology, and the apocalyptic perspective of Paul. All three groups (Christians, Epicureans, and Roman imperialists) held it as a kind of ideal, but worked it out in different ways.

<sup>18</sup>Commentaries allow for a generally accepted metaphor in Graeco-Roman texts, while also noting in 1 Thessalonians a specific link to LXX Isaiah 59:17.

<sup>19</sup>Contrary to Polybus, see above (Fulkerson 2018). This suggests matter for further study in other Pauline or New Testament texts, such as Romans 5 or the opening concatenation of 2 Peter.

### 2.4.1 Paul and Epicureanism

Malherbe (2014, p. 367) points out that Paul's relationship with Stoicism is well known. However, rather recently Malherbe and others have turned their attention to studying Paul's use of Epicurean elements. Malherbe (2014, p. 369) brings a new perspective to the table by proving that Paul in fact was injecting into his Christ-following Jewish apocalyptic framework a slogan ("peace and security") that belonged to Epicurean discourse. Malherbe for example turns to Lucretius (*De Rer. Nat.* 5.1120–1130) and Epicurus (*Kyriai Doxai* 14) to show that the Epicureans strove to live an unobtrusive life in the company of intimate friends in a way which drew boundaries between themselves and their neighbors who strove ambitiously forward in life. For them, ἀσφάλεια [security] is a result of a quiet life (ἡσυχίας) and is expressed in some form of escape or withdrawal from the world (Epicurus, *Kyriai Doxai* 14) into their own created symbolic universe where they focus on what matters in the here and the now (Malherbe 2014, p. 370 and n. 18). According to this view, some would argue that in this symbolic universe all that matters is the present, and the people with whom you surround yourself, and there is no hope beyond the here and the now. There is also no fear of the gods or of some form of judgment at the end of time. Happiness is found in the context of the quiet retraction from the world amongst fellow brothers/sisters in the here and the now. But even this gives no security. Malherbe (2014, p. 370) quotes Epicurus (*Kyriai Doxai* 13): "There is no profit in attaining security (ἀσφάλεια) in relation to people, if things above and things beneath the earth and indeed all in the boundless universe remain matters of suspicion."

The Epicureans wanted to provide an alternative to their contemporaries' ambitious drive that prized φιλοτιμία [love of honor]. But the excessive drive for honor and social reputation was seen at the time as a virtue contributing to the common good (Malherbe 2014, p. 371). From this perspective, the Epicureans, with their attitude of withdrawal from the world of honor and public recognition, were frowned upon by contemporaries like Plutarch (see *Tranq. An.* 465F-466A, quoted by Malherbe 2014, p. 372 n. 27). Malherbe argues that Paul saw this withdrawal from the world as problematic (from a Christ-following perspective). In fact Paul motivates believers in all of his letters to be actively engaged in this life, and to show sensitivity to each other and to outsiders (cf. Gal 6:10). Malherbe correctly shows in his careful exegesis of Thessalonians that the καὶ before φιλοτιμεῖσθαι (in 1 Th 4:11) is explicative and that their love for each other should increase in at least three ways as expressed by the complementary infinitives that follow:

- ἡσυχάζειν [to live a quiet life]
- πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια [to mind one's own affairs]
- ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ἰδίας] χερσὶν ὑμῶν [to work with (your own) hands]

These concepts were not strange in ancient texts, in fact they were used by Stoics and are typical, specifically, of Epicureans who aimed to live a quiet life and tend to their own affairs. However, it is interesting that Paul here introduces an adverbial

purpose clause with the word ἵνα, i.e., that the purpose of all these actions should lead to proper behavior toward outsiders. This idea is very un-Epicurean. Now, what is interesting is that Paul is “consuming” words and concepts already found in the Epicurean discourses (Seneca, *Ep.* 68.10). But unlike the Epicureans, Paul wants his community to continue being actively engaged with the world. In fact, their behavior should lead to positive relationships with outsiders. They were not called (as would be the case with Epicureans) only to focus their attention on insiders, but also to engage practically with outsiders. They are not called to withdraw from the world with an inwardly directed gaze, but to live in a way that would be attractive to outsiders (Malherbe 2014, p. 373). This is a missional responsibility. For that reason they are not to stop working, but to work with their own hands, just as Paul continued to do while among them (1 Th 2:8–9). Giving up on this life, or quietly turning inward like the Epicureans, because one has some form of imminent hope of Christ’s return, is not what Paul had in mind for the community of faith. Rather, they should be sober and awake (1 Th 5:3). This idea also appears in moral philosophers such as Plutarch (*Princ. Iner.* 781D; *ibid.*, p. 373 n. 35). The Epicureans believed that one must “eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die”. In un-Epicurean fashion, Paul preached that one must sober up and be self-controlled (νήφωμεν in 1 Th 5:6), for the end of times, which will bring judgement, is imminent. This contrasts with the Epicurean notion of security (ἀσφάλεια) which Paul sketches as being a false and displaced form of security. Those who would preach such a message would be nothing less than false teachers and false prophets. Malherbe (2014, p. 374) is correct when he points out that Paul here reminds believers in Thessalonica of their eschatological identity that is to separate themselves from those not belonging to the in-group. He urges them not to be asleep like the rest (οἱ λοιποὶ) but be sober and ready. The rest, Paul says, have no hope (καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα in 1 Th 4:13; cf. also Eph 2:12). However, the moment one becomes aware of one’s eschatological identity, one will begin to act soberly, Paul insists. Pauline insiders are clearly distinguished from outsiders, the “in” from the “out” indicating the boundary markers, most clearly expressed in 1 Thessalonians 5:6–8, as this article has shown.

Paul is clearly making use of words and concepts which circulated in the *Umwelt*, and which his readers would have recognized as being rather strongly un-Epicurean. Subsequently we see that Christians would purposefully try to differentiate themselves from Epicureans and, in their writings, show where the boundary lines were (see Schmid 1962, pp. 880–883, referred to by Malherbe 2014, p. 375 n. 43). In this early Pauline letter, we see how Paul carefully delineates the boundaries and tries to steer the young believers in the right direction, helping them in the process of constructing their own identity and boundaries.

#### **2.4.2 Paul Countering Roman Imperial Ideology?**

Another argument in research is that Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians, was countering Roman Imperial ideology by providing a form of hope rooted in the

Christ-event. In the past, scholars like Jewett (1986, pp. 124–125), Crossan and Reed (2004, p. 166), and others (such as Ehrensberger 2007) have drawn a parallel between Paul’s notion of εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια and the Roman *Pax Romana* political slogan *pax et securitas* (peace and security).<sup>20</sup> According to this approach, Paul was countering well-known Roman Imperial ideological notions of peace and security. With his anti-Imperial message, Paul challenged the notion that Caesar was the great benefactor who provided peace and should be honored accordingly (as demonstrated by, among others, Chanoitis 2018, see above). According to Jewett (1986, p. 124), it was particularly the economically disadvantaged lower classes (whom the believers represented) who were “victims of this process of political co-optation.” Kathy Ehrensberger (2007, pp. 10–11) argues that the Empire was strongly hierarchical and autocratic and it was clear that Caesar was the Father of the Fatherland, the Savior and the Great Peacemaker. Thus, when Paul claims that God is father and that God brought peace, he is directly going against and resisting the prevailing imperial discourses at that time. One is to have hope in God, not Caesar. This is certainly a point that the author of Luke-Acts picks up on in Acts 17:7. We do not have historical evidence that there was a synagogue or strong Jewish presence in Thessalonica, but we do have literary evidence created by the author of Acts. In Acts 17:7 the author places Paul and Silas engaging with Jews for 3 weeks in a synagogue (Acts 17:1–3). Acts states that many came to faith and joined Paul and Silas. Amongst them were devout Greeks and some of the leading women (Acts 17:4). Then, apparently, the Jews became jealous (cf. religious competition) and formed a mob in the marketplace to set the city in uproar (Acts 17:5). Eventually Jason, who housed/entertained Paul and Silas, was dragged in front of the city authorities by local people shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” (Act 17:6–7 NIV). Because of this uproar, the believers decided to immediately send Paul and Silas to Berea where there was also a synagogue in which Paul and Silas immediately went to preach.

Current archaeological and literary evidence calls into question the widely accepted claim of the ubiquity and influence of the emperor cult in certain areas of the Roman Empire (Miller 2010). For that reason one must also consider alternative explanations. To this end, the insights of Malherbe discussed above would also need to be considered seriously (and perhaps seen to be more likely), namely, that Paul was providing an alternative perspective on hope which could be contrasted to the forms of hope available in the *Umwelt*.

In our opinion, whichever direction one opts for, whether Paul was reacting against Epicurean discourse or anti-Imperial discourse, the point would still be that Paul introduces an apocalyptic notion and connects that with imminent eschatology and resurrection thought. What is unique is the way in which Paul places the focus on the resurrection of Jesus and on believers’ future resurrection, with the

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<sup>20</sup>See more recently Harrison (2016).

implications thereof for the early Christian conception of hope. Christian hope has a different content and focus. Bruce (1982, p. 97) says:

The reality of his [Jesus'] death points to the divine miracle accomplished in his resurrection. His people's resurrection is a corollary of his, and therefore their death can be described as 'falling asleep' in the new Christian sense of that figure, but there was no precedent for *his* resurrection. 'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again,' the fullness of Christian hope follows. The continuing life of his people depends on, and is indeed an extension of, his own risen life (cf. Rom 8:11; also John 14:19, 'because I live, you will live also').

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has given some indication of how studies on ancient views of hope have advanced, while suggesting the need for classical and biblical scholars to benefit from each other's results. Taking some cues from these studies, it proposed an integrative model to more adequately relate the relevant data and then applied this model to a close reading of 1 Thessalonians. Various associations with hope and its possible framing played a role for Paul in adjusting boundaries both inside and outside the community of his readers. In this regard, Paul reflects the movement in antiquity from reflection on individual to a stronger focus on the communal implications of hope. Its application to other early Christian texts awaits further study. We close with one insight in this regard.

From the perspective of the construction of social identity it could be interesting in the future to reflect on the way in which boundaries between insiders and outsiders were being created and in what direction Paul (and other early Christian leaders) wanted believers to move.<sup>21</sup> From the textual evidence it is clear that the Thessalonian believers had to deal dialogically with different discourses and social identities. Not only were some of them former pagans who turned to the true, living God (1 Th 1:9), but they were also influenced by a discourse on eschatology that would have had a direct influence on their identity. Eschatology and resurrection influence the future view of the self and from such a future view, the self from the present is pulled towards the (possible) future reality. If the conceptual frame of future reality and the future self changes, the current existential view of self will also change.

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<sup>21</sup>The field of social identity research in New Testament Studies is a growing subfield as seen in recent and forthcoming social identity commentaries. Much research in this field could still be done. See in this regard Kok (2014) and Brawley (2020).



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**Martin I. Webber** (Ph.D.) is Professor of New Testament and coordinator of the doctoral program at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven and Research Associate at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. His university teaching and research career has spanned three continents—North America, Africa, and Europe. Current research interests include Historical Jesus studies, situating the New Testament within Early Christian history and literature, and development of Early Christian identity.

**Jacobus (Kobus) Kok** (Ph.D. Ph.D) is Full Professor and Head of Department of New Testament Studies and Co-Director of the Research Center for Early Christianity at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven (Belgium). He also serves as Professor Extraordinarius at the University of Pretoria in South Africa and is an NRF Y1 rated scholar.

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# Chapter 3

## Hope as a Virtue in the Middle Ages



Andrew Pinsent

**Abstract** As a theological disposition revealed in Scripture, the recognition of hope as an important virtue coincided with the radical transformation in virtue ethics in the early Middle Ages. As the ideals of pagan antiquity gave way to the Christian aspirations for the Kingdom of Heaven, early work on hope was strongly influenced by writers with a monastic background, such as Pope St Gregory the Great. The rise of scholasticism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, gave an impetus to finding a coherent account of virtue ethics that would incorporate hope along with the other theological virtues and revealed attributes of perfection, such as the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. This chapter examines, in particular, the attempt of St Thomas Aquinas to develop such an account and the role of hope in this account, drawing from new research in experimental psychology. The chapter concludes by considering briefly the transposition of the medieval account of hope to aspects of contemporary life.

### 3.1 Introduction

The crescendo of crises at the end of Roman Empire helped to consolidate a radical change in the principles of virtue ethics for the subsequent millennium. With the decay of the Empire, there was a massive stripping away of what ordinarily constituted the means of support and material basis for life. In its place, there was a growing focus on what Christian converts regarded as the more enduring basis of existence that had taken root in them through faith, a life of divine grace that was also given new and concrete expressions, especially with the rise of monasticism. This new life began indeed in this world but was oriented towards the Kingdom of Heaven, the eternal country of the saints.

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A. Pinsent (✉)

Faculty of Theology and Religion, Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

e-mail: [andrew.pinsent@hmc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.pinsent@hmc.ox.ac.uk)

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S. C. van den Heuvel (ed.), *Historical and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9_3)

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Virtue ethics in the Middle Ages, spanning roughly the abdication of the last Western Roman Emperor (476) to the Fall of Constantinople (1453), reflects these changes and therefore departs in many significant ways from the accounts of classical Greco-Roman antiquity. Many signs of this transformation can be found in the works of Pope St Gregory the Great (d. 604), often regarded as a pivot figure between the Greco-Roman and medieval worlds (Leyser 2000, pp. 132–133). In his massive and influential allegorical commentary on the Book of Job, Gregory makes frequent reference to attributes of the moral life that are drawn uniquely from revelation, such as the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Among the most important of these attributes is the Scriptural triad of faith (*fides*), hope (*spes*), and love (*caritas*),<sup>2</sup> which Gregory describes, for example, as being invited by the virtues into everything they do (I, 46), and being represented allegorically in Scripture by the three daughters of Job, the most beautiful women in the land (Job 42:13–15), who are born to Job after his crisis (XXXV.13). Although Gregory does not use the phrase himself, these virtues became known to the Middle Ages as the *theological virtues*.

Gregory therefore set a challenge that would persist throughout the Middle Ages of producing a virtue ethics suitable for the new Christian person and societies, oriented in a concrete way towards the Kingdom of Heaven. A priority of this project was to include those dispositions revealed only in Scripture that played such a prominent role in Gregory's work, namely the theological virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit. During the twelfth century, however, and consistent with a renewed interest in Aristotelian philosophy, there was a growing formal recognition of the existence of naturally acquired virtues next to the salvific virtues and gifts of divine grace.<sup>3</sup> During this century, one can therefore discern two main streams of moral thought: the monastic morality represented, for example, by Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh of Folieto, and Hugh of Saint Victor; and the proto-scholastic approach of John of Salisbury, Peter Abelard, and Stephen Langton. By the end of the fifteenth century, the scholastics dominated the teaching of ethics in European universities, drawing the materials for their commentaries largely from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As one consequence, although dispositions of revelation, such as theological hope and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, were still formally acknowledged as being of paramount importance in the concluding years of the Middle Ages, in practice the ground was being prepared for their gradual eclipse and relegation to mystical theology.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Moralia in Iob*; the anonymous translation in 1844 has been reprinted (Gregory 2012).

<sup>2</sup>The perfective attributes of faith (*fides*), hope (*spes*), and love (*caritas*), are highlighted twice by St Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 5:8, as well as 1 Corinthians 13; this triad had already been discussed by St Augustine of Hippo and St Gregory of Nyssa among others.

<sup>3</sup>See Bejczy (2005). For an outstanding introduction to the scholastic project, see Southern (1997).

<sup>4</sup>For the trends in virtue ethics at the end of the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, see, for example, Pinckaers (1995, pp. 240–257).

Given these sweeping changes over many centuries, how, then, is it possible to characterize the topic of hope in the Middle Ages? Rather than an eclectic survey, I have chosen in this chapter to examine a single account in detail: the account of hope by St Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa theologiae*. Among the reasons for making this selection is the fact that Aquinas has an enduring influence and reputation, and that he continues to be studied extensively today. In addition, Aquinas in his account of hope draws together a vast range of materials from throughout the prior Middle Ages on this topic, including from Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory, John of Damascus, and Peter Lombard, among others. On this account, Aquinas can be interpreted as offering a cumulative summary of prior medieval work, while also applying the methods of the neo-scholastics that had become available by the thirteenth century.

What is also significant is that Aquinas draws extensively from both the neo-scholastics and the monastic moralists to present an integrated account of human flourishing, an account that appears to emulate and even vastly exceed the systematic detail and comprehensiveness of Aristotle's virtue ethics. Crucially, however, this account also incorporates the key attributes of Christian perfection that were hallowed throughout the Middle Ages, such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the theological virtues. Although some respected contemporary commentators have tended to cast doubt on the success of this achievement,<sup>5</sup> the prospect of a single and cohesive account of human flourishing in the life of grace, an account with an integral place for the theological virtue of hope, deserves careful examination.

Where then is Aquinas's account to be found? Although references to virtues, including the virtue of hope, can be found across many of his works, the most detailed systematic account is the vast second part of his influential *Summa theologiae* (*ST*) and especially *ST II–II*, qq.1–170. This account is structured around seven principal virtues, starting with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, followed by Christianized versions of the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, courage, and temperance.

## 3.2 Hope in the *Summa Theologiae*

On Aquinas's account, the theological virtue of hope is relatively straightforward to describe in outline, namely it is the good desire for the difficult but possible goal of attaining eternal happiness with God in the Kingdom of Heaven (*ST II–II*, q.17, a.2). In other words, hope is the subjective desire for the proper completion or fruitfulness of a human life. Nevertheless, the meaning of such perfection differs in some

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<sup>5</sup>See, for example, MacIntyre (2007, p. 178). MacIntyre here describes Aquinas's treatment of the virtues as 'questionable' at key points and goes on to suggest that we ought to be suspicious of the apparently exhaustive and consistent classificatory scheme by which Aquinas presents his table of virtues. Whatever else may be said, MacIntyre, at least, does not see how Aquinas's virtue ethics makes sense.

important ways from the ideals of classical pagan antiquity as found, for example, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. For Aquinas, the life that human beings possess by virtue of being born physically needs to be transformed by God's gift into a new kind of life, the life of grace that is revealed and made possible through divine revelation.<sup>6</sup> This new life, which ordinarily begins with the second birth of Baptism and culminates ultimately with the vision of God in the resurrected human body, is described in Scripture as a sharing in or partaking of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). On this account, if the person of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is like a bridge connecting heaven and earth, the life of grace enables people to cross that bridge and live in the presence of God.<sup>7</sup> This new life enables a relationship with God that is described in intimate and interpersonal terms, such as "Father," "friend," or "spouse," the latter instance corresponding to heaven being described as the "wedding feast of the Lamb."<sup>8</sup>

Consistent with the notion of a different kind of life to that of the classical ideals of the Greco-Roman world, Aquinas also offers a markedly different account of the virtues of this new life compared to those found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As the first principles of this new life, as described in *ST II-II.1-46*, he introduces the triad of faith (*fides*), hope (*spes*), and divine love (*caritas*), which are mentioned repeatedly in Scripture and traditional commentaries as being associated with a life that is ordered to salvation.<sup>9</sup> Following customary practice, he describes these dispositions as the theological virtues, so named first, he says, because they direct us rightly to God; second, because they are infused by God alone; and third, because these virtues are not made known except by revelation (*ST I-II, q.62, a.1*).

Aquinas's treatment of hope, covered in *ST II-II, qq.17-22*, is the shortest, at 34 articles, of all the seven principal virtues of *ST II-II, qq.1-170*.<sup>10</sup> This description also has the simplest structure: there is, in fact, only one question on hope, considered in itself (q.17), in which Aquinas argues, first, that hope is properly a virtue (a.1) and then that its object is eternal happiness (a.2),

Wherefore the good which we ought to hope for from God properly and chiefly is the infinite good, which is proportionate to the power of our divine helper, since it belongs to an infinite power to lead anyone to an infinite good. Such a good is eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of God Himself. For we should hope from Him for nothing less than Himself,

<sup>6</sup>For a recent account of this life, see Stump (2018, pp. 197-230).

<sup>7</sup>The image of the bridge is taken from another Dominican of the Middle Ages, St Catherine of Siena (d. 1380). See Thorold and Marcellino (2011, p. 45).

<sup>8</sup>The term "Father" is found in the opening of the most famous Christian prayer, the Lord's Prayer or Our Father (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-3); the term "friend" is found in John 15:15; and the wedding feast of the Lamb is mentioned in Revelation 19:9.

<sup>9</sup>Faith in relation to salvation, for example, is cited in Romans 3:28 and Galatians 2:16; hope is mentioned in Romans 8:24; and love in 1 Corinthians 2:9 and 1 John 3:17.

<sup>10</sup>For comparison, here are the figures for all the seven principal virtues of *ST II-II, qq.1-170*: there are 81 articles for faith; 34 for hope; 142 for love; 59 for prudence; 304 for justice; 66 for courage; and 129 for temperance.

since His goodness, whereby He imparts good things to His creature, is no less than His Essence. Therefore the proper and principal object of hope is eternal happiness.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, the hope that is the object of the theological virtue of hope is the good of eternal life itself, consisting principally of the enjoyment of God. Specifically, Aquinas defines hope as denoting a movement or a stretching forth of the appetite towards this supreme but arduous good.<sup>12</sup> In the same and other articles of this question, Aquinas will clarify that this hope properly belongs only to the one who has it (q.17, a.3), that the only and proper grounding of hope is God (a.4), that hope is numbered among the theological virtues (a.5), but is distinct from the others (a.6), that faith precedes hope (a.7), and that hope precedes love, the greatest of the theological virtues, in the order of generation (a.8).

This question is followed by a single question on the subject of hope (q.18), in which Aquinas underlines that hope belongs to the will or rational appetite (a.1), and is solely a virtue of the wayfarer state, in other words a virtue of the life of grace in the present life or in purgatory (a.3, co.). Hope cannot be in the saints enjoying eternal life, for they already possess that for which they hoped in this life (a.2); and hope cannot be in the damned, because they cannot escape damnation and know that they cannot escape (a.3). Aquinas also argues that there is certainty in hope, by which he means that there is no deficiency in God's power and mercy to bring a person to salvation, even though some people do, in fact, fail to gain this happiness through their own choice of deadly sin (a.4, especially ad 3).

The next question (q.19) deals with an aspect of Aquinas's treatment of the virtues that is still often overlooked by commentators, namely that he connects the principal virtues with three further kinds of perfective attributes: first, the dispositions (*habitus*) that are the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit; second, the beatitudes, which are promissory micro-narratives; and, finally, the 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Aquinas's virtue ethics is really a virtue-and-gift ethics with two kinds of actualizations, namely beatitudes and fruits. For the virtue of hope, the associated gift of the Spirit is filial fear (a.1–11), which fear, as Aquinas explains in q.19, a.2, is not the servile fear of punishment but more akin to disappointing a beloved parent. As regards the beatitudes, Aquinas in q.19, a.12 ad 3 associates the virtue of hope with the last beatitude that deals with spiritual perfection (Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God") and the gift of fear with the first beatitude (Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom

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<sup>11</sup>ST II–II, q.17, a.2, "Et ideo bonum quod proprie et principaliter a Deo sperare debemus est bonum infinitum, quod proportionatur virtuti Dei adiuvantis, nam infinitae virtutis est proprium ad infinitum bonum perducere. Hoc autem bonum est vita aeterna, quae in fruitione ipsius Dei consistit, non enim minus aliquid ab eo sperandum est quam sit ipse, cum non sit minor eius bonitas, per quam bona creaturae communicat, quam eius essentia. Et ideo proprium et principale obiectum spei est beatitudo aeterna." In this chapter, I use the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Aquinas 1911) because it has become standard and because there are not many places where I could improve on it significantly.

<sup>12</sup>ST II–II, q.17, a.3, "... spes autem importat quendam motum sive protensionem appetitus in aliquid bonum arduum."



of heaven”). These associations, together with the promissory form of the beatitudes in general, suggests that the kind of perfective actualization that is called a beatitude belongs especially closely to the virtue of hope.<sup>13</sup> In q.19, a.12, Aquinas also assigns modesty, continency, and chastity to hope as the corresponding fruits of the Spirit.

As the concluding parts of his account of hope, Aquinas presents the dispositions that are opposed to hope, namely despair (q.20) and presumption (q.21), followed by a final question (q.22) on the precepts of hope and fear. As regards hope, Aquinas argues that all the promises contained in the Law are incitements to hope (q.22, a.1); as regards fear, he claims that this is a kind of principle of all observances connected with reverence for God.

### 3.3 The Second-Person Perspective on Hope

In order to interpret how the various attributes associated with hope in *ST* II–II qq.17–19 fit together, it is important to offer at least a brief account of how Aquinas’s virtue ethics works in general, especially as Aquinas describes these virtues as infused rather than acquired by habituation, and also as integrating in some way with corresponding gifts of the Spirit, as well as beatitudes and fruits. In this section, I offer a summary of my own solution based on the second-person perspective, not only because it has many explanatory benefits but also because I am not aware of any alternative at the present time that offers any prospect of seeing Aquinas’s virtue-and-gift ethics as an integrated whole.

What does this virtue-gift-beatitude-fruit (VGBF) structure imply for understanding hope? As I have argued in detail elsewhere, Aquinas’s account of virtue ethics in the *ST* is definitely non-Aristotelian and he prioritizes what he calls infused virtues or, more precisely, virtues and gifts that are infused directly by God rather than acquired by human effort (Pinsent 2012, pp. 12–23). As I have also argued elsewhere, for these infused virtues to be philosophically interesting rather than sky-hooks from revelation, there is a need to ground the notion of infusion on a metaphor that connects these claims to embodied experience (Pinsent 2017, pp. 75–77).

The metaphor I have proposed is what psychologists today call *shared* or *joint attention*, which is also closely associated with *second-person relatedness* (Pinsent 2012, pp. 41–63). On this account, dispositions are infused in the context of a triadic arrangement that involves two personal agents that share awareness of shared focus on some object, like a parent pointing out something to a child or playing a game with a child. In this context of this interaction, the stance towards the object is shared between the first and second person, providing a practical metaphor for the way in

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<sup>13</sup>The genre of the beatitudes of Matthew 5:3–12 varies depending on one’s perspective. For those setting out on the Christian life, the beatitudes are the promises of Jesus Christ, encouraging perseverance, and are therefore very closely associated with the virtue of hope in the present world. For those who finish the race well and attain heaven, the beatitudes become the story of their lives.

which a disposition may be infused from person to person.<sup>14</sup> Such dispositional infusion is commonplace in everyday interactions, such as when a first person likes a second person and begins, often subconsciously, to imitate that person. For Aquinas's account of flourishing in grace, the second person is the Holy Spirit, and the vast suite of virtues and gifts described in his account are infused and actualized in the context of *joint attention* or *second-person relatedness with God*. On this account, one is moved by God spiritually, in ways that are reinforced by hallowed stories and liturgical practices, becoming God-like by loving with God what God loves.

On this account, hope involves God not only as the difficult-to-obtain future object of one's attentive desire but also as one's present co-attending subject, a claim that is consistent with the details of Aquinas's claims about the virtue of hope in *ST II-II*, q.17, a.1 as follows:

... the act of hope, whereof we speak now, attains God. For, as we have already stated (*ST I-II*, q.40, a.1), when we were treating of the passion of hope, the object of hope is a future good, difficult but possible to obtain. Now a thing is possible to us in two ways: first, by ourselves; secondly, by means of others, as stated in *Ethic.* iii. Wherefore, in so far as we hope for anything as being possible to us by means of the Divine assistance, our hope attains God Himself, on Whose help it leans.<sup>15</sup>

The notion of "leaning on," or being supported by, God's help is repeated in the following article:

As stated above (a.1), the hope of which we speak now, attains God by leaning on His help in order to obtain the hoped for good.<sup>16</sup>

These texts confirm that hope is indeed about attaining God, but not simply as a remote object of desire. Instead, the very act of hoping also involves the side-by-side metaphor of "leaning on" God, consistent with the description of the Holy Spirit as the *paraclete* (John 14:16, 26) meaning the one called to one's side, as well as the second-person interpretation of Aquinas's virtue-and-gift ethics in general, in which the Holy Spirit is the co-attending subject who moves oneself in the manner of a second person.

This point can be expanded fruitfully if one considers the general question of how it is possible to know any person well, an especially important question given that Scripture sometimes describes salvation or the condition of salvation in terms of

<sup>14</sup>By 'stance', I mean here a conative attitude consequent upon understanding. This description of a stance is adapted slightly from Eleonore Stump (2011, p. 41). The description of joint attention in terms of a shared awareness of shared focus, along with a shared stance, is drawn from Hobson (2005, p. 185).

<sup>15</sup>*ST II-II*, q.17, a.1 co., "Actus autem spei de qua nunc loquimur attingit ad Deum. Ut enim supra dictum est, cum de passione spei ageretur, obiectum spei est bonum futurum arduum possibile haberi. Possibile autem est aliquid nobis dupliciter, uno modo, per nos ipsos; alio modo, per alios; ut patet in III *Ethic.* In quantum igitur speramus aliquid ut possibile nobis per divinum auxilium, spes nostra attingit ad ipsum Deum, cuius auxilio innititur."

<sup>16</sup>*ST II-II*, a.17, a.2 co., "... sicut dictum est, spes de qua loquimur attingit Deum innitens eius auxilio ad consequendum bonum speratum."

“knowing God.”<sup>17</sup> Experience teaches that persons do not grow in friendship simply by looking at one another but rather by interacting with one another through diverse good and challenging contexts. As a consequence, if the issue at stake is that of knowing God, then it is plausible that interacting with God in the manner of joint attention is precisely what is needed to prepare to see God face-to-face in a state of divine friendship. Moreover, this interpretation answers one of the objections to hope, namely how it is possible to desire heavenly happiness without an experience of what this happiness is like, given that “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has the human heart conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). The answer is that the act of hope does give a foretaste of this happiness insofar as it attains to God, albeit indirectly, even though the one who hopes does not yet see the face of God in glory.

The second-person perspective also sheds light on the relationship of hope with love, an issue that Aquinas addresses in *ST* II–II, q.17, a.8 as follows,

Now there is a perfect, and an imperfect love. Perfect love is that whereby a man is loved in himself, as when someone wishes a person some good for his own sake; thus a man loves his friend. Imperfect love is that whereby a man love something, not for its own sake, but that he may obtain that good for himself; thus a man loves what he desires. The first love of God pertains to charity, which adheres to God for His own sake; while hope pertains to the second love, since he that hopes, intends to obtain possession of something for himself.<sup>18</sup>

One may interpret this passage by means of the joint attention metaphor as follows. Although both hope and love are directed to the ultimate good of eternal life with God, the motivation of hope is that one obtains that good for one’s own sake, whereas the motivation of love is a desire that one obtains that good for God’s sake.<sup>19</sup> With this act of love, one rejoices in the joy of the second person, an ecstasy in the sense of the Greek word *ekstasis*, meaning to stand outside oneself.<sup>20</sup> In other words, although both hope and love involve harmonizing one’s desire with what

<sup>17</sup>See Matthew 7:23 and Luke 13:27.

<sup>18</sup>*ST* II–II, q.17, a.8 co., “Amor autem quidam est perfectus, quidam imperfectus. Perfectus quidem amor est quo aliquis secundum se amatur, ut puta cui aliquis vult bonum, sicut homo amat amicum. Imperfectus amor est quo quis amat aliquid non secundum ipsum, sed ut illud bonum sibi ipsi proveniat, sicut homo amat rem quam concupiscit. Primus autem amor Dei pertinet ad caritatem, quae inhaeret Deo secundum seipsum, sed spes pertinet ad secundum amorem, quia ille qui sperat aliquid sibi obtinere intendit.”

<sup>19</sup>With this love, one’s desire for God can itself be described as God-like, insofar as Scripture and Tradition describe the Holy Spirit as Love. This union as the goal of the virtue of love is noted in *ST* II–II, q.17, a.3, “. . . we must observe that love and hope differ in this, that love denotes union between lover and beloved, while hope denotes a movement or a stretching forth of the appetite towards an arduous good. . . .”

<sup>20</sup>Some people may recognize this experience, or at least its human analogues. Nevertheless, most people would also agree that even its human analogues are rare, especially as such love typically involves sacrifices in which one chooses for the sake of love what one would not choose for oneself in the absence of love. Indeed, much of what goes by the name of “love,” even in a benevolent sense, begins with and may not progress beyond a refined version of first-person desire, or mutual first-person desires.

God wills for one's life, the ultimate motivation of hope is first-personal, whereas the ecstatic motivation of love is second-personal. This interpretation supports the notion that hope is an especially "natural" theological virtue for human beings, not simply because it happens to pertain to this life with which we are familiar, but because human desire tends, ordinarily or at least initially, to be first-personal.<sup>21</sup>

This second-person approach also sheds some light on the fruits of the Spirit associated with hope noted above, namely modesty, continency, and chastity. As I have also argued elsewhere, these fruits can helpfully be interpreted in a second-personal way as *resonances*, a term drawn from a vast range of phenomena in physics in which two systems are in near-perfect harmony and then reinforce one another in disproportionately exaggerated way. Two persons can also resonate when they align almost perfectly, like singers or dancers attaining a near-perfect harmony, and this account seems to work well, both subjectively and objectively, as a metaphor for the fruits of the Spirit in Aquinas's VGBF account (Pinsent 2012, pp. 84–99).

As noted previously, the particular fruits that Aquinas assigns to hope are modesty, continence, and chastity (q.19, a.12), but this assignment is puzzling at first insofar as the connotations of these attributes are not obviously or intuitively associated with hope. In traditional virtue ethics, one would expect the attributes signified by the names of these fruits to be connected more intuitively with the virtue of temperance, which is an association that Aquinas also makes, albeit indirectly.<sup>22</sup>

A second-person interpretation of hope, however, may help to explain its more direct connection with modesty, continence, and chastity. While it is true that hope looks towards future happiness in which the saints see God face-to-face, a second-person interpretation also involves God already being present, spiritually, as the co-attending subject of one's attention. Hope is not, therefore, solely about future happiness, but also involves the present enjoyment of at least a foreshadowing of this happiness. And the spiritual fullness consequent upon enjoying the company of one's true beloved excludes the temptations of competing and false loves that undermine modesty, continence, and chastity. On this account, these fruits do not signify any kind of emptiness or lack of love, but rather being made whole and strong to resist temptations by virtue of being full of the genuine love of one's true beloved.<sup>23</sup>

The second-person framework also helps to put into context the next two questions (qq.20–21), on despair and presumption respectively, as well as the final question (q.22) on the precepts of hope and fear. A striking aspect of these three questions is how closely Aquinas associates the virtue and the appended gift of fear, consistent with Aquinas offering a virtue-and-gift ethics. He also classifies despair

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<sup>21</sup>The narratives of saints throughout history suggest that it is a tremendous achievement of grace, typically involving time and the kind of suffering described in the first clauses of the early beatitudes, for the motivation of one's desire to become truly second-personal.

<sup>22</sup>See *ST II-II*, q.141, a.1 ad 3.

<sup>23</sup>I am grateful to Eleonore Stump for making this suggestion.

and presumption as sins, and despair as the worst of sins (q.20, a.3). This classification also makes sense in second-person terms, since despair represents an absolute refusal to align with God's stance in regard to one's own life, given that salvation is always possible, and greatly desired by God for any created personal being who is not already in hell. Despair is therefore self-fulfilling, since the lack of alignment makes interpersonal union impossible with God, which in turns cuts off the hope of heaven.

Presumption (q.21) also breaks the relationship with God, insofar as one relies on oneself rather than God or one trusts inordinately in divine mercy or power without repentance. Just as, in the case of despair, one refuses to share God's stance about the possibility of salvation, in the case of presumption, one refuses to share God's stance about the means of salvation, namely union with the Holy Spirit in the life of grace. Hence by its very act, presumption precludes divine joint attention and friendship.

As regards the precepts of hope and fear, Aquinas also describes them in ways that are also very consistent with the second-person perspective. He argues that all the promises contained in the Law are incitements to hope (q.22, a.1), and promising, in which "I" promise "you," is plausibly an inherently second-personal act.<sup>24</sup> As regards fear, Aquinas argues that filial fear, which is the gift of the Spirit, "is a sort of genus in respect of the love of God, and a kind of principle of all observances connected with reverence for God."<sup>25</sup> So this filial fear is closely related to love, as in the case of the child fearing to disappoint a beloved parent, and is therefore, by implication, also second-personal.

### 3.4 The Object of Hope

The second-person interpretation of hope emphasizes the central theme of hope as the present and anticipated union of the created and graced human person with the uncreated personal God of love. Even without this interpretation, however, union with God and the enjoyment of God is plainly the key object of hope as shown, for example, in the words of *ST II-II*, q.1, a.2 considered previously.

From one's present perspective, however, a desire for God may seem rather esoteric and difficult to fill out with any kind of imaginative content. Indeed, as noted previously in reference to 1 Cor 2:9, one of the striking differences between the Christian and Aristotelian approaches to human flourishing is that, in the Christian case, the goal of one's desires cannot be properly known or perceived in advance of its attainment. This claim does not mean, however, that nothing can be known about what is associated with this goal. Indeed, Aquinas has some very

<sup>24</sup>This theme is explored in Darwall (2013, pp. 131–154).

<sup>25</sup>*ST II-II*, q.22, a.2, "Sed timor filialis, qui reverentiam exhibet Deo, est quasi quoddam genus ad dilectionem Dei, et principium quoddam omnium eorum quae in Dei reverentiam observantur."

concrete descriptions of these concomitant goods as can be seen, for example, in his prayer for the attainment of heaven:

God of all consolation, you who see nothing in us but what you have given us, I invoke your help: that after this life has run its course, grant me knowledge of you, the first truth, and enjoyment of your divine majesty.

O most bountiful rewarder, endow my body with beauty of splendour, with swift responsiveness to all commands, with complete subservience to the spirit, and with freedom from all vulnerability. Add to these an abundance of your riches, a river of delights, and a flood of other goods. So that I may enjoy your solace above me, a delightful garden beneath my feet, the glorification of body and soul within me, and the sweet companionship of men and angels about me.

With you, most merciful Father, may my mind attain the enlightenment of wisdom, my desire what is truly desirable, and my courage the praise of triumph. There, with you, is refuge from all dangers, multitude of dwelling places, and harmony of wills. There, with you, resides the cheerfulness of spring, the brilliance of summer, the fruitfulness of autumn, and the gentle repose of winter.

Give me, O Lord my God, that life without death and that joy without sorrow where there is the greatest freedom, unconfined security, secure tranquility, delightful happiness, happy eternity, eternal blessedness, the vision of truth, and praise, O God. Amen.

“Qua Ad Caelum Adspirit (For the Attainment of Heaven)” (2000, pp. 52–57).<sup>26</sup>

The words “grant me knowledge of you, the first truth, and enjoyment of your divine majesty” are closely associated with the goal of the theological virtue of hope, namely personal union with God. There are many other words and phrases, however, that might seem surprisingly “earthy,” such as “a river of delights . . . a delightful garden beneath my feet . . . the glorification of body and soul . . . the sweet companionship of men and angels . . . a multitude of dwelling places . . . the cheerfulness of spring, the brilliance of summer, the fruitfulness of autumn, and the gentle repose of winter.” These latter goods most clearly correspond to Aquinas’s expectations for the final resurrection of the dead and they seem, at least in part, to be goods desired by the corporal senses as well as the intellect.

<sup>26</sup>The original text is: “Te Deum totius consolationis invoco, qui nihil in nobis praeter tua dona cernis, ut mihi post huius vitae terminum donare digneris cognitionem primae veritatis, fruitionem divinae maiestatis. Da etiam corpori meo, largissime remunerator, claritatis pulchritudinem, agilitatis promptitudinem, subtilitatis aptitudinem, impassibilitatis fortitudinem. Apponas istis affluentiam divitiarum, influentiam deliciarum, confluentiam bonorum, ut gaudere possim supra me de tua consolatione, infra de loci amoenitate, intra de corporis et animae glorificatione, iuxta de Angelorum et hominum delectabili associatione. Consequatur apud te, clementissime Pater, mea rationalis potentia sapientiae illustrationem, concupiscibilis desiderabilium adeptionem, irascibilis triumphus laudem: ubi est, apud te, evasio periculorum, distinctio mansionum, concordia voluntatum; ubi est amoenitas vernalis, luciditas aestivalis, ubertas autumnalis, et requies hiemalis. Da, Domine Deus, vitam sine morte, Gaudium sine dolore: ubi est summa libertas, libera securitas, secunda tranquillitas, iucunda felicitas, felix aeternitas, aeterna beatitudo, veritatis visio, atque laudatio, Deus. Amen.” This Latin text can be found in Aquinas (1954, vol. II, p. 288).

This latter point is important, first, because the formal goal of hope, union with God, has a context, described in traditional Christian metaphors and art in terms of a glorious Kingdom that will give sensory as well as intellectual and spiritual delight. Consistent with this satisfaction of sensory desires, Aquinas defends not only the theological virtue of hope but also the existence of a corresponding passion (*passio*) of hope, which Aquinas describes in *ST I-II*, q.40 as the first of the “irascible” passions, concerned with the yearning for difficult-to-obtain goods.

The relation of the passion and virtue of hope is still a matter of some scholarly debate, but on this point I take the view that is also defended by Christopher Bobier (2020),<sup>27</sup> namely that Aquinas’s account of the passion is shaped by the theological virtue, and that both the passion and virtue have the same object, the Kingdom of Heaven, albeit with diverse aspects desired by diverse appetites of the same person. The point serves as a reminder that ultimate goal of human flourishing, in Aquinas’s account, is not simply that of a disembodied soul but that of body and soul together, made pure and holy in glory.

### 3.5 Concluding Remarks

Hope, the supernatural virtue of desire for the happiness of heaven, appears the most “natural” of the triad of theological virtues accepted in the Middle Ages. First, hope is about the first-personal desire for complete and perfect happiness, a desire that is also natural to all human beings, as Aristotle famously argued, even though unaided human reason cannot articulate very clearly what this happiness means. Second, both Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and Aquinas’s prayer for heaven agree on this point at least, that this desire for happiness is not for any ordinary state of present existence, but for something complete and permanent.<sup>28</sup> Hence although hope is properly for a goal that can only be known through revelation, the desire of hope aligns closely with our unaided natural desires.

Hope is also natural in the sense that it belongs specifically to the present life with which we are familiar, a life in which one desires happiness, and may have a prospect of attaining it, but one does not yet possess it. At best, on the second-person account, one may have a certain foretaste of happiness from a union with God as co-attending subject in the life of grace, but not yet as the direct object of one’s attention, face-to-face. On this point, Aquinas adds that the souls in purgatory also have hope and for the same reasons, but there is no hope in hell because happiness cannot be attained

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<sup>27</sup>Note that this publication is forthcoming at the time of writing, so I cannot give a more precise reference.

<sup>28</sup>See, for example, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.9–10, especially 1100a9–14, in which Aristotle points to the fact that no one is securely happy while alive, and yet happiness is an activity which seems incompatible with being dead. Hence Aristotle seems to suggest that there is or ought to be a state of happy activity that is complete and free from any prospect of its loss.

from this state, and there is no hope in heaven insofar as all such desire is finally and permanently satisfied.

Given these considerations, it might seem that the medieval account of theological hope cannot be other than an historical curiosity to a contemporary world in which there is widespread unbelief in the existence of God or heaven. Nevertheless, there have been some recent and well-received scholarly attempts to argue that hope can breathe new life into contemporary humanism and contribute to the good life of the earthly city, as well as looking to Kingdom of God.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, it is not difficult to find multiple references to such hope simply by visiting any supermarket or retailer that uses advertising. Such a setting for selling temporal goods might seem a strange place for finding evidence of transcendent desires. Nevertheless, I have found many goods that offer, for example, “snacking nirvana,” or “bliss,” or “paradise,” or “heaven,” or products, such as from a famous coffee company, that promised to warm my soul, not just my stomach. The prevalence of this soft-focus religious language, to sell everything from holidays to oatmeal, witnesses to a confidence that human beings have at least an inchoate desire for the happiness of heaven regardless of their personal religious commitment. This desire belongs to what the Middle Ages would classify as the passion of hope rather than the theological virtue, but the desire is clearly strong enough, not only to be acknowledged, but to have become a central theme of massive investment, even in a secular age.

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<sup>29</sup>See, for example, Doyle (2011) and Elliot (2017).



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**Andrew Pinsent** (Ph.D.) is Research Director of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford. Formerly a particle physicist on the DELPHI experiment at CERN, he is now a Catholic priest trained at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He has degrees in philosophy and theology and a second doctorate, in philosophy. A major theme of his research is second-person relatedness in science, philosophy, and theology. His publications include work in virtue ethics, neurotheology, science and religion, the philosophy of the person, insight, divine action, and the nature of evil. At Oxford, he has been Principal Investigator for more than \$8 million of research grants involving scholars in more than a dozen countries. In the media, in schools, and at a great diversity of other venues, he is a regular contributor to public engagement with science and faith issues.

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# Chapter 4

## Enlightenment Views of Hope



Claudia Blöser

**Abstract** This chapter discusses accounts of hope found in the works of important Enlightenment thinkers: René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch de Spinoza, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. The paper’s guiding questions are: Where are discussions of hope located within these thinkers’ works? Do the authors provide an account of what hope is? Do they ascribe a certain function to hope? Most authors of the Enlightenment, with the exception of Kant, write about hope in the context of a general account of the passions. Their characterization of hope closely resembles the “standard definition” of hope in contemporary debates. According to this definition, hope consists of a desire and a belief in the possibility, but not the certainty, of the desired outcome. It turns out, however, that Descartes, Hobbes, and Hume advocate a stronger evidential condition for hope than is common today: According to their view, we do not hope for what we take to be merely possible, no matter how unlikely it is; we hope for what we take to be more likely. Kant’s account differs from the other ones in important respects: He does not treat hope as an affect and he does not require a probability estimate, but grounds hope in faith.

### 4.1 Introduction

Considered as an historical period, the Enlightenment began around the middle of the seventeenth century and concluded near the end of the eighteenth century with the French Revolution. Considered as an intellectual movement with certain unifying ideas, one famous characterization is that offered by Immanuel Kant in his Essay “An answer to the question: What is enlightenment?” (1784). Kant defines enlightenment as “the human being’s emergence from his self-incurred minority”, where minority is characterized as the “inability to make use of one’s own understanding without direction from another” (8:35; Kant 1996a). This characterization already provides a hint as to the defining features of the Enlightenment that emphasized human reason and understanding, fought against prejudice and authority, and

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C. Blöser (✉)  
Goethe University Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany

promoted the belief that progress towards greater freedom is possible. The intellectual climate of the Enlightenment, with its aspirations for intellectual progress and improvement through the use of reason, seems to be fertile ground for hope.

In this contribution, I will present accounts of hope found in the works of important Enlightenment thinkers: René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch de Spinoza, David Hume and Immanuel Kant. The paper's guiding questions are: Where are discussions of hope located within these thinkers' philosophical works? Do the authors provide an account of what hope is? Do they ascribe a certain function or value to hope?

Most authors of the Enlightenment, with the exception of Kant, write about hope in the context of a general account of the passions. As has already been observed (see Martin 2013, p. 11), the characterization of hope found in these early modern texts closely resembles the "standard definition" of hope in contemporary debates. According to this definition, a person P hopes that X iff P desires X and believes X to be possible but not certain. It is apt to say that early modern accounts offer precursors of this definition, but as I will point out, they also differ in important respects.

## 4.2 René Descartes

Descartes discusses hope in his last published writing, "The Passions of the Soul" (1649).<sup>1</sup> The text is divided into three parts: In the first, Descartes describes the nature and function of the passions in general; in the second, he explains the six "fundamental" passions (wonderment, love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness (§69)), before describing the "particular passions" in the third part. Hope is mainly treated among the particular passions in Part Three, although it is also mentioned in Part Two (§58) because of its role in producing desire.

In the background of Descartes's theory of the passions is the substance dualism that he argues for in the *Meditations*: the view that body and soul (or mind) are two distinct substances. The *Passions of the Soul* begins with a description of the functioning of the body. By providing a mechanistic account of all bodily functions, Descartes distances himself from Aristotle, who regarded the soul as necessary for explaining bodily organic functions. On Descartes's view, the soul is solely responsible for "thoughts, of which there are two main kinds: the actions of the soul and its passions" (§17). In his definition of the passions, Descartes characterizes them as "those perceptions, sensations, or emotions of the soul which we refer particularly to it, and which are caused, maintained, and strengthened by some movement of the spirits" (§27). Moving or "animal spirits" (§7), for Descartes, are "bodies, and their only properties are that they are very small and fast-moving", constantly distributed throughout the body, conveyed into nerves and muscles, and setting the body in

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<sup>1</sup>I use the following translation (Descartes 2015).

motion (§10). The “moving spirits” play an important role when it comes to the difficult question of how body and soul communicate. The precise way in which Descartes imagined the interaction between body and soul in the “little gland” (§30) is not our topic here; suffice it to say that it secures the possibility of the passions’ leading to bodily actions. This is, according to Descartes, the main function of the passions in general: They lead to volitions (§40), and these volitions (via the “little gland”) cause movements.

The process of passions causing volitions, however, is not a mechanistic one that happens with necessity. Descartes holds that “the will is so free of its own nature that it can never be compelled” (§41). Volitions are free and under our direct control, while passions can be changed only “indirectly” (§41). The way to influence the passions is “by the representation of things that are habitually associated with the passions we want to have” (§45). In other words, by focusing on certain “reasons, objects, or examples” (*ibid.*) rather than others, we can arouse certain passions in us.

To sum up the most important elements of this overall picture for an understanding of hope, we can note that first, *qua* passion, the *function* of hope is to dispose us to certain kinds of action (via causing volitions) and second, that it is possible to gain control over when we hope by focusing on certain reasons, objects, and examples. Turning to the question of what hope is, Descartes characterizes hope alongside its counterpart, fear:

Of hope and fear. Hope is a disposition of the soul to persuade itself that what it desires will come to pass, which is caused by a particular movement of the spirit, namely, by that of mingled joy and desire. And fear is another disposition of the soul, which persuades it that the thing will not come to pass. And it is to be noted that, although these two passions are contrary, one may nonetheless have them both together, that is, when one considers different reasons at the same time, some of which cause one to judge that the fulfillment of one’s desires is a straightforward matter, while others make it seem difficult. (Descartes 2015, p. 264, §165)

Comparing this definition with the standard definition of hope mentioned in the introduction, there are interesting similarities, but also differences. There is agreement that the object of hope is also an object of desire. As to the cognitive aspect of hope, Descartes’s view differs from more contemporary ones insofar as he holds that hope involves the view that the fulfillment of one’s desire “is a straightforward matter” or the “idea that it [the desire] is likely” to be satisfied (§58). In contemporary definitions, hope requires only a belief in the *possibility* of the object, even if it is very unlikely. “Hope against hope”, i.e. strong hope in the face of extremely slim odds, is even considered a central case of hope to be explained (Martin 2013, p. 5). Descartes seems to exclude cases of “hope against hope” because on his view, hope involves a probability estimate according to which the object is likely. We will see that Hobbes and Hume have a similar view.

Descartes’s characterization of the doxastic attitude of the hoping person releases him from the need to search for further conditions in order to distinguish hope from fear and despair. Contemporary authors have refined the standard account on the basis of the argument that the standard view that hope amounts to desire plus belief in possibility cannot distinguish hope from despair, since despair can involve these

two elements as well (see e.g. Meirav 2009). For Descartes, however, despair represents the desired object “as impossible” (§166). The two attitudes that presuppose uncertainty are thus hope and fear. Descartes holds that one can have hope and fear “both together”, whereas many other theorists assume that one can have them only in succession (see e.g. Day 1969, p. 91). In fact, Descartes seems to have a quick succession in mind as well, for it is difficult to imagine how one can consider “different reasons at the same time”. We can plausibly interpret Descartes as claiming that hope and fear are two aspects of the emotional experience of a person who is uncertain about whether a desired object will materialize. In line with this, Descartes claims that when either hope or fear is entirely absent, the state of the person changes: When fear is overcome, the state of the person is not one of hope but one of “complacency or confidence” (§166); when there is no longer room for hope, fear becomes despair (ibid.). Thus, the *possibility* of fear is necessary for hope, and vice versa, even though the difference with regard to the judgment of probability means that *experiencing* fear is not necessary for hope.

Even though Descartes does not say much about the specific function of hope, as is the case for all passions in general, its main role consists in its being a disposition to act. More precisely, hope seems to acquire its specific usefulness in *difficult* action. This becomes apparent when Descartes describes hope as a (minimal) condition for boldness:

[A]lthough the object of boldness is difficulty, the usual effects of which are fear or even despair [...] we do need to hope, or even to be certain, that the goal we have in view will be attained, if we are to tackle the difficulties in our path with vigour. (§173)

If hope is a condition for boldness, we can assume that Descartes’s advice on how to arouse boldness is also relevant to arousing hope (or even certainty). Descartes says that

to arouse boldness in oneself, and banish terror, it is not enough to will to do so: we must instead set ourselves to consider the reasons, objects, or examples that will persuade us that the danger is not all that great; [...] that we can look forward to the glory and joy of the victory [...] and so on and so forth. (§45)

This passage provides hints to answering the question whether hope is under our control. Can we decide to hope? Descartes seems to suggest an indirect way how to influence hope. We cannot bring hope about directly, simply by deciding to do so. Rather, we can decide to focus on reasons or examples that point to the fact that a desired end is indeed likely to come to pass. Paying attention to such reasons and examples is an instrument to arouse hope, though it is no guarantee: Whether we end up hoping is at least contingent on which reasons and examples we discover.

### 4.3 Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes investigates the passions with the aim of providing a basis for his political theory. The *Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* (1640) and *Leviathan* (1651) begin with an account of human nature, where the passions form an important part. While it is generally acknowledged that *fear* plays a central role in Hobbes's political thinking (see e.g. Blits 1989), especially in his depiction of the state of nature that motivates the social contract, Hobbes's views on hope are less prominent and must be pieced together from various remarks. Perhaps surprisingly, it becomes apparent that hope has an important role to play in Hobbes's view of philosophy in general, his philosophy of action, and his social contract argument.

Like Descartes, Hobbes presents a theory of the passions against the background of an encompassing account of human nature. Whereas Descartes's theory is based on substance dualism, where his account of how body and soul interact is unconvincing to most, Hobbes's philosophy is monistic in the sense that it does not make reference to an immaterial soul. In both the *Elements* and the *Leviathan*, Hobbes tries to understand the passions, along with all other workings of the human mind, as motions. Two consequences of this picture are worth mentioning: First, the monistic view results in a theory of the will and of deliberation in which the passions in general, and hope in particular, play a central role. I will discuss this point in further detail below. Second, Hobbes claims not only that passions are motions but, more generally, that human life is in constant forward motion: "appetite is the beginning of [...] motion toward something which pleaseth us" (*Elements*, 7.5),<sup>2</sup> and once an appetite is fulfilled, the next one propels us to fulfillment. Hobbes rejects the existence of an "utmost end" (*Elements*, 7.6) and instead holds that "there can be no contentment but in proceeding" and that "felicity, therefore (by which we mean continual delight), consisteth not in having prospered, but in prospering" (*Elements*, 7.7). Hobbes (at least in the *Elements*) intimately connects this endless striving for the fulfillment of one's desires with the endless striving for power and superiority over others. On this picture, future-directed appetites, and therefore hope, are foundational aspects of human life.

In the *Elements*, Hobbes characterizes hope as "expectation of good to come", whereas fear is "the expectation of evil" (*Elements*, 9.8). Hobbes explains that what we expect depends on "causes": "some that make us expect good, and some that make us expect evil" (*ibid.*). When the person is uncertain about what to expect, such that these causes are "alternately working in our minds", the "whole passion" is called hope if the "causes that make us expect good, be greater than those that make us expect evil" (*Elements*, 9.8). Despair is "absolute privation of hope" (*Elements*, 9.8). Hobbes seems to think that believing in the mere possibility of the object does not suffice for hope; rather, he characterizes hope as being connected to (or even as a kind of) *expectation*, where one must believe that the causes of the realization of the object are "greater" than the causes of the object's not obtaining. In the *Leviathan*,

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<sup>2</sup>I use the following translation (Hobbes 1969).

hope is characterized as an “[a]ppetite with an opinion of attaining” (*Leviathan*, VI (Hobbes 1991, p. 41)). Considering the context in which the definition appears, it becomes clear that “opinion of attaining” means “opinion men have of the *likelihood* of attaining what they desire” (*ibid.*, my emphasis). Thus, when we hope for something, we think that there is some likelihood (based on our experience and knowledge of causes) that it will occur. To be sure, this might mean ‘likelihood, however small’, which would be in accord with the modern standard view that hope involves mere possibility. However, Hobbes seems to hold—as he does clearly in the *Elements*—that hope comes with a kind of expectation, which is relatively free of doubt. This is supported by the fact that he defines confidence as “constant hope” (*ibid.*).

As to the relation between hope and other passions, Hobbes, like Descartes, describes hope as an aspect of courage (*Leviathan*, VI (Hobbes 1991, p. 41)). In the *Elements*, Hobbes characterizes *trust* as “a passion proceeding from belief of him from whom we expect or hope for good, so free from doubt that upon the same we pursue no other ways” (*Elements*, 9.9). Hope is thus constitutive of trust. In other words, if the ground of hope is a person, and if we rely on this person without reservation in our action-guiding plans, then this is the interpersonal attitude of trust.

Further, Hobbes describes hope as being crucial to intellectual endeavors, or the search for knowledge:

And this hope and expectation of future knowledge from anything that happeneth new and strange, is that passion which we commonly call admiration; and the same considered as appetite, is called curiosity, which is appetite of knowledge. (*Elements*, 9.18)

Admiration and curiosity motivate the search for the causes of the newly discovered events and thereby drive the search for knowledge. The hope for knowledge that is incited by new experiences is, as Hobbes emphasizes, the origin of all philosophy (*Elements*, 9.18). On this basis, it is apt to say that Hobbes points towards an understanding of hope as an “epistemic emotion”, a category that has gained attention in contemporary debates (see Michaelian and Arango-Munoz 2014).

Hope is not only relevant to agency in the theoretical realm, according to Hobbes, but also integral to—and even necessary for—practical deliberation as well. For Hobbes, deliberation consists in alternating appetites and fears, where “the last appetite, as also the last fear, is called will (*viz.*) the last appetite will to do; the last fear will not to do, or will to omit” (*Elements*, 12.2, see also *Leviathan*, VI (Hobbes 1991, p. 44)). Hope is also a *necessary* condition of deliberation, as Hobbes goes on to explain in the *Elements*:

Deliberation therefore requireth in the action deliberated two conditions: one, that it be future; the other, that there be hope of doing it, or possibility of not doing it. For appetite and fear are expectations of the future; and there is no expectation of good without hope; nor of evil without possibility. Of necessities therefore there is no deliberation. (*Elements*, 12.2)

With the last sentence, Hobbes seems to be saying that if an event will necessarily happen according to the laws of nature, there is no point in deliberating about whether to bring it about. This is plausible. It is more difficult to assess the general claim that we necessarily need hope in order to deliberate. This claim is treated as an

open question in the contemporary debate (for a defense of this view, see (Bobier 2017); for a criticism, see (Mueller 2019)). It has been argued that one can deliberate about how to attain a goal (say, secure a piece of cake), even though one does not hope but merely desires (Mueller 2019). This example seems to presuppose that one can desire something without viewing its fulfillment as uncertain, and hence without hoping for it. Note that this is not the case with Hobbes's account, where desiring something while taking it for granted that one will get it (as long as it is not a natural necessity) is a paradigmatic case of hoping, insofar as hoping involves an "opining of attaining" the thing. If one understands Hobbes as saying that one can only hope for things that one regards as likely, however, this seems to be an overly strong condition for deliberation, since one can deliberate about trying something that is unlikely to be successful.

In political contexts, hope is one of the causes of fear of one's neighbor, but it is also one of the passions that contribute to the peacefulness of man and a condition for promoting peace. Hobbes's central assumption is that the state of nature is a war of each against all, which means "continual feare, and danger of violent death" (*Leviathan*, VIII (Hobbes 1991, p. 89)). Hope figures in the genesis of competition: According to Hobbes, men are equal in terms of their capacities, and hence there is an "equality of hope" that one will realize one's intentions (*Leviathan*, VIII (Hobbes 1991, p. 87)). Consequently, when two people hope and intend to attain the same object, they will enter into competition and become enemies.

Nevertheless, Hobbes also lists hope among the passions that contribute to the peacefulness of men (*Leviathan*, XIII (Hobbes 1991, p. 90)). In this regard, what is conducive to peacefulness is hope for the attainment of objects that one regards as belonging to an agreeable life through one's own effort.

Hobbes also mentions the role of hope in securing peace itself. It is a principle of reason "[t]hat every man, ought to endeavour Peace, as farre as he has hope of obtaining it" (*Leviathan*, XIV (Hobbes 1991, p. 92)). In this context, hope is a precondition for political efforts to secure peace. This thesis does not come as a surprise if one considers Hobbes's claim that hope is a necessary condition for deliberation: only if it is possible to realize peace can we can deliberate about what to do to promote it. Of course, the crucial question is what is needed to maintain belief in the possibility of peace. Hobbes provides us with a hint when he says "[t]hat a man be willing, *when others are so too*, as farre-forth, as for Peace, and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things" (ibid., my emphasis). We can understand Hobbes as saying that one crucial condition for the possibility of peace is that one be able to rely on the cooperation of others. This idea refers back to the close connection between hope and trust as described in the *Elements*: In order to transition from the state of nature to the commonwealth, we must trust that others will do their part, such that we can proceed with our own efforts on the basis of this trust. This is the basis of hope for peace.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Titus Stahl concludes from the observation that hope is both relevant to characterizing the state of nature and entering into the legal condition that the role of hope in Hobbes's account is not merely



## 4.4 Baruch de Spinoza

Spinoza provides an extensive account of the affects in his *Ethics*. Spinoza's ethics deals in the first part with the nature of god and in the second part with the nature of the human soul. Part three is devoted to the affects. If we understand ethics as a doctrine of how to live a good life, this can be mainly found in Parts IV and V, where Spinoza discusses how to live well with the affects.

In Part I, Spinoza argues that god is the only real substance and the cause of all things that follow with necessity from his nature. God is not an anthropomorphic figure who created the world according to a plan, acting purposefully and judging human actions. Rather, Spinoza identifies god with nature, which led to his reputation as a pantheist (for discussion, see Nadler 2019). One consequence of this view is that Spinoza does not defend religious hope. In general, Spinoza has a rather critical view of hope. Since, as we will see, hope is necessarily bound up with doubt, it is a state of mind that should be overcome in our quest for knowledge of eternal truths. Of course, the view that human beings are capable of such knowledge (“[t]he human mind has an adequate knowledge of God’s eternal and infinite essence” (Spinoza 1996 [1677], IIP47, p. 61)) reveals a remarkable hope, if not optimism, about human cognitive capacities (see Nadler 2019).

In Parts I and II, Spinoza establishes the claim that the human being in all its aspects is part of nature and governed by natural laws. In accordance with this view, Spinoza treats affects as natural phenomena, which therefore obey natural laws with necessity. Like Hobbes, Spinoza rejects Descartes’s view that the human soul is not part of nature and as such is free from the determining influence of the passions. Still, Spinoza describes in Part IV how it is possible to gain (some degree of) control over the passions and thereby free oneself from the influence of external causes.

Just like the other early modern philosophers, Spinoza identifies a few foundational affects and claims that the other affects are generated from them. The basic affects of the soul, for Spinoza, are joy, sadness (which correspond to pleasure and pain, insofar as they refer to soul and body taken together), and desire (Spinoza 1996 [1677], IIIP11, p. 77). Hope is “nothing but an inconstant joy which has arisen from the image of a future or past thing whose outcome we doubt.”<sup>4</sup> (Spinoza 1996 [1677], IIP18, p. 81) Doubt is an essential element of hope, but also of fear, which is “an inconstant sadness, which has also arisen from the image of a doubtful thing.” (ibid.) Spinoza points out that “it follows simply from the definition of these affects that there is no hope without fear, and no fear without hope” (Spinoza 1996 [1677], IIIP50, p. 95). This closely resembles the view put forth by Descartes, who also claims that hope and fear go together, and Hobbes’s view that hope and fear arise from the consciousness of different causes “alternately working in our minds.”

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instrumental but rather *constitutive* of the “emergence of a political sphere in the first place” (Stahl 2020, p. 269).

<sup>4</sup>I use the translation de Spinoza (1996).

If the doubt is overcome, hope becomes certainty and fear becomes despair (ibid.). Just like Descartes, and in contrast to contemporary positions, despair is not compatible with the view that the object is possible; it implies the view that the object is impossible. In contrast to contemporary positions, Spinoza does not view desire as a component of hope. He distinguishes joy or pleasure from desire and views hope as a kind of *joy* that is characterized by a certain doxastic attitude towards the object, namely uncertainty about its existence.

When it comes to evaluating the affect of hope, Spinoza argues that hope (and fear) lead to superstition, since we are so constituted by nature that we easily believe what we hope but reluctantly believe what we fear (see Spinoza 1996 [1677], IIP50, p. 95). This point is important in his political philosophy, as we will see shortly. A positive aspect of hope, at least at first sight, is that it is a kind of joy, and joy brings the soul to greater perfection (see Spinoza 1996 [1677], IIP11, p. 77). With “perfection”, Spinoza refers to the individual’s power (power to act, to be acted upon, and to persevere in being) (see ibid.). However, the fact that hope is always accompanied by fear and fear is a kind of sadness that reduces the perfection of the soul (see ibid.) neutralizes this advantage. This is what Spinoza says in Book IV of the *Ethics*, entitled “On Human Bondage, or the Powers of the Affects”. The negative evaluation of the affects expressed in the title also applies to hope (and fear): Insofar as they are accompanied by sadness, they cannot be intrinsically good—though they can have instrumental value if they moderate an excessive joy (Spinoza 1996 [1677], IVP47, p. 141). Therefore, insofar as we strive to live according to reason, we strive to be free of hope and fear.

In the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Spinoza takes up the idea presented in the *Ethics*, namely the role of hope in grounding superstition: “[A]s the good things of fortune for which they [people] have a boundless desire are quite uncertain, they fluctuate wretchedly between hope and fear” (Spinoza 2007 [1670], p. 3). Even though Spinoza accords fear the most central place in the development of superstition (“Hence, fear is the root from which superstition is born, maintained and nourished” (Spinoza 2007, p. 4)), he repeatedly claims that a group of affects, among them “hope and hatred,” are the pillars of superstition—in contrast to reason (Spinoza 2007, p. 5).

This negative evaluation of hope does not lead Spinoza to demand that the political sphere must be free of hope and other affects. He considers this impossible. The fact that hope (and fear) belong to human nature also plays an important role in Spinoza’s view of the social contract in Chap. 16. He considers it an “universal law of human nature that no one neglects anything that they deem good unless they hope for a greater good or fear a greater loss, and no one puts up with anything bad except to avoid something worse or because he hopes for something better” (Spinoza 2007, p. 198). The same principle explains the phenomenon of abiding by a contract. Spinoza seems to hold that the bindingness of a contract in general, and the political contract as the basis of the state in particular, results from its being “in our interest” (Spinoza 2007, p. 199). This is how the state can secure its power via negative emotions: by inciting “fear of the ultimate punishment” (Spinoza 2007, p. 200). However, Spinoza also considers obedience based on “free will” as an alternative.

The sovereigns “are very much obliged to work for the common good and direct all things by the dictate of reasons” (Spinoza 2007, p. 200). This is superior to ruling by fear or violence.

At this point, however, one might wonder what role *hope* plays in a good political system. Spinoza seems to draw a contrast between ruling by inciting fear and ruling on the basis of reason. If hope and fear indeed cannot be had independently of each other (Spinoza suggests as much in his *Ethics*), there seems to be little room for a politics of hope *instead of* fear. On the basis of Spinoza’s argument for the social contract, however, one might infer that citizens cooperate with the government because they *hope* to attain greater goods by doing so (see Stahl forthcoming). On the assumption that it is possible to have hope without or instead of fear, and on the further assumptions that hope increases the power of the individual and that the power of the state depends on the power of its individuals, we can understand hope as constitutive of a powerful political community (see Stahl 2020; Tucker 2018).

## 4.5 David Hume

David Hume devotes the second book of his *Treatise of Human Nature* to the passions.<sup>5</sup> He distinguishes between two “perceptions of the mind” (2.1.1, p. 181), namely impressions and ideas. Impressions, in turn, can be either “original” (from sensation) or “secondary” (from reflection): Original impressions are impressions of the senses and bodily pains and pleasures. Secondary impressions “proceed from some of the original ones, either immediately or by the interposition of its idea” (2.1.1, p. 181). Passions, and all emotions, are impressions of reflection. Again, Hume distinguishes between direct and indirect passions: hope, alongside desire, aversion, grief, joy, fear, despair, and security, belongs to the direct passions that “arise immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure” (2.1.1, p. 182) that we experience in the present, or think about occurring in the future.

In the section on the direct passions, Hume does not treat hope and fear merely as examples but rather devotes considerable time to discussing them in detail. He announces that “[n]one of the direct affections seems to merit our particular attention, except hope and fear” (2.3.9, p. 281). He defines joy and grief or sorrow as reactions to certainty concerning good and evil and hope and fear as reactions to the corresponding uncertainty: “When either good or evil is uncertain, it gives rise to FEAR or HOPE, according to the degrees of uncertainty on the one side or the other” (2.3.9, p. 281). Hume pays particular attention to hope and fear in what follows because he wants to understand why the situation of uncertainty “makes such a considerable difference” (ibid.) to our passions: “‘Tis evident that the very same event, which by its certainty wou’d produce grief or joy, gives always rise to fear or

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<sup>5</sup>All quotes are taken from the *Treatise of Human Nature*, quoting (book.part.section, page), using the edition (Hume 2000).

hope, when only probable and uncertain” (ibid.). Hume refers back to his treatment of probability in Book I (“Of the Understanding”), where probability is a major topic of the third part.

In the chapter on the “probability of chances,” Hume divides “human reason into three kinds, viz. that from knowledge, from proof, and from probabilities” (1.3.11, p. 86). Whereas knowledge is assurance provided by the “comparison of ideas” and proofs are arguments “free from doubt and uncertainty,” which are based on the relation between cause and effect, probability concerns “that evidence, which is still attended with uncertainty” (1.3.11, p. 86). The situation of uncertainty is due to the fact that the subject can imagine causes that would bring the object into existence but also causes that speak against the object’s coming into existence.

Hume argues that hope and fear are mixtures of joy and sorrow or grief. The first assumption is that in situations of uncertainty, the understanding oscillates between the two possibilities—the existence and absence of an imagined good. Second, Hume claims that the emotional state of the person follows the understanding and therefore oscillates as well, namely between joy (imagining the existence of the good) and sorrow (imagining the absence of the good). Third, Hume assumes that the passions (in contrast to the imagination) exhibit a certain inertness: When the representation of the object changes (from coming-into-existence to not doing so), the passions do not immediately adapt to the imagination, but linger on. Therefore, in situations of uncertainty, the subject experiences a mixture of joy and grief, which give rises to hope or fear, depending on whether joy or grief is stronger (2.39, p. 283). The connection of hope to joy recalls Spinoza’s account. However, Spinoza views hope as a kind of joy (inconstant joy), whereas Hume describes hope as a *mixture* of joy and grief in which joy dominates.

If hope is distinguished from fear because the mixture of joy and grief involves more joy, this implies that hope presupposes that the subject takes the good to be more probable than not. This accords with the definition which was the starting point of Hume’s reflections, where hope and fear are distinguished “according to the degrees of uncertainty on the one side or the other” (2.3.9, p. 281). If this is true, Hume also deviates from the contemporary “standard account” according to which one may hope for what one takes to be very unlikely. For Hume, if a good event is considered very unlikely (and thus if an “evil” is likely), this leads to the dominance of grief in the mixture of grief and joy, which amounts to fear.

## 4.6 Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant’s account of hope differs from those of his contemporaries in important respects. On the one hand, he does not develop a taxonomy of affects and does not provide a definition of hope.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Kant assigns hope a

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<sup>6</sup>Kant’s works are cited using volume and page numbers (volume:page) of the standard Academy edition of Kant’s writings (Berlin, 1900–), except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The latter is cited

central place in his philosophy. In the Canon of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states that “What may I hope?” (A805/B833) is one of the fundamental questions of reason. That is, Kant is mainly interested in the *normative* question of what makes hope rational. Despite the centrality of hope, interpreters have found it difficult to pin down Kant’s answer precisely. One reason is that immediately following the hope question, Kant seems to focus on faith, not hope, which has led many interpreters to conflate the two concepts. Further, Kant talks about hope in different writings, and it is not immediately clear whether there is one unified account in the background. For reasons of space, in what follows I will only present his account in the first *Critique*, followed by an overview of Kant’s treatment of hope in his political writings.<sup>7</sup>

Kant’s starting point in the first *Critique* is a statement about what we de facto hope for: “all hope concerns happiness” (A805/B833). At first sight, the question *what may we hope* seems to concern what we are *morally permitted* to hope. However, this is not exactly Kant’s focus, as we see in his second formulation of the hope question: “If I do what I should, what may I then hope?” (A805/B833). Kant is in fact asking *what may we hope to attain regarding our happiness as a result of our moral conduct?* He draws a conceptual connection between moral behavior and *worthiness* to be happy: The moral law “commands how we should behave in order [. . .] to be worthy of happiness” (A806/B834). In the hope question, Kant already presupposes moral conduct (“If I do what I should. . .”) and thereby the worthiness of being happy. Does being worthy of happiness mean that one can expect or hope to attain happiness? This is the question that Kant wants to answer affirmatively.

According to Kant, each of us may have “hope for happiness in the same measure as he has made himself worthy of it in his conduct” (A809/B837). Kant calls the state in which happiness is attained in exact proportion to morality the “highest good” (A814/B842). Thus, one might suppose that the answer to the hope question is “the highest good.” Note, however, that Kant reserves hope for one of the two elements of the highest good, i.e. when he speaks of the “*hope* of being happy” and the “*effort* to make oneself *worthy* of happiness” (A810/B838, my emphasis).

This is not yet the full answer to the hope question, as Kant suggests in the third version of it: “Now if I behave so as not to be unworthy of happiness, *how* may I hope thereby to partake of it?” (A809/B837, my emphasis). This question is motivated by the fact that we might question how the highest good is even possible: Neither nature nor human agency can ensure the necessary connection between happiness and morality (A810/B838). Therefore, it seems that we do not have grounds to hope for our happiness as part of the highest good. This problem and

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using the A- and B-editions (A/B). I use the following translations: *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1998), *Critique of Practical Reason* (Kant 1996b), *On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, but It Is of No Use in Practice* (Kant 1996c), and *Toward Perpetual Peace* (Kant 1996d).

<sup>7</sup>For an overview of all contexts in which Kant treats hope, including the *Religion*, see my chapter “Hope in Kant” (Blöser 2020).

its answer lie at the heart of Kant's hope question. We can reformulate the question as "What do I have grounds to hope for?"<sup>8</sup>

Kant argues that only if we assume god's existence and the existence of a "future life" can we conceive of the highest good as possible (A811/B839). Only by assuming that a just and benevolent god will distribute happiness in proportion to morality can we imagine that the necessary connection between morality and happiness will be established. As we can see that this does not happen presently on earth, we must assume a future life in which the highest good is realized. Therefore, hoping for one's happiness as part of the highest good requires assuming the existence of god and immortality. The normative question of whether we *may* hope also requires that these assumptions be *rational*.

In a nutshell, Kant argues that even if the assumptions of god and a future life can never be justified on *theoretical* grounds—by providing an a priori argument or pointing to evidence—we have decisive *practical* reasons for these assumptions. Therefore, we may rationally assume the existence of god and a future life as objects of faith or "moral Belief"<sup>9</sup> (A828/B856), or, in the terminology of the second *Critique*, we may hold them as *postulates* of pure practical reason. Discussing Kant's argument in detail would exceed the limits of this chapter. Instead, allow me to focus on two central features of postulates and to point out their consequences for an understanding of hope. According to Kant, a "postulate of pure practical reason" is "a *theoretical* proposition, though one not demonstrable as a such, insofar as it is attached inseparably to an a priori unconditionally valid *practical* law" (5:122), which is the moral law. A postulate is a theoretical proposition (i.e. it concerns an existence claim), but it is not justified on theoretical grounds. However, it is a necessary precondition of the moral law—Kant argues that the assumption of god and immortality are necessary conditions for a moral duty, namely that of promoting the highest good.

This reconstruction reveals how hope and faith are related: Faith is an epistemic attitude towards the grounds of hope for deserved happiness (god and immortality), of which we lack knowledge. We may hope because hope is based on *rational* faith. Thus, the full answer to Kant's hope question is: if I do what I should, I may hope for happiness as part of the highest good, because it is rational to assume that this hope has grounds, i.e. because it is rational to have faith or moral Belief that god exists and the soul is immortal.

The connection between hope and faith is responsible for a special feature of Kant's conception of hope: its status as "sure hope" (6:482). This feature is particularly interesting against the background of the other early modern views of hope we have seen so far. According to Kant, hope for happiness is sure in two respects: First, hope does not go hand in hand with fear. For Kant, hope and fear have different

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<sup>8</sup>Günther Zöllner (2013, p. 254) draws attention to the fact that "may" [*dürfen*], in Kant's time, was used not only in the sense of permission but also in the sense of "having grounds" [*Grund haben*].

<sup>9</sup>Translating Kant's term "Glaube" into English is difficult; it is sometimes translated as "faith" or as "Belief" with a capital "B" (Chignell 2013).

presuppositions: hope presupposes faith, and fear presupposes the absence of faith (see A830/B858).<sup>10</sup> Second, hope for happiness is sure because it is empirically indefeasible. It is based on faith, which is theoretically undecidable and immune to any evidence to come. If we can have faith come what may, we can also hope, come what may, that we will attain deserved happiness.

In his historical and political writings, Kant envisages hope for moral and legal progress in various passages (e.g. 7:93, 8:17, 8:307, 8:386). A parallel to the account of hope in the *Critiques* is suggested by calling the goal of progress—perpetual peace—the “highest political good” (6:355). A further similarity between Kant’s various treatments of hope is that in the political context also, Kant aims to justify the assumption of a ground of hope. The role of god in the highest good is assigned to nature (understood as a teleological order) or providence (see e.g. 8:361). Just as we lack knowledge of god, the teleological order of nature cannot be an object of knowledge; it can only be an object of faith or trust (8:313).

In the *Common Saying*, Kant advances an argument that is meant to show that even people who deny the reality of progress—like Moses Mendelssohn, whom Kant cites as an advocate of this view—must “hope for better times” if they act to promote the “general well-being” (8:309). Kant gives the following rationale for this thesis: “[H]e [Mendelssohn] could not reasonably hope to bring this about all by himself, without others after him continuing along the same path” (ibid.). That is, Kant focuses here on actions where (1) the success cannot be brought about by a single individual and (2) the success is possible only after the death of the acting individual. To be motivated to perform these kinds of actions, we must not believe that they are impossible. Just how the role of hope should be understood here is an open question in Kant scholarship. First, Kant can be understood as holding that lack of belief in the impossibility of success amounts to *hope* that our actions will be successful. This would mean that hope for the success of one’s actions is a necessary presupposition of rational action.<sup>11</sup> A problem with this interpretation is that Kantian hope, as described thus far, implies a kind of certainty that *goes beyond* lacking belief in the impossibility of the outcome. Second, Kant can be understood as holding that hope is *conducive* to difficult action where success is uncertain without being *necessary* for rational action at all. Kant emphasizes that “the mind is [...] cheered up by the prospect that matters could become better in the future” (8:309), which plausibly has a positive effect on our willingness to act and contribute to this future.

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<sup>10</sup>By way of a thought experiment, Kant suggests that for a person who lacks faith in god and immortality, “there is enough left to make him fear a divine existence and a future. For to this end nothing more is required than that he at least cannot pretend to any certainty that there is no such being and no future life” (A 830/B858).

<sup>11</sup>Onora O’Neill emphasizes this aspect of Kant’s account of hope (O’Neill 1997).

## 4.7 Conclusion

Enlightenment views of hope are mostly found in the context of a general theory of the affects or passions. Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Hume advance definitions of hope that can be seen as precursors of the contemporary “standard definition,” according to which hope consists of a desire and a belief in the possibility, but not the certainty, of the desired outcome. In contrast to contemporary definitions, however, Descartes, Hobbes, and Hume advocate a stronger evidential condition for hope: according to their view, we do not hope for what we take to be merely possible, no matter how unlikely it is; we hope for what we take to be more likely. The consistency with which early modern philosophers arrive at this position, and the consistency with which contemporary philosophers of hope maintain that hope is compatible with low probabilities, might lead one to suspect that “hope” has come to express a different concept over time.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps enlightenment views of hope would today be classified as views of *optimism*. Alternatively, the discrepancy between early modern and contemporary views can be taken to point to the fact that hope can take different forms, and that early modern authors were primarily concerned with a kind of hope that does not receive much attention today.

While Descartes, Hobbes, and Hume see hope as connected with a higher probability estimate of the good outcome than fear, Kant distinguishes hope and fear by grounding hope in *faith*. Kant does not provide a definition of hope, since he is not interested in giving an account of hope in the context of empirical psychology. Rather, he focuses on the rationality of hope and argues that we may hope for our deserved happiness because we are rationally entitled to assume that the grounds of hope, namely god and immortality, exist. The other early modern authors wanted to avoid grounding their accounts of hope in metaphysical assumptions. Instead, they treated hope in their taxonomies of affects, which were meant to be based solely on the methods of empirical science. Note that Kant, too, is concerned with providing a philosophical account that does not *contradict* empirical findings. Nevertheless, his restriction of knowledge claims to the empirical realm leaves open the possibility of having faith in god on practical grounds, which is the basis of *sure* hope.

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<sup>12</sup>Thanks to Michael Milona for pointing this out to me and for other helpful comments on an earlier version of this text.



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**Claudia Blöser** (Ph.D.) is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Goethe University Frankfurt. Her main areas of research are practical philosophy, especially Kant’s practical philosophy and moral psychology (especially hope and forgiveness). Her publications include a book on the concept of imputation in Kant’s practical philosophy (*Zurechnung bei Kant*, 2014, Berlin/New York: de Gruyter) and articles in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, *Kantian Review*, *Philosophia*, *Ratio*. She has co-authored the Stanford Encyclopedia article on hope (2017, together with Titus Stahl).

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# Chapter 5

## Post-Kantian to Postmodern Considerations of (Theological) Hope



Ronald T. Michener

**Abstract** Hope found in the rational, empirical, epistemological optimism of Enlightenment-based modernism attempted to detach itself from its religious, Christian roots. This chapter will focus on post-Kantian and postmodern sensibilities that reject the modernist “myth of neutrality” and return to the theological roots of hope, even when for some, particular theological or Christian beliefs are renounced. To consider this, the chapter will highlight themes of hope found in precursors to postmodern thought: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Marcel. Next, it will turn to the postmodern Derridean hope of John D. Caputo and offer a glimpse of the pragmatic hope of Richard Rorty. This will be followed by a consideration of James K.A. Smith’s critique of Caputo and Rorty, and his proposal for a phenomenological, determined hope.

### 5.1 Introduction

For Kant, Jürgen Moltmann quipped, the Enlightenment brought a “chiliastic solemnity” transitioning “humanity into the new era of pure faith in reason. . . . What had formerly been called the Kingdom of God became for Kant the symbol of the ethical goal humanity had endlessly to approach” (Moltmann 2004, pp. 10–11). The real religious question for Kant, Moltmann believed, was not about how we are connected with the past, but about hope for the future (Moltmann 2004, p. 11). Unfortunately, the hopes of progress stemming from the optimism and confidence of the Enlightenment, whether industrial, economic, political, or otherwise, were dashed in the wake of the World War One, World War Two, Auschwitz, the failure of industrialism to sustain third world countries, and the environmental crisis. But does this suspicion or dissolution of modern progress require the absence of hope for the future altogether? Moltmann’s response is prudent: “Today our hopes will have

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R. T. Michener (✉)

Department of Systematic Theology, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium  
e-mail: [ron.michener@etf.edu](mailto:ron.michener@etf.edu)

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S. C. van den Heuvel (ed.), *Historical and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9_5)

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to be cautious hopes, and hopes that count the costs. We have to hope and work for the future without arrogance and without despair” (Moltmann 2004, p. 16).

Hope, it seems, must be linked to time and expectation in the future. That is, hope is looking toward, or the anticipation of, some positive state of affairs beyond the present, without ignoring the past. Hope is thoroughly affirmative and sanguine rather than defeatist in its expectations. One would not normally speak in terms of “hope” with regard to the expectation of devastation, illness, or torture.<sup>1</sup> But modern hope, stemming from the ideals of Enlightenment confidence in human ability and reason, has been found politically, economically, and morally bankrupt. This is not to say that there are no signs of improvement in the living conditions of humanity. Indeed, most of us have enjoyed the benefits of modern technological developments, especially in terms of transportation conveniences, and communication and medical technologies. But such amenities have certainly not been universal or free from complications. Further, with such developments and “virtual” conveniences we are challenged with the meaningfulness of relationships with respect to bodily presence. Medical technologies equally raise questions as to the meaningfulness of being human in view of life supporting and life enhancing technologies.<sup>2</sup>

In *Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium*, Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart submit, “the Enlightenment’s idea of progress was certainly to some degree indebted to the Christian eschatology it repudiated. It has often been seen as the secularized form of the Christian metanarrative” (Bauckham and Hart 1999, p. 9). Regardless, Mark Bernier points out that any reflections on hope are greatly indebted to the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor 13:13 when he claims “hope” as one of the three essential, everlasting virtues next to faith and love (Bernier 2015, pp. 1–2). Any attempt to ignore or strip the religious-theological-eschatological dimension of hope is robbing it of its human context and origins. The hope found in the rational, empirical, epistemological optimism of Enlightenment-based modernism attempted to detach itself from its religious, Christian roots. Postmodern sensibilities, however, in their rejection of the modernist “myth of neutrality,” return forthrightly to the theological roots of hope, even if particular theological or Christian beliefs are disavowed. The utopian hope of modernism is, Bauckham and Hart submit, a “secularized version of the traditional Christian understanding of providence” combined with “a human assumption of the responsibility for creating the future which had previously been in God’s hands.” And they add, “Transcendence . . . is replaced both by immanent teleology and by human rationality and freedom” (Bauckham and Hart 1999, p. 14; cf. also p. 12).

But what then does a post-Kantian, even postmodern (theological) view of hope look like? It is to this question we turn in this chapter. To consider this, we will first

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<sup>1</sup>Of course, it is possible to imagine an aberrational use of “hope” in the sense of one who maliciously desires the ill-will of another. For Kierkegaard, this would not essentially be hope at all, but rather a “misuse of the noble word *hope* . . . for to hope is essentially and eternally related to the good . . .” (Kierkegaard 1962, p. 244).

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, the issues raised by Brent Waters with respect to posthumanism and medical technology (Waters 2009).

briefly highlight themes pertaining to hope from those we may consider precursors to postmodern thought: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Marcel.<sup>3</sup> We will then turn to the postmodern Derridean hope of John D. Caputo and offer a glimpse of the pragmatic hope of Richard Rorty. This will be followed by a consideration of James K.A. Smith's critique of Caputo and Rorty, and his proposal for a phenomenological, determined hope (Smith 2004).

One may wonder why I have placed the parenthetical "theological" in the title of this chapter on postmodern notions of hope when another chapter (Chap. 7) is already devoted to the subject of theology and hope. My answer is twofold: First, if there is one thing we learn from the postmodern critique, it is that there is no unbiased, neutral perspective from which to view history, philosophy, or even hope. Our perspectives are embedded, situated, and conditioned by our inescapable context and backgrounds. My context as a professor and student of theology with particular Christian commitments affects my views of hope within a post-Enlightenment, postmodern context. My philosophical views are integral to my theological views. Second (related to the first), I believe we may not bifurcate postmodern philosophical notions of hope from their theological roots. As I will suggest, postmodern perspectives on hope are implicitly theological inasmuch as they are responses, reactions, and proposals to the eschatologically built hope of modernism (as previously noted above in Bauckham and Hart). With these factors in mind, I now turn to Kierkegaard.<sup>4</sup>

## 5.2 Kierkegaard (1813–1855)

Mark Bernier's recent monograph, *The Task of Hope in Kierkegaard* (2015), is perhaps the most extensive and focused research on Kierkegaard's perspectives on the subject of hope. Bernier alerts us out this dearth of resources and attempts to correct it.<sup>5</sup> This is an ambitious task, since, as Bernier notes, Kierkegaard did not produce any particular writing on hope itself, so this must be derived from his diverse texts (Bernier 2015, p. 3).

Bernier argues that hope is "an essential element of Kierkegaard's framework" and is integral in connecting three of Kierkegaard's most important perspectives: "despair, faith, and the self." He makes three basic observations in his introduction. First, despair comes when one is unwilling to hope. Second, hope is critical to

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<sup>3</sup>I can by no means do justice to the breadth and depth of thought in these authors in the following brief descriptions and analyses. The purpose here is simply to highlight notions/themes of hope, either explicit or implicit in a selection of their writings.

<sup>4</sup>Thanks to Michael Milona for helpful remarks on a previous draft of this chapter.

<sup>5</sup>Bernier does, however, point out some exceptions and also notes that during the writing of his monograph there has been some resurgence of studies in this regard (see Bernier 2015, p. 2n5).

“becoming a self.” Third, faith is what undergirds the “ground for hope” (Bernier 2015, p. 3).

Bernier notes that the most extensive examination of hope in Kierkegaard is found in *The Works of Love* (Bernier 2015, p. 88). In the first six chapters of Part Two of *The Works of Love*, Kierkegaard heads each chapter with a Scripture reference (mostly from 1 Corinthians 13) referring to a different attribute of love. For example, Chap. 1 speaks to love building up (1 Cor 8:1); Chap. 2 is about love believing all things (1 Cor 13:7), Chap. 3 (most relevant for our discussion) pertains to love hoping all things (1 Cor 13:7). Kierkegaard’s perspective and explication of hope is best understood in this Christian and “biblical” context. Near the beginning of this chapter, Kierkegaard provides this definition of hope: “To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of the good is to hope, which therefore cannot be some temporal expectancy but rather an eternal hope” (Kierkegaard 1962, p. 234). Bernier seems to agree with John Davenport in thinking that this eschatologically centered hope in Kierkegaard does not require it to have specific “Christian content” (111).<sup>6</sup> However, Bernier’s later comments seem to modify this perspective when he affirms that Kierkegaard’s understanding of ultimate, victorious, eschatological hope is taken “in a decidedly Christian sense, with the overtones of a Christian afterlife” (Bernier 2015, p. 112). After citing Kierkegaard on this matter, Bernier even adds: “Kierkegaard is therefore unapologetically Christian in his approach to understanding authentic hope” (Bernier 2015, p. 112).

Peter Kline offers appears to offer a similar interpretation to Davenport by suggesting that Kierkegaard has an “apophatic approach to hope” (Kline 2017, p. 137). As Kline puts it:

If anticipation relates to the future through the projective power of consciousness, filling the future with determinate content, expectancy holds itself open before the future as absolute, the future withdrawn or absolved from any determinate apprehension. What faith expects is simply time as openness, time as the beginning. This is to expect “an eternity” and “victory.” But again, the eternity and the victory here are nothing determinate. “The person who expects something particular or who bases his expectancy on something particular,” Kierkegaard writes, “does not have faith” (137–38).<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps we should suggest a happy medium. We must not confuse Kierkegaard’s call for the ridding of particular expectancies for with the absence of his overall expectancy of Christian faith. Kierkegaard continues his thoughts several lines after the brief quotation included in Kline’s citation above (from *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*). Writing from a third-person perspective as the “person of faith,” he says: “‘My soul is not insensitive to the joy or the pain of the particular, but, God be praised, it is not the case that the particular can substantiate or refute the expectancy of faith.’ God be praised! Time can neither substantiate nor refute it, because faith expects an eternity. . . . But there is one expectancy that will not be disappointed . . . this is the expectancy of faith, and this is victory” (Kierkegaard 1990, pp. 27–28).

<sup>6</sup>Bernier refers to John Davenport (2008, p. 249).

<sup>7</sup>Cline cites this from one of Kierkegaard (1990, p. 27).

For Kierkegaard, Bernier submits, hope is either “mundane” or “authentic” (Bernier 2015, p. 3; cf. also pp. 88–92, 103–121).<sup>8</sup> This “authentic” or eternal type of hope for Kierkegaard must not be confused with the triteness of mere desire in normal conversation, especially among youth looking with excitement toward days ahead. Eternal hope is more mature and deep. Since authentic hope is eternal hope it “has range enough for the whole of life; therefore there is and shall be hope until the end” (Kierkegaard 1962, p. 235). Again, one must keep in mind that the backdrop here for Kierkegaard is thoroughly Christian; he is speaking of the eternality of *Christian* hope where “Christ is the way” (Kierkegaard 1962, p. 233). Furthermore, as mentioned above, Kierkegaard is situating his Christian understanding of hope in the broader context of love: “But love, which is greater than faith and hope, takes upon itself the work of hope or takes hope upon itself as the work of hoping for others. It is itself built up and nourished by this hope of the eternal and then acts lovingly in this hope towards others” (Kierkegaard 1962, p. 233; cf. also Bernier 2015, p. 213; and Fremstedal 2012, p. 57). Roe Fremstedal adds that “Christian hope” for Kierkegaard is a gift from the Holy Spirit and is reliant upon God’s grace and forgiveness. One may “hope against hope” when one understands she is powerless and in need of God’s mercy (Fremstedal 2012, p. 54).

Like Bernier, postmodern philosopher/theologian Mark C. Taylor expressed a similar position with respect to Kierkegaard: “This universal condition of inauthentic selfhood can only be overcome by the belief in God as the ground of infinite possibility, and the belief in God as the ground of one’s future life. In other words, authentic human selfhood presupposes the belief in God as omnipotent” (Taylor 1973, p. 232). Further, Taylor claims, for Kierkegaard, “the individual must believe that God will annul his sin, thereby re-establishing the possibility of salvation. But the only way in which the sinner can be related to forgiveness is in hope” (Taylor 1973, p. 232). Hence, the eschatological hope of Kierkegaard is about reaching ultimate selfhood before the eternal God. Hope is seen in terms of possibility, rather than the impossibility of hope for one immersed in despair (Bernier 2015, p. 112). As we will see below, this is in stark contrast to John D. Caputo’s postmodern notion of hope that is characterized by hope of the impossible.

Although this is only a cursory glance at Kierkegaard’s perspectives on hope, we may see how he is moving away from the general, depersonalized, economic-political utopian hope of the Enlightenment. Hope is not abstract and impersonal, it is radically existential, personal, and is integrally related to love of God and others.<sup>9</sup> It is not, however, thoroughly postmodern. With Kierkegaard, the personal

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<sup>8</sup>Bernier suggests in Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*, that the distinction between wish (which Bernier classifies as the “mundane”) and hope is unclear. Nonetheless, within the “framework of mundane hope” in Kierkegaard, he “does intend for there to be a distinction” (Bernier 2015, p. 106). Furthermore, “mundane” hope for Kierkegaard is not at all genuine hope. See note 1, above. Bernier nuances “mundane” hope in a section titled, “Mundane Wish vs Mundane Hope” (Bernier 2015, p. 106). Cf. also Roe Fremstedal’s distinction between Kierkegaard’s “heavenly hope” and “earthly,” “temporal,” or “natural” hope (Fremstedal 2012, p. 52).

<sup>9</sup>See Bernier (2015, pp. 212–214).

self is still front and center. With the advent of postmodern thought, the entire notion of the self is challenged. This, as we will see, greatly colors and shapes one's perspectives on the nature of *personal* hope.

### 5.3 Nietzsche (1844–1900)

If Kierkegaard is seen as a positive, even enthusiastic example of post-Kantian (theological) hope, Nietzsche is often regarded as one who disfavors hope and is marked by hopelessness. A quick search on the Internet will locate the following popular quotation from Nietzsche that lends favor to this view: “Hope . . . is, in truth, the greatest of evils for it lengthens the ordeal of man.” The full quotation in context appears in section 71 of Nietzsche’s *Human All Too Human*:

Pandora brought the box containing evils and opened it. It was the gift of the gods to men, a gift of most enticing appearance externally and called the “box of happiness.” Thereupon all the evils, (living, moving things) flew out: from that time to the present they fly about and do ill to men by day and night. One evil only did not fly out of the box: Pandora shut the lid at the behest of Zeus and it remained inside. Now man has this box of happiness perpetually in the house and congratulates himself upon the treasure inside of it; it is at his service: he grasps it whenever he is so disposed, for he knows not that the box which Pandora brought was a box of evils. Hence he looks upon the one evil still remaining as the greatest source of happiness—it is hope.—Zeus intended that man, notwithstanding the evils oppressing him, should continue to live and not rid himself of life, but keep on making himself miserable. For this purpose he bestowed hope upon man: it is, in truth, the greatest of evils for it lengthens the ordeal of man (Nietzsche 2015a, section 71, Kindle Edition).<sup>10</sup>

Certainly this section from Nietzsche does not announce hopefulness. But when the quotation is displayed within its larger context, it does give a nuanced impression. Pandora’s box was presumed by mankind to contain happiness, instead it was a box of assorted evils. All evils were released from the box barring one: hope. Hope is evil because ultimately happiness never arrives. But, such false “evil” hope ironically keeps mankind alive, as Zeus intends. So mankind continues to live with gritted teeth, facing whatever comes along.

With this in mind, thinking about hope in a Nietzschean context must be nuanced. Certainly, Nietzsche abandons the eschatological, “authentic” Christian hope of Kierkegaard.<sup>11</sup> But he is not replacing this abandoned hope (along with the God to which Kierkegaard’s hope was attached) with some new form of salvation. Bruce Ellis Benson argues “that Nietzsche—far from seeking a new soteriology—is

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. also the following quote: “Hope, in its stronger forms, is a great deal more powerful stimulant to life than any sort of realized joy can ever be. Man must be sustained in suffering by a hope so high that no conflict with actuality can dash it—so high, indeed, that no fulfilment can satisfy it: a hope reaching out beyond this world. (Precisely because of this power that hope has of making the suffering hold out, the Greeks regarded it as the evil of evils, as the most malign of evils; it remained behind at the source of all evil.) (Nietzsche 2015a, section 23).

<sup>11</sup>Although Nietzsche is not engaging with Kierkegaard himself in his writings.

seeking to overcome the perceived notion that we need some sort of salvation. Not only does he wish to be free from the God of Christianity, he also wished to be free from the very idea of redemption” (Benson 2008, p. 7). Benson suggests, however, that Nietzsche is not an atheist or nihilist in the sense in which he has customarily been branded. In fact, Benson maintains that Nietzsche “remains a kind of theist throughout his life, even though he moves from one god to another” (Benson 2008, pp. 6, 7).

Nietzsche’s announcement of the death of God is not “an onto-theological claim made by an atheist” Graham Ward argues, but a way of proclaiming the death of the God of modernity. ‘God’ is a metonym, standing for an approach to philosophy embedded in modernity that seeks metaphysical grounding for everything. Nietzsche reveals that there is no such ultimate grounding (Ward 1997, pp. xxviii, xxix). The point that there is no grounding, however, does not necessarily lead to nihilism or complete hopelessness.

Nietzsche’s brand of hope apart from God may be considered what Gilbert Hottois calls “Le nihilism affirmative”—affirmative nihilism (Hottois 1998, p. 231).<sup>12</sup> Although Benson may not agree with the term “nihilism” applied to Nietzsche, he agrees that Nietzsche does not escape the affirmative “logic of Christianity.” But rather than the “kingdom of heaven” having an eschatological and soteriological focus as something beyond this life, for Nietzsche, it is about “getting back into life’s true rhythm . . . from a decadent rhythm to one that is truly life *affirming*” (Benson 2008, pp. 7, 8, italics original).<sup>13</sup> To face life after Christendom’s God, after modernity’s god of progress, requires strength of mind, courage and will. This is found in Nietzsche’s notion of the “overman” (*Übermensch*)—which is, as Benson submits, “characterized not so much by strength of body . . . but by strength of character, depth and creativity” (Benson 2002, p. 86). As Nietzsche puts it: “There are still hopes . [sic] the breeding of superior men” (Nietzsche 1911, p. 28). I will avoid the controversial discussion about what Nietzsche may have been proposing with regard to eugenics. I simply point this out to illustrate that Nietzsche’s view of the overman, the human being who masters self-discipline and effort, will be able to face the horrors of life through such mastery and by being resilient and maintaining a stiff upper lip.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Hottois, however, does not directly identify Nietzsche’s perspective here with the notion of hope as I am suggesting. On this idea of an affirmative nihilism, Hottois writes: “La destruction des vieilles valeurs et des anciens tabous est donc aussi joyeusement iconoclaste, acte prospectif qui rend possible de nouvelles créations, l’invention de valeurs inouïes, la découverte d’autres interprétations de la vie, du monde et de l’homme” (Hottois 1998, p. 231).

<sup>13</sup>Whether or not Nietzsche himself succeeds at such affirmation is a question that Benson addresses and develops in his book, *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith* (2008, esp. pp. 189–216).

<sup>14</sup>Willard Huntington Wright spells this out well in his preface to *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, with reference to how the overman fits in with Nietzsche’s perspective of eternal recurrence: “The eternal recurrence . . . concerns the possibility that all events in one’s life will happen again and again, infinitely. The embrace of all of life’s horrors and pleasures alike shows a deference and acceptance of fate, or *Amor Fati*. The love and acceptance of one’s path in life is a defining characteristic of the



Nietzsche expresses this resolute hope of the overman through the words of Zarathustra:

And that is the great noon when man stands in the middle of his way between beast and overman and celebrates his way to the evening as his highest hope: for it is the way to a new morning. Then will he who goes under bless himself for being one who goes over and beyond; and the sun of his knowledge will stand at high noon for him.

*“Dead are all gods: now we want the overman to live”*—on that great noon, let this be our last will.

Thus spake Zarathustra. (Nietzsche 1976, pp. 190–191, italics original)

Although this “hope” may seem dour as it falls on the heels of the death of “all gods” it remains, nonetheless quite optimistic in tone with words such as “celebrates,” “new morning,” and “highest hope.”

Paul Carus provides insightful comments with respect to the overman as it relates to Nietzschean hope:

The highest summit of existence is reached in those phases of the denouement of human life when the overman has full control over the herds which are driven into the field, sheared and butchered for the sole benefit of him who knows the secret that this world has no moral significance beyond being a prey to his good pleasure. Nietzsche’s hope is certainly not desirable for the mass of mankind, but even the fate of the overman himself would appear as little enviable a condition as that of the tyrant Dionysius under the sword of Damocles, or the Czar of Russia living in constant fear of the anarchistic bomb. (Carus 2015, Kindle Edition)

Enviably or not, Nietzsche is not abandoning life itself, nor advocating a defeatist nihilism. He is articulating a type of hope, but it is a hope that stems from the abandonment of a false, hope that seeks escape from the adverse conditions of life. His hope knows the true secret of Pandora’s box. Happiness is not to be found in its contents.

Thus, although their conclusions are radically different, we can nonetheless see how both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard’s notions of hope are theological in orientation. Kierkegaard’s hope of affirmation is a personal, existential hope in the eternal God, away from the artificial hope of modern progress and reason. Nietzsche’s hope of negation is hope that stems from the ridding of God or gods that have blinded us from the reality of being human, a human that must rise above, in spite of it all, with the will to power, to be the overman.

I will now turn to another affirmative theistic proponent of post-Kantian hope: Gabriel Marcel.

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overman. Faced with the knowledge that he would repeat every action that he has taken, an overman would be elated as he has no regrets and loves life. Opting to change any decision or event in one’s life would indicate the presence of resentment or fear. Therefore, the overman is characterised by courage and a Dionysian spirit” (Wright 2015).

## 5.4 Marcel (1889–1973)

Gabriel Marcel has both similarities and differences with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. As William Desmond observes: “Like Nietzsche he acknowledged the godless condition of modern man. But unlike Nietzsche, he did not see this condition as gain for human freedom but as the sign of a catastrophic loss or refusal” (Desmond 2004, p. 143). Marcel appreciates Nietzsche’s “honest diagnosis about our godlessness, but not his proposed solution in the Overman” (Desmond 2004, p. 143). Marcel believes that there must be something beyond ourselves (143). We can see ties with Kierkegaard in that Marcel does not link religious faithfulness to objectivity. Faithfulness is linked with hope that is not tied to being absolutely certain (Desmond 2004, pp. 142–143). For Marcel, hope is a “process” and a “mystery” having character traits of “humility,” “modesty,” and “chastity” so it must not be placed under the rational scrutiny (Marcel 1962, p. 35). Unlike Sartre’s existentialism, Marcel refuses to dismiss God from his journeying with respect to hope, even if one does not prove God in some objective sense. Like Kierkegaard, God must not be made into an object of proof (Desmond 2004, p. 142). Unlike Kierkegaard’s existential emphasis on the individual self, however, Marcel emphasizes a hope that is community centered: “. . . there can be no hope which does not constitute itself through a *we* and for a *we*. I would be very tempted to say that all hope is at bottom choral” (Marcel 1973, p. 143). Previously, in his work *Homo Viator*,<sup>15</sup> he wrote of a “remedy of communion”:

“I hope in thee for us”; such is perhaps the most adequate and the most elaborate expression of the act which the very ‘to hope’ suggests in a way which is still confused and ambiguous. “In thee—for us”: between this “thou” and this “us” which only the most persistent reflection can finally discover in the act of hope . . . (Marcel 1962, p. 60)

With this in mind, Brian Treanor comments: “It is impossible to rise to the level of hope in a solitary or selfish egoism. Only love can hope, for hope takes place on what might be called the plane of *agape*” (Treanor 2006, p. 86, italics original).<sup>16</sup>

Hope that is set in the context of community and love, reflects the move away from “[t]he self-absorption arising out of Enlightenment individualism” (Doede and Hughes 2004, p. 172).<sup>17</sup> Along with the rejection of a self-centered notion of hope, Marcel’s hope of otherness also rejects Enlightenment self-confidence placed in the “unlimited power of reason” and is represented by “humility rather than hubris” (Treanor 2006, p. 267). In this regard, particular hopes are indeterminate and lack

<sup>15</sup>Marcel’s book, *Homo Viator* (i.e. “man on a journey or “man as a wayfarer”) devotes an entire chapter developing a metaphysic of hope. As David Elliot points out, the term “Homo Viator” was previously used by Thomas Aquinas to describe the human being as a “wayfarer,” one “journeying through this world to the heavenly city” (Elliot 2014, p. 101).

<sup>16</sup>Of course, it may be the case that there are gradations of loving actions between selfish egoism and purely *agape* focused love. Thanks to Michael Milona for this insight.

<sup>17</sup>Doede & Hughes also refer to Bauckham and Hart (1999, p. 62).

certainty, being centered more on the journey rather than some particular destination (see Treanor 2006, p. 267).<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Marcel's view of hope was undirected or satisfied to remain in the void. As Desmond aptly notes: "The howl of Nietzsche's Madman was heard by Marcel, but he also heard a different music. With neither Marcel nor Nietzsche had the horror of this howl been cheapened into the postmodern kitsch it has now become, with the chirpy nihilists who blithely claim to be at home in the wasteland" (Desmond 2004, p. 143). Unlike Nietzsche's abandonment of the attachment of salvation to hope, Marcel's hope is certainly a hope of salvation: "The 'I hope' in all its strength is directed towards salvation. It really is a matter of my coming out of a darkness in which I am at present plunged, and which may be the darkness of illness, of separation, exile or slavery" (Marcel 1962, p. 30). Commenting on this hope-centered salvation of Marcel, Pius Ojara affirms: "Hope gives invincible assurance that the tragedies of current life do not have the final say on life" (Ojara 2007, p. 22. See also p. 21).

Marcel's salvation-visioned hope is also linked (as a response) to despair: "The truth is that there can strictly speaking be no hope except when the temptation to despair exists. Hope is the act by which this temptation is actively or victoriously overcome" (Marcel 1962, p. 36). When despair tempts one to give up on life, one's thoughts may be drawn to the love of another. In this, hope and love are connected (Ojara 2007, p. 26; cf. also pp. 27–28). As Ojara puts it: "Herein lies the spiritual economy of intersubjectivity or genuine human kinship. . . . In its élan hope locates itself in a dimension of perpetual novelty that fosters and celebrates life with others; it is not fatigued" (Ojara 2007, p. 26).<sup>19</sup> Hope ultimately transcends the finiteness of despair and the difficult problems of life (Ojara 2007, pp. 27–28); it is an "unconditional quality" (Ojara 2007, p. 29) that "has a transcendent foundation in being and, ultimately, in the absolute Thou" (Ojara 2007, p. 30). For Marcel, hope transcends all conditions because "absolute hope" comes from "the infinite Being" from which all is derived (Marcel 1962, pp. 46–47).

This existential, indeterminate, yet radically affirmative view of hope in Marcel provides a fitting segue into postmodern notions of hope. As mentioned above, I will consider the Derridean nuanced hope of John D. Caputo, and very briefly mention the undetermined pragmatic hope of Richard Rorty. These reflections will occur in dialogue with James K.A. Smith's critique of both Caputo and Rorty, while also considering Smith's phenomenological, determinate hope.

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<sup>18</sup>In a conversation between Marcel and Paul Ricoeur, Ricoeur notes: "We have come to see that hope and journeying are not two different things, but that hope is what makes the passage something more than just simple wandering" (Marcel 1973, p. 255, cited in Ojara 2007, p. 23).

<sup>19</sup>Here Ojara draws upon Marcel's "Desire and Hope" in *Readings in Existential Phenomenology*, Nathaniel Lawrence and Daniel O'Connor, eds. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), 283, 278.

## 5.5 Postmodern Hope: Caputo, Rorty, Smith

### 5.5.1 *Caputo's Hope-Filled Deconstruction*

John D. Caputo is perhaps the foremost theological translator of Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism. For Caputo, as with Derrida, deconstruction is radically affirmative and hope-filled.<sup>20</sup> Caputo's appropriation of Derrida has been frequently marked by themes of hope.<sup>21</sup> Like Kierkegaard and Marcel, Caputo's hope is forthrightly theological, but also wildly indeterminate and radically unorthodox—as he admittedly borrows from Derrida, it is “religion without religion” (Caputo 2015, p. 20).

Caputo's theologically colored hope is illustrated in this following affirmation: “Scriptures are songs of hope, calling for the coming of the kingdom, which is always to-come” and “[t]he name of God is a nickname for hope, for hope against hope” and (Caputo 2018, p. 320). Hope, for Caputo, is about a call to justice and goodness, not about some entity or metaphysical judge. Using the name of “God” is to name an “event of our faith in the transformability of thing, in the most improbable and impossible things, so that life is never closed in, the future never closed off . . . and gives hope where everything is hopeless” (Caputo 2006, p. 88; cf. also Gschwandtner 2013, pp. 243, 243n2). Caputo's postmodern hope may be derived from his religious appropriation of Derrida's apocalyptic deconstruction and its accompanying notion of the messianic. Christine Gschwandtner deftly points out that Derrida is not putting forward “any particular messianism but a certain messianicity. . . . The coming of a Messiah then haunts deconstruction, although this coming is always infinitely deferred” (Gschwandtner 2013, p. 249). The concept of the messianic, in Caputo's perspective, is “the impulse of expectancy in concrete expectations, the structure of hope in determinable hopes” (Caputo 2002, p. 127). But, the messianic never ultimately pans out into a concrete, specified event itself—it is always unsettled and undetermined and “divorced from any particular, determinate messianism (i.e., any determinate religion or tradition) and thus is without any determinate expectation for what is ‘to come’” (Smith 2004, p. 218, italics original).<sup>22</sup> In this regard, the messianic is about constant, ongoing anticipation of what may come, understanding that it ultimately will never (at least completely) arrive. It is a perpetual invitation to come, without the resolution of reaching the destination. Hope, one might say, is reduced to the process (of hope) itself.

Caputo's appropriation of Derrida's messianic colors his emphasis upon the radical indeterminacy of hope. Hope is not hope for a particular thing; it is not

<sup>20</sup>As Caputo insists: “The apocalyptic tone recently adapted in deconstruction is upbeat and affirmative, expectant and hopeful, positively dreamy, dreaming of the impossible” (italic “a” in “adapted” in original) (Caputo 1997, p. 98; cf. also pp. 195–196).

<sup>21</sup>For instance, see Caputo (2006, 2013, 2015).

<sup>22</sup>Derrida's notions of messianic, messianicity, and messianism are complex. Smith refers to Derrida (1994, p. 59) for an explanation. See also Caputo (1997, pp. 117–118, 272–273, 2002, pp. 126–128).

hope in some literal return of Christ nor hope in the reality of an embodied afterlife. It is always a hope “in hope itself” where the future is never closed and complete but is always open for more to come (Caputo 2002, p. 127).<sup>23</sup> The postmodern God, for Caputo, does not show up “in the bound volumes of theology but in loose papers that describe a more underlying and insecure faith, a more restless hope, a more deep-set but unfulfilled promise or desire, a desire beyond desire that is never satisfied. . . . God does not bring closure but a gap” (Caputo 2013, “Preface: The Gap God Opens”).

Of course, a hope with the lack of any future closure may appear not only “restless” but also nihilistic. That is, it would be an unsettled, uncertain hope, absent of determinate meaning or ultimate eschatological purpose. Indeed, Caputo warmly embraces a nihilism of sorts when it comes to postmodern hope. Drawing approvingly upon Lyotard, Caputo looks “nihilism in the eye” as “grace”—a word he confesses to stealing “from the toolbox of classical religion, here refitted do service in our incredulous, postmodern world” (Caputo 2015, p. 44). Caputo calls the embrace of life and hope a “nihilism of grace” (Caputo 2015, p. 171).

Although expressly nihilistic, It is clear that Caputo’s postmodern, undetermined hope is not simply gloom and doom. The absence of hope, for Caputo, “is not a postmodern condition, it is a *postmortem* condition” (Caputo 2015, p. 43, italics mine). That is, while we (humans) remain alive, there remains the possibility of hope as we smile at life. As Caputo insists: “The smile gives us grounds for hope, albeit groundless grounds, for hoping against hope, for smiles can turn into frowns, and laughter into tears, which means that hope, an audacious hope, knows how to smile through our tears. This smile does not last forever, but that does not refute the smile; it makes it all the more precious” (Caputo 2015, p. 42). Caputo desires to put his roots in the here and now of everyday life. He wants to embrace daily embodied presence, living life to the fullest. And, in spite of life’s difficulties, in spite of evil, it is ultimately important to learn “how to smile” in the face of the impossible (Caputo 2015, pp. 41–42, 185–186, 199; cf. also Caputo 2006, p. 181). Caputo’s postmodern hope is effectively summarized near the end of one of his recent books, *Hoping Against Hope*: “I honor the audacity of the old Enlightenment, dare to think, *sapere aude*, but I love a second audacity even more, dare to hope, *sperare aude*, by which the first is haunted. . . . Hope dares to say “come,” dares to pray “come,” to what it cannot see coming” (Caputo 2015, p. 199, italics original).

### 5.5.2 Rorty’s Social, Pragmatic Hope

Richard Rorty’s pragmatic social hope is neither explicitly nor implicitly theological, but it nevertheless may be argued that it is an atheistic response to the overarching

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<sup>23</sup>Caputo puts it another way: “Hope is always hope in hope, hope against hope, hoping like hell” (Caputo 2002, p. 148).

metaphysical narrative of Christian hope. Rorty aims to replace the onto-theological vocabulary of Christian theology and Greek philosophy with a more relevant vocabulary for today (Rorty 1999, p. xxii). He refers (albeit pejoratively) to the subject of Christian hope multiple times in his work *Philosophy and Social Hope* (which includes a chapter, “Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility and Romance,” and another, “Failed Prophecies, Glorious Hopes.” Rorty’s critique is thoroughly pragmatic; he does not claim empirical evidence to discount Christian faith. Yet, for Rorty, Christ has not returned, and Christian evangelicals claiming to be “a New Being in Christ” do not appear to be as transformed as “we had hoped,” although this does not deny the authenticity of their experience (Rorty 1999, pp. 201–202). Rorty contends: “We have been waiting a long time for prosperous Christians to behave more decently than prosperous pagans” (Rorty 1999, p. 202). Ultimately it is pragmatic action for justice that matters instead of a theoretical metaphysical paradigm.

Rorty does not think we can “take either Christian or Marxist postponements and reassurances seriously,” but this does not mean that we cannot seek hopeful “inspiration and encouragement” from the New Testament and the Manifesto” (Rorty 1999, pp. 202–203).<sup>24</sup> But in order to seriously appropriate the New Testament’s social justice morality, in contrast to seeing it as prophecy, one must hope for a democratic redistribution of “money and opportunity in a way that the market never will” (Rorty 1999, p. 249). Ultimately, we need to take the “morally flawed” other worldly aspirations of the New Testament writers and turn them into this worldly, social convictions (see Rorty 1999, p. 207; cf. Smith 2004, p. 204)<sup>25</sup> It is the “hope for social justice,” for Rorty, which is “the only basis for a worthwhile human life” (Rorty 1999, p. 204). Rorty refers approvingly to the Social Gospel Movement that stemmed from theologians Paul Tillich and Walter Rauschenbusch, which put social justice first and foremost over debates between theism and atheism (Rorty 1999, p. 206).

### 5.5.3 *James K.A. Smith’s Critique of Indeterminate Hope*

James K.A. Smith questions both the indeterminacy of hope in Derrida (on which Caputo’s hope rests) and the basis of hope for Rorty. Based upon his phenomenological analysis of the structure of all notions of hope, Smith argues that both perspectives are unable to provide authentic perspectives on hope (Smith 2004, pp. 204–205). Instead, Smith insists that a viable postmodern hope lies not in a

<sup>24</sup>Rorty also expresses caution in this, as he believes that both Christianity and Marxism can be coercive and damaging (Rorty 1999, pp. 204–205).

<sup>25</sup>The moral flaw lies in the “suggestion that we can separate the question of our individual relations to God—our individual chance for salvation—from our participation in cooperative efforts to end needless suffering” (Rorty 1999, pp. 207–208).

return to the immanent progress narratives of modernity, but in the transcendent, eschatological Christian hope in God and in God's revelation in Jesus Christ (Smith 2004, pp. 226–227).

Borrowing features of phenomenological analysis from Husserl, Smith contends that intentionality, constitution, and horizonality are all essential for hope. Hope is always intentional in that there is always something to which hope is directed. Further, it is constituted by a sense of particular meaning that allows one to place such hope “within horizons of meaning.” As Smith adds: “Without the horizons, there is no constitution; without constitution, there is not object of hope; and, without an object of hope, there is no hope” (Smith 2004, pp. 206–208). Following from this, Smith claims that any notion of hope must contain the following five “structural elements:” (1) Someone who hopes; (2) An object of hope; (3) The action of hope; (4) A ground for hope; and (5) Fulfillment of hope (Smith 2004, pp. 207–209).

Smith concludes that the postmodern hope expressed in both Derrida (and Caputo, by implication) and Rorty fail to contain all of these structural elements. The messianic “*à-venir*” advocated by Derrida and Caputo is completely indeterminate, and must remain so (Caputo 1997, pp. 96–97, italics original; Smith 2004, pp. 217–218).<sup>26</sup> But if this is the case, Smith wonders how it is possible to hope for that which is indeterminate (Smith 2004, p. 219). After all, Smith contends: “One cannot wait for (literally) nothing” (Smith 2004, p. 223; cf. also Hughes 2004, pp. 103–104). That is the question: Is it really possible to hope without hope being directed toward *something*? The implicit answer to this question is not to say, however, that the content of Christian hope is *completely* determinate and specified. As Robert Paul Doede and Paul Edward Hughes submit: “The telos and content of hope (an inherently futural verity) remain largely indeterminate—even within the Christian eschatological vision” Yet, Christian hope is still directed toward “an eschatological re-envisioning of the fallen created order” (Doede and Hughes 2004, pp. 172, 171). Smith concurs when he asserts that Christian eschatology looks toward a fulfillment of justice that is “both *continuous* with the present order, as a redeeming of creation, but also *discontinuous*, insofar as it represents a revolutionizing of fallen structures” (Smith 2004, p. 225, italics original). In this sense, hope is not oriented towards a specifically determinate outcome, but is situated in a broader context of God's promise to renew creation and make all things right.

For Derrida and Caputo, a determined hope will act itself out in violence and exclusion of the other. But Smith insists that simply because hope is broadly determined does not necessarily imply it will result in violence to the other. If hope is situated within the context of the finite human being, accepting that there are various degrees of what is determinacy and indeterminacy (as in a Christian

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<sup>26</sup>One caveat: Smith points out that Derrida is less reluctant than Caputo to admit some sort of eschatology or determinacy. For example, “we know it is a *democracy* to come” and not a “*theocracy*” to come” (italics original, Smith 2004, p. 222. Smith also refers to Caputo 1997, p. 142).

eschatological vision) then violence need not be linked to determined hope (Smith 2004, pp. 221–222). Further, the Christian hope is not simply about personal redemption, but about the renewal of creation and ultimate justice from tyranny and exploitation (Doede and Hughes 2004, p. 171).

Nevertheless, it is important to learn to critically appropriate the worries of Derrida and Caputo. If our hope is expressed with overconfidence in eschatological particularities “we risk theological hubris,” while ignoring “the incomprehensible mystery that lies at the center of existence and the end of history” (Hughes 2004, p. 104). To help avoid such “hubris,” Kevin L. Hughes suggests that we can learn from the “disciplined speech” of the apophatic tradition to help us navigate our expressions of hope “between the presumption of claiming to know too much and the emptiness of knowing nothing at all” (Hughes 2004, p. 103). Of course, navigating such waters is not easy. A Christian theological hope is a hope in God making all things right in the promise of resurrection and new creation because of Christ; but the particulars on how and when remain unknowable. This avoids the modern arrogance and unquenching desire to lay claim on knowledge, while avoiding the “hope” of endless postponement found in the deconstruction of Derrida and Caputo.<sup>27</sup>

Rorty’s pragmatic hope, on the other hand, according to Smith, has a determinacy to it in terms of its vision for justice, equality, and democracy. It is through “fraternity” where “equity” is made possible. Hence, Smith’s critique does not focus on Rorty’s indeterminacy with respect to hope, but in Rorty’s lack of “ground” for his notion of pragmatic hope. Smith asks: “Is there a ground for this expectation? Or is it merely a false hope, perhaps a delusion?” Smith claims that Rorty does not argue his point except by pointing to the “historical narrative of progress” (Smith 2004, pp. 213–215).<sup>28</sup> For Smith, Rorty is elsewhere unclear and even pessimistic on his position with respect to the ground of hope in history (Smith 2004, p. 216). Nonetheless, Rorty still asserts: “The utopian social hope which sprang up in nineteenth-century Europe is still the noblest imaginative creation of which we have record” (Rorty 1999, p. 277, as cited in Smith 2004, p. 216). Is this all we have? In what particular sense can this narrative (overall) be portrayed as “progress”—moral or otherwise? In view of the events of the past century (as highlighted above), can this historical narrative sustain a vision of hope? It is understandable why Smith is doubtful as to whether Rorty’s hope may truly be considered hope at all (Smith 2004, pp. 216–217).

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<sup>27</sup>See Smith’s comments on hope and “horizons of expectation” in this regard (Smith 2004, p. 223).

<sup>28</sup>Smith refers to Rorty (1999, pp. 232, 203).



## 5.6 Concluding Reflections

Some may reject Christian hope because it is hope expressed within a particular narrative framework. However, simply because Christian hope is particular and broadly determinate does not itself disqualify it from being a viable rendering of postmodern hope (see Smith 2004, p. 227). And, as Smith argues, Christian (post-modern) hope certainly seems to fit within the general phenomenological structures of hope. In fact, a robustly postmodern hope recognizes the modernist fallacy of neutrality, realizing that our expressions and phenomenological dispositions are situated within our context as human beings. In this regard, all expressions of hope in one way or another will be particular in orientation, Christian or otherwise. The question that Smith raises, however, is whether such expressions are phenomenologically fitting.

I have elsewhere suggested that hope is an aspect of our humanness, although it is not anthropocentric, that is, it is not “grounded in human potential, but it is a hope beyond hope grounded in the eschatological promise of God” (Michener 2007, p. 216).<sup>29</sup> Of course, the ultimate and specific purposes of God are always beyond our grasp, which is clearly present in the words of Qoheleth in the book of Ecclesiastes. We wander onwards in life facing the enigmas and “troublesome paradoxes of life” in view of the mysteries of God, and in that journey, we continue to hope in that mysterious God that is beyond our reach (Michener 2007, p. 219).

At the same time, we must take Caputo and Rorty’s provocations regarding hope seriously, even if we disagree with their sustainability. Caputo’s challenge to find hope in the smile of everydayness, in the face of evils which beset the world, is indeed a call to intentional goodness and charity in the particulars of life. As Caputo insists: “The promise of the world is not extinguished by evil, not suffocated by suffering and setbacks, not abolished by the cosmic forces, but grows like a root that makes its way through rocks to find a nourishing soil. It is the hope, the chance, the faith that the future is always better, not because it is, but because that is what we hope and that is what hope means” (Caputo 2013, p. 247). Caputo reminds us that if hope is only in what is to come, while ignoring possibilities of hope in the present, then hope seems to lose an important connection to everyday practices of virtue that must be directed toward fellow humans and creation. Likewise, Rorty’s challenge for hope in justice and equality of human beings must not be overlooked today simply because of an Christian eschatological promise of renewal. It is critical to recognize how today’s actions of social justice are concrete and necessary expressions and instantiations of Christian hope. Seeking and hoping for making right the wrongs of social injustice are not contrary to, but indicative of, the broadly determinate, postmodern hope of Christian eschatology. As William Katerberg aptly states: “The refusal to resolve with finality the deepest questions that humanity can pose—whether historical, political, or spiritual—arguably is an indispensable aspect of any radical form of commitment and openness that is at once transforming,

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<sup>29</sup>Here I refer to Grenz and Franke (2001, p. 251).

alienating, unnerving, and hopeful” (Katerberg 2004, pp. 72–73).<sup>30</sup> The both/and of the determinate and indeterminate, the hope for present justice and future reconciliation, human limitations and God’s transcendence—all must be considered together. These tensions call us to both: “responsible action and trust” providing “an invitation to hope for the ultimately satisfying end that only God can give” (Bauckham and Hart 1999, p. 43). This is a postmodern hope that provides consolation for the past, motivation for the present, and joyful expectancy for the future.

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<sup>30</sup>Katerberg credits Michel Foucault for the shape of his thinking in this regard (Foucault 1984).

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**Ronald T. Michener** (Dr. Theol., Faculté Universitaire de Théologie Protestante de Bruxelles) is Professor and Chair of the Department of Systematic Theology at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit (ETF), Leuven (Belgium). He has been a regular editorial reviewer for the Christian Perspectives on Leadership and Social Ethics series for the Institute of Leadership and Social Ethics at ETF. His work concentrates on areas of dialogue between postmodern philosophy and Christian theology. He is the author of *Postliberal Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2013), and co-author, with Patrick Nullens, of *The Matrix of Christian Ethics: Integrating Philosophy and Moral Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

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**Part II**  
**Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope**

# Chapter 6

## Philosophy of Hope



Michael Milona

**Abstract** The philosophy of hope centers on two interlocking sets of questions. The first concerns the *nature* of hope. Specific questions here include how to analyze hope, how hope motivates us, and whether there is only one type of hope. The second set concerns the *value* of hope. Key questions here include whether and when it is good to hope and whether there is a virtue of hope. Philosophers of hope tend to proceed from the first set of questions to the second. This is a natural approach, for one might expect that you must develop a basic understanding of what hope is before you can determine its value. The structure of this chapter thus follows this approach. But readers should not be misled: there is in fact a good deal of *feedback* between the two sets of questions. A theory of hope is more plausible to the extent that it fits well with plausible ideas about the value of hope. So the movement from hope's nature to its value is one of emphasis rather than a strict, step-wise process.

### 6.1 Introduction

There are two interlocking sets of questions at the center of the philosophy of hope. First, philosophers are interested in the *nature* of hope. Key questions here include the following: Can hope be analyzed and, if so, how? Does hope have a special motivational power and, if so, how do we account for it? Might there be different kinds of hope that require different analyses? The second set of questions concerns the *value* of hope. Key questions here include the following: Is it ever good/rational to maintain hope in the face of low odds? What are the dangers of hoping? Is there a virtue of hope?

The methodology of the philosophical literature on hope tends to proceed from the nature of hope to its value (Bovens 1999; Martin 2014; Milona 2019; *inter alia*). This is a natural approach, for one might expect that you must develop a basic understanding of what hope is before you can determine its value. The structure of the present chapter follows this methodology. But readers should not be misled:

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M. Milona (✉)  
Ryerson University, Toronto, ON, Canada

there is in fact a good deal of *feedback* between the two sets of questions. A theory of hope is more plausible to the extent that it fits well with plausible ideas about the value of hope. So the movement from hope's nature to its value is one of emphasis rather than a strict, step-wise process.

## 6.2 The Standard Account

We can begin to zero in on hope by comparing it to similar as well as opposing phenomena (cf. Milona and Stockdale 2018, p. 204). On the one hand, people tend to group hope together with *optimism*. But they are distinct. Consider the expression "hoping against hope." According to Adrienne Martin, we hope against hope when we highly value the object of our hope but do not expect it to happen; we may even believe that it likely won't happen (2014, p. 5). But given that one cannot be optimistic that something will occur while believing that it likely won't, it follows that we can have hope without optimism. Furthermore, hoping against hope indicates that it is possible to both hope that P and be *pessimistic* about P. In other words, a person can hold on to hope even as they begin to expect that their hope won't be fulfilled.

Hope is often contrasted with despair and fear. The word 'despair' indicates an absence of hope. If one despairs of their favorite team ever winning the championship, then this implies that they lack hope that they will win (at least in their moments of despair). But it is also clear that despair is *more* than this, for despair involves pain or suffering. Unlike hope, though, the details of despair are underexplored (but see Govier 2011, pp. 247–248; Ratcliffe 2013; Calhoun 2018). Hope is also contrasted with fear, but in this case, the two often arise in tandem. If we are told that a person fears that they will never find true love, then we expect that they likewise hope to find true love. So hope and fear are often two sides of the same coin (see Stockdale 2019b).

So what *is* hope such that it can stand in such relations to optimism, pessimism, despair, and fear? Recent philosophical analyses typically begin with what Ariel Meirav (2009) calls the *standard account* of hope (see Wheatley 1958; Downie 1963; Day 1969 for variations of this approach).<sup>1</sup> According to this view, hope involves *desire*; we only hope for what we want. But desires come in different varieties. Sometimes we wish for things that we believe to be impossible. For instance, I might desire (wish) to chat with Socrates, but I don't hope to do this. The standard account tells us that this is because hope requires a belief that the object of our desire is *possible but not certain*. If I'm certain that something will happen—say, that the sun will rise—or certain that it won't, then I don't count as hoping. The

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<sup>1</sup>See Claudia Blöser's "Enlightenment Views of Hope" (this volume) for several important precursors to the standard account.

standard account, then, defines hoping that P in terms of a desire that P and a belief that P is possible (but not certain).

This theory can apparently explain hope's relationship to optimism, pessimism, fear, and despair. Regarding optimism, we can both desire and believe possible what we expect to happen; and regarding pessimism, we can desire and believe possible what we expect *will not* happen. With respect to fear, we often fear something while desiring and believing it possible that what we fear won't come to fruition. On the surface, this account also seems to show that hope and despair are incompatible. This is because despair seems to involve (inter alia) believing that what one desires is no longer possible. But as we shall see, it is an unanswered question among hope theorists whether the standard account really delivers the result that hope and despair are incompatible.

An additional virtue of the standard account is that it allows for temporal flexibility in our hopes. At one time, it was common to maintain that hope is fundamentally directed to the future (Aquinas 2007; Augustine 2008). And while it is certainly true that many paradigmatic examples of hoping, e.g., for heaven, for a job, for peace, are for future objects, we also speak of hoping for past objects, say, that one's package arrived on time, or that one's relatives had a safe trip home. According to advocates of the standard view, then, the realm of hope is *uncertainty*. And even though most philosophers nowadays reject the standard account (despite its being called the *standard* account), they largely agree that hope is not essentially tied to the future (though see Walker (2006, p. 45) for resistance).

The standard account is also meant to explain *intentional* hopes, or hopes which are *about* something. But some theorists have recently argued that there can be hopes that lack intentionality; they do not have the form of a hope that P. For example, Cheshire Calhoun proposes what she calls *basal hope*:

Basal hopefulness is not hope for this or that outcome but, rather, is what Matthew Ratcliffe describes as a non-propositional, pre-intentional sense of the future—"a kind of general orientation or sense of how things are with the world" or an "experiential backdrop" against which particular hopes for this or that become intelligible. (2019, p. 74; see also Ratcliffe 2013, p. 600, 603)

Calhoun is distinguishing basal hope and intentional hope in a way that is structurally similar to how some theorists have distinguished moods and emotions. Whereas emotions (e.g., anger, sadness) always seem to be *about* something, moods (e.g., cheerfulness, gloominess) seem to be a general orientation to the world and not about anything in particular (see Deonna and Teroni 2012, p. 4). But against the view that moods are non-intentional, some have argued that they have very general targets. For example, cheerfulness might be about the following: *life is going well* (cf. Solomon 2007, p. 265). And so perhaps basal hope is a way of seeing the importance of continuing to live one's life and plan for the future (Milona and Stockdale 2018, p. 219; cf. Kadlac 2018 for a similar view). Since the question of basal hope turns on general questions about how to think of mood-like forms of affect, we will not be able to settle the question here of whether basal hope, as Calhoun and others imagine it, exists. But readers should know that the question is



relevant to whether the standard theory of hope (and theories to be discussed below) are best construed as purporting to capture all forms of hoping.

### 6.3 Hope and Despair

The most common view among philosophers today is that the standard account captures two *necessary conditions* for hope but is ultimately insufficient. Some allow that our *less substantial* hopes consist only of beliefs and desires. But then they argue that our most robust hopes require more. Others insist that belief and desire are never sufficient for hope. In either case, what they are looking for is the so-called *third factor* to complete the analysis of hope.<sup>2</sup>

Ariel Meirav (2009) argues that the standard account fails to capture any of our hopes. According to him, this is because the standard account allows that a person can hope and despair at the same time. But to despair is by definition to be without hope. So the standard account must be false. Meirav's argument is motivated by cases, the central being from the film, the *Shawshank Redemption*.<sup>3</sup> The story, as some readers will know, is about Red and Andy, both of whom are being held in prison. Both characters desire to escape. In fact, as Meirav imagines it, they desire to escape with equal intensity. Both agree that escape is possible. Yet according to Meirav's interpretation, only Andy hopes. Here is how he puts it:

Andy lives in the hope of escaping, whereas Red despairs of this. Indeed, Red thinks that hope should be resisted, suppressed, for hoping in this virtually hopeless situation would threaten his sanity. It seems reasonable to say that the film suggests that Andy hopes for freedom and Red does not, in spite of their similar desire for freedom and their assignment of similar probability to attaining it, and to that extent it challenges us with a counterexample to the Standard Account. (2009, pp. 222–223).

According to Meirav, cases like this illustrate that hope must be more than a desire and belief. In effect, then, Meirav accepts the possibility of both despairing of escaping and believing that escape is possible. If he is correct, then assuming that hope and despair are incompatible, there must be some (at least) third factor that completes the analysis of hope.

### 6.4 Substantial Hope

A second style of objection to the standard account allows that while some hopes may consist only of a desire and a belief, our substantial hopes require more (Pettit 2004; Martin 2014). This style of objection is also motivated by cases.

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<sup>2</sup>Others, still, have given up on this quest for a third factor. I discuss this move below.

<sup>3</sup>This case was originally discussed in the hope literature by Luc Bovens (1999).

Adrienne Martin's *Cancer Research* case has been among the most influential. In this example, two cancer patients, Alan and Bess, have agreed to participate in an experimental drug trial. Both have been informed that the odds of success are less than 1 percent. Both accept these odds and consequently do not expect to be cured. Both desire to the same extent to be cured. Yet they have very different stances toward the trial:

Alan will say he does indeed hope the experimental drug will turn out to be, for him at least, a miracle cure. But he will also emphasize how poor a chance 1 percent is, and he rarely appeals to his hope as a justification for his decisions, moods, or feelings. . . Bess, instead, while noting that it is almost certain she will not be cured by the experimental drug, says the bare possibility is what keeps her going, and often appeals to her hope as a justification for her decisions, moods, and feelings. One percent is enough, she says. She hopes to be the 1 percent, and that is her main reason for enrolling in the trial. For example, he says he was motivated to enroll in the trial primarily by a desire to benefit future people with cancer. (2014, p. 15)

Martin takes this case to be an example of *hoping against hope*, which is hope in its most complete form. It's not that Alan does not hope, for indeed he does, it's just that, according to Martin, "there is some sense in which her hope is higher or greater or stronger than Alan's" (2014, p. 15). The Cancer Research case illustrates the interaction between questions about what hope *is* and how hope *motivates*. According to the example, Bess's motivations are distinct from Alan's in a way that the standard account fails to explain.

These two objections to the standard account—the despair objection and the substantial hope objection—frame much of the dialectic in the contemporary literature on the nature of hope. Any persuasive theory of hope needs to address both.

## 6.5 The Search for a Third Factor

There is little agreement about what needs to be added to the standard account. Different theories have been offered by, among others, Bovens (1999), Pettit (2004), Meirav (2009), Martin (2014), Milona and Stockdale (2018), and Kwong (2019). Several of these theories have already been extensively discussed in the literature (namely, Bovens's, Pettit's, Martin's, and Meirav's), and I mention them only briefly here.

### 6.5.1 *The External Factor Account*

According to Meirav hope also involves taking some external factor—something independent of the hoper—as *good*, or *on one's side*. Possible external factors include other people, God, nature, or fate. Whatever exactly this external factor is, the key is that it be seen by the hoper as working to facilitate their hope-constituting

desire (Meirav 2009, p. 230). A major concern about this approach, however, is that it's often unclear what the external factor could be. When I hope, say, to win the lottery, I don't necessarily see anything as working to fulfill my desire for winning the lottery (Kwong 2019).<sup>4</sup>

### 6.5.2 *Mental Imaging Account*

A second theory is Luc Bovens's (1999) *mental imaging* account. The basic thought behind this proposal is that a person doesn't count as hoping unless they have given some conscious thought to the object of their hope. For example, I can't truly report that I was hoping to see you unless I had given thought to the possibility (Bovens 1999). Hope-constituting thoughts may be imagistic or discursive; Bovens uses the label *mental imaging* as a general label for either possibility. This is an intriguing proposal, one which, if correct, would rule out unconscious hopes (see also Martin 2014, pp. 17–19).

The mental imaging theory arguably faces some of the same difficulties as the standard account. For example, if Meirav is right that Andy hopes to escape while Red despairs of escaping, even while both share the same desire and probability estimate, then it seems doubtful that Red could begin to hope just by fantasizing about escaping. In other words, it seems doubtful that a person can lift themselves from despair simply by imagining their desires being fulfilled. Similarly, with regard to Martin's Cancer Research example, it seems doubtful that Alan could bring himself to hope just as much as Bess by fantasizing about being cured.

### 6.5.3 *Cognitive Resolve Account*

Philip Pettit proposes the *cognitive resolve* theory of hope. According to this proposal, a person who hopes that P *resolves* to act as if P will occur, or at least is likely to occur, even if they believe that P has only a low probability of occurring. The difference between Bess and Alan, then, is explained in the following way: Bess, unlike Alan, resolves to act as if she will (likely) be cured, even though she doesn't believe that this is actually likely. Yet we can easily imagine Bess not doing this. For example, we might expect Bess, who is hoping against hope, to nevertheless make preparations for her likely death, perhaps to avoid creating additional hardship for her family (see Martin 2014, p. 22). But then if we can easily imagine her behaving as such despite hoping against hope, then Bess is hoping in a substantial way without resolving to act as if her hope will likely be fulfilled. Thus the cognitive resolve theory mischaracterizes some substantial hopes.

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<sup>4</sup>See Martin (2014, p. 20) and Milona (2019, pp. 713–14) for additional criticism.

### 6.5.4 Pathways Account

Jack Kwong (2019) has recently defended the *pathways* theory of hope. According to this proposal, hoping that P requires a desire that P, belief that P is possible, and the recognition of a possible way in which the desire could come to fruition. Importantly, the agent must see this possible route to satisfying their desire as *genuinely* possible. This is what explains the difference between Andy and Red: even if both desire to escape prison and assign the same probability to escaping, only Andy can conceive of a possible way of escaping as a genuine possibility. Similarly, in Cancer Research, Bess sees possible routes to being cured as a genuine possibility while Alan does not.

The pathways theory faces a pair of important difficulties. First, it does not seem as if conceiving of pathways is necessary for hope. Consider a person who despairs over any solution to the melting polar icecaps. They are then told by a credible climate scientist that a solution may be possible, after all. Before becoming aware of any ways in which we might avert the melting of the icecaps, they are flooded with newfound hope. In this case, they believe that there is some way which is a possibility, but *they cannot yet see what that way is*, even faintly. Believing that there is some way which is a possibility isn't, according to the pathways theory, sufficient for hoping. This is because a person always believes that there exists *some* possible way that their desire is fulfilled whenever they assign any non-zero probability to the desire's fulfillment. To be sure, we often transition from not hoping to hoping by coming to see a pathway to fulfilling our hopes. But some cases illustrate that this is not always true. And so the pathways account seems to identify a method for *cultivating* hope rather than something which is *constitutive* of the nature of hope.

A second problem with the pathways theory is that it is not clear what it is to see something as a *genuine* possibility. Crucially, it isn't a matter of assigning a certain probability to the perceived pathway (Kwong 2019, p. 250). But then what exactly does seeing something as a genuine probability amount to? To illustrate, consider Remy and Kunal, who are considering buying a lottery ticket. Remy has hope that he will win while Kunal does not have any hope that he will. As it happens, neither quite knows the real odds. And even though Kunal has no hope of winning, he does assign higher odds to winning than does Remy. Both are aware of the same pathway to victory, namely writing down the set of numbers that match the winning numbers. So why does Remy see that pathway as a genuine possibility while Kunal does not? The pathways theory, as Kwong presents it, simply doesn't theorize this central component.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Kwong says, "To see a way to the outcome as a *genuine possibility* is therefore not only to see that it exists but also to see that we can *move forward* on it towards the outcome, whether in action or in thought" (2019, p. 248).

### 6.5.5 *The Incorporation Account*

Adrienne Martin argues that the key to hope is *incorporation*. Hoping that P, or at least hoping that P in the fullest sense, involves four central elements. The first two are the desire that P and the belief that P is probable to some degree. The third element involves taking the probability assignment as licensing, or rationally permitting, engagement in hopeful activities such as planning and fantasizing. The final element involves taking the desire, and desirable features of P, as *sufficient* reason to pursue those hopeful activities. In this way, the hoping agent *incorporates* her desire into her agency. According to Martin, the incorporation account explains what makes the difference between Alan and Bess; despite having the same desires and beliefs, Bess relates to hers in a very different, distinctively hopeful, way.

Martin's account has been criticized for overintellectualizing hope. For example, it has seemed to many theorists that hoppers are occasionally ashamed of their hopes. A hope to reform a relationship with an abusive partner, for example, may be a hope that one repudiates and refuses to incorporate into one's agency. But just as fear, anger, jealousy, and anger that we repudiate aren't thereby a lesser form of such emotions, so, too, it is with hope (Milona and Stockdale 2018; Milona 2019).<sup>6</sup>

### 6.5.6 *The Perceptual Theory*

My own favored theory of hope, developed with Katie Stockdale, aims to build on Martin's incorporation theory as well as to remedy its difficulties. Similar to Martin, we contend that hope involves a normative evaluation on the part of the hoper. According to the proposal, hoping that P involves a desire that P, a belief that P is possible, and a non-doxastic, perceptual-like experience of reasons to promote the object of one's desire (Milona and Stockdale 2018; see also Roberts (2007), Döring (2014) for similar theories). For example, a person who hopes to have a career as a computer programmer experiences certain features of this career (e.g., the challenge of learning to code, the opportunity to be creative, and the high salary) as reasons to promote that they become a computer programmer. The difference between this view and the incorporation theory is that it does not require agents to actually take or judge themselves to have reasons to promote the object of their desire.

This key difference allows the perceptual theory to handle cases of shameful hoping. Just as a person might visually experience a stick in water as bent while believing their experience to be inaccurate, a hoper may experience reasons to

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<sup>6</sup>See Segal and Textor (2015) and Blöser (2019) for similar objections to Martin's theory. Interestingly, at one point, Martin shifts from the language of *judging* to the language of *seeing as* (2014, pp. 48–52). The trouble with this approach is that in typical cases of “seeing as,” e.g., the famous duck-rabbit, we are often able to exert a level of control that is at odds with what seems possible with hope. See Milona and Stockdale (ms.) for discussion.

promote some end that they do not believe that they should promote. In this way, the perceptual theory of hope aims to bring hope theory into closer contact with recent developments in the philosophy of emotion. A familiar point from the philosophy of emotions is that each emotion appears to have an essential relation to a corresponding value. For example, fear relates to danger, sadness to loss, anger to wrongs, and so on (see Kenny 1963). Some theorists have taken this relationship between emotion and value to be that of *judgment* (Solomon 1976; Nussbaum 2001). So, for example, fear that P would be analyzed as a judgment that P is dangerous. But this approach faces a problem when our judgments about danger conflict with our fears. For instance, one might fear flying on a plane despite judging it to be safe. An analogy with perceptual experience, which allows for conflict with judgment, helps with this problem. (For instance, fear might involve a perception of danger rather than a judgment.) Given that hope is often thought of as an emotion, or as something near to an emotion, a perceptual theory of hope seems promising.

The perceptual view offers solutions to the problems with the standard account. For example, the reason that Andy hopes is that he experiences reasons to promote the idea that he escapes from prison; but Red does not experience such reasons. And when it comes to Bess and Alan, Bess experiences the prospect of being cured as giving her reasons to participate in the trial. Alan does not experience these reasons, or at least does not experience them as being as weighty as Bess does (in which case Alan would hope but hope less).

The perceptual theory faces important questions. The most pressing question concerns the nature of the non-doxastic, perceptual-like experience it treats as central to hope. Milona and Stockdale give a detailed phenomenological description of this experience (2018, pp. 210–213). The basic idea is that one cannot describe the phenomenology of hope—*what it is like* to hope—without making reference to reasons to act; reasons to act are manifest in the experience of hope. A second question for the perceptualist concerns the precise content of the normative evaluation involved in hope. Traditionally, philosophers who have thought that hope involves a normative evaluation have taken that evaluation to concern *goodness* (Aquinas 2007, p. 760; Augustine 2008, p. 36; Roberts 2007). But as we have seen, Milona and Stockdale take hope to involve a representation of reasons. Their argument for this position is rooted in the observation that hoping well is sensitive to the *likelihood* of outcomes, and while reasons for action are sensitive to likelihood, the goodness of outcomes is not similarly sensitive to how likely they are (see 2008, pp. 214–216) for the details of this argument).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>One may worry that a reasons-based perceptual theory faces a problem with hopes in which an agent knows that there is no way to promote the object of the underlying desire (and so presumably lacks any reason to act). This is an important challenge. According to Milona and Stockdale (2018, p. 216 n. 14), there are several different forms of “wishful” hope and different solutions are required for different forms of wishful hope. One such case is analyzed in the penultimate paragraph of this section. It must be admitted, though, that more work needs to be done working through the nuances of how the perceptual theory captures each case of hoping.

It is worth noting that one natural way of developing the perceptual theory brings us back to a version of the standard account. To begin, consider that many philosophers are attracted to perceptual views of *desire*. On this approach, to desire that P is to have a non-doxastic, perceptual-like experience of reasons to promote P (see Scanlon 1998; Schroeder 2007; Milona and Schroeder 2019). If this view of desire were correct, and if the perceptual theory of hope were correct, then hope may only have two components, after all.

Advocates of a perceptualist reading of the standard account seem to face a devastating problem. The whole point of the Andy and Red case, for example, was that they have the same desire to escape and belief about the probability of escape. So is the perceptualist version of the standard account simply denying the possibility of Andy and Red having similar desires and beliefs while differing radically in their hopes? In a word, *yes*. Andy and Red have radically different motivational profiles, which is suggestive of a difference in underlying desires. The difference in their desires is plausibly rooted in the following: Andy's desire is responsive not only to his beliefs about what it would be like to escape prison, but also his belief that escape is possible. In other words, Andy desires to escape *because he sees escape as a possibility*. Even though Red also believes that escape is possible, he doesn't desire to escape *because of this*. While Andy has a full-blooded desire, one which presents to him reasons for action, Red merely wishes. His "desire" is more akin to a fanciful daydream, seeming to present him with reasons to act only on the condition that he live in some other possible reality. Even though Red believes escape is possible, this belief is alienated—causally disconnected—from his desires. If Red were to begin to desire because of his belief, then he would count as hoping (see Milona 2019).

In general, then, my favored theory of hope says that hope has two key components, namely a desire that P and a belief that P is possible (or, for reasons that become clear below, *some form of uncertainty about P*). The desire is understood as an experience of reasons to act (distinct from a mere wish), arising in part because the object of the desire is believed to be possible (but not certain).

## 6.6 Are Belief and Desire Necessary for Hope?

Claudia Blöser has recently argued that the common assumption that belief and desire are *necessary* for hope is mistaken. If her arguments work, then the standard theory should no longer be the starting place for theorizing hope. Blöser herself ultimately defends the position that the *concept* of hope cannot be reduced to other concepts, such as belief and desire.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Blöser does not deny that particular instances of hoping are composed of other mental states. For example, some hopes may be composed of a belief and desire, but not all are. She allows, then, for *ontological* reductions of particular instances of hoping, but the concept of hope is irreducible.

Blöser argues against the belief requirement by offering a counterexample. According to her, it can make perfect sense for a person to claim to hope that P despite also claiming to be in doubt about the possibility of P. In this case, the person is *suspending judgment* about the possibility of P.<sup>9</sup> Philosophers of hope should accept a belief *constraint* on hope. What's essential for hoping that P is that the hoper not believe that P is impossible.

I suspect that Blöser is right that one can suspend judgment about the possibility of P and yet still hope that P. But might hope still require *some* belief that entails uncertainty about P? This depends on delicate questions about what it is to *suspend judgment*. One might think that suspending judgment about a proposition is *simply* not believing it, or perhaps not believing a proposition after having considered whether that proposition is true (cf. Wedgwood 2002, p. 272). But other theorists maintain that suspending judgment is more than the absence of belief; it is itself an attitude of indecision toward a proposition. Some suggest that this attitude may be a *belief*: a belief that one does not know some proposition (see Friedman 2013, p. 170).<sup>10</sup> A philosopher attracted to this view might say that, in Blöser's example, the agent who hopes that P despite not believing that P is possible nevertheless believes something, namely that they do not know whether P is possible or not. Perhaps, then, hope requires an "uncertainty-entailing" belief, the specific content of which can take different forms. In the hope literature, one can already discern different ways of describing the belief requirement. For instance, one might believe that P has some specific probability of occurring (say, 1%), or one might just have a bare belief that P is possible.<sup>11</sup> So, one might take the lesson of Blöser's thought experiment to be that hoping that P requires some uncertainty-entailing belief about P. Settling this question, though, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Blöser also makes the case that desire is not required for hope. According to her, while desire implies motivation to promote the object of one's desire, hope does not. To be sure, the connection between desire and motivation is *defeasible*; a person who desires that P is only going to be disposed to promote P under certain conditions. For example, in some cases, one might not know how to promote one's desire. In other cases, one might have overriding motivations to do other things (e.g., some motivation to give to charity that is overridden by a desire for an upgraded computer). But Blöser contends that some cases of hope do not even involve a disposition to promote the object of one's hope. She imagines a person who tells themselves, "I *hope* that we will find a solution to climate change, but how that hope is realized is none of my business, so I won't forgo flying to far-off holiday destinations every year" (2019, p. 7). She continues, "In such cases, it is meaningless to still ascribe

<sup>9</sup>See also Chignell (2014, p. 101).

<sup>10</sup>Friedman also suggests that suspending judgment may be a *sui generis* attitude rather than a belief (2013, p. 180). This raises additional possibilities for how we might conceptualize the cases Blöser imagines.

<sup>11</sup>Philosophers of hope often waffle between these two ways of talking about the belief requirement.



motivational force in a dispositional way, because it is uninformative to characterize the hope in question in terms of something that *never* becomes actual” (2019, p. 7).

One concern with Blöser’s climate change example is that it seems equally to be an argument against an essential link between desire and motivation. A person in that situation could also say that they desire to stop climate change but aren’t inclined to do anything about it. The theory of desire proposed above, according to which desires are an experience of reasons for action, allows for desire without a disposition to promote the desire. This is because an agent might experience reasons but not be inclined to act on them. Additionally, it is not clear that the agent *does* hope in the climate change case, if they really wouldn’t be inclined to promote an end to climate change should they come to believe that doing so would be easy for them. Blöser is aware of this possible reply. She maintains that “We should resist this temptation, which is grounded in the wish to equalize all realizations of hope and to exclude those instances that do not fit the preferred generalization” (2019, p. 7).<sup>12</sup> But there is an alternative explanation, namely that the refusal to assign hope without any disposition to act is rooted in a grasp of the concept of hope. Going forward, it would be helpful to find a way to push through such clashes of intuition about the nature of hope.

## 6.7 The Value and Danger of Hope

### 6.7.1 Hope and Agency

Hoping may, at first, seem to be of little value, and perhaps even foolish. Luc Bovens has an eloquent way of putting this worry. If we hope for something good and fail to get it, then we are likely to be disappointed. But if we do not hope for something good and then get it, we will be no less pleased for not having hoped. But as Bovens goes on to observe, this overlooks at least one familiar way in which hope is valuable. Hope can have *instrumental* value (1999, pp. 670–673). Hope can have instrumental value because hoping for something can make it more likely that it will happen. Suppose, for instance, that it would be good for Jordan if she gets a job. If Jordan doesn’t hope for a job, then she is less likely to search for jobs, apply for jobs, pursue valuable training, and prepare for interviews. By contrast, if she does hope, then she is likely to do these things. The instrumental value of hope here is rooted in its motivational power.

Some theorists maintain that the question of whether we should hope at all ultimately makes little sense. According to these theorists, agency itself requires hope. Victoria McGeer, for instance, says “to be a full-blown intentional agent—to be a creature with a rich profile of intentional and emotional states and capacities—is to be an agent that hopes” (McGeer 2004, p. 101; see also Ben-Ze’ev 2000, p. 475;

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<sup>12</sup>For additional support of Blöser’s position on hope and motivation, see Rosen (2019, p. 207).

Stockdale 2019a, p. 28). The thought appears to be that if we see any reason at all to move forward, then we qualify as hoping. For to lose all hope is, as McGeer says, “to cease to function—as a human being” (McGeer 2004, p. 101).

The extent to which one agrees with McGeer may depend on how one theorizes hope. Suppose, for instance, that to hope that P is to desire that P and to believe that P is possible (or at least that P is uncertain). According to Christopher Bobier (2017), this view entails that all practical deliberation about what to do requires hope. After all, we can only deliberate about what we take to be possible (or uncertain). As Bobier points out, it makes no sense to deliberate about whether  $2 + 2 = 4$ , given our certainty in the proposition. And people also do not deliberate about whether to do things that they have no desire to do.

Bobier’s argument has recently been challenged by Andy Mueller (2019). According to Mueller, the trouble with the argument is that it relies on an overly simplistic theory of hope. What needs to be added to the standard account (even on Milona’s (2019) revised standard theory) isn’t necessary for practical deliberation. Adjudicating this debate requires returning to different theories of hope and carefully studying a variety of different cases. But whichever party to this debate is ultimately correct, we can at least say that hope is *central* to human agency, if not necessary. For even if there are cases of deliberation without hope, deliberation over major life projects is typically rooted in hope. For instance, perhaps I can deliberate about how to obtain a slice of pie without hope (Mueller 2019; Milona 2019, p. 715). But it is difficult to imagine someone deliberating about which career to pursue, or who to marry, without the support of hope. Our desires point us toward candidates for major life projects, and these projects are infused with uncertainty. Claudia Blöser and Titus Stahl’s notion of *fundamental hopes*, which I turn to now, helps us to understand the inescapability of hope for a good life.

### 6.7.2 *Fundamental Hopes*

Claudia Blöser and Titus Stahl argue that our *practical identities* are partly constituted by hopes. A practical identity is “a set of commitments that an agent has that single out a certain conception of that agent’s life as worth living (from the perspective of the agent) and certain considerations as reason-giving in virtue of that fact” (2017, p. 359). As an illustration, a person may view themselves as committed to helping those suffering from hunger and malnutrition; and they view acting to alleviate such suffering as a central source of value and meaning in their lives (Blöser and Stahl 2017, p. 359). Part of what it is to have such a practical identity oriented to alleviating suffering is to have hopes to alleviate suffering. The reasons such a person has to maintain these hopes are not simply rooted in the fact that maintaining the hopes may actually facilitate alleviating suffering, but also because the hopes are part of who they are. Blöser and Stahl call these hopes *fundamental hopes*. It seems to me that they have put their finger on an important point: insofar as we view our identity as partly constituted by long-term projects, it is

difficult to see how we could uphold such a project and identity without also having certain hopes.

### 6.7.3 *Social and Politic Hopes*

Lee-Ann Chae begins her paper “Hoping for Peace” with a poignant description of Vedran Smailović, the “Cellist of Sarajevo.” During the siege of Sarajevo, he continued to perform for twenty-two days amidst the rubble of a ruined marketplace and under constant threat of sniper fire. Chae sees his behavior as a valuable expression of hoping for peace. The value here is not instrumental. Smailović was aware that his hopeful actions were not likely to bring about peace. Chae characterizes his hope as *meaningful hope*, which has intrinsic value. As she puts it, “When we act on meaningful hope, we reach out towards the world that we seek, and draw the value of that good future into what we are doing now” (2019, p. 5). Because peace would be valuable, and because Smailović understands his performances as part of what makes for a peaceful world, it inherits its value as a piece of that future. Meaningful hope, then, emerges when the object of one’s hope is itself of intrinsic value and when one expresses that hope by engaging in activities that would be constitutive of a world in which the hope is realized.

Jakob Huber describes some less dramatic but highly significant ways in which hope can be valuable in a socio-political context. He focuses on hope’s value in upholding democratic ideals. As Huber observes, democracies require us to *act with others* to achieve political goals. We are thus constantly confronted with our limitations as individuals (e.g., when considering whether to vote). Thus one important role of hope is to supply us with the energy needed to overcome obstacles, when the pathways to doing so may be far from clear (Huber 2019, pp. 11–12). Additionally, a healthy democracy requires reasoning and debating with others about who to elect and which laws to enact. Citizens are more likely to engage in the collective activity of democracy if they hope that others share their commitment to reasoned public discourse (even if they disagree about policy). This hope can support trust in our fellow citizens (Huber 2019, pp. 13–16)

Thus far, there is a thread running through the discussion of valuable socio-political hopes, namely that they lead to valuable *actions*. Following Victoria McGeer, I call hopes that don’t lead to action *wishful hopes*. In wishful hoping, we offload our own agency to others, putting our hope almost entirely in them that they will achieve our hoped-for ends. McGeer sees such wishful hopes as a way of hoping poorly (2004, p. 110). But Stockdale argues that we should not condemn wishful hoping altogether. Under conditions of oppression, people are sometimes unable to exercise their agency to promote the objects of their hope, or doing so would require sacrifices that they arguably should not make. Stockdale offers the following example:

A single Black mother from a low socioeconomic background working multiple jobs to feed her children may have no time, energy, or resources to contribute to struggles against gender and racial injustice that may increase (however slightly) the likelihood that her hopes for gender and racial equality will be realized. (2019a, p. 39)

Sometimes it can make sense for a person to hold on to hope even while there is nothing they can do to promote the hope. For a given individual, the benefits to peace of mind and well-being provided by hope may outweigh giving up hope altogether.

But even if some people are able to cling to hope in dire situations, others find themselves losing hope. Stockdale (2017) argues that the absence of hope can itself be a fitting and valuable response. Her reasoning begins from an observation about *bitterness*. According to her, “bitterness is a form of unresolved anger involving a loss of hope that an injustice or other moral wrong will be sufficiently acknowledged and addressed” (p. 364). And if a wrong is real and the probability of moral repair justifiably thought to be low, then bitterness is warranted. For example, people of color in the United States have long suffered racial oppression, and there is arguably little reason to expect these wrongs to be sufficiently repaired in the future. As Stockdale observes, bitterness is not only a fitting response in such situations but also one which *calls attention* to perceived injustices. So even if hope can sometimes help us to achieve our socio-political ends, it also threatens to cultivate a false sense of security in what is a dire situation (Stockdale 2017, p. 370; 2019a, p. 37).

#### 6.7.4 Hope as a Virtue

Thus far I have outlined several ways in which hope can be valuable (as well as dangerous). But is there a *virtue* of hope? The Christian tradition has long classified hope as a *theological* virtue alongside faith and love. But might hope be a non-religious virtue, too?

Darrell Moellendorf (2006), for instance, has argued that hope can be a *political* virtue. According to Moellendorf, the hopes that can be virtues have a *practical aspect*, namely those hopes which guide our plans and actions (2006, p. 423). Hope for just political institutions can count as a virtue for two main reasons. First, such hopes are instrumentally valuable for pushing us to overcome injustices (e.g., politically motivated voter identification laws in the United States) in the face of substantial uncertainty. Second, hope can support *self-respect*. This is because hope supports *confidence* in one’s ability to promote a more just society as well as the sense that one is *entitled* to a just society. Such confidence and entitlement are important parts of self-respect. Similar to Moellendorf, Nancy Snow (2018) has recently argued that hope can be a democratic virtue. And Adam Kadlac (2015) has argued that any hope can count as a virtue, at least so long as it is a powerful enough hope.

Chris Bobier (2018) argues that such attempts to make sense of hope as a non-theological virtue are bound to fail. The core of his objection is simple: hope is an emotion (or passion), and virtues are not passions. To observe that hope is

valuable in various ways is not enough to show that hope is a virtue. Virtues are complex traits of character that *regulate* virtues. So unless we are willing to say that other valuable emotions, including fear, anger, shame, etc. are virtues, then we should not say that hope is a virtue, however valuable it may be.

In my view, Bobier's challenge raises a pair of questions. First, is there a virtue that primarily has to do with the regulation of hope? Second, if there is such a virtue, do we already have a name for that virtue? If the answer is *yes* to the first question and *no* to the second, then we have a plausible basis for thinking that there is a virtue of hope. For a defense of hope as a virtue, see Milona ([forthcoming](#)).

## 6.8 Conclusion

As philosophers delve more deeply into the nature of hope, they raise (and clarify) more questions than they definitively answer. The nature of hope, in particular, continues to prove elusive. This is especially true when it comes to “hoping against hope,” that Martin (2014) rightly emphasizes as central. When it comes to the value of hope, the difficulty rests in the diversity of ways in which we can hope and the impact that those different ways of hoping can have in our lives. While philosophers continue to map the various benefits and dangers of hoping, it will take a great deal of practical wisdom to know when hoping is appropriate. Philosophers seeking such wisdom benefit by stepping outside the boundaries of their own discipline, looking to the wisdom of history and lived experience.

**Acknowledgments** I would like to thank Claudia Blöser for very valuable feedback on this chapter. More generally, my research on hope has benefited tremendously from conversations with numerous scholars, especially Luc Bovens, Andrew Chignell, Alex Esposito, Nicole Hassoun, Katie Stockdale, and Hannah Tierney.

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**Michael Milona** (Ph.D.) is an Assistant Professor in Philosophy at Ryerson University. He was previously a postdoctoral fellow at Cornell University (affiliated with the Templeton Foundation’s Hope & Optimism Initiative) and an Instructor at Auburn University. He received his PhD in Philosophy (advised by Mark Schroeder) from the University of Southern California. His research centers on the question of how we ever come to know what is right or wrong, good or bad. He has come to think that the emotions are foundational for answering this question, and that hope is among the most significant of our emotions in this regard. This has led him to a related research program on the nature and value of hope. Recent and representative publications include “Finding Hope” (*Canadian Journal of Philosophy*) and “Intellect versus Affect: Finding Leverage in an Old Debate” (*Philosophical Studies*).

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# Chapter 7

## Hope in Theology



David Elliot

**Abstract** As social, civic, and global anxieties mount, the need to overcome despair has become urgent. This chapter draws on St. Thomas Aquinas and virtue ethics to propose the theological virtue of hope as a powerful source of rejuvenation. It argues for the necessary place of theology in reflection on hope due to the religious origins of hope as a central human aspiration and virtue capable of resilience. The virtue of hope, it is suggested, sustains us from the sloth and despair that threaten amid injustice, tragedy, and death; it provides an ultimate meaning and transcendent purpose to our lives; and it encourages us “on the way” (*in via*) with the prospect of eternal beatitude. Rather than degrading this life and world, hope ordains earthly goods to our eschatological end, forming us to pursue justice and social tasks with a resilience and vitality that transcend widespread cynicism and disillusionment. While hope ultimately seeks the kingdom of God, it can be concluded that it contributes richly to personal happiness and the common good, even in this life, and that this may be affirmed by those who do not share the theological premises.

### 7.1 Introduction

Over the past decade in Western society a growing sense of crisis has made the search for hope take on new urgency. As polarization in society and politics increases, many who pay attention to current events struggle to find reasons for hope. Yet the quest for hope must contend with the fact that it is not a commodity which meets ordinary supply and demand relations. Hope cannot be sold to us by pharmaceutical companies, or packaged for delivery by an online retailer. It confounds our ordinary consumer and technological means for procuring what we want, making it both necessary and elusive.

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D. Elliot (✉)  
Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, USA

Von Hügel Institute at St Edmund’s College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK  
e-mail: [elliott@cua.edu](mailto:elliott@cua.edu)



The question therefore arises: where may hope in a meaningful and durable sense be found? Proposals here vary and are sufficiently familiar, ranging from populist politics and psychological techniques to revolutionary progressivism and scientific technocracy. But before offering solutions, we do well to reflect on the origins of hope as a moral concept in our society and on the particular contours which that origin gave to its expression. This confronts us with an unavoidable and important fact: that hope as a moral concept is tied to religious history.<sup>1</sup> Trying to understand the general shape of hope in Western culture while ignoring the impact of religion would be like trying to understand democratic modernity while ignoring the impact of the French Revolution. If moral concepts cannot be wrenched from their histories without some loss of understanding, a serious interest in hope must begin by addressing its theological origins in a meaningful way.

This is especially so when hope is thought of as a *virtue* and therefore as resilient, rather than as a temporary mood, attitude of optimism, and so forth. Since virtues are stable character traits which prove durable over time,<sup>2</sup> to have hope in this form would be a great advantage. As is well-known, pagan antiquity affirmed a variety of virtues as essential for the good life, such as the “cardinal” virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Conspicuously absent from such lists is a virtue of hope, which was added to the standard list of Greco-Roman virtues through the rise of Christianity. St. Paul famously wrote that “faith, hope, and charity abide, these three” (1 Cor 13:13). In time these would be categorized as the three “theological” virtues set alongside the four cardinal virtues.

Given its far-reaching biblical pedigree, hope’s place in this triad is well-merited. From beginning to end, the Old Testament is saturated with hope in God. “Hoping against hope” (Rom 4:18) Abraham founds the Chosen People and becomes their paradigm of piety. Amid slavery in Egypt and the Babylonian captivity, Israel is sustained by a hope in God which shows astonishing firmness. The Book of Psalms voices total confidence in God, pictured throughout in hope-specific metaphors—as a refuge or fortress to shield us, or an eagle that will lift us up—all this despite injustices, deportation, and tragedy. The New Testament likewise depicts hope as tenacious, describing it “the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (Heb 6:19), and telling believers to put on “for a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thess 5:8).

Both before and during Christ’s lifetime, hopes for a Messiah were at fever pitch. The disciples projected these onto Jesus, but on the cross such hopes seemed mocked and ruined. Against that grim background, the Resurrection of Christ surprised his disciples with dazzling intensity, impressing on believers the ultimate vindication of hope. The Easter mystery and the belief in Christ’s second coming inspired the belief that nothing—not even death—could prevent the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Born in this context, Christianity came into the world not just as a generic religion of hope; but as an unprecedented movement of confident, rejoicing, and triumphal

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<sup>1</sup>At least in Western history, a fact that is a commonplace in the literature. For a historical sketch of hope, see Elliot (2017, pp. 1–38). See also Moltmann (2010); Van Hooff (2014).

<sup>2</sup>See Elliot (2016) and Snow (2009).

hope. Patristic, medieval, and later theology take by comparison a more sober approach, but only in the sense that they moderate the joyful triumphalism with warnings against presumption and counsels to spiritual vigilance.

Although its precise form has varied over time, until quite recently hope in the Western tradition was believed to make a crucial contribution to the good life and to helping us face the enigma of death. But in a multidisciplinary setting this can no longer just be assumed. Academics outside theology may be inclined to ask what *relevance* there is today in distinctly religious as opposed to other forms of hope, and to wonder whether it is likely to prove a foolish distraction. Yet one need not denigrate ordinary earthly hopes to see that theological hope has a unique value from which innumerable people have and continue to derive solace. One of these has to do with the disconsoling limits of human agency.

Earthly existence exposes us, our loved ones, our neighbours, and the whole human community to a variety of tragic circumstances: poverty, disease, hunger, violence, pain, loss of livelihood, injustice, broken relationships, illness, decline, and tragedies of all kinds. In its final extremity it exposes us to death, that on naturalistic terms is the final and irrevocable parting from those we love most, the permanent loss of all that we cared and worked for in this world. Whether by sudden existential shocks or the slow attrition of the years, we are vulnerable to the threats of demoralization and despair, what J.S. Mill called “the disastrous feeling of ‘not worthwhile.’” Even our best efforts to overcome these ills are doomed to “reach beyond our grasp,” and fall well short of our praiseworthy aims.

Hope changes our perspective on suffering, discouragement, injustice, tragedy, and death. By making clear that our present situation is not permanent and by relying on grace to sustain us, hope precludes undue dejection and despair. As Isaiah says: “They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall take wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Is 40:31). Instead of seeing their lives as the product of cosmological chance, the hopeful see themselves as created by a God of love who wills their beatitude from eternity. Hope can therefore provide an ultimate meaning and transcendent purpose to our lives, and encourage us with the prospect of ultimate reconciliation and lasting beatitude.<sup>3</sup> Recent work in empirical psychology affirms the personal benefits of religious hope.<sup>4</sup>

But it is precisely this transcendent quality of religious hope that brings us to a familiar set of suspicions. In biblical terms, the hopeful ultimately seek membership in a heavenly *civitas*, believing that “here we have no lasting city, but seek one which is to come” (Heb 13:14). Since these “cities” may represent competing loyalties—most dramatically seen in martyrdom—this forces us to think through the relationship between those identities, and the prospects for social and ecclesial tension they

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<sup>3</sup>In no way does this *prove* the theological claims of hope. As Matthew Arnold wrote: “Nor does the being hungry prove that we have bread.” But I do think it illustrates something in the human condition that hope speaks to, both historically and, for believers, normatively.

<sup>4</sup>See Snow (2013).

involve. Moreover, theological hope may seem to regard this world as a dissolving phantasmagoria or sinking Titanic, and critics have been quick to twist the knife on this point. “The country of the Christian is not of this world,” Rousseau wrote disparagingly. “This short life counts for so little in their eyes” that for Christians “the essential thing is to get to heaven” and out of “this valley of sorrows”.<sup>5</sup> Christian hope, critics argue, devalues the world and prompts Christians to identify with their own parallel society of the Church at the expense of worldly memberships. Those who wish for stronger hopes in society may therefore view theological hope as a positive menace: an obscurantist force prone to reinforce alienation.

This chapter will push against this view and argue that Christian hope makes an important contribution not just at the personal but also at the social level, and that this can be recognized and appreciated even by those who do not share the theological premises. In giving this account I will draw on St. Thomas Aquinas, whose overall model of hope I regard as rich and persuasive. (Elsewhere I explain why I do not take my lead from the valuable but limited “theology of hope” of Jürgen Moltmann.)<sup>6</sup> Without aiming at an overall theory of social identity or Christian citizenship, I will argue that virtuous hope does not detract from this life and world but acknowledges their integrity and honours their goodness; taking up and ordaining the earthly projects of prudence, justice, charity, and other virtues to the eschaton itself. The social achievements of the hopeful, I propose, may at their best be not just a movement towards, but a foretaste or premonition, of the perfect social happiness proper to redeemed humanity.

This gives added reason for the hopeful to be socially invested and work for justice and reform. The lives of the saints and great reformers suggest this may be done with a refreshing lack of cynicism that corresponds to the spiritual “youthfulness” (*iuventas*) traditionally ascribed to hope, and compared to which despair is a kind of spiritual senility. Theological hope, I suggest, can powerfully help us to sustain vitality and curb demoralisation when the results of our personal and social endeavours prove flawed. In a period threatened by various forms of despair, such hope is a vital resource we would do well to consider.

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<sup>5</sup>Rousseau (1986 [1762]).

<sup>6</sup>I readily acknowledge that anyone interested in Christian hope is deeply in Moltmann’s debt. Along with Wolfhart Pannenberg, he helped to rescue eschatology from the image of an embarrassing conversation-stopper that the demythologisers had given it. In addition, Moltmann’s biblically rich account refuses hope’s equivalent of cheap grace at all points by its stress on social praxis, and by founding hope on Christ’s Resurrection rather than on some baptised optimism. Yet Moltmann’s account is implicated in a lot of Hegelian metaphysics and Marxist politics that many will find uncongenial. Moreover, his pantheism with its developing and disempowered God cannot ensure that the eschaton ends happily rather than tragically. The ironic result is that Moltmann deflates hope in crucial ways, making the search for alternatives important. See Elliot (2017, pp. 46–54).

## 7.2 Origin and Concept of Theological Hope

The concept of hope obviously has a history, but it has also changed the very idea of history. Early Christians believed that the powers of sin and death had been conquered by Jesus Christ through his life, death, and resurrection. Hope therefore looks forward to the time when God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:4). But since the kingdom of God will not be fully ushered in prior to the return of Christ, who will “make all things new” (Rev 21:5), Christianity has a provisional view of history. We are in transition between what the New Testament calls the “ages” or *aiones*, but that transition is from the old *aion* of sin and death to the new *aion* where the kingdom will be fully manifest. The risen Christ is the first fruits of a “new creation” (Gal 6:15) in which evil and suffering have no power.<sup>7</sup> So rather than thinking of it as a *past* event, from the Christian perspective it would be more satisfactory to see the Resurrection as “ahead of the times,” so to speak, and incomparably newer than the old *aion* whose bad news still litters the headlines. For Christians, the Resurrection therefore remains not just good, but (what is too easily forgotten) “news.”

This vision helps to account for the remarkable intensity of early Christian hope. As Peter Brown notes, early Christians were intoxicated with hope, and even the seeming collapse of civilization that was the fall of Rome did not sober them up.<sup>8</sup> Later patristic and medieval theology tempered this earlier enthusiasm with warnings against presumption and counsels to ascetic patience. Of particular interest to my account in this history is the role of the great thirteenth century theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. He inherited a millennium-long tradition of Latin theology whose greatest authority was St. Augustine and whose medieval benchmark was Peter Lombard. In his *Sentences*, Lombard defined hope vaguely as a form of expectation, but left its practical (and therefore its moral) role unclear.<sup>9</sup> This was not unusual. The conceptual neglect of hope had been going on for centuries. Of the three theological virtues, it was easier to describe an act of faith or charity than to describe an act of hope. Partly due to this, hope has historically been kept in soft focus as the junior partner of faith and charity, consistently valued but conceptually underdeveloped.

In contrast to this, Aquinas took a serious interest in hope from early in his career, and sought to clarify its nature and role with some thoroughness. He defines hope’s object as a “future good possible but arduous to attain” (*bonum futurum arduum possibile haberi*).<sup>10</sup> We hope for goods which we do not yet have, and which we may but are not certain to get.<sup>11</sup> Hope therefore combines desire and uncertainty, and may oscillate between joyful anticipation and anxious longing.

<sup>7</sup>See Stanley B. Marrow (2002); Richard B. Hays (1996, pp. 169–181).

<sup>8</sup>Brown (1981).

<sup>9</sup>Merkt (1981).

<sup>10</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>11</sup>See Elliot (2017); Merkt (1981); Doyle (2012).

Although Aquinas wrote at length on hope as a passion or form of affect, he did not set great evaluative store by it. The passion of hope itself—which Aquinas thinks conspicuous among “youth and drunkards” (*iuvenes et ebrii*)—should not be confused with hope as it appears in the will.<sup>12</sup> Specifically Christian hope for Aquinas is a *virtue* rather than a feeling, attitude of optimism, and so forth.<sup>13</sup> The virtues themselves are firm dispositions or *habitus* to act well. Aquinas quotes his Latin translation of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* to state that “virtue is that which makes its possessor good, and his work good likewise”.<sup>14</sup> But unlike the natural or “acquired virtues” (*virtutes acquisitae*) which humans themselves attain through habituation and effort, hope is one of the supernatural or “infused” virtues (*virtutes infusae*) gratuitously poured out by the grace of God. Like faith and charity, hope is also a “theological” virtue in that its immediate object is God (*theos*). But whereas faith knows God as first truth and charity loves God as the universal good, hope seeks God as our personal good—namely, as the source of perfect and lasting happiness in eternal life.

Aquinas says that hope does this in two ways, making its object two-fold. The first aspect is “eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of God”.<sup>15</sup> This is the “final cause”<sup>16</sup> or end for which hope longs, and it denotes a “stretching forth of desire”<sup>17</sup> towards “eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of God Himself”.<sup>18</sup> As this suggests, hope is the virtue which answers to St. Augustine’s famous phrase, “You have made us for yourselves, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you” (Augustine 2005 [400]).<sup>19</sup>

Hope’s second object is “the divine assistance. . . on whose help (hope) relies”.<sup>20</sup> This is hope’s “efficient cause,” and it “attains God by leaning on his help,”<sup>21</sup> that is, on his “omnipotence and mercy”.<sup>22</sup> This is how Aquinas puts what we would describe in plainer terms as asking God for help to do your duty or become a better

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<sup>12</sup>At the same time, Aquinas notes that volitional hope may overflow into and stimulate the passions, often giving rise to feelings of hope. *ST II-II.25.5.2* (Aquinas 1981 [1265]).

<sup>13</sup>Historically, the concept of hope as a discrete and focal virtue originates with hope as a *theological* virtue. But this does not, of course, imply that no secular form of hope could count as a virtue in any sense. Nor am I arguing such, though I think losing the distinct value of theological hope would be a considerable loss. Even in terms of conceptual history, it would be a bit like “Hamlet without the Prince.” Yet a proper treatment of this question is beyond the scope of this paper given that I am treating the theology of hope.

<sup>14</sup>“*Virtus est quae bonum facit habentem, et opus eius bonum reddit.*” *ST I-II 55.3.*

<sup>15</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>16</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>17</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>18</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>19</sup>“*Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te,*” Augustine (2019, 1.1).

<sup>20</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>21</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>22</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

person, seeking forgiveness, praying for strength, relying upon God to get through illness or tragedy, and so forth.

The basic practice of hope, therefore, might be summarized as a combination of *longing* and *leaning*. By hope we long for God as the source of our beatitude, and this corresponds to hope's final cause. By hope we also lean upon grace to sustain us through the joys and challenges of our earthly pilgrimage, and this corresponds to hope's efficient cause. Understood in these terms, the virtue of hope sustains agents from the twin threats of presumption and despair, the two vices opposed to hope.<sup>23</sup>

### 7.3 Not "of the World"?

Aquinas believes that we may attain partial happiness in this life, but that the ultimate goal of hope is the beatific vision of God in the next. So important is this trajectory of hope toward eternal beatitude that it imparts a unique identity to those who have it. Just as we classify human beings as *homo sapiens*, the medievals classified the Christian as *homo viator*: the human "wayfarer" who is "on the way" (*in via*) or on the journey to arrive in the heavenly homeland (*in patria*). Such thought draws on various New Testament passages, such as the claim that Christians are "pilgrims and strangers on the earth" (1 Pt 2:11) and the admonition to desire "a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb 11:13–16). As the second century Epistle to Diognetus would later famously say: Christians are "in the world but not of the world." (Mathetes, 130).

If matters ended there, hope might lead us to reject all earthly goods and worldly endeavours as nothing but harp-strumming by the waters of Babylon. Some read in this light St. Paul's admission that the Christian community is disproportionately poor, uneducated, and lacking in worldly success (1 Cor 1: 26–27). Christianity's "cultured despisers" at times fasten onto this point in a polemic to unmask hope as a self-deceiving hatred of life. This polemic itself has an ancient pedigree. The familiar tale, tweaked and varied by Celsus, Voltaire, Gibbon, Hume, Nietzsche, Marx, and others, generally goes this way. Christians are fixated on heaven because the world has not been kind to them. Having missed out on happiness here, they console themselves with the wish-fulfilment fantasy of the hereafter, and avenge themselves on the happy, healthy, and fortunate by declaring their worldly joys bankrupt. Instead of having to admit that they are failures, hope licenses Christians to convert their wretchedness into a moral trophy and promissory note of heaven while indulging the sweets of resentment towards the "worldly"—that is, towards everybody else—by passive aggressive moralising and hints of divine punishment. The

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<sup>23</sup>Whereas despair consists in believing that hope's object is impossible, hope's second opposed vice is presumption, which comes in two forms. The first occurs when one refuses to seek God's grace or forgiveness out of either self-reliance or self-righteousness. The second occurs when one refuses to repent or perform good works in the belief that salvation is easy or guaranteed, and therefore requires no moral or spiritual toil. See *ST II-II* 20, 21.

world-renouncing hope of Christians turns out to be nothing more than a case of cosmic sour grapes.<sup>24</sup>

While people who know Christianity know that this is a caricature, some may suspect that there is a real point here which has been grossly stretched. Fears that the hope debunkers have something of a point also helps to account for the neglect of hope by Christian ethicists who dread the jeer of “pie in the sky”. What must be established is how the hopeful should regard created goods and earthly projects granted that they have in some sense redirected their core aspirations from those objects and towards God as the supernatural end. If, as the Nicene Creed states, Christians “look forward to . . . the life of the world to come,” where does that leave this life and world?

To examine this I will address several distinct but related questions. The first is whether theological hope permits us to *identify* with human society in specific forms, such as culture and nation, or whether hope simply alienates us from these. The second is whether theological hope gives its own reasons to *benefit* the earthly city, rather than just being indifferent to it.<sup>25</sup> The third is whether hope may seek the *redemption* of our social identities themselves in the eschaton. I will argue in the affirmative for all three.

For the hopeful, eternal happiness in the kingdom of heaven, the beatific vision of God “face to face” (1 Cor 13:12), is our central aspiration. But taking my cue from Aquinas, I will suggest further on that hope may invest itself in the social body as a “proximate end” that is referred to God as our “ultimate end.” That relation invests hope deeply in justice and earthly concerns, but rather than crudely instrumentalizing these as a ladder to heaven, it implies that our social identifications may themselves be redeemed.

At first this may seem highly improbable. Christianity has historically viewed “the world” in some sense as a tension, a problem, or even an adversary. In Luke’s Gospel “the children of the world” are sharply distinguished from “the children of the light.” John’s Gospel calls the devil “the ruler of this world” who must be “cast out” (John 12:31). Later in the same Gospel, Christ says that the world cannot receive the “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17), and ominously tells his disciples “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me first. . . because you are not of the world. . . therefore the world hates you” (John 15:18–19).

But it is not immediately clear why the world should be described so pejoratively. Did not God create the world and call it very good? More baffling, how is one to reconcile “for God so loved the world” (John 3:16) with the injunction “love not the

<sup>24</sup>For a discussion of this polemic, see Elliot (2017, pp. 92–103).

<sup>25</sup>Without opposing it, I am not here using the term “earthly city” here in the Augustinian (normative) sense of the city of man opposed to the city of God, but in the merely (descriptive) sense of all of the neighbours with whom we share bonds. The former has in view those defined in advance as lacking grace, and therefore unsusceptible to the agency of hope. The latter does not address this question, since it is describing our neighbours generally, whom Christians will hope are in a state of grace (or, at the very least, that as many as possible are or will come to be). Concerning Augustine’s own terminology, see Speck (1996).

world” (1 John 2:15)? The fear that there something quasi-Manichean is going on here makes it tempting, but facile, to ignore the tension. Most of the tradition interpreted this ambivalence through 1 John 2:16: “all that is in the world... the desire of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not of the Father” (1 John 2:16).<sup>26</sup> This makes clearer that “the world” in the pejorative sense refers not to the physical earth, the human race, or human culture. It is shorthand for the widespread pursuit of materialistic ends such as wealth, status, lust, and power.

In general terms, this is “the world” that Christians are “in” but are not supposed to be “of”. But that very alienation may free us to be “for the world” with respect to justice and other social goods which worldliness by its nature impedes. This opens up the possibility that hope may be *contra mundum* in a highly qualified sense that frees us to be *pro mundo* in another and much more important sense. Later, I shall try to fill out what this looks like.

Nevertheless, the New Testament does appear to commend alienation of a serious kind. Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham are said to have “acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (Heb 11:13). This is not credited to their own idiosyncrasies, but is represented as highly reasonable: “They desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Heb 11:13–16). The early Church reinforced such trends, though there were notable exceptions: e.g., St. Paulinus of Nola, St. Ambrose, Orosius, Prudentius, and even (in some respects) St. Jerome, each of whom reconciled their ardent and ascetical Christianity with an affirmation of Rome as a providential carrier of cosmopolitan ideals, civic norms, and Christianity to the nations. But such views are minority reports amid the more general trend toward worldly alienation.<sup>27</sup> I noted earlier the second century *Epistle to Diognetus*, which famously said that Christians “reside in their own homelands, but as if they were foreigners... they are in the world but not of the world” (Mathetes, 130). The impression can be that the hopeful do not see themselves as really belonging to earthly society in any thick sense. Honouring Caesar and paying taxes would not

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<sup>26</sup>This interpretation has garnered the support of much biblical scholarship. In addition to Marrow, Brown (1995, pp. 293–328). For a shorter treatment, see Vawter (1968, pp. 407–409).

<sup>27</sup>Prudentius is by far the most positive of these figures in terms of viewing his Roman society (at its best) and the Christian Church as mutually compatible and reinforcing (see Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, II, 578–636). But such connections are by no means lacking in related figures, and often come into sharp focus negatively: e.g., as howls of lament over Rome’s painful, protracted downfall. In *De excessu 1.30*, St. Ambrose referred to Rome’s decisive military defeat as “the destruction of the entire globe, the end of the world... more bitter than any death” (*totius orbis excidia, mundi finem... omni morte acerbius est*). He is only outdone in his rhetoric by St. Jerome, for whom the sack of Rome was not just the end of the world, but also the defiling of God’s holy temple and the loss of a second Jerusalem (St. Jerome, *Epistola CXXVII*, 12). We are a far cry here from St. Augustine’s assessments of the situation in *De Civitate Dei*. See Averil Cameron, “Remaking the Past,” in *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World*, ed. Peter Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 1–20, and especially p. 7; Noel Lenski, “Initium mali Romano imperio: Contemporary Reactions to the Battle of Adrianople,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 127 (1997), pp. 129–168; and more generally, Christopher Dawson, *The Making of Europe* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002), pp. 39–41, 58–67.



necessarily alter this. Even a determined commitment to justice and charity in society might not. You can benefit a place without claiming membership within it, or at least any membership that deeply matters to you. So does hope, seriously followed, encourage alienation from family, town, community, culture, and civil society more broadly?

## 7.4 *Homo Viator* as a Citizen of Two Cities

Certainly hope in its more pessimistic, dualistic, and Platonic inflections does heavily alienate. But Aquinas strikes a quite different tone. The Dominican Order to which he belonged were formed in part to combat the Cathars, a Manichean revival movement of sorts which took the world and the body to be evil. Partly in response to this, Aquinas laboured heavily to explain the good of creation and embodiment. As the medieval historian R.W. Southern says:

The work of Thomas Aquinas is full of illustrations of the benign congruity between reason, nature and faith. He reversed the ancient opinion that held that the body is the ruined habitation of the soul, and held with Aristotle that it is the embodiment in this life of the soul's being. Man indeed. . . needs supernatural grace, but his final Redemption can be seen as the completion of the perfection which was his by nature at the Creation.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, Aquinas also sees the world as marred by sin, harried by temptations, and even beset by demons.<sup>29</sup> He is not at all a moral Pollyanna. Nevertheless, he views such evils as extrinsic to the created nature of the world itself, which remains essentially good and a work of divine wisdom. Moreover, his account of embodiment views human beings as fully inserted in local and social space. Drawing on Aristotle, he construed humans as body-soul composites or psychosomatic unities, stressing our essential embodiment so far as to bluntly state that “My soul is not I” (*anima mea non est ego*), and insisting that death breaks human nature apart, making necessary the Resurrection.<sup>30</sup>

If we are essentially embodied beings our identity will be importantly shaped by the time and place of our lives, making our earthly and social identities true parts of ourselves from which we cannot escape. Alasdair MacIntyre put the point well:

For the Platonist, as later for the Cartesian, the soul, preceding all bodily and social existence, must indeed possess an identity prior to all social roles; but for the Catholic Christian, as earlier for the Aristotelian, the body and the soul are not two linked substances. I am my body and my body is social, born to those parents in this community with a specific social identity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Southern (1997).

<sup>29</sup>See, for instance, ST III 41.1, 114.1.

<sup>30</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>31</sup>MacIntyre (2007).

Taken alone, this point does not get us very far, but it does prevent a wrong turn at the outset. It entails that the effort to identify with a dualistic conception of the self which transcends social space is ruled out as strictly incoherent.

Moreover, Aquinas holds that we have an essential inclination toward sociability. Upon this the virtue of justice is built. One sub-virtue of justice is *pietas*, which he takes from Cicero filtered through Augustine.<sup>32</sup> *Pietas* demands that reverence and regard be shown to our parents as the primary sources of our “birth and upbringing.” Piety, he believes, is demanded by the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, and it is owed by extension to non-parental sources of life, support, and nourishment. In addition to parents, *pietas* should be “given to our native land (*patria*)... This includes honour to all our fellow-citizens and to all the friends of our native land”.<sup>33</sup> So not only is it impossible to escape one’s social identity, the failure to acknowledge indebtedness to the community that helped nourish and rear you is strictly unjust.<sup>34</sup> The implication is that the Christian hopeful really are “dual citizens” of a sort. *Homo viator* may seek eternal citizenship in the city of God, but he owes honour to the earthly city analogous to the honour shown toward parents. Since disowning that city, like disowning one’s parents, is perhaps the grandest gesture of refusing honour, the effort to renounce membership in one’s culture and society is from this perspective both incoherent and unjust. So even apart from the contextual improbabilities it would involve, one cannot respond to the hope/world tension by simply transferring one’s social membership out of one’s *patria* and into the Church.<sup>35</sup>

If piety and social hope commend membership in one’s society, then hope requires persistent integration where possible. On Aquinas’ reading, Christ himself did this, conforming to the local “manner of living” in part by attending dinner parties and not refusing a glass of wine.<sup>36</sup> The hopeful may do so by any number of social and cultural practices which express and reinforce membership in their people. These should not imply fantasies of superiority, but rather a sense of fellowship and familiarity. Understood in this way, even necessary criticism of one’s society or country can be a medium of outreach. Objecting to vicious values, practices, habits, and institutions may partly cause alienation in a certain sense of the word; but then this is a form of communication summoning one’s people to recognize vicious and dehumanizing practices for what they are. That summons may itself be charitably

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<sup>32</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>34</sup>Obviously, family and country are not the only sources of individual and social birth and nourishment. But they are representative and serve as convenient book-ends between which we may place other social groups, from one’s town and neighbourhood to one’s *alma mater* and home parish.

<sup>35</sup>Stanley Hauerwas has sometimes been accused of doing this. See, for example, Stout (2009, pp. 140–161). For Hauerwas’s denial of the sectarian charges made against him, see Hauerwas (2010, pp. 3–21).

<sup>36</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

expressed: specifically, as a form of fraternal correction which Aquinas saw as an act of charity.<sup>37</sup>

The cases of Dante and Rudyard Kipling are illustrative. Defending his home country from charges of injustice, Kipling wrote: “If England was what England seems. . . ‘Ow quick we’d chuck ‘er! But she ain’t!” This suggests that identification with one’s country may be dropped if one judges it to be on balance corrupt. Far better is Chesterton’s claim that “Love for one’s country implies for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health”.<sup>38</sup> Not only does piety commend this approach; charity and hope do as well. Charity, which wills the good of the beloved, does not cease to will that good just because the beloved is not ideal. The pattern is the reverse, as suggested in the biblical phrase: “God showed his love for us in that *while we were yet sinners* Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8, emphasis added). A corollary is that commitment to one’s homeland or country may persist even if one strongly disagrees with its political, economic, or other policies.

But some have called into question the wisdom of such identification. In *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre suggested that those who wish to continue “the tradition of the virtues” should treat contemporary society roughly the way St. Benedict’s monks treated the dying Roman empire. The crucial moment came when “men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman *imperium* and sought new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness”.<sup>39</sup> In full agreement with this view, Stanley Hauerwas has suggested that the modern nation has become less of a country than a corporation. The United States is by his reckoning little more than a militaristic plutocracy, so that the call to make the ultimate sacrifice for your country sounds to him “a lot like being asked to die for the telephone company”.<sup>40</sup>

Hauerwas’ quip captures an important facet of modern society, but it is also necessary to distinguish the civic people and one’s homeland from the overlapping nation-state and political institutions. The love of home, land, neighbour, and a shared way of life which shapes cultural expressions and local practices is prior to any specific economic, political, or bureaucratic arrangement. Obviously the two exert much mutual influence and concretely overlap in many ways. But we should distinguish them roughly the way we distinguish between a person and an office.<sup>41</sup> While I think a great many of MacIntyre and Hauerwas’ criticisms of modern life hit their mark, the separate point needs to be made that our social and civic bonds are not coterminous with the sprawling institutional bureaucracies that govern economic and political life. Refusal to cooperate with certain policies and practices of the latter does not require repudiation of one’s commitment to the former. Recognizing this

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<sup>37</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>38</sup>Chesterton (2011 [1917]).

<sup>39</sup>MacIntyre (2007 [1981]).

<sup>40</sup>Hauerwas and Willimon (2008).

<sup>41</sup>I am indebted here to discussions by Wolterstorff (1983, Chap. 5), and Stout (2009, pp. 296–300).

fact also helps to disentangle piety from jingoism. That disentanglement in turn makes clear that love and honour of one's homeland neither requires nor condones injustice to those outside it.

In contrast to Kipling, there stands Dante's committed membership in his native Florence. In the heavenly court he is investigated on hope by St. James, like a "bachelor candidate" (*baccialier*) at a university answering questions in an oral exam.<sup>42</sup> Dante is not only asked what hope is, but "how much of it thrives in your mind".<sup>43</sup> We then discover that Dante possesses the theological virtue of hope to a degree unparalleled on earth. Beatrice vouches for him that "There is no son of the Church Militant/ With greater hope than his" and "this is why he is allowed to come" to the heavenly court "before his fighting days on earth are done".<sup>44</sup> Dante tells St. James that his epistle "instilled me with this dew" of hope, "till now I overflow and pour again your shower upon others".<sup>45</sup> Dante is, among other things, a missionary poet, and the *Divine Comedy* (again, among other things) is his great sermon on hope.

Dante not only passes his "exam" with a *summa cum laude*, but is singled out as (so to speak) the star student of Christian hope on earth. Given that he is a dishonoured exile from his home *patria* of Florence, we might expect him at this point to bury all thought of his homeland forever. But he does the opposite. Though second to none in hope for the heavenly *patria*, Dante continues to tenderly love his earthly *patria*, calling it "my sweet fold where I grew up a lamb".<sup>46</sup> Instead of indulging in alienation, he imagines himself back at the baptismal font in Florence where he was baptized, and pines to return home.

Nevertheless, Dante criticizes the city severely at times (Florence has, he insists, "become as venal as a whore").<sup>47</sup> He also refuses to bend to the corrupt elites who alone could recall him to Florence, instead remaining "a foe to the wolves that prey upon it now".<sup>48</sup> But crucially, such social criticism and partial alienation flow from the anxious piety of a loving son, not from the aloof disdain of a disowning one. In short, Dante is personally *invested* in Florence.<sup>49</sup> Zealous for membership both in his native city and the heavenly city, Dante is an exemplary case of *homo viator* as a committed dual citizen. He refuses the temptation to renounce either citizenship just because the dual commitment involves real tensions. Social criticism uttered from this moral space will stem from piety's solicitude and love's anxiety, not the clinically detached and aloof moral disgust of those who feign flight from and

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<sup>42</sup>Dante (2003 [1320]).

<sup>43</sup>Dante (2003 [1320]).

<sup>44</sup>Dante (2003 [1320]).

<sup>45</sup>Dante (2003 [1320]).

<sup>46</sup>Dante (2003 [1320]).

<sup>47</sup>Dante (2003 [1320]).

<sup>48</sup>Dante (2003 [1320]).

<sup>49</sup>See Najemy (1993).

abdicate responsibility for their society—a move which inevitably frays social bonds and foments cynicism.

On this model, the reasonable attitude to civic membership is therefore one of virtuous ambivalence. A judicious balance must be struck between affirming and denouncing, integrating and objecting. When criticism is necessary it should be expressed in terms of fraternal correction and therefore in the temper and mode of charity; making alienation itself, to the extent it is unavoidable, part of one's communication and outreach: one that summons to moral accountability while signalling the intention to lovingly persist in identifying with one's home and society even amid, and not just until, the onset of serious tensions.<sup>50</sup>

## 7.5 Hope's Ordination of the Earthly City to the Eschaton

Granted that the hopeful amid ambiguities may continue to identify with the earthly city, just what stake does the virtue of hope have in that city, and how might hope benefit it? Though it is marred by sin, Aquinas emphatically believes in the essential goodness of creation. Beyond this, he thinks we may enjoy a rich, if limited, happiness in this present life, and that we should "rejoice in hope" at the approach of eternal life (Aquinas 1981 [1265]).<sup>51</sup> The result is that hope, for Aquinas, does not fit into a narrative meant to make this life and world look unrelievedly bleak. There is a distinct social interest to hope as well. Aquinas observes that we cannot pray for something without hoping for it, and notes that the Our Father includes not just "thy kingdom come" but seeks "our daily bread." He concludes that theological hope may therefore seek earthly goods, but with one caveat, and one qualification. The caveat is that earthly goods are hoped for "with reference to eternal beatitude" (*in ordine ad beatitudinem aeternam*), meaning we should only seek them in that kind and degree which is compatible with and conducive to eternal life<sup>52</sup> (Though this may come in very ordinary-looking packaging, as in "our daily bread").

The qualification is that they are hoped for as "secondary" rather than as "primary" objects of hope, which rules out the idea that God might be deemed a lesser good, or even instrumentalized for purely temporal ends.<sup>53</sup> For Aquinas, earthly goods, from those of subsistence to our relationships and the most pressing goals of justice, are fully compatible with theological hope insofar as they are virtuously

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<sup>50</sup>Though I disagree with the Emersonian pragmatism he offers, I am at this point indebted to Jeffrey Stout's discussion of principled alienation (Stout 2009, pp. 298–300).

<sup>51</sup>ST I-II 5.3, *Super Romanos*, 990.

<sup>52</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>53</sup>Aquinas wrote that "hope regards eternal happiness chiefly, and other (i.e., temporal and created) goods, for which we pray God, it regards secondarily and as referred to eternal happiness." (*spes principaliter quidem respicit beatitudinem aeternam; alia vero quae petuntur a Deo respicit secundario, in ordine ad beatitudinem aeternam, ST I-II 17.3.*) For a full treatment of this subject, see Doyle (2012, pp. 119–144).

sought. Just as importantly, they may participate in theological hope as secondary final causes ordered to our ultimate final cause. As Joseph Merkt notes, Aquinas connects the secondary or created goods for which one should hope with the theological virtue of hope. Thus Thomas Aquinas establishes a relationship between the material/political world and hope. He understands that in some ways the material/political world is a cause of hope and an object of hope.<sup>54</sup>

The consequence is that earthly projects may *participate* in our overall movement to the beatific vision, hope's ultimate end. This occurs in many respects, two of which are relevant at present. First, how we conduct earthly projects figures importantly into whether we will attain the beatific vision, and in what way, quality, or condition. Put bluntly, Aquinas thinks that refusing justice and charity in the belief that you can just focus on heaven is the vice of "presumption" opposed to hope, which puts one's salvation in jeopardy. Second, this model allows us to hope that our flawed earthly projects may be redeemed and perfected by divine mercy in the *eschaton*. The things we loved and cared for will be "fulfilled" rather than "abolished" in a pattern of glory perfecting grace as grace perfects nature.<sup>55</sup> Were this not the case, it might suggest that everything we care about in the world is, *in itself*, a waste of time from the perspective of hope; and surely that is a thought too many. Instead, a cosmic fulfilment and reconciliation of earthly projects is envisioned: the swords will be beaten into ploughshares, Christ will make all things new, every tear will be wiped away, we will see "the healing of the nations" (Rev 22: 2).

Through the mediation of charity we may also hope for our neighbours' beatitude, and therefore for the beatitude of our fellow believers, fellow citizens, and the human race generally.<sup>56</sup> Since that beatitude is meant to begin in this life, though imperfectly,<sup>57</sup> commitment to the common good and the happiness of our society is incumbent upon the hopeful. As the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* states:

The expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age. Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God.

Society is the occasion not just for the exercise of cardinal virtues like prudence and justice; it also has ample scope for theological virtues such as charity. If heaven were eremitic, hope itself might lack any role here since it would then have nothing but incidental interests in social existence. But Christianity has always regarded the eschatological end itself in social terms: as a *patria*, a city, a communion of saints.

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<sup>54</sup>Merkt (1981).

<sup>55</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>56</sup>ST I-II 17.3.

<sup>57</sup>See for instance ST I-II 5.3, 69.2, and Celano (1987).

Since the social body may be referred by hope to our ultimate end, society is part of hope's interests.

## 7.6 The Heavenly *Patria* and the Beatific Vision

*Gaudium et Spes* speaks of social reform and work for the common good as a “foreshadowing of the new age.” Social reform at its best may not just move toward the perfect friendship of the beatified communion of saints, but constitute a foretaste or premonition of it. *Gaudium et Spes* states: “after we have obeyed the Lord, and in his Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood, and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, *we will find them again*, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured (emphasis mine)”. In this vision, the beatified communion of saints “will find”, so to speak, the fullness of social fruition whose beginnings they helped set in motion on earth. This helps to bury the view that hope, in the end, envisions the sheer destruction of our temporal and earthly identities, and therefore cannot be motivated to care much about them now.

Hope construes the Christian as a wayfarer or *viator* on the most important journey possible. But plainly that journey begins, as epic poetry begins, *in medias res*. We are born entangled in a story that has already been going on for some time, and acquire at birth layers of social identity bound up with family, town, history, culture, language, nation, and so forth. The maxim that grace perfects rather than abolishes nature suggests, by extension, that the life of grace perfects and does not abolish social nature. Charity informs hope, and Aquinas says both that one's fellow citizens rank extremely high in the “order of charity” (*ordo caritatis*), and that this order remains in the heavenly “homeland” (*patria*): “Nature is not done away, but perfected, by glory. Now the order of charity is derived from nature.... Therefore this order of charity will endure in heaven”.<sup>58</sup>

Hope perfects our sociability in part by gathering Christians together as a pilgrim people jointly seeking the kingdom. Yet even in the Church our local social identities remain, and grace builds upon these. So what might the perfection of this social nature by grace ultimately look like in terms that hope can aspire to, and work towards?

It has been suggested that the resurrection of the body may include the resurrection of social identities as our “larger body”: in its vision of the heavenly city, Revelation 22 says of the tree of life that “the leaves of the tree were given for the healing of the nations” (Rev 22:2), as though, to borrow the biblical idiom, they will be “fulfilled” rather than “abolished”.<sup>59</sup> It intriguingly adds that something about the nations in their redeemed form will persist as an adornment or quality of the

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<sup>58</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>59</sup>Lewis (1960, p. 187).

heavenly city itself: “the glory and the honour of the nations” shall be brought *into* the heavenly city (Rev 21:26). The biblical scholar Robert Mounce interprets this as developing Isaiah 60’s claim that the “wealth of the nations shall come” to Jerusalem (60:5). But whereas Isaiah is referring to “the choicest of earthly treasures,” the author of Revelation makes the wealth “symbolic” of spiritual riches related to “human culture,” here treated as an object of love and redemption.<sup>60</sup> So while the hopeful should not expect an earthly kingdom or secular utopia, the belief that our social identifications may be long-term objects of redemption gives added reason for the hopeful to be socially invested and work for reform.

Both because they are important in themselves, and because religious hope is often regarded with unease or suspicion, I have in this chapter devoted a good deal of space to social considerations. But it is important to stress that hope, as a theological virtue, has God (*theos*) as its basic object and primary concern. In that sense, even an afterlife paradise full of happy family reunions or Arcadian delights absent God would be wholly insufficient.

Hope’s tale fittingly ends with the wayfaring theme in consummation. When the journey is finished, *homo viator* becomes *homo comprehensor*: one who has “grasped” or “laid hold of” (*comprehendit*) the perfect beatitude that comes through seeing the face of God.<sup>61</sup> In this “beatific vision” of God’s divine essence, we do not just know God through created effects; we know the very essence of God through the light of glory bestowed upon us. “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2:9). This everlasting contemplation of goodness itself is the greatest possible perfection and activity of the intellect, and it produces utter and complete joy in the will, a *torrens voluptatis*.<sup>62</sup>

Yet Aquinas rightly notes that friendship befits creatures with a social nature, and so he adds that the glorified saints will “see one another and rejoice in God at their fellowship”.<sup>63</sup> As the concept of the “communion of saints” (*communio sanctorum*) implies, perfect beatitude is social rather than individualistic. The heavenly Jerusalem is not regarded by the Christian tradition as a long row of hermitages, but as a *civitas* united by perfect fellowship and love in the new creation. In *Paradiso*, Dante symbolizes the Church Triumphant in precisely these terms, with humanity depicted

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<sup>60</sup>Mounce (1998).

<sup>61</sup>Using scholastic terminology, Aquinas describes the beatific vision in terms of perfection, actuality, and activity (*operatio*). What is potential rather than actual is imperfect, and so happiness considered as perfection is a pure activity or operation. The beatific vision of God’s divine essence is our most perfect activity. In it we do not just know God through created effects; we know the very essence of God through the light of glory bestowed upon us. See ST I-II 3.2 and, for a full-length treatment, Leget (2005).

<sup>62</sup>*Torrens voluptatis* (“torrent of pleasure”) is a phrase from Ps. 36:8 in Aquinas’ Vulgate translation of the Bible.

<sup>63</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).



as a vast “white rose” and the angels as a “hive of bees” flying back and forth from God to the rose, transporting his love.<sup>64</sup>

In keeping with the New Testament, Aquinas says we are called to become “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God”.<sup>65</sup> In its beatified form, the communion of saints is thus the consummation of the social body as referred by theological hope to the eschaton. Given this and our irreducibly social identity, it follows that even if, as the New Testament says, “here we have no lasting city (Heb 13:14)”, it would be wrong to think that our earthly city is unimportant to who we are or what we should care about, either in this life or in the life to come.<sup>66</sup>

## 7.7 Conclusion

Given such considerations it is therefore no surprise that so many Christians conspicuous for theological hope have also been conspicuous for social hopes. We need only consider the great medieval saints who tirelessly advocated and worked for the poor, the work of Martin Luther King, Jr., in the civil rights movement, and other great reformers who sought first the kingdom of heaven and yet contributed to the earthly city in extraordinary fashion. Trust in God and hope for eternal life helped them elude burnout amid setbacks, and avoid becoming hateful to those resisting them. But plainly, their hope for the kingdom of God did not just coexist with their pursuit of justice and reform; it helped motivate, sustain, and shape it.

Without denigrating this-worldly forms of hope, theological hope adds something of tremendous value in its own right, one with the power to address many of our discontents. The vice of despair has collective expressions: howls of pain that take form in the available outlets of anger and division, as even a casual glance at social media and our political moment shows. The great exemplars of hope responded to similar challenges with a vision that gives to this-worldly projects a transcendent horizon and stake while sustaining the hopeful with the confidence that divine help will not be lacking and that grace is operative in their contexts. The paradox is that this ability to keep pursuing arduous goods after so many conventional optimists and political “realists” have called it a day makes hope a magnificently dynamic force for social reform. In a period when severe civic and social anxieties threaten many with despair, this can only be good news.

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<sup>64</sup>“As they entered the flower, tier to tier  
each spread the peace and ardor of the love  
they gathered with their wings in flight to Him” (Paradiso xxxi, l. 16–18).

<sup>65</sup>Aquinas (1981 [1265]).

<sup>66</sup>For a treatment of this verse and theme, see Hays (2009). Portions of this chapter have been re-worked from my *Hope and Christian Ethics* and reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press (copyright 2017).

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**David Elliot** (Ph.D.) is Assistant Professor of Moral Theology at the Catholic University of America (CUA) and Research Associate at the Von Hügel Institute at St Edmund's College, University of Cambridge. He received his Ph.D. in Moral Theology at Notre Dame in 2014, and came to CUA following a 3-year postdoctoral fellowship as Research Associate in Theological Ethics at Cambridge University. His research focuses on virtue ethics, the theological virtue of hope, and the ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas. He is the author of *Hope and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), and was awarded the Essay and Book Prize from the Character Project of the Templeton Foundation for contribution to the study of character.

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# Chapter 8

## The Psychology of Hope: A Diagnostic and Prescriptive Account



Anthony Scioli

**Abstract** In this chapter, I review psychology’s contributions to the study of hope. To close potential gaps in this interdisciplinary volume, I include work in psychiatry and nursing. The nearly 400-year history of psychological reflections on hope reveals extended stretches of neglect, alternating with brief flashes of interest. Shifting scientific paradigms are partly to blame. However, I suggest that the greatest challenge for investigators seeking scientific consensus on the topic may be cultural and sociopolitical. I begin with a review of the most significant writings and research on hope, dating back to the seventeenth century. I examine goal-related approaches in greater depth, due to their strong influence on the field of psychology. The latter half of this chapter is more critical and prescriptive. For a deeper commentary, I rely on Markus’s (Meas Interdisciplinary Res Perspect 6:54–77, 2008) distinction between constructs and concepts as well as Danziger’s (Naming the mind: How psychology found its language. Sage Publications, 1997) observation on how psychology found its lexicon. This middle, diagnostic section includes a review of philosophy of science criteria for evaluating theories. I transition to general prescriptions for achieving a better understanding of hope, organized around Bacon’s “four idols” of the mind, and add specific suggestions for future research. I conclude with a summary of recent work within our hope lab.

### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review psychology’s contributions to the study of hope. To close some potential gaps in this interdisciplinary volume, I include work in psychiatry and nursing. With little exception, the modern literature deals primarily with efforts to operationalize hope for measurement purposes. A more robust set of conceptual

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A. Scioli (✉)

University System of New Hampshire’s Keene State College, Keene, NH, USA

University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI, USA

e-mail: [tscioli@keene.edu](mailto:tscioli@keene.edu)

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S. C. van den Heuvel (ed.), *Historical and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9_8)

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insights can be found in earlier publications, some predating the establishment of a scientific psychology. A few of these ideas find expression in twentieth-century accounts but many have remained untapped. The treatment of hope within the social and health sciences also reveals a curious pattern of brief periods of fascination, alternating with extended stretches of neglect. This perplexing trail of staggered inquiry is partly explained by shifting scientific paradigms which can accelerate or delay research on particular constructs. However, as I will suggest later, the greatest challenge for investigators seeking scientific consensus on the topic of hope may be cultural and sociopolitical, rather than conceptual or technological in nature.

I begin with a historical review of the most significant writings and research on hope in psychology, psychiatry, and nursing. To assure a balanced account, I crosschecked my initial outline against the PsycINFO database, the premier electronic collection of psychologically-oriented research, with over 4 million publications. I entered HOPE as a SUBJECT term, and added a second filter to parse the search into three historical frames. The earliest reference to hope dates to 1656. In previous reviews, I have cited Menninger's (1959) article as a significant milestone in the history of hope science. Taken together with Wundt's creation of the first psychological laboratory in the late nineteenth century, I arrive at three eras. I depart from a strict chronological order when introducing broader themes that may have received less attention in one era but more interest in a later period. My decision to highlight goal-oriented and metaphor-based analyses within the modern science of hope is designed to illustrate two recurring, but very different, interpretations of hope from a cognitive perspective. I examine goal-related approaches in greater depth, particularly the works of Stotland (1969) and Snyder et al. (1991), due to their strong influence on the field of psychology.

The second half of this chapter is more critical and prescriptive. For a deeper commentary on the history of hope, I rely on Markus's (2008) distinction between constructs and concepts as well as Danziger's (1997) observation on how Psychology found its lexicon. This diagnostic section continues with a review of criteria in the philosophy of science for evaluating the adequacy of a scientific theory. I transition to general prescriptions for achieving a better understanding of hope, organized around Bacon's "four idols" of the mind, and add specific suggestions for future research. I conclude with a summary of recent work within our hope lab.

## 8.2 History of Hope Research

### 8.2.1 1656–1879: *Emerging Psychological Accounts*

Eighteen publications appear between 1656 and 1879. Hope is a potential virtue when aligned with the will of God (Bushnell 1858; Fowler 1854; Mahan 1875). Richards (1846) specified that hope must be built on trust and faith rather than "vain" philosophical inquiries. The more psychological accounts include Reynolds (1656), Nurse (1697), and Tucker (1805). APA style would have a comma after each name

when there is a string of authors in parentheses. For example, Bushnell, 1858, Fowler, 1854, Mahan, 1875). However, if this is an intentional style preference by Springer, I accept.

Philosophers will recognize the strong influence of Aquinas in Reynolds' approach to hope from the perspective of a good object that is difficult but possible to attain. Reynolds contrasts hope with despair (a good that is impossible to obtain). He divides despair into three kinds: sensual, due to forfeiture of the future; sluggish, from lack of effort; and sorrowful, a consequence of overwhelming fear. Reynolds adds four potential outcomes of hope; escape from weariness (stress relief), satisfaction of desire (goal attainment), contentment via realization of higher aims (fulfillment), and peace of mind from certainty of outcome (anxiety reduction).

Hale (1675) cautioned his reader to respect both the powers and perils of hope. Hope emerges from God-given imagination but this human capacity may lead to lofty and worth hopes or unworthy material goals that may spawn "vanity and vexation."

"Hope . . . is the great Wheel, or rather Weight that moves Man to all Actions and Undertakings. The Plough-man Ploughs in Hope; and the Merchant Adventures in Hope; and the Scholar Studies in Hope; and the Soldier Fights in Hope; and so for all Human Actions (p. 361)."

English preacher Tim Nurse (1697) reinforced earlier distinctions between hope and presumption. His perspective would be shared by twentieth century dynamic theorists (e.g., Capps 2001; Pruyser 1986) who challenged reductions of hope to "expectations". Period should come after the parentheses. Also, as noted above by me, APA style would have commas between name and date. For example: Capps, 2001; Pruyser, 1986. Again, if this is intentional, I accept.

Tucker (1805) spent 15 years drafting a psychology of human nature, which includes a long chapter on hope. Tucker highlighted humanity's unique capacity to project into the future but also listed characterological and environmental challenges that render earthly hopes more difficult to sustain as opposed to those which are focused on the next life. Tucker's greatest insights deal with the process of hoping and how it [hope] can positively impact motivation. "Hope has a natural tendency to smooth the ground for itself to walk on" (p. 116). Tucker suggests that a proper fixation on a worthy object will set in motion a train of consciousness that includes intermediate steps which function to increase the intensity of the hope experience via an accretion of successes. He invokes the metaphors of an anchor, a golden chain, and a spring. He suggests different "vehicles" or forms of [mental] transport when aiming at earthly versus heavenly endpoints; the former being more violent and the later filled with "steady serenity." period should follow parentheses

Pham (1828) argued that hope was a derived passion, emerging from desire. Hope was located in the middle of a probability continuum, between wishes (low odds) and expectations (high odds). Whereas wishes were languid, hope is more "vivid and enlivening." "It proffers its aid in the chambers of the sick and suffering. . . the victim of oppression, the captive in the dungeon" (p. 492).

For much of the latter half of the eighteenth century, psychology and moral philosophy are indistinguishable. Walker (1857) argued that God endowed

humanity with hope and fear for the purpose of aligning human behavior with His will. Fowler (1873) wrote a manual for families and children, emphasizing instruction in the moral sentiments, including hope. In *Elements of psychology*, Henry Day (1877) describes hope as one of the three comprehensive virtues. When the feeling tone of hope dominates, it may be considered merely a “grace” whereas if the moral dimension grows, it rises to a “virtue.”

### 8.2.2 1879–1959: *The Emergence of a Scientific Psychology*

Clarke (1880) distinguished true and false hope. True hope relies on thought, patience, and action. False hope rests on a perceived end without a means. Clarke grounded hope in faith, in both religion and science, in God and the laws of the universe, heralding a new science of Psychology.

McCosh (1887) included hope as one of several prospective emotions, which “cast sunshine on the landscape and stirs up motives which lead to exertion and activity” (p. 75). Quoting Cogan (1813), he adds that “Hope seems to give a life and spring to our whole nervous system so far as it is influenced by the gray matter of the brain. It is especially seen in the keen eye. It leads us to look forward as if to see, and lean forward, as if to reach, the object.” (p. 120). No period after “object”, only at the end of the sentence, after (p. 120).

“But it is also true that ill-grounded hopes, [creating] false security” can lead to disappointment and despair” (p. 119).

McCosh also introduced different types of hope, including hope secured from praise, as well public or collective hope. In contrast, he attributes dread to the steady press of “evil,” and terror to the sudden and immediate presence of harm. Despair occurs when there is no hope of escaping evil. the comma for the first use of the word evil should come after the parentheses: ...steady press of “evil”,

In *The uses of life*, Lubbock (1894) shares his recipe for living with hope. He urges patience, persistence, courage, and an equal reliance on memory and the inevitable future. Rejecting what would be called “mindfulness” today, Lubbock warned against becoming a prisoner-of-the-moment. Maudsley (1902) viewed desire as the basis of hope. As a psychiatrist and self-professed agnostic, Maudsley’s writings on hope reveal great ambivalence about hope; a recognition that many hopes are based on illusions that are nevertheless essential to human life.

Shand (1914) offered several laws of hope, including the proposition that the arousal of hope created a disposition towards anxiety. However, if hope was sufficient to destroy anxiety, there is a feeling of confidence. If anxiety destroys hope, then despair will replace both.

### 8.2.2.1 Psychodynamic Exceptions

Few references to hope appear in the psychological database between 1920 and 1950. One explanation is the rise of American behaviorism, which put inner states out of the scientific reach of its adherents. Psychodynamic theorists, on the periphery of North American academies, were less constricted by the learning theory paradigm. A good example is psychoanalyst Clifford Scott (1960), who offered an emergent sequence of four developmental stages that unfold when a child's present activities do not lead to satisfaction: waiting, anticipating, pining, and hoping. Hope incorporates elements of all three of the earlier states but takes into account a more complex relationship to the object (the object cares about the subject), and a more developed temporal component. Presumably, the child can now incorporate a sense of the time that is required for the fulfillment of hope.

### 8.2.2.2 Fundamental Hope

Two definitions of "hope" appear in the Oxford English Dictionary, both dating back to the eleventh century. From one perspective, hope is a stepping-stone to a higher elevation. A second meaning of hope is an island in the middle of a wasteland. In the twentieth century, the philosopher Marcel (1951) would label these ultimate and fundamental hope (desired endpoint and underlying character). In psychology, the most cited version of fundamental hope is Erikson's (1950) "basic hope." *To reiterate a point made in the overview to this chapter, I briefly depart here from a strict chronological ordering of hope eras to cover the few developmental analyses of hope that are primarily elaborations of Erikson's work in the fifties.*

Erikson (1950) linked hope to the experience of trust in the first stage of life. Erikson favored the notion of trust over Benedict's (1938) belief that the earliest derivative of good care is "confidence." For Erikson, trust more accurately captures the vulnerable state of the infant, the mutuality that must exist between the recipient and provider, and most importantly, the growing sense of separateness that brings the desire to try to reclaim a "paradise forfeited" (Erikson 1950, p. 250). According to Erikson, it is this basic trust that spawns an enduring belief in the attainability of the individual's deepest desires.

Erikson also noted that hope is frequently associated with a numinous experience and an elevated location in space. He traces this metaphorical representation of hope to the infant, wet or cold, hungry or frightened, and lying in a crib, shrouded in darkness, repeatedly attended to by a looming "higher power" emerging from a place of light. While he considered basic hope the most lasting human strength, Erikson believed that it might acquire new qualities as the individual ascended to higher stages of the lifecycle. Erikson asserted he could not be more specific or conceive of a way to measure hope. However, "he who has seen a hopeless child, knows what is not there" (Erikson 1964, p. 115).



Several decades would pass before Paul Pruyser (1986) and Donald Capps (2001) sought to extend Erikson's thoughts on hope. Pruyser's (1986) pastoral psychology of hope combines attachment concepts with spirituality, and a microanalysis of the imagination process. Pruyser agreed with Erikson that early attachment and care was central to the development of hope. He added that hope is anchored by a belief that a desired object will appear because "it is believed that the object desires this" and is also believed to be able to act on this desire (Capps 2001, p. 36). This latter premise, a belief in the adequate power of self or other to justify hope, would also be discussed by Godfrey (1987) in his philosophical defense of religious hope (in a higher power).

Pruyser collapsed Scott's four stages into two: wishing (waiting and anticipation) and hoping (pining and hoping). Unlike wishing, hoping involved a more controlled form of imagination. The images of hope are less detailed or goal-specific, the future is viewed as positive but unclear, an advance cannot be perfectly staged. Later experimental research by Averill et al. (1990) would show that at least in adults, wishes and hopes are distinguishable in terms of personal and cultural values.

In a chapter entitled "On the origins of the hopeful self," Capps (2001) integrates the earlier work of Erikson (1950), Scott (1960), and Pruyser (1986), and asserts that the foundation of hope is established in the first 3 years of life. Capps extends Erikson's model by clarifying the significance of verifications that engender trust and hope, widening the scope of these states, from early local care experiences to a more generalized "world-ready" hope. He writes, "the first verifier (care-taker) is not just a verifier of the world of persons but the world of things. . .to the human infant, the mother *is* nature. . .she provides a convincing pattern of providence. . ." (Capps 2001, p. 31).

Capps suggests that accumulating verifications, presumably feedback and evidence, inculcate a sense of self in early childhood whereby hoped-for events are not just desired but are actively pursued. "In infancy hope is based on specific hopes and is not yet an attitude independent of these specific hopes. . . [with development] our hopefulness does not depend on the realization of any particular hope. . .we become active agents of hope" (Capps 2001, pp. 32–33).

## 8.2.3 1959–2019: *The Modern Science of Hope*

### 8.2.3.1 Psychiatry

In the modern era of hope studies, Karl Menninger (1959) and Jerome Frank (1968) provided critical commentaries on the significance of hope. Menninger's (1959) address to a group of medical students remains one of the greatest presentations on the subject. He notes how little hope is found in the psychiatric literature, "our shelves are bare. . .the journals silent." (Menninger 1959, p. 481). Menninger dubbed hope the "major weapon" against suicide and the "indispensable flame" of psychiatry. A few years earlier, Eysenck's (1952) controversial publication, "The effects of

psychotherapy” initiated a two-decade debate on the merits of talk-based interventions. Eysenck’s data appeared to show there was little, if any, measurable gain from psychotherapy that could not be attributed to placebo or the mere passage of time. In this context, Jerome Frank (1968) published *Persuasion and healing*, a defense of psychotherapy, that highlighted common factors that spanned a wide range of therapeutic encounters, from tribal medicine work to western clinical science. Frank concluded that the activation of hope was a key ingredient in any form of effective healing.

Aaron Beck and his colleagues developed a measure of hopelessness (BHS; Beck et al. 1974). Approximately half of the 20 BHS items were obtained from a general measure of attitudes while the rest were taken from a pool of statements generated by psychiatric patients classified as hopeless by clinicians. In interpreting their factor analysis, Beck et al. suggested three components, feelings and expectations regarding the future, and loss of motivation. A review of the original factor loadings shows a more ambiguous structure, perhaps due to the selection of an orthogonal rotation which may not reflect the underlying (overlapping) relationships among these elements. Debates continue over the number of components required to address hopelessness (Aish and Wasserman 2001; Forintos et al. 2013; Szabó et al. 2016).

Gottschalk’s (1974) “Hope Scale,” unlike the BHS, requires a five-minute speech sample that is subjected to content analysis using a 7-point coding system. Individuals speak into a microphone, without pausing or interruption, about any interesting or dramatic experiences. Four positive themes are scored +1, whereas three negative themes are scored –1. The positive themes include references to obtaining help or support, feelings of optimism about the future, seeking favors or blessings, and hopes that lead to a constructive outcome. The negative themes consist of references to rejecting assistance or offered blessings, inability to secure help, and feelings of hopelessness, lack of confidence, or discouragement. This is an interesting approach that deserves further consideration, particularly in light of later work by McClelland et al. (1989) revealing how self-attributed (explicit) motives, assessed via self-report questionnaires, differ from data obtained on implicit need and drives that is collected from projective or associative methods.

Schrank et al. (2008) reviewed the psychiatric literature on hope and identified 49 definitions and 32 measures. Seven dimensions of hope were noted: time, an undesirable starting point, goals, likelihood of success, locus of control, relations, and personal characteristics. Shrank et al. excluded philosophical and religious writings, book chapters or “opinion” papers (hope apologetics), and purely conceptual articles. Approximately 70% of the 49 studies (definition sources) involved research with severely, chronically, or terminally ill patients. Nursing accounted for 88% of the studies. Their “synthesized” definition of hope acknowledges relationships and spirituality as the possible ends (but not means) of hope. The authors also highlight the significance of a perceived goal attainment (expectations). Their own Integrative Hope Scale (Schrank et al. 2011) is more questionable, created by reassembling three existing measures (Herth 1991; Miller and Powers 1988; Snyder et al. 1991). While it is not a common psychometric practice to publish a “new scale” with items from the existing scales of others, the greater problem is content validity.

Nearly 75% of the variance is explained by the first factor (Trust and Confidence), which does not include any questions about trust but reflects a heterogeneous combination of efficacy, agency, and purpose. A single item refers to “faith”; spirituality is otherwise absent.

### 8.2.3.2 The Cognitive Revolution in Psychology

In 1960, as the “cognitive revolution” swept in to challenge a half-century of dominance by learning theorists, O. Hobart Mowrer and Magda Arnold emerged with two very different accounts of hope. Mowrer (1960), the behaviorist, offered a two-factor theory of learning that defined hope as the expectation of fear reduction. When the laboratory rat is conditioned to associate the appearance of a colored light with the offset of a shock, this (light) becomes a “safety signal” that arouses hope. Arnold (1960), a pioneer of the modern cognitive approach to emotions, credited Aquinas as the inspiration for her work. For Arnold, hope was a basic, “contending” emotion, an action-tendency that increases when obstructed in some fashion. Like Reynolds and others influenced by Aquinas, hope is defined as a desire for a suitable or beneficial object that is difficult to obtain.

Wright and Shontz’s (1968) article, “Process and tasks in hoping,” was an important contribution to the literature on hope and coping. Their work focused on the hopes of families with a severely disabled child, “since these hopes would not glibly reflect ready-made hopes provided by culture” (p. 323). Wright and Shontz uncovered seven different “hope structures,” two child forms and five adult versions. The structures revealed different elements of the hoping process such as [maintaining a] positive valence, a present or future orientation, reality surveillance, and reality grounding. The two latter processes distinguished the adult structures from the child forms. Wright and Shontz also delineated 12 different reality-grounding methods used by parents of the children but emphasized that these were subjectively experienced reasons for hope (vs. objective reality).

Stotland (1969) defined hope as a product of perceived goal importance and probability of achievement. He provided seven propositions; four deal with hope, the last three address the formation, activation, and persistence of schemas (cognitive sets). These propositions include: motivation is a function of goal probability (A) and perceived importance (B); positive affect results from perceptions of a high probability of achieving an important goal; anxiety results from low probability of achieving an important goal; anxiety motivates escape or avoidance behavior. Stotland’s preference for a particular kind of hope is apparent in the first lines of chapter one, “people who are hopeful are usually described as active, vigorous, energetic” (p. 7). What might be labeled a “cognitive-expectancy” model, Stotland’s focus on goal estimations would overshadow other work on the topic and dominate approaches to both hope and hopelessness within and beyond psychology for the next five decades. For this reason, it is worth considering some of the limitations of this perspective.

Two contemporary reviews of Stotland are noteworthy. Merrifield (1970) was “dismayed by Stotland’s consistent usage of supportive reference and research data, whether the data referred to man, cat, dog, rat, or sheep, in a nondifferentiated fashion. This served to place undue emphasis on automatic, learned responses and to minimize certain human qualities” (p. 105). Sarnoff (1970) credited Stotland for addressing a topic [hope] “whose great psychological significance has been acknowledged by Everyman. . . except most scientific psychologists” (p. 323). However, he is also highly critical of Stotland’s approach, particularly Stotland’s failure to provide an operational definition of hope. “While tending to conceive of it as the expectation of attaining a goal, he uses hope primarily as a heuristic construct to tie together antecedent and consequent events” (p. 323). Sarnoff agreed with Merrifield in questioning Stotland’s determination to “confine himself only to those aspects of hope that may reach across species”. Sarnoff is also troubled by the societal implications of both Stotland’s inferences and research examples, which in his (Sarnoff) view appear to condone “social destructive values,” linking hopefulness to “vicissitudes in strivings for self-aggrandizement.”

### 8.2.3.3 Nursing

Between 1975 and 1991, a number of Nursing articles were published on the topic of hope. The focus was primarily on measurement. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) is an exception, and their work remains the most detailed account of hope within the nursing literature. Their methodology is not clearly explained but apparently involved a qualitative, participant-observer approach. Over several years, the authors observed 35 elderly cancer patients and 47 terminally ill individuals, with various diagnoses. They define hope in process terms, as a dynamic, multidimensional “life force” characterized by “a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving a future good. . . [that is] realistically possible and personally significant” (1985, p. 380). They further describe two spheres, particularized and generalized. Within each sphere are six common dimensions: affective, cognitive, behavioral, affiliative, temporal, and contextual.

Dufault and Martocchio (1985) provide an excellent inventory of elements that may enter into the hoping process. Unlike many other nursing or psychological approaches to hope, they include affiliative and contextual factors. Their insights into the affective dimensions of hoping make a good case for viewing hope as an emotion (desire and attraction, personal significance, confidence but also uncertainty). The generalized sphere is presumed but barely discussed, and it is not clear if the six dimensions apply to the same degree, or in the same manner, to this aspect of hope. Moreover, they discount the potential significance of trait or dispositional hope.

Miller and Powers (1988) hypothesized ten elements of hope. Unfortunately, hope is not clearly delineated. They include concepts such as mutuality-affiliation, freedom, goal achievement, and reality negotiation, which are perennial favorites of hope theorists. However, the addition of wellbeing, meaning, mental and physical

activation, and avoidance of dichotomous thinking, reflects drifts into other conceptual domains. Predictably, the statistical analysis of such an eclectic set of items reveals a primary factor labeled “satisfaction with self, others, and life” that appears to encompass a blend of engagement, life satisfaction, and resilience. The remaining two factors are closer in content to elements of hope conceptualized by other theorists (Factor 2: trapped and overwhelmed; Factor 3: goal-setting and a positive future).

Nowotny (1989) sought a measure of hope applicable to cancer patients. From her review of the literature, Nowotny identified six dimensions: future orientation, active involvement, an internal resource related to trust, possibility, others (humans and/or higher power), and importance of the object. Along with Dufault and Martocchio (1985), this is one of the most compelling explications of the hope construct in the field of Nursing. Nevertheless, in translating these concepts into scale items, Nowotny may have overemphasized self-confidence (versus trust, general readiness, or openness).

Hinds (1984) has done the most research on hope in adolescents with cancer. Relying on a grounded theory method, her interviews of adolescents revealed four dimensions: forced effort to adopt a positive view; possibilities of a second chance; non-specific expectations of a better tomorrow; and anticipation of specific, personal possibilities. Hinds and Gattuso (1991) later developed a 24-item, visual analog scale from this model to assess adolescent hopefulness. Based on her grounded theory approach, the content validity is strong with respect to her selected population. However, in terms of reliability and sensitivity, visual analog scales may increase measurement error and decrease the ability to detect individual differences (McCormack et al. 1988).

The Herth (1991) Scale is the most cited measure of hope in nursing. Herth’s impetus for developing a new measure was to include general and specific aspects of hope. She tested her scale on four samples, cancer patients, healthy adults, the elderly, and bereaved elderly. Her data revealed three factors: temporality and future; positive readiness and expectancy; and interconnectedness. Overall, this is the best general measure in nursing. Nevertheless, the Herth scale does demonstrate an overemphasis on mastery, and only one item addresses spirituality. Add a subtitle after this paragraph for the paragraph on Staats and Stassen. It will be section 8.2.3.4 The subtitle is 8.2.3.4 Psychology Revisits Affect: Hope as Mood.

Staats and Stassen (1985) defined hope as the sum of expected positive moods minus expected negative moods. Staat’s Hope Scale was derived from Bradburn’s Affective Balance Scale (ABS; Bradburn 1969). The original ABS measure consists of five positive and five negative mood states (e.g. excited, proud, bored, depressed, or unhappy). Respondents indicate whether or not they felt particular moods over the previous few weeks. The affective balance score is computed by subtracting the negative mood score from the positive mood value. Staats modified the ABS by changing the focus from the past to expectations for “the next few weeks”. There are two problems. First, I would concur with McCosh’s (1887) insight that emotion, including hope, should be distinguished from moods and basic “hedonic states” such

as interest, excitement, restlessness, or boredom. Secondly, the ABS measure also includes discrete emotions such as pride and depression.

This reduction of hope to a positive mood state may be understood in terms of the cognition-affect debates that dominated psychological inquiries in the 1980s. After three decades of a “cognitive revolution,” psychologists began to question the limits of computer-centric, serial-styled, information processing models. In an often-cited debate, Zajonc (1980) argued for the primacy of affect. Lazarus (1981), his counterpart, took the position that cognition was more fundamental but insisted on an alternative definition of this construct that highlighted “immediate features of the environment. . .attended and responded to selectively on the basis of needs, commitments, beliefs and cognitive styles” (p. 222).

### 8.2.3.4 Metaphors of Hope Change this subtitle to 8.2.3.5 Psychology Stretches Cognition: Metaphors of Hope

The research of Breznitz (1986) and Averill et al. (1990) on hope may be understood as attempts to test the limits of a cognitive approach to emotion. A few years prior, In *Metaphors we live by*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) proposed that that the study of metaphors is critical if cognitive science wishes to link body with mind, behavior with imagination. Lakoff and Kövecses (1987) would eventually follow with a more explicit theory of emotion in term of cognitive metaphors. Breznitz (1986) examined the “work of hope” (hoping processes) from the perspective of six metaphors: a protected area, a bridge (a means), intention (focused biased attention), performance (successful or unsuccessful intention), an illusion (maladaptive), and an end in itself (fear and worrying reduction). Breznitz (1986) also explored four possible states of mind, deriving from the presence or absence of hope and denial. The most maladaptive combination was the absence of both hope and denial, tantamount to “giving up,” whereas the best permutation was hope without denial.

Averill, Catlin, and Chon (1990) modeled their approach to hope on Lakoff and Koveces’ (1987) research on implicit theories of love and anger. Their research yielded 108 metaphors of hope, drawn primarily from maxims and thesauri, which they reduced to seven primary categories (e.g., a vital principle, a source of light and warmth, a form of support, elevated in space, a physical object or things, deception, and pressure). Within each primary category, subcategories of metaphors were identified. For examples, hope as a vital principle encompassed: hope as the basis for life, hope as food (not always nourishing), hope as a remedy or prescription, an environmental life-supporter, a form of life itself. A closer look reveals that each of the seven categories include references to ultimate hope (verb forms, or the process of “hoping”) and fundamental hope (noun forms or hopefulness), as well as allusions to both adaptive and maladaptive varieties. Averill et al. note that the most common metaphor of hope is a form of pressure, or a gas, which may either “burst” or provide a “lift”. The authors consider hope as an emotion on the basis of the following observations: it is difficult to control, affects thoughts and actions, motivates behavior, is a common or universal experience.

### 8.2.3.5 The Return of Goals in Psychology (now 8.2.3.6)

Snyder and colleagues introduced a two-dimensional model of hope in terms of agency and pathways, tagged as the “wills and ways” [of hope] (Snyder et al. 1991). Firmly anchored in goal approaches to hope, Snyder distinguishes his model from previous work by adding “the perceived availability of successful pathways” (p. 571). To differentiate this “S-hope” [my abbreviation] from the constructs of optimism and self-efficacy, Snyder et al. suggest that the former (optimism) only relates to expectations regarding outcomes while the latter (self-efficacy) is limited to beliefs about the self. In contrast, S-Hope encompasses both self and outcome appraisals. The primary focus of the Snyder et al. (1991) paper was not theory development but measurement. The authors developed an eight-item agency and pathways trait hope scale.

Over a quarter-century, many psychologists, particularly in the United States, came to associate the concept [of hope] with S-Hope, and routinely incorporated the Snyder scale into their experimental protocols. After Snyder’s death, remaining members of his lab continued to utilize S-Hope, and in most recently publications, renamed it “hope theory.” In light of its popularity, a number of limitations are important to consider.

1. In selecting a goal approach, Snyder et al. draw on a narrow tradition with a similar bias, in favor of casting hope as a form of achievement or attainment expectation, that began with Stotland (1969). Moreover, by including in the “goal tradition,” writers such as Frank (1968) and Farber (1968), who focused on survival and healing, and Frankl (1963), who stressed existential and spiritual elements, Snyder et al. expand the concept of goals to a degree that makes the concept hard to distinguish from intentionality or directedness.
2. S-Hope is viewed as a form of expectation, similar to self-efficacy and optimism. Conceptualized in this manner, hope is no longer an emotion but a cold cognition, stripped of trust, a perennial reference in the philosophical literature, and also implied in Arnold’s (1960) reference to a “contending” element. Averill et al. (1990) found that individuals typically associate an experience of hope with a 50–50 probability of realization.
3. If S-hope is differentiated from optimism and self-efficacy because it encompasses both sets of expectations, then “hope” appears to be reduced to the sum of these constructs.
4. A focus on willpower and associated “way-power” locates hope firmly within the self, ignoring a voluminous literature on the attachment elements of hope.
5. From the perspective of content validity and psychometrics, items on the Snyder hope scale appear to cover the same conceptual space as the Schwarzer Generalized Self Efficacy Scale (GSE; Schwarzer and Jerusalem 1995). “I can think of many ways to get out of a jam” (S-Hope). “If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution” (GSE). “I energetically pursue my goals” (S-Hope). “It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals” (GSE).

Today, Psychology is still very “cognitive” but this perspective is joined by another revolution in the form of Neuroscience. In this context, the survival and coping aspects of hope are often a major focus.

Folkman (2010) examined the role of hope in the context of coping with serious illness, particularly cancer. She acknowledges two levels of hope: generalized, and specific to an immediate stressor such as a life-threatening illness. Regarding the former, trait or dispositional hope, she compares it to a “reserve,” perhaps attributable to faith, personality, or developmental coping experience, that is critical for preserving “physical, psychological, and spiritual health” (p. 905). However, her primary focus is on dimensions of the hoping process that may determine its level of adaptiveness. These dimensions include: odd estimations in the face of uncertainty, levels and kinds of denial processes, and how an individual manages uncertainty over time.

Denise Larsen and her colleagues at Hope Studies Central (University of Alberta) have conducted a series of interesting studies on the process of hoping within the context of education and counseling (Larsen and Stege 2012; Yohani and Larsen 2012). Her work has included different phases of the counseling process (e.g., early versus later sessions) as well as individuals and couples, chronic pain patients, and trauma survivors. In one study, Larsen and Stege (2012) found that goal attainment is typically a minor theme in counseling, trumped by client-therapist relationship-building and perspective change. Moreover, Larsen and Stege discovered that “supportive identity development,” including fostering a sense of worthiness, was more critical for instilling hope in counseling sessions than goal support.

### 8.3 Diagnosing the History of Hope Science

I turn now to a higher-level, meta-theoretical analysis, to distill the history of hope science into a more succinct diagnostic summary. Specifically, I draw upon Markus’s (2008) differentiation between concepts and constructs, and Danziger’s (1997) analysis of how psychology found its lexicon. Markus (2008) makes a useful distinction between concepts and constructs. Concepts cover the actual (focus of empirical studies), and the possible (all potential manifestations of an idea, across locations, times, populations, etc.). The latter [a construct] is population dependent, its meaning follows from the samples under investigation. Drawing on Scriven (2002), Markus believes that questions of “validity” should be directed towards concepts, whereas notions of “utility” are more appropriate for constructs.

Much of the research reviewed in this chapter reveals a panorama of constructs, each addressing one or more aspects of the hope concept. Psychologists have favored a view of hope as a mindset of probabilities attached to specific goals. Hope is a lightning bolt. In nursing and medicine, hope is a coping resource for contending with illness and stress. Hope is a buffer. Philosophers and theologians view hope as a foundation that is rooted in relationships or faith. Hope is a pillar.



This divergence in approach raises several important questions. How are concepts selected within a particular field? What factors affect the construct explication (elaboration) process? How are constructs applied and distributed within a particular discipline, time, or place? Danziger (1997) provides a provocative analysis in, *Naming the mind: How psychology found its language*. Danziger contrasts natural kinds (present in nature) with human kinds (created, not found in nature). Most psychological concepts, including hope, are human kinds. Danziger (1997) wonders, "Are they [truly] a mirror held up to the world that reflects the divisions to be found there?" (p. 187).

Danziger identifies a three-phase historical cycle in the development of psychological concepts: moral arguments, scientific pretensions, and the emergence of an expert class. The moral phase is clearly evident in the early writings of hope, particularly prior to 1879. Nevertheless, these publications contain important psychological insights into hope. The writings of Clarke, McCosh, and Lubbock represent an interesting confluence of a waning moral phase in psychology, an emerging focus on adaptation [the "science" of evolutionary biology], as well as a smattering of prescriptive or "self-help" advice (the "expert" phase). Three ideas from this period are worth further consideration; Clarke's distinction between true and false hope, McCosh's allusions to a collective hope, and Lubbock's appeal to future-mindedness which he contrasts with becoming a "prisoner-of the moment."

The rise of a scientific, positivist psychology, focusing on lab-centered observables, was given as one reason for the relative lack of scholarship on hope in the first half of the twentieth century. Following Danziger's approach, the "return of hope" in the late 1950s and early 1960s, exemplified by the writings of Menninger (1959) and Frank (1968), may be viewed as a new cycle of "moralizing"; hope *should* be a focus of psychological study. Much has been written about this hopeful period in American history, from the shift in demographics to a younger nation, the rapid development of interstate highways and television networks, to JFK's proclamation of a "new frontier."

Another cycle of hope "science" followed with the works of Mowrer (1960), Wright and Shontz (1968), and Stotland (1969), as well as the flurry of nursing publications in the seventies and early eighties. In the latter half of the 1980s, Cybernetic models caught the attention of psychologists. The predominant approach to hope for the next two decades would be a revision of Stotland (1969), advanced by Snyder et al. (1991), that stressed a closed self-system, of complementary wills and ways, directed at goal attainment.

Danziger (1997) warns that paradigm-driven appropriation of constructs under the guise of "science" may not only hinder understanding, but may also channel future inquiry, professional applications, as well as public consumption.

"Psychological categories...are not purely descriptive but also normative. Adopting a particular classification of psychological phenomena, and implicitly rejecting a myriad of possible alternative classifications, means establishing a certain form for the recognition of human conduct and human individuality" (Danziger 1997, p. 185).

The third predicted development, of an expert class, is most evident in the rise of “Positive Psychology” (PP), introduced at the start of the current millennium (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000), that I view as a proxy for hope distribution. Expertise is provided via social media, self-help books, life coaches, and well compensated lectures by celebrity psychologists (Chivers 2019). In one branch of PP, suggestions are made for increasing hope via interventions for extending happiness and life-satisfaction (Bryant and Veroff 2007). A second branch of PP seeks to address the cultivation of virtues, including those related to core hope needs: attachment in the guise of “compassionate love” (Hwang et al. 2008); survival through “post-traumatic growth” (Joseph and Linley 2008); and mastery via “grit” (Duckworth 2016). The primary challenges levied against this “new movement” parallel criticisms applicable to modern accounts of hope, namely individualism and instrumentalism. A more “specialized” expert class of [hope] providers may eventually emerge if sociocultural demands cannot be met in this more diffused fashion.

In the following section, I offer some suggestions for guiding future work in the psychology of hope. Toward this end, I review classic criteria for judging the adequacy of a scientific explanation. A possible set of corrective steps is offered, drawn from Francis Bacon’s “four idols” of the mind. I add specific recommendations for addressing the most obvious gaps in the hope literature, and conclude by summarizing some recent work in our hope lab.

### 8.3.1 *Philosophy of Science*

As Markus (2008) suggests, utility is a reasonable standard for judging scientific theories. Four criteria for evaluating the usefulness of a theory appear in the writings of Rychlak (1968) and Gelso (2006); description (clarity), delimitation (boundaries), generativity (explanatory power or heuristic value), and integration. Most psychological theories of hope may be considered “construct under-representations” (Cook and Campbell 1979). The construct explication process is too limited; the construct is under-defined. This includes the work of Stotland (1969), Staats and Stassen (1985), and Snyder et al. (1991). In contrast, a number of the Nursing publications offer an overly-inclusive view of hope, producing what Cook and Campbell (1979) label “surplus construct irrelevancies” (over-defined constructs). If a construct is either too narrowly or too broadly conceived, problems of clarity (what is hope) and delimitation (what is not hope) are inevitable.

The explanatory power (generativity) of Stotland and Snyder’s (cognitive-behavioral or “CB”) approach is more evident when studying healthy westerners, particularly younger adults in an academic or workplace environment. The nursing derived models of Dufault and Martocchio (1985), Herth (1991), and Nowotny (1989) appear most compelling when examining hope in the context of illness. Since both models (CB and Nursing) reflect specialized interests, integration with potentially associated concepts will be limited by the facets that define their respective constructs. For example, there is very little empirical work linking the CB hope

**Table 8.1** Hope dimensions in light of Bacon's Four Idols

Idols	Definitions	Hope dimensions vulnerable to conceptual drift	Prescriptions
Tribe	Human nature	Attachment	Grounded theory
Cave	Age gender, SES, culture	Mastery	Ethnographic study
Market	Theoretical, professional	Survival	Interdisciplinary study
Theatre	Paradigms, worldviews	Religion and spirituality	Cross-cultural investigations

construct (goal estimations or wills and ways) to physical health outcomes (Scioli et al. 2016).

### 8.3.2 *Prescriptions for a Better Hope: Bacon's Four Idols*

Francis Bacon (1620/1902) identified four levels of potential bias that threaten truth-seeking. Idols of the tribe are defects in human nature. Idols of the cave are biases flowing from secondary human characteristics such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status (SES). Marketplace idols can be defined in terms of theoretical, professional, or guild-centered preoccupations. At the broadest level, idols of the theatre encompass scientific paradigms and cultural worldviews. A full discussion of all the ways in which these factors may influence psychological studies of hope is beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I will briefly highlight the dimensions of hope most vulnerable to bias by each idol. An outline appears in Table 8.1.

#### 8.3.2.1 **Idols of the Tribe: Attachment Hope**

With the exception of Erikson and a few of his followers in pastoral psychology (e.g., Capps 2001; Pruyser 1986), attachment processes are minimized in psychological studies of hope. To some extent, it may be “natural” for human beings, highly social creatures, yet endowed with great self-regulatory capacities, to lose sight of the profound effects of early assistance. Kohut (1971), the most influential “self” theorist, describes the process by which healthy narcissism emerges from transmutation of self-objects. Individuals and groups attach to various self-objects (individuals, institutions, symbols with perceived power). Gradually these attachments are internalized and the individual experiences them as part of the [empowered] self. Psychologists are not immune from this natural process of mastery absorption. In fact, McClelland and his colleagues (cited in McClelland 1987) consistently found that psychologists ranked in the top three of all professions in their need for

perceived personal power, along with teachers and clergy. A classic study of the personality traits of psychologists by NIMH social psychologist Lauren Wispe (1965) revealed that eminent psychologists, those most likely to be theorists, were high in research commitment and professional commitment but low in social concerns or altruism.

### 8.3.2.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a method of qualitative research. It is an inductive process that begins with one or more questions, followed by categorization of content categories (themes).

Grounded theory was developed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), initially for the purpose of better understanding the experience of dying hospital patients. Two reasons for developing this approach were to close the gap between theory and empirical research, and, most important, from the perspective of hope and attachment, to better understand complex social interactions.

A brief review of 21 scholarly publications using the subject terms “hope” and “grounded theory” showed that the majority (17) highlighted interpersonal aspects, including: ways to foster parental hope (Bally et al. 2014), inspiring psychotherapy client hopes (Chamodraka et al. 2017), promoting hope in the bereaved (Cutcliffe 2004), trust and hope in trauma survivors (Srivastava 2015), collective workplace hope (Barron 2015), and the promotion of hope in vulnerable or HIV affected youth (Thampanichawat 2008). Nevertheless, any grounded inquiry of hope must be tempered by Bloch’s (1995) central insight that a full understanding of hope must include the here and now as well as the “not-yet” manifested in time or space, awareness or belief.

### 8.3.2.3 Idols of the Cave: Mastery Hope

Mastery expectations have dominated the treatment of hope within American psychology. The proximate cause may be psychological science; the distal or ultimate explanation may be the western ethos. In Bacon’s model, idols of the cave are secondary characteristics of humanity such as age, gender, SES, and culture. A review of the psychological literature (PsycINFO) by HOPE (subject term) and AGE (filter) reveals that less than six percent of the research involves individuals over the age of 64; only one percent deals with children (birth to age 12). Filters by GENDER or CULTURE (and HOPE) account for one percent each; research on SES and HOPE is even less common (1 per 1000). Health is a fifth “idol in the cave,” yet is particularly relevant for the study of hope. Just five percent of the research deals with HOPE and ILLNESS.

Hope is not the only construct impacted by “cave elements.” In a widely cited article by Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan (2010), the authors criticize the behavioral sciences for drawing “universal” conclusions about human characteristics from individuals residing in WEIRD societies (western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic). To some extent, issues of convenience, and challenges associated with the operationalization (i.e. measurement) of hope, may be blamed for eroding the truth-seeking process. This is not the whole story. Psychology, like any human activity, also resides within a cave [of culture]. Heike (2014) reflects on the “myths that made America;” four, in particular, may explain the recurring western emphasis on a privatized, mastery-directed hope: appeals to rugged individualism and the “self-made man,” belief in the discovery of a “new world,” search for the inevitable appearance of a “promised land,” and the call of “expansionism,” romanticized via the American West. As will be suggested later in this chapter, hope may be particularly vulnerable to “myth-loading.” (period should come after parentheses).

#### **8.3.2.4 Ethnographic Studies**

Ethnographic studies offer a way to counteract biases of the cave. More data must be collected on the initial and final stages of the lifecycle. Gender, culture, and SES differences should be explored in greater depth, ideally with interdisciplinary teams (e.g. psychologists working with sociologists and cultural anthropologists). Recent critiques of positive psychology from feminist and philosophically-oriented psychologists parallel the concerns raised in connection with hope, and may offer ways to achieve a more inclusive understanding (e.g., Becker and Marecek 2008; Lamb 2005). Nor can health status be ignored when investigating hope. Different insights about hope have emerged from studies of healthy young adults as compared to sick children or elderly patients confronting cancer. However, regardless of the focus (age, gender, culture, etc.), investigators must integrate their fieldwork with theoretical sophistication, or conceptual drifts will continue.

An excellent model of ethnographic research is provided by Rojas (2005) who investigated the relevance of seven conceptions of “happiness,” including stoic, virtue-ethics, enjoyment, utopian, etc., across levels of age, household income, education, and gender. A similar study could be done to explore the relevance of different hope formulations across these demographics, as well as culture and health.

#### **8.3.2.5 Idols of the Market: Survival Hope**

The bias of the “market” is apparent in the discipline-locked focus on survival or “coping hope.” (period after parentheses) Nursing has generated most of the work in this area, particularly with respect to measurement tools. As already noted, few exceptions are found in psychology. For example, empirical research on the coping aspects of hope tend to be singular and scattered, rather than programmatic; only one noteworthy article has appeared within the past three decades (Folkman 2010). Does

this reflect a more general bias towards mastery within psychology? A quick search of the PsycInfo database using “Subjects Terms” does not appear to support this hypothesis. Over the past 30 years, approximately 29,000 publications dealt with “mastery” or “goals” while more than 62,000 change to 62,000 focused on “survival” or “coping”. Is it relevant that the dominant psychological accounts were developed by experimentalists, not clinicians? The answer is probably not, for this does not explain the traction or longevity of a goal-centered approach. Possibly, there is something unique about hope, the ultimate prospective emotion, which encourages its appropriation as a cultural transporter and perpetual guardian of a mystical future, as suggested by Heike (2014), leading to a greater focus on growth and expansion rather than coping, self-regulation, or more generally defined, survival. This imbalance is unfortunate because survival, not mastery, is the more pressing imperative addressed by hope. This insight is clear in the writings of Aquinas and Arnold (hope is a contending emotion), and supported by the metaphor research of Breznitz (stress and the work of hope), as well as Averill et al. (1990), who found that nearly 50 percent of all hope metaphors referred to a “vital principle,” “warmth or heat,” or “support”.

#### **8.3.2.6 Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

Greater interdisciplinary collaboration offers the most potential for understanding the survival (coping and health) implications of hope. Social and experimental psychologists are experts in behavior, especially goal-related action, and are increasingly moving towards a deeper understanding of attachment. Clinical psychologists have a better handle on coping, defense mechanisms, and real-life adaptations. A clinical-experimental collaboration is a first step in assembling collaborative hope teams. Going further, since antiquity, hope has been hailed as the “best medicine,” and has been likened to a second immune system. At least two tracks of mind-body collaboration are foreseeable: one focusing on immunology and the second on neuroscience. The needs underlying hope—attachment, mastery, and self-regulation—parallel the variables cited in the psychoneuroimmunology literature. Hope, unlike optimism or denial, is a “balancing act,” a metaphor applicable to multiple levels of the human immune system. Neuroscience, despite its risk of reductionism, is inherently an interdisciplinary activity. With increasing access to fMRI technology, a team of clinical psychologists, cognitive neuroscientists, and psychiatrists, might venture to identify the circuitry associated with states of low and high hope, potentially transforming both the understanding of depression and suicidal risk as well as the development of more effective psychoactive medications.

#### **8.3.2.7 Idols of the Theatre: Religion and Spirituality**

Psychology has intermittently embraced and rejected religion and spirituality. In a provocative article that remains relevant today, Jones (1994) cited data that showed

psychologists were among the least religious academicians. Moreover, “only a minority of clinical psychologists (33%) described religious faith as the most important influence in their lives as compared to 72% of the general population” (Jones 1994, p. 184). More recently, Ecklund and Scheitle (2007) surveyed academics from eight disciplines at 21 elite U.S. research universities. Responding to the question, “I have no doubts about God’s existence,” (comma after parentheses) only 11% of psychologists agreed. In contrast, a Gallup poll conducted in 2017 indicated that 87% of Americans reported a belief in God (Hrynowski 2019).

A number of investigators have commented on the rise of a non-religious form of spirituality, particularly in the United States (Zinnbauer and Pargament 2005). However, supporting Jones’s (1994) earlier impressions, Ecklund and Scheitle (2007), found that only 7.7 percent of psychologists agreed with the statement, “I believe in a higher power, but it is not God”. This percentage was lower than physicists, chemists, and sociologists. Globally, a very different picture emerges. While identification with a formal religion has decreased in North America and western Europe, it is growing in many other parts of the world. Moreover, worldwide belief in God remains above 80%.

### 8.3.2.8 Cross-Cultural Studies

Pargament (2007) makes a compelling argument that ignoring the religious or spiritual background of an individual in psychotherapy constitutes unethical practice. In line with this thinking, American hospitals that seek accreditation by The Joint Commission must provide for the spiritual needs of their patients. By extension, ignoring the religious or spiritual aspects of hope may be considered a form of theoretical malpractice. First, it can be argued that for over two millennia, the primary source of ultimate hope for most of the world’s population has been religious or spiritually based. Secondly, a content analysis by Scioli and Biller (2009) of the world’s major religious and spiritual traditions reveal different patterns of hope, with varying emphasis on attachment (e.g. African or Native American spirituality), survival (Buddhism), mastery (Protestant), or combinations of such needs (e.g., Hindu attachment and mastery; Islam and Judaic attachment and survival). Thirdly, the attachment literature offers compelling accounts of how early relationships combine with religious or spiritual experiences to alter self-object developments (internal representations), impacting the nature of fundamental hope in ways that can shape a lifetime of corresponding and compensatory behaviors (Kirkpatrick 2012; Hall 2007). Fourthly, even if the overhyped claim is granted, that religion’s demise is imminent, the fullest experiences of hope will continue to require some form of spiritual foundation. Humans are connected but psychically alone, resourceful but vulnerable, powerful but not omnipotent. Unmet levels of attachment, survival, or mastery are inevitable, and hope, including a spiritualized component, will be needed to address these gaps. For some individuals, a different form of higher power may suffice. For others, spirituality may be centered on humanity, nature, science, or art (cf. Davis et al. 2015).

## 8.4 Additional Suggestions for Future Studies

Hope is complex. A fuller understanding will require refinements in theory and measurement, informed by additional historical, cultural, and ethnographic studies. Specifically, there are five primary issues that require attention. *First*, additional work is needed to distinguish between ultimate and fundamental hope. Within the philosophical literature, a single, overriding hope preoccupied thinkers from Kant to Marcel; securing a place in the Kingdom of God (Godfrey 1987). With the rise of atheism as well as non-religious forms of spirituality (Zinnbauer and Pargament 2005), psychologists need to consider other paramount hopes. What is the nature of such hopes and when more than one is deemed “ultimate,” how are these organized or prioritized? The work of Dufault and Martocchio (1985) as well as Folkman (2010) suggests an interaction between ultimate and fundamental hope. However, this topic has yet to be explored in a systematic fashion.

*Secondly*, there is a need for more research on the development of hope. The few commentaries on this topic derive from the brief sketches of Erikson (1950), nearly 70 years ago. There is a single measure of hope for children, a downward extension of the goal-oriented, Snyder hope scale (Snyder 2006). New research on future-oriented, mental time-travel (FMTT), coupled with fMRI has the potential for greatly enhancing our understanding of the hoping process across development stages (Atance and Mahy 2016).

*Thirdly*, there is a need to better understand hopelessness. The literature on this topic is scant; the most often cited measure was developed nearly a half-century ago (BHS; Beck et al. 1974). In light of the ongoing debates over the factor structure of the BHS, and the availability of multiple theoretical perspectives, it is worth asking if hopelessness is better viewed as a unidimensional or multidimensional construct.

*Fourthly*, more programs of research are needed to discern the limits and possibilities of hope in confronting physical illness, aging, and the dying process. As technological advances extend lives, they will likely prolong and complicate the hoping process. A three-way collaboration would be ideal, involving research on psychoneuroimmunology, imaging (e.g., fMRI), and hope theory.

*Fifthly*, Interventions are needed to instill fundamental hope and guide the development of ultimate hopes. The few available publications on this topic are strongly goal-oriented, and focus primarily on the hoping process (Snyder 1994; Stotland 1969). The valuable but isolated clinical insights of Wright and Shontz (1968), Dufault and Martocchio (1985), Breznitz (1986), and Folkman (2010) deal primarily with ultimate hope.

### 8.4.1 Keene Hope Lab

For several decades, our lab has utilized a four-dimensional model of hope (Scioli et al. 2011). Hope is conceptualized as a four-part network, constituted from



attachment, survival, mastery, and spiritual subsystems, functioning to address inevitable gaps in meeting the first three needs—for connection, defense, and advancement. The primary focus of this work is on fundamental hope. However, in a number of studies we have explored the hoping process (For a review see Scioli and Biller 2009). With regards to health, our studies have tracked the positive impact of trait hope on immune functioning in HIV-affected individuals, and the practice of healthy habits by young adults, as well as the role of ultimate hope in recovery from breast cancer (Scioli et al. 2012; Scioli et al. 2016). Our lab has also published adult self-report, state and trait hope questionnaires (Scioli et al. 2011) as well as a Rorschach method for deriving hope, and coding systems for content analysis (Scioli et al. 2018). We have three lines of research in progress. We are validating a measure of hope for children and teens, ages seven to 17, as well as a multidimensional measure for detecting nine varieties of hopelessness (pure and blended disruptions in attachment, survival, and mastery). Since 2011 we have been refining a group intervention to instill fundamental hope in adolescents and young adults through a structured group workshop that targets the four, core building-blocks of hope (attachment through spirituality).

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**Anthony Scioli** (Ph.D.) is Professor of Psychology at the University System of New Hampshire's Keene State College and a member of the Graduate Faculty at the University of Rhode Island. He is a licensed Clinical Psychologist in Massachusetts (USA). Dr. Scioli is Associate Editor for the *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, and Consulting Editor for the *Journal of Positive Psychology*. Dr. Scioli obtained his BS in Honors at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and his Ph. D. in Clinical Health Psychology at the University of Rhode Island. He completed Harvard fellowships in Health Psychology research with Dr. David McClelland and in Behavioral Medicine via the Harvard Medical School. Dr. Scioli is the author of *Hope in the Age of Anxiety* (2009, Oxford University Press), *The Power of Hope* (2010, HCI Press), as well as articles and book chapters on the topic of hope. He has created multiple hope assessment tools, including questionnaires for adult and youth, thematic coding systems, a Rorschach-based measure of hope, and multidimensional measure of hopelessness. The Swiss Academy of Sciences has used his measures to track hopefulness across Europe and Asia. With NIH funding, Dr. Scioli developed an intervention to instill fundamental hope in adolescents. Dr. Scioli is currently collaborating with Never Again Rwanda, to assess hope and hopelessness in youth impacted by genocide.

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# Chapter 9

## Hope in Economics



Emma Pleeging and Martijn Burger

**Abstract** As a topic of research in economics, hope has not been very prevalent. Following the neo-classical paradigm, economists have tended to focus on rationality, self-interest, and universals. A normative and subjective experience such as hope was not believed to fit well with this perspective. However, the development of several heterodox economic approaches over the past decades, such as behavioral economics, has led to renewed attention being given to emotion, subjectivity, and normativity. Economic research on concepts related to hope, such as anticipatory feelings, (consumer) confidence, expectations and aspirations has consequently increased. In general, these studies find that hopeful feelings have a strong motivating power for (economic) behavior. By and large, the effects of hope seem to be positive, ranging from longevity and health to innovation and well-being. Nonetheless, there have also been indications that prompt caution, for example when it comes to false hopes, disappointment, or possible manipulation of societal hope. The field of economics has gained much valuable insight from existing research but we argue that it could gain from further definitional clarity. We discuss the difference between hope and related concepts such as optimism, in particular when it comes to economic research, and suggest topics for future research that could benefit from a focus on hope.

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E. Pleeging (✉)

Erasmus School of Health Policy & Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

e-mail: [pleeging@ese.eur.nl](mailto:pleeging@ese.eur.nl)

M. Burger

Erasmus School of Health Policy & Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Department of Applied Economics, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

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S. C. van den Heuvel (ed.), *Historical and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9_9)

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## 9.1 *Homo Economicus*

Hope is fundamentally a subjective and normative experience. It is about desire, uncertainty, and about what we believe is possible and good (Day 1969; Webb 2007; Martin 2011). However, hope has not been well-covered in the field of economics. This can partly be explained by looking at the common understanding of human nature that economists tend to subscribe to. Within current mainstream economics, the neoclassical approach is still largely dominant. Modeling most of its theories on the prototypical *homo economicus*, this perspective assumes that, universally, people tend to be selfish, behave rationally, aim to maximize their interest, are not influenced by others, and have full information and understanding of their surroundings (Henrich et al. 2001; Dequech 2007). Hence, within this perspective of the calculating, rational human being, emotions or virtues have little explanatory power, and a topic such as hope has received little attention.

However, this is not to say that emotions or virtue do not matter in the field as a whole. Fundamentally, economics is about the production, distribution, and consumption of valuable output. What we regard as valuable can be determined in different ways. The term *utility*, signifying value within economics, was initially part of utilitarian theory developed by philosophical thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and was understood to represent the overall pleasure or happiness that we gain from our decisions (Kahneman et al. 1997). Even though the concept has over time been interpreted differently by other economists, utility from its outset was thus meant to represent something as subjective and personal as happiness. In addition, psychological and ethical theory were also important foundations of neo-classical economic thinking from the outset. Adam Smith, for example, deemed virtues such as prudence, temperance, and self-command essential for the correct functioning of the economic system through the pursuit of self-interest (Bruni and Sugden 2013). Moreover, early neo-classical economic thinkers did incorporate psychological constructs into their theories to explain economic behavior, investigating for example human tendencies, the effects of stimuli, pleasure, and sensitivity (Bruni and Sugden 2007). However, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, economics went through several fundamental changes, leading to an increased focus on mathematical, rational-choice models, and theory, and abandoning its psychological and ethical dimensions, all in an aim to increase the unique value and contribution of economics (Bruni and Sugden 2007). The idea behind this change was that philosophy, sociology, and psychology are worthwhile and relevant fields in their own right, but economics should fulfil its particular “niche” as the scientific field studying the universal rules of logical action. By adopting this focus and making use of empirical data and mathematical models, it was assumed that economics would become simpler, clearer, more relevant in predicting economic phenomena and improving public policy, and avoid the danger of drawing false conclusions based on prepossessed assumptions (Ekelund Jr and Hébert 2002). The consequence of this change has been that emotion, experience, and subjectivity no longer had a place within economic research. This is clear, for



example, in the way economists have approached a topic such as preferences. During the eighteenth century, preferences were largely understood in the way that philosopher David Hume defined the passions: as motivating and unruly feelings following from our experience of pleasure or pain. However, as neo-classical economists tried to develop mathematical, universal, logical, and predictable rules and models of motivation and behavior, preferences were stripped of their individual, context-dependent and subjective characteristics. Rather, economic theory from then on started to assume that preferences were fixed, separate from belief, and completely determined behavior (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2006).

Nonetheless, in recent decades, the field of economics can be said to have experienced a “counter-revolution” involving heterodox economic approaches, such as behavioral economics, which again swayed attention to the importance of psychology and to accepting complexity and ambiguity in understanding economic behavior (Dequech 2007). Within this school of thought, the idea of the rational *homo economicus* and neoclassical theory focusing on universals is assumed to be too simplistic to predict real life behaviors and therefore in need of reform (Henrich et al. 2001). Thinkers within this approach adopt a different interpretation of human nature, stating that comparisons and framing matter; that altruism can be an important motivator; that people can often behave in a seemingly irrational manner, partly since they often don’t have or correctly process all relevant information when making choices; and that emotions matter (Henrich et al. 2001; Kahneman 2003). This is exemplified in the changing approach to preferences; rather than pre-determined golden rules for behavior, economists have started to frame preferences as dynamic, context-dependent, and subjective experiences (Sent 2004). As part of this change, psychological topics have been increasingly investigated by economists during recent decades, and several strands of research have focused on concepts related to hope.

## 9.2 Research on Hope in Economics

Within the academic economic literature, there are very few publications specifically focusing on hope—in the psychological sense of the word. However, there are some strands of research that focus on related topics. Here, we will discuss the most prominent ones, namely *prospects*, focusing on the way people experience decisions; *consumer confidence*, i.e. the belief that economic circumstances will develop in a positive way for consumers; *expectations*, comprising our assumptions about the future; *aspirations*, relating to what we desire; and discuss how these different states are regarded as a form of capital both on micro and macro levels.

### 9.2.1 *Expected Utility Theory and Prospect Theory*

An important incentive for the further development of behavioral economics has been criticism of the neoclassical *expected utility theory*. This hypothesis states that utility, i.e. the value that people attach to certain goods, can be deduced by observing their choices. Based on the assumption that we cannot objectively and therefore reliably assess the subjective experience of people, e.g. whether and how much we value something, neoclassical economists favored observing behavior as a measure of utility. Choosing a certain amount of one good over another was assumed to reliably represent the value people attach to it. However, as summarized by the opposing *prospect theory*, which has been substantiated by several empirical studies over past decades, people also derive utility from the memory, experience, and anticipation of an event or good. This means that *decision utility*, i.e. what we base our choices on and which is reflected in our behavior, can be and often is different from our *remembered, predicted, instant, or total utility* (Kahneman et al. 1997). When we choose to do something, we might often think very differently about this choice afterwards or beforehand, for example when we regret a decision or when we enjoy the anticipation of a something but decide against it at the last minute. This means that simply observing behavior can draw a very misguided picture of what people really value. Rather, we need to know what people experience, not only at the moment they make a decision, but also before and after they do so. The increasing acceptance of prospect theory within economics over the last decades has paved the way for numerous investigations into the subjective experience of economic agents over time, including the experience of “anticipatory feelings” such as dread, savoring, hope and anxiety (Senik 2008). Although this type of research has only recently really started to flourish, the idea that perspectives on the future matter for our experience and economic behavior has already been around for a bit longer.

### 9.2.2 *Consumer Confidence*

A relatively traditional topic within economics that is related to hope focuses on *consumer confidence*, i.e. the belief that future economic developments will be positive and that it is a good time to make large purchases. The development of the consumer confidence index in the mid-twentieth century was based on the idea that consumers not only react to the current, objective state of the economy, but also to their subjective interpretation of future developments (Katona 1968). Items in the consumer confidence indices typically include questions on the present conditions (e.g., how would you rate present general business conditions in your area? [good/normal/bad]) and expectations (6 months from now, do you think business conditions in your area will be [better/same/worse]?).

The aim of the consumer confidence instrument was to better explain and predict consumer behavior, although over time, it has appeared that the index predicts a

relatively modest amount of variation in future consumer spending (Ludvigsson 2004) and is only substantially better at predicting behavior than traditional objective measures during times of economic shock, such as during financial crises or geopolitical tension. This might be because emotions play a more important role in these contexts, as strong feelings of distrust seem to render inadequate those models based on purely objective measures (De Boef and Kellstedt 2004; Dees and Brinca 2013). To this day, most countries still collect data on consumer confidence, making it possible to analyze trends, make international comparisons, predict behavior and study the relation between people's confidence in the future and their (economic) behavior.

### 9.2.3 *Expectations*

The idea of consumer confidence is closely related to the concept of *expectations*, i.e. the assumptions we uphold about whether the future will be positive or negative, when it comes to a wide possible array of domains, such as household finances, the economy at large, or life as a whole. Within economic research, there is a growing recognition that (positive) expectations are a worthy topic of scientific investigation, since they can explain behavior, are valued by people, and affect several outcomes such as health and longevity. For example, a relatively strong relation has been found between pessimism and negative outcomes such as premature mortality, reported pain, and low labor force participation (O'Connor and Graham 2018; Graham and Pinto 2019). Moreover, optimistic expectations help people endure (economic) hardship; not only are more optimistic people happier, they are also more resilient to negative shocks such as unemployment or political turmoil (Ekici and Koydemir 2016; Arampatzi et al. 2019). Also, research has shown that income expectations and financial security have a strong relationship with our subjective well-being, and at times are even more important than our objective, current income or financial situation (Brown et al. 2005; Frijters et al. 2012; Arampatzi et al. 2015). Together, these results indicate that optimism is generally beneficial to our well-being and health, and helps as a buffer against misfortune. Moreover, rather than being just instrumental, people seem to value optimistic expectations in and of themselves. For example, some seemingly (financially) irrational behaviors, such as lottery participation, can be explained by the finding that people simply enjoy the positive anticipation they engender (Senik 2008; Burger et al. 2016, 2019). However, there is also some evidence that being overly optimistic might be harmful to us: Expecting too much from the future might make us prone to disappointment or societal disillusionment (Easterlin 2001; Gollier and Muermann 2010; Sweeney, Carroll and Shepperd 2006; Kleist and Jansen 2016; Arampatzi et al. 2018). Being overly optimistic might give people a distorted picture of reality and incentivize reckless behavior (Malmendier and Tate 2005). And naïve feelings of optimism without any evidence could be taken advantage of, or leave people

apathetic in the face of serious threat or risk (Ojala 2012; Sleat 2013; Boukala and Dimitrakopoulou 2017).

There is a strong social component to the role of expectations within economics. People are social animals, and constantly examine how they relate to others. For example, when we see that other people's welfare is increasing, we also tend to be more optimistic about our chances of increased prosperity, but we could also become envious (Frijters et al. 2012). In modern capitalist economies, hope for prosperity is often based on the perceived possibility of upward social mobility, and seeing others' progress can be interpreted as a sign that one's own welfare might also soon improve (Hage 2003). However, here also lies an important risk, since optimistic expectations that remain unanswered can transform into disappointment, disillusionment, and envy. This is symbolized in the so-called "tunnel-effect" voiced by economist Albert Hirschman: When waiting in traffic, we might at first become optimistic when we see cars in the lane next to us moving, as this might indicate that we, too, might be able to move soon. However, if nothing changes after a while, people tend to get frustrated, envious and might even start to break the rules, for example to shift lanes. Similarly, economic prosperity can increase people's optimism, but having to wait too long before such expectations are realized can lead to frustration and deviant behavior (Hirschman and Rotschild 1973).

In many societies, there are indications that there are large groups of people who have been structurally disappointed in their expectations of a better life and suffer from negative effects such as ill-health and low well-being (Graham 2017). In a study we conducted among US citizens, for example, we find that people's hope represents little of the American Dream where anything is possible as long as we put our minds to it. When asked for their hopes for the upcoming years, people generally report that they hope for better health, to be able to make it through the year despite (financial) misfortune, or to be able to save enough money for a down payment on a house. Moreover, positive expectations tend not to be evenly distributed among different groups of people in society, meaning that some groups might disproportionately experience pessimism and its related negative consequences (Kleist and Jansen 2016; Graham and Pinto 2019). At a societal level, the "tunnel-effect" has been associated with eruption of popular anger in the form of protests and voting against the incumbent party (Witte et al. 2019).

### 9.2.4 Aspirations

A different strand of research within economics focuses on *aspirations*, i.e. the desire to reach certain goals, for which one is prepared to invest time, effort, and money (Easterlin 2001). Such aspirations are also often heavily influenced by our surroundings, since what we desire partly follows from what we perceive to be possible and what others think is desirable. It has been found, for example, that increased wealth goes together with higher aspirations, so that the richer people become, the more they desire. This can partly be explained by the finding that as

people get wealthier, they quickly adapt to new standards of living and they start to compare themselves to a new, wealthier group of peers (Stutzer 2004). In happiness economics, it is believed that these increasing aspirations cause a hedonic treadmill, i.e. the observed tendency of people to return to a relatively stable level of happiness, despite major positive life changes such as a major income increase (Brickman and Campbell 1971).

On the other hand, very low levels of wealth seem to coincide with lower aspirations. Here, it is assumed that aspirations and effort are jointly determined: high aspirations lead to higher effort to achieve ones goals, but through creating better outcomes, higher effort also becomes a stepping stone towards higher aspirations. However, since people living in poverty have fewer means of achieving positive outcomes with the same effort, for example because of less influential contacts, less wealth that can be used for investments, or less access to information, they are likely to form lower aspirations, which in turn limits the goals they might achieve (Appadurai 2004; Dalton et al. 2015).

### 9.2.5 *Hope as Psychological Capital*

As an increasing number of studies seems to indicate, optimistic perspectives of the future are related to many other positive outcomes, such as wellbeing, health, productivity, but also academic and athletic success (Snyder 2002). Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that traits such as hope and optimism are increasingly regarded as capital that can be used to achieve greater prosperity and as a buffer against misfortune. This is perhaps most clearly exemplified in the field of business economics, where hope and optimism are seen as positive psychological capital that can help employees flourish, be productive, and stay healthy (Youssef and Luthans 2007). Also, it is theorized that effective leadership styles such as authentic and spiritual leadership are closely related to, and could be strengthened by inducing hope (Helland and Winston 2005). Moreover, it seems that the human tendency to be somewhat overoptimistic plays an important role in investment and entrepreneurship (Flyvbjerg 2008; Sharot 2011). It appears that most people are generally overoptimistic when it comes to economic assessments and decisions, and that this is especially the case for entrepreneurs (Dawson et al. 2014). Moreover, this optimism seems to pay off, since optimistic entrepreneurs tend to be more successful (Ayala and Manzano 2014). Due to its strong perceived motivating power, optimism and hope are often regarded as important resources to teach to youngsters, also for battling societal challenges such as climate change (Ojala 2012).

On the flip side, it seems that pessimism also has some negative consequences, and prevents constructive investment in our future. A field within economics that has focused on the effects of lack of hope is that of development economics (Lybbert and Wydick 2018; Bloem et al. 2018). Here, the focus is on the question whether hope affects whether we invest in our futures and how. For example, the idea of a *poverty trap* implies that in contexts where people see no possibility of improving their

situation, they are likely to become apathetic and refrain from behaviors that could actually make their lives better, whereas offering people hope by creating new possibilities will increase their agency and resourcefulness (Sen 1999; Duflo 2012). This might be explained partly by the fact that people who think negatively about the future in general tend to avoid thinking about it. This might limit the negative effect of focusing too much on what might go wrong, but it can also prevent people from taking precautions against misfortune and from grasping opportunities when they do arise (Duflo 2012).

### 9.3 Hope and Related Concepts

While the field of economics is thus increasingly focused on how perspectives of the future influence behavior and outcomes, there is significant heterogeneity in its approaches and little consensus on terminology; concepts such as optimism, expectation, hope, aspiration, and confidence are often used interchangeably, without paying much attention to the question of whether these concepts do indeed represent the same experiences. Within the fields of philosophy and psychology, hope has been a more prevalent topic, and these disciplines have therefore developed much more detailed definitions, from which we can borrow some conceptual clarification. Within the field of positive psychology, hope is often defined as a desire, agency, and resourcefulness in the face of obstacles on the way to the object of our hopes (Snyder 2002). Philosophical approaches usually follow the orthodox definition of hope, claiming that hope entails desire for a possible, but uncertain event (Day 1969; Martin 2016). Based on our own interdisciplinary literature review of academic articles on the definition and characteristics of hope, we see that the individual experience of hope entails at least three core components; *desire*, a *probability estimate* of attaining this desire, and a way of dealing with the inherent *uncertainty* of whether or not we will attain our hopes (Pleeing et al. 2019). This implies that expressing hope means that we would like to achieve whatever the hope is aimed at, that we think reaching this goal is possible, but not certain, and that we are aware of this uncertainty.

This definition showcases hope as quite a particular phenomenon, that differs fundamentally from related concepts. For example, “expectations” are not at all uncertain, but are actually about expressing certainty, about what we believe is probably going to happen. Having strong positive expectations means an event is likely to happen, whereas having a lot of hope can easily pertain to something quite unlikely (even if our hopes might grow with the increased probability of attaining our goal). Moreover, expectations don’t necessarily involve desire. Although we can certainly form expectations about events we desire, stating that we expect something to happen does not imply that we want it to happen, even if it pertains to something most people regard as positive. Hoping for an event, on the other hand, does always mean that we want it to happen. “Optimism” refers to the tendency to have positive expectations and thus differs from hope in the same way as expectation does (Bailey

et al. 2007; Alarcon et al., 2013). Aspiration on the other hand focuses on desire, and does not relate to any uncertainty. Expressing hope implies that we are aware that we might not get what we want, while aspiring to something does not imply anything regarding our assessment of whether it is probable or not. Similarly, confidence can boost hope, but we can nonetheless also hope for things we believe to be quite unlikely to happen (but not impossible). As pointed out by Swedberg (2017), consumer confidence overlaps to some extent with hope, the most important difference between hope and consumer confidence being that consumer confidence focuses mostly on expectations what will happen, while hope focuses more on aspirations and desires. Although what *will* happen can coincide with what one *wants* to happen, this is not necessarily the case.

These distinctions are important, because it means that hope and its related concepts have quite different meanings and therefore also quite different roles for our behavior and experience. Hope is a very particular phenomenon, with especially important characteristics when it comes to economic behavior. Firstly, hope is about desire, and as such tells us a lot about what people value. Contrary to expectations, asking people about their hopes relates both to what they think will happen, as well as what they want to happen. Secondly, the fundamental uncertainty that underlies hope has a strong motivating power. As long as our hopes are uncertain, we need to take persistent action. Things we already expect to happen on the other hand, require no further initiative. Thirdly, awareness of the inherent uncertainty of our hopes means that hope is often more process-focused than other related concepts such as expectations. Hope is both about what we want to achieve and about how we might navigate the uncertain path towards it. This does not necessarily mean we will always act on our hopes, or even have very specific ideas about how we might achieve them. But it does mean that we are aware of the obstacles between our current state and the one we want to achieve, and will need to navigate our way around them (Snyder 2002). As such, hope tells us a lot about what people want and what will motivate them to behave in a certain way. Although there is no perfect correlation, hope could function as a very strong prediction or explanation of our behavior.

The field within economics that seems to focus most specifically on hope rather than on another related concept, is that of development economics (see also Chap. 14 of this volume). The difference between this strand of research and others, is that in this conceptualization, hope does entail desire, i.e. it is about what people regard as progress, and involves a probability estimate, i.e. whether people perceive their attempts and efforts worthwhile and uncertainty, i.e. that opening up the possibility of change, influences their behavior. For example, several studies theorize that certain interventions aimed at alleviating poverty might be specifically effective because they engender a renewed desire for a better life, increase the perceived possibility of doing so and open up entrenched assumptions to make room for new behaviors. Nonetheless, this research focusing on the role of hope in poverty alleviation is still largely theoretical and lacks empirical substantiation (Duflo 2012).

## 9.4 Future Research on Hope in Economics

While current strands of economic research focusing on expectations, aspirations, and consumer confidence are definitely proving their value, we believe that economic thought could benefit further from a specific focus on hope. Rather than the other concepts, hope implies a strong motivating state, which simultaneously represents desire and subjective assessment of probability of attainment. These characteristics make hope specifically useful for predicting (economic) behavior, since they determine whether people are prepared to invest, either in their future, in an uncertain venture or in collaboration with others. Previous empirical research from fields such as psychology, environmental studies, leadership, and business studies, has found several, mainly positive, consequences of a hopeful disposition. Hopeful people have been found to perform better academically and athletically, to be more creative and innovative, to be better at dealing with change, to be healthier and happier, and to behave more constructively in an organizational setting (Snyder 2002; Reichard et al. 2013). Moreover, hope and optimism have been found to be conceptually different and have their own, unique relation to well-being (Bailey et al. 2007; Pleeing et al. 2019). This is not to say that more hope is always necessarily better, since there can be important negative side-effects to hope, such as false hope, passive hope, or manipulation through appeasement of people's hopes. However, it does tell us that hope has a particularly strong relationship with behavior, especially when it comes to our willingness to improve our future.

Therefore, there are several economic phenomena that will most likely be better understood when we understand how hope plays a role. Possible economic topics that might particularly profit from a focus on hope are types of behavior that rely heavily on investments, such as sustainable behavior, education, and pro-social behavior. Similarly, a focus on hope might provide insight on the behavior of marginalized groups, such as refugees, unemployed people, and people living in poverty. Here, people make decisions based on what they assume to be a possible and better future. Here, there is also a strong social component at play, since hope often relies at least in part on our surroundings: others influence what we deem possible, but also often what we desire. As such, what people hope for often gives some insight into what we perceive as progress within our specific context (Kleist and Jansen 2016). Moreover, hope plays an important role during economic and societal shocks such as financial crises or political turmoil, and could even function as an early signal before there is further societal unrest.

All of this is based on the assumption that it is possible to measure hope. There are currently a wide variety of measures available which tap into how hopeful people feel. Popular multi-item instruments that have been used, mainly within psychological research and nursing studies, are for example Snyders's Trait Hope Scale (Snyder et al. 1991), Herth's Hope Scale (Herth 1992), Beck's Hopelessness Scale (Beck et al. 1974) and the Comprehensive Hope Scale (Scioli et al. 2011). All these scales have proven to be valid instruments for measuring hope. However, little research has been done on possible shorter or simpler instruments or how well



these multi-item scales perform compared to a single-item question. Although there are thus several avenues for increased empirical research concerning hope, there is clearly much to be gained in pursuing them.

## 9.5 Conclusion

Hope has not been a very popular topic in economics throughout history. Although mainstream economic thought was, from the outset, inherently related to psychological functioning and ethical consideration, and thus with how people perceive their surroundings and their future, neoclassical economic theory has tended to focus only on subjects that can be measured objectively and can be generalized to universal rules. However, recent heterodox approaches have started once more to incorporate psychological and philosophical topics and theories in their study of economic phenomena, and as a consequence have embraced subjective topics such as hope. Studies in this field show that humans are much more complex than the traditional image of the calculating, rational *homo economicus* leads us to believe. Life is uncertain, and people constantly try to make sense of their surroundings and behave in accordance with their subjective experiences. Hope is an important emotion in this regard. Positive perspectives of the future have been found to have an impact on our longevity, health, and quality of life and to motivate behavior and increase innovation, creativity, productivity, leadership, and entrepreneurship. Moreover, a lack of hope can induce apathy, rigidity, and myopia. On the other hand, more hope is not necessarily always better. Overly optimistic hopes can lead to disappointment and reckless behavior, and naïve hope can be easily abused. All in all, hope seems to play an important role in many economic phenomena, and the field could probably profit from further study of the topic. However, definitional clarity is necessary to further disentangle the roles of the different types of positive perspectives on the future. Hope, optimism, expectations, aspiration, and confidence are often used interchangeably, but refer to fundamentally different states, all with their unique characteristics and effects on behavior. Nonetheless, economics might become a more hopeful field by incorporating more of the complexity of human behavior and experience.

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**Emma Pleeging** is researcher and Ph.D. candidate at the Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organisation. Her research is focused on exploring the determinants and effects of hope, and its relation to happiness. Emma obtained her master Humanistics (cum laude) at the University of Humanistic Studies Utrecht and a bachelor Liberal Arts & Sciences at Utrecht University. Moreover, she conducts research on happiness within municipalities and organisations.

**Martijn Burger** (Ph.D.) is Academic Director at the Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organisation and Associate Professor of Industrial and Regional Economics in the Department of Applied Economics at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. He obtained his Ph.D. in Economics (cum laude) from the Erasmus University Rotterdam. Most of his current research focuses on happiness economics and urban and regional economics, including geography of happiness, location decisions of multinational corporations, and institutional and social conditions for economic development.

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# Chapter 10

## Hope During Conflict



Oded Adomi Leshem and Eran Halperin

*Hope requires the conviction about the yet-unproven*  
(Eric Fromm 1968)

**Abstract** The most deeply rooted international conflicts are termed *intractable conflicts*. Intractable conflicts are violent disputes that demand extensive investment from the rival parties and persist for a long time. These conflicts also share a more subjective quality: those embroiled in such severe disputes perceive them as innately irresolvable. Unsurprisingly, after decades of intergroup violence and hostility, citizens' hope for peace is almost absent. Yet hope is an essential component in the pursuit of any political change, including the pursuit of peace. To promote the resolution of intractable conflicts, it is vital to accurately assess the levels of hope for peace in these severe disputes and explore hope's origins and broader political consequences. This chapter addresses some of these issues by presenting the findings of a large-scale survey on hope for peace administered in one of the most longstanding intractable disputes today, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The survey is part of a larger global attitudes project that aims to map the hopes for peace of citizens living in conflict zones. Examining hope for peace among Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and Jews from Israel, this chapter reveals some of the demographic and sociopolitical antecedents of hope for peace and demonstrate hope's effect on broader political attitudes. Overall, findings suggest that hope is not only an obvious outcome of a successful peace process; it is also one of its sources.

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O. A. Leshem (✉)

Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University,  
Jerusalem, Israel

Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Reconciliation Lab, Hebrew University, Jerusalem,  
Israel

e-mail: [oded.leshem@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:oded.leshem@mail.huji.ac.il)

E. Halperin

Psychology Department, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

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S. C. van den Heuvel (ed.), *Historical and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9_10)

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What is the role of hope in the lives of individuals and collectives mired in violent intergroup conflict? How does hope for peace form in the seemingly hopeless situations of intractable ethnonational conflicts, and why do despair and fear often prevail? Most importantly, does hope for peace have any impact on political outcomes? These questions are not only thought-provoking but also highly relevant to the political realities of millions of people around the world who are struggling for justice, equality, and peace. This chapter takes on the challenge of answering some of these questions by investigating the role of hope (or, more commonly, its absence) in an intense and violent ethnonational dispute—the intractable conflict between Jews and Palestinians living in the Holy Land. We should note that speculating whether there is hope for peace in Israel-Palestine (or in other conflict zones) is not, in any way, the goal of this chapter. As political psychologists, we are not concerned with our own predictions, but with the predictions of the citizens embroiled in these devastating disputes. We ask what makes people mired in intractable conflicts hopeful or hopeless, and investigate whether hope has any impact on their political attitudes and behaviors.

The theoretical and empirical insights of this chapter derive from research conducted in the last two decades on what has been termed “the social-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflicts” (Bar-Tal 2013; Halperin 2016). At its core, social-psychological analysis of conflicts looks at the psychological factors (e.g., emotions, belief systems, cognitive biases) that drive intergroup disputes, including deeply rooted international conflicts commonly referred to as intractable conflicts. Intractable conflicts, like the longstanding dispute between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and the protracted dispute in Israel-Palestine, are prolonged ethnonational conflicts that seem resilient to resolution (Zartman 2005). They involve fluctuating levels of violence, diplomatic hostility, and deep animosity between the rival groups. The social-psychological infrastructure of these conflicts refers to the rigid societal belief (e.g., the enemy is evil by nature, we are the sole victim of the conflict) and emotions (e.g., hate, fear, and anger) that evolve throughout the dispute (Bar-Tal 2007; Kriesberg 1993). Over the course of the conflict, these emotions and beliefs ossify and serve as a powerful agitator of conflict (Coleman 2003; Bar-Tal 2013).

Critically for the study of hope, members of the parties to the dispute adhere to a rigid set of perceptions, not only about themselves and their adversary but also about the conflict itself. One of those perceptions is that the conflict is inherently irresolvable (Rouhana and Bar-Tal 1998). In other words, the majority of citizens involved in intractable conflict think that resolution is simply impossible (Telhami and Kull 2013). Indeed, decades of violence, coupled with failed attempts to negotiate an agreement, can serve as convincing evidence that the conflict cannot be solved (Rouhana and Bar-Tal 1998). Yet, when the conflict is perceived as irresolvable, citizens become reluctant to engage in constructive behaviors towards peace (Cohen-Chen et al. 2015; Leshem 2019). Why should citizens make an effort to compromise if they believe the conflict is innately irreconcilable? Why should they get involved in taxing tasks like reflecting on their own wrongdoings, if the conflict can never be

resolved? There is simply no incentive to work for peace if peace is deemed unattainable.

The remainder of the chapter continues as follows. In the first part, we elaborate on the nature of intractable conflicts and expand on the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We then offer a brief summary of several studies on hope recently conducted within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the findings from the Israeli-Palestinian Hope Map Project, one of the most comprehensive projects on hope for peace in conflict zones. The study is unique in its scope and ability to compare the hopes of two rival groups locked in a live and heated conflict. We conclude by offering some theoretical and applicable implications.

## 10.1 Intractable Conflicts and the Hope for Peace

Intractable conflicts, like the one between India and Pakistan and the conflicts in Cyprus and Palestine-Israel, are prolonged international disputes that involve intergroup hostility and violence (Kriesberg 1993). These severe conflicts demand extensive material and psychological investment from the rival parties and impact many aspects of the day-to-day life of those involved in the dispute while also taking front stage in the international arena. Though the benefits of solving the conflict are evident to international actors and to the parties to the dispute, intractable conflicts seem to be resistant to resolution (Coleman 2003; Deutsch et al. 2006; Zartman 2005). The failed attempts to reach an agreement become the proof of the conflict's innate irreconcilability.

Counterintuitively, being skeptical about the prospects of peace can be advantageous for the people engulfed in the dispute. Skepticism minimizes the chances of frustration when the hopes for peace are dashed and exonerates citizens from responsibility and commitment. In addition, when the reality of the conflict has been the only reality for decades, perceiving the conflict as a stable situation extending into the far future can provide a sense of certainty and predictability (Fiske 2010; Thórisdóttir and Jost 2011). Regrettably, skepticism can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Kelman 2018). It feeds back into the reality of the conflict by crippling citizens' motivation to opt for peace. When no attempt is being made in the direction of resolution, the conflict persists (or even exacerbates), which, in turn, validates the sense of skepticism. Thus, at least theoretically, skeptical outlooks should not be regarded as merely a product of an ongoing violent dispute, but also as one of its origins (Kelman 2010; Pruitt 1997).

## 10.2 The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Roughly a century old, the conflict between the Palestinian and Jewish national movements encapsulates the typical features of intractable ethnonational conflicts (Azar et al. 1978). It is a prolonged and violent conflict that has had a devastating impact on local, regional, and international stability from 1948 onwards (Brecher 2017; Dowty 1999; Kelman 2010). The physical and psychological well-being of Israelis and Palestinians are constantly jeopardized by the violent and hostile reality of the conflict. To exemplify, there were 5748 conflict-related deaths in Palestine-Israel between January 2008 and September 2019, on average, more than one death each day. It is critical to note that the conflict is asymmetrical, with Israelis having political and military superiority over Palestinians. This asymmetry is apparent in the ratio of fatalities. From the 5748 conflict-related deaths mentioned above, 96% were Palestinians.<sup>1</sup>

Several historical and geopolitical features of the conflict are directly relevant to hope for peace. The first is that the Jewish and Palestinian national movements share the same but seemingly incompatible objective—securing ownership over the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (Kelman 1999). It is therefore not surprising that from the beginning of the twentieth century, the two movements were immensely antagonistic to each other (Telhami 2005). Antagonism is so ingrained that peace with the hated enemy seems utterly impossible. The second factor is that in the contested territory, smaller than the size of New Jersey, live, as of 2020, about 14 million people, approximately half of them Jewish and half of them Palestinian. The proximity of the groups results in constant friction, manifested in full-fledged wars, military incursions, assassinations of leaders, kidnapping of civilians, popular uprisings, mass arrests, indiscriminate shelling and bombing, and countless violent incidents of other types. The ongoing violence does not seem to subside and, consequently, generates the perception that it never will.

The third attribute is that the conflict is one of the most notable examples of futile international peace interventions. High caliber international mediators such as Henry Kissinger and Ban Ki-Moon, have been coming to the Middle East since the 1950s to establish common ground for negotiations. A full-time diplomatic envoy, the International Quartet on the Middle East, was established in 2002 to consolidate the diplomatic powers of the United Nations, the European Union, the USA, and Russia in order to stimulate the peace process, but to no avail. Even the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, made by the most powerful regional actor in the middle east, the Arab League, has been, as of November 2019, unsuccessful in creating the conditions for a peace agreement. Dashed hopes for international intervention that will bring a just and sustainable peace for the region decreases the already low hopes for peace among Israelis and Palestinians.

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<sup>1</sup>OCHA Data on Casualties (<https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>).



### 10.3 The Hope for Peace in Israel-Palestinian

The hopelessness of Israelis and the Palestinians regarding the likelihood of peace is demonstrated in a public poll showing that about half of Israelis and Palestinians believe that the conflict will never end (Telhami and Kull 2013). Low levels of hope were also reported in 1976 by 59% of Israeli Jews who thought lasting peace is simply unachievable (Stone 1982). However, several studies show that Jewish-Israelis have *high* hopes for peace. For example, a study published in 2008 found that Jewish-Israelis' hope for peace is quite high, with a mean score of 4.1 on a scale from 1 to 5 (Halperin et al. 2008). Antonovsky and Arian (1972) also report high levels of hope for peace amongst Israelis such that "hope for peace with the Arabs" scored higher than hope for national prosperity and economic stability put together. How can these mixed results be explained?

Webster's dictionary defines hope as "a desire accompanied by an expectation of or belief in fulfillment." Hope for peace can thus be understood as a combination of two factors, a wish (i.e., desire) to attain peace and some expectation (i.e., assessment of likelihood) that peace can be attained. Psychological examinations support this proposition by revealing that wish and expectation are the two core components of hope (Erickson et al. 1975; Staats and Stassen 1985; Stotland 1969).<sup>2</sup> With this definition in mind, we can reinterpret the seemingly contradictory results found in the studies above. It could be the case that participants exhibited high levels of wishing for peace but low expectations that peace would materialize.

Indeed, a closer look at the questions used in these studies reveals that one of the reasons for the different levels of hope is conceptual, namely, that hope was defined, operationalized, and reported in fundamentally different ways. For example, Stone (1982) was reporting participants' hope for peace but was measuring only participants' *expectations* for resolution, not the intensity of their wishes to attain it. Antonovsky and Arian (1972) also asked participants to report their "hopes for peace" but were de facto, gauging only participants' *wishes* for peace, not their expectation about its feasibility. Support for this explanation was obtained in a study that separately gauged Jewish Israelis' wishes for peace and their expectations that peace will materialize (Leshem 2017). Results show that the wish for peace is high, but the expectations are low. In a follow-up study conducted 2 years later, no significant change was detected in the (high) wishes or the (low) expectations for peace, demonstrating the relative stability of both components. As exemplified in this edited volume, there are many definitions of hope. However, we found the straightforward definition of hope as a construct combining the wish to attain a goal (in our case, "peace") and the expectations of attaining it as a useful definition for the study of conflicts (e.g., Staats and Stassen 1985; Stotland 1969).

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<sup>2</sup>We acknowledge the fact that many hope scholars use other definitions of hope (e.g., Averill et al. 1990; Scioli et al. 2011). However, our goal-oriented approach led us to focus on the most basic elements of hope, namely wishes and expectations.

When discussing the hopes for peace of Jews and Palestinians, it should be mentioned that, given the asymmetrical nature of the conflict, peace might mean one thing for Jewish-Israelis and another for Palestinians. The low-power group (in this case Palestinians) might tend to associate peace with the political condition where justice and equality are restored. In contrast, the high-power group (in the case Jewish-Israelis) may see peace as harmonious relationships within the existing asymmetrical power structure. We should therefore take note that while both groups might hope for the ending of the conflict, the Palestinians' hope will also include their aspiration for self-determination, whereas the Jewish Israelis' hope will include their wish for cooperation and partnership. A number of studies, like the ones mentioned above, measured Jewish-Israelis' hope for peace (e.g., Antonovsky and Arian 1972; Cohen-Chen, Crisp, and Halperin 2015; Halperin et al. 2008; Leshem 2017; 2019; Leshem, Klar, and Flores 2016; Stone 1982). Unfortunately, there have been almost no studies on the hopes for peace among Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories. Several observations might help to form some initial speculations about Palestinians' hope for peace.

In 1974, Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, was the first non-state representative ever to speak at the UN General Assembly. In a later published manifesto about his UN speech, Arafat proclaimed he was fighting for freedom and hope. "I am a rebel, and freedom is my cause. . . Why therefore should I not dream and hope?" (1975, p. 16). Arafat was clear that his dream for a peaceful future in Palestine means liberating the land from Zionist imperialism and attaining political freedom for Palestinians. As he saw it, the struggle for independence *is* the struggle for peace. Another example of the inherent connection between peace and the Palestinian struggle for statehood is a statement by Abdel-Shai, one of the delegates at the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference who expressed the idea that for Palestinians, peace is tantamount to justice (resolving the injustices of past wrongdoings) and freedom (sovereignty and statehood). Palestinian hopelessness, in that sense, results from unfulfilled hopes for justice and political freedom.

When Palestinians' aspirations for justice and statehood are not met, despair will rise. According to Butler (2002), high levels of despair led many young Palestinian men to participate in suicide bombings during the Second Intifada. Eyad El Sarraj, the director of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program, argues that violence escalated during the Second Intifada due to the psychological factor of despair, ". . . the hopelessness that comes from a situation that keeps getting worse, a despair where living becomes no different from dying. Desperation is a very powerful force. . . it propels people to actions or solutions that previously would have been unthinkable" (Butler 2002, p. 72).

The hopelessness of citizens enmeshed in conflict stems from the widespread belief that the ingroup, the outgroup, and the conflict itself are fixed and unchangeable (Cohen-Chen et al. 2017). This hopelessness, in turn, leads to a general reluctance to support peacebuilding (Leshem 2019) and compromise (Cohen-Chen et al. 2015) and might lead low-power group members to engage in violent actions (Butler 2002). Given these detrimental consequences, the questions then become, can we increase the hope for peace? And if so, how? These questions were partially

answered by Cohen-Chen et al. (2014, 2015) and Halperin et al. (2011) who showed that group members' hope can be induced by changing their perception about the malleability of groups, conflicts, and the world in general. In their experimental paradigms, Israeli Jews were exposed to information that suggests that groups, conflicts, and the world in general are dynamic and malleable.<sup>3</sup> After being exposed to the information, participants' hope for peace (narrowly operationalized only as expectation) was measured. Results indicate that expectations for peace increased among those who learned that groups, conflicts, and the world in general were everchanging. Furthermore, the increase in the expectations for peace resulted in an increase in support for concession making (Cohen-Chen et al. 2015).

Utilizing a new experimental paradigm, Leshem (2019) showed that exposing Jewish-Israelis to optimistic messages conveyed in a short video posted by a Palestinian blogger, increased their hopes for peace on both the wish and expectation components. In fact, the increase in the wish and expectations for peace was more apparent among political hawks, who commonly exhibit lower desires and expectations for peace (Leshem 2017). Moreover, using a follow-up survey, the study revealed that hope induced by the short video was still high after violent confrontations broke out between Israeli forces and Palestinians. Most importantly, Leshem (2019) demonstrated the behavioral consequences of induced hope for peace. It seems that participants who were exposed to the optimistic message conveyed by the Palestinian blogger were more supportive of a real-world peace-building initiative than participants in the control group.

Overall, the literature on hope inducement suggests that by using specific cues, hope for peace can be instilled among citizens entrapped in intractable conflicts (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014, 2015; Leshem 2019; Leshem et al. 2016). However, the findings are limited because these studies were conducted only on Israeli Jews. As mentioned, research on the hopes for peace of Palestinians is scant (but see: Sagy and Adwan 2006). "The Hope Map Project," introduced in the next section, sought to address this gap by surveying the hope for peace among both Israelis and Palestinians.

## 10.4 The Hope Map Project

### 10.4.1 Background

The Hope Map Project is a global research project aimed at exploring the hopes for peace of people living in conflict zones. Three main objectives guide the project. The first is to identify the demographic and socio-political antecedents of hope for peace. Are women more hopeful than men as to the prospects of peace? Are the young more hopeful than the old? Are the religious more hopeful than the secular? And how does

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<sup>3</sup>Halperin et al.'s study (2011) was conducted also among Palestinians.

ideology affect hope? Obtaining such insights would greatly contribute to our knowledge on hope and how it forms and proliferates in times of conflict. The second goal is to identify the direct consequences of hope for peace. For example, we can test whether hope for peace predicts citizens' support for peace building or whether their support or opposition to peacebuilding is better explained by their political ideology or other factors. The third and final goal, which we hope to achieve in the longer run, is to offer a comprehensive comparison of hope for peace across conflict zones. Comparing the hope for peace in places such as Cyprus, Colombia, Israel-Palestine, and the Caucasus could teach us not only about the variations in the hopes for peace in different geopolitical contexts but also about the similarities that cut across cultures and political circumstances.

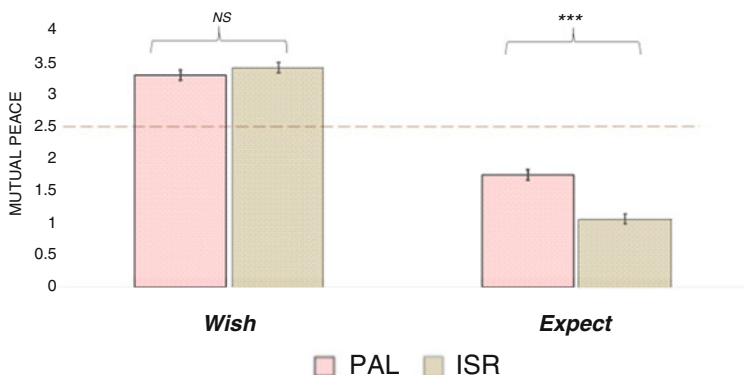
The first phase of the Hope Map Project was conducted simultaneously in Israel and the Palestinian Territories in the summer of 2017 and provides a detailed account of Palestinians' and Israelis' hopes for the future. The sample consisted of 500 Jewish-Israelis and 500 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Data were collected in only 3 days among representative samples of adult Palestinians and Jewish Israelis. The swift collection of data minimized the potential influence of conflict-related events that can occur during data collection. The simultaneous collection of data among the two societies increases our ability to compare the hopes for peace of Palestinians and Israelis.<sup>4</sup>

### **10.4.2 Results**

Our study was designed to capture citizens' hope for peace on the two core components of hope—wishes and expectations. Thus, Palestinians and Jewish-Israeli participants were asked to rate how much they wished for peace and how much they expected peace to materialize. As noted, Palestinians and Jewish Israelis understand peace in distinct ways. Thus, for the purpose of this study, we provided participants with a broad definition of peace we term “generic reciprocal peace.” The definition is worded such that it may incorporate a wide array of interpretations of what peace is, as long as these interpretations do not come at the expense of the basic needs of either group. The basic needs were spelled out: security and safety for Israelis and freedom and statehood for Palestinians. Participants were thus asked to

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<sup>4</sup>In all, the samples represent the adult population of Jews living in Israel and Palestinians living in the OT (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 2018; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2017; Pew Research Center 2016). The margin of error for each national sample is  $\pm 4.38\%$  and for the entire sample  $\pm 3.01\%$  at the 95 CI. The full report can be obtained from the authors (see also Leshem et al. 2019).



**Fig. 10.1** Hope for peace by nationality. Note: Bars represent margins of two regression models, one predicting wish and the other expectations. Demographics and sociopsychological measures were controlled for. Two-tailed significance,  $p^{***} < .001$ . Scale from 0 to 5, dashed line represents the midpoint of the scale

rate how much they wished that generic reciprocal peace would materialize and how much they thought it could actually materialize.

Results show that when it comes to the wish for generic reciprocal peace, Jewish Israelis and Palestinians exhibit identical and quite high wishes (Fig. 10.1).<sup>5</sup> In all, 77% of participants scored on or above the midpoint of the scale. This is quite an encouraging finding as it seems that both populations not only support the idea of a peace agreement that will address the basic needs of both peoples, but have strong aspirations for it. Second, it is apparent that expectations for reciprocal peace are low, with less than 25% of all participants scoring above the midpoint of the scale. Interestingly, it seems that Palestinians exhibit much higher expectations of peace compared to Jewish Israelis. Given the asymmetrical nature of the conflict, the fact that Palestinians have higher expectations for reciprocal peace might appear surprising. More than 50 years of Israeli military control over the Palestinian people might seem like a good reason for Palestinians to be skeptical about the possibility of peace. Nevertheless, it appears that Palestinians believe that reciprocal peace is possible much more than Israelis do. We provide a tentative explanation for this finding in the discussion section.

*Demographic Antecedents of Hope for Peace:* Next, we report on the effects of demographic measures on the hope for peace in Israel-Palestine.<sup>6</sup> First, it appears that across societies, religiosity had a negative effect on both hope components. The more one is religious, the less one wishes for peace and expects it to materialize. This trend might be explained by the religious origin of the conflict that has been shown to

<sup>5</sup>Results reflect findings from two regression models, one predicting wishes and one predicting expectations. The models included nationality and collected demographic and sociopsychological measures as predictors.

<sup>6</sup>Unless otherwise stated, the effects were similar for both populations.

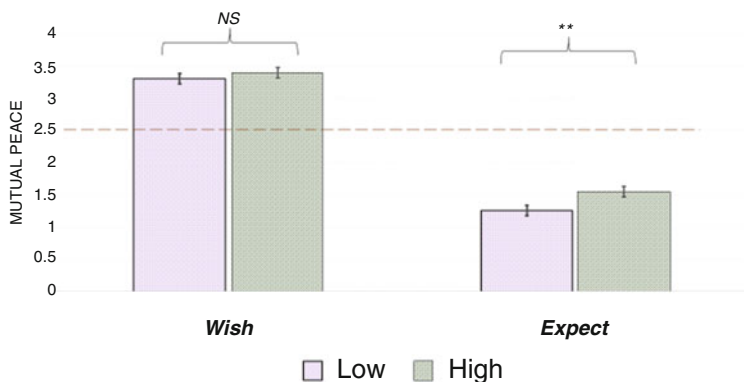
impede peace in Israel-Palestine (Canetti et al. 2019). It also seems that women wish for peace more than men and have firmer beliefs in the feasibility of peace compared to men. Further scrutiny shows that most of this effect was driven by the difference between men and women in the Palestinian society.

Age also predicted hope such that the older one is, the more one wishes and expects peace. Looking at each sample separately, a more nuanced picture unfolds. It appears that the effect of age on the wish for peace was driven by the Israeli sample, and the effect of age on expectations was driven by the Palestinian sample. That said, in both national samples, the direction of the effects were always positive, demonstrating that the younger generation in both societies has less wishes and expectations for peace than the older generations. As for political ideology, in line with past studies (e.g., Shuman et al. 2016), dovish political ideology predicted higher wishes *and* higher expectations for peace. Looking separately at each component of hope, results demonstrate that political doves from both communities have higher expectations for peace compared to political hawks. However, doves had more wishes for peace than hawks only in the Israeli sample. Among Palestinians, doves and hawks exhibited similar levels of the wish for peace.

### 10.4.3 *Sociopsychological Antecedences of Hope for Peace*

A central endeavor in the study of the sociopsychology of conflict is the identification of the sociopsychological factors that hamper or facilitate conflict resolution. Within the framework of the Hope Map Project, we sought to explore several sociopsychological antecedences of hope and hopelessness. We have reported elsewhere on two interesting findings. The first is that Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians form their hopes for peace based, to some extent, on their erroneous appraisals of their “enemy’s” hope (Leshem and Halperin 2020a). It seems that members of both groups underestimate their adversary’s wish for peace, and this, in turn, leads them to decrease their own wishes and expectations for peace. The second finding concerns the nuanced relationship between fear and hope during conflict (Leshem and Halperin 2020b). Results show that the more citizens feel threatened by the *likelihood* of future conflict, the less they expect peace to materialize, whereas the more they feel threatened by the *severity* of future conflict, the more they wish peace would materialize. In this chapter, we focus on a new set of antecedences of hope amidst conflict. Specifically, we look at the role of political efficacy and acceptance of uncertainty as predictors of citizens’ hope for peace.

Political efficacy refers to people’s belief that citizens can influence political outcomes (Balch 1974; Craig and Maggiotto 1982). People that score high on political efficacy believe that the general public has some power within the political sphere, while people low on political efficacy believe that citizens have no way of influencing political processes. We hypothesized that high scores on political efficacy would predict higher expectations for peace because both constructs are related to the belief that social change is possible. However, political efficacy was not



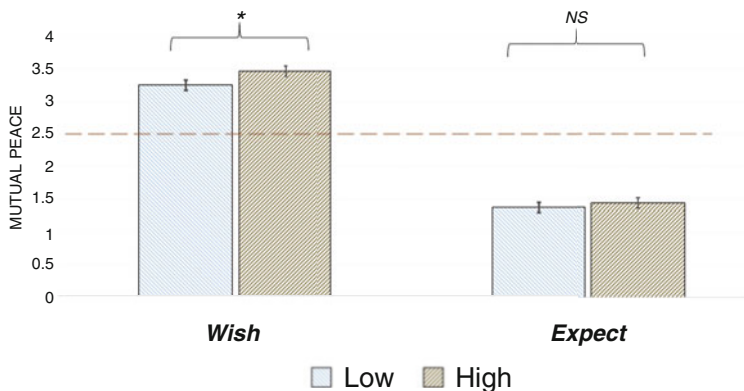
**Fig. 10.2** Hope for peace by political efficacy. Note: Bars represent margins of two regression models, one predicting wish and the other expectations. Demographics and sociopsychological measures were controlled for. Two-tailed significance,  $p^{**} < .01$ . Scale from 0 to 5, dashed line represents the midpoint of the scale

hypothesized to predict the wish for peace, because citizens' belief in their own ability to influence political processes is likely to be independent of their desire to influence them.

Acceptance of uncertainty pertains to peoples' tendency to accept uncertainty as an integral part of life (Freeston et al. 1994). Some people have a hard time with uncertainty, while others are more at ease with uncertainty and unpredictability. As stated earlier, the extreme duration of intractable conflicts makes people experience the conflict as a familiar and predictable—however dire—reality (Fiske 2010). Peace, on the other hand, is strange and unfamiliar for those who have known conflict all their lives and therefore entails uncertainty. We thus hypothesized that people who accept uncertainly would exhibit higher wishes for peace compared to those who seek certainty and predictability. Acceptance of uncertainty was not hypothesized to affect the expectation component of hope.

Results show that political efficacy predicted participants' expectations for peace in the hypothesized direction (Fig. 10.2). The more one believes in the capacity of citizens to impact political reality, the greater one's expectations for peace. This finding illustrates the connection between bottom-up social change and intergroup peace. When people believe in their ability to change their political future, they are inclined to believe that peace is possible. As hypothesized, political efficacy did not influence how much Israelis and Palestinians wished for peace, demonstrating that the desires to attain peace are separate from the belief in citizens' perceptions of agency.

A different pattern emerges when looking at the acceptance of uncertainty as a predictor of hope (Fig. 10.3). As hypothesized, those who accept uncertainty as an integral part of life had higher wishes for peace than those who are not comfortable with uncertainty. Stated differently, people who are more at ease with uncertainty allow themselves to wish for peace while those that seek certainty do not dare to wish



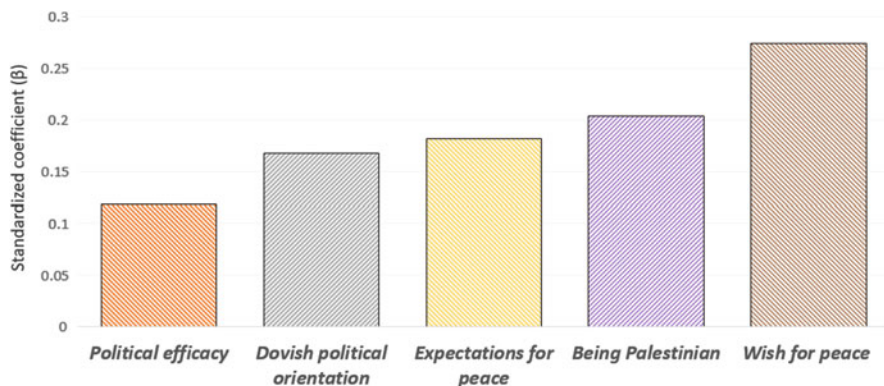
**Fig. 10.3** Hope for peace by acceptance of uncertainty. Note: Bars represent margins of two regression models, one predicting wish and the other expectations. Demographics and sociopsychological measures were controlled for. Two-tailed significance,  $p^* < .05$ . Scale from 0 to 5, dashed line represents the midpoint of the scale

for peace as much (though this trend was pronounced among Palestinians but did not reach statistical significance among Jewish Israelis). At least to some extent, those who need certainty, prefer the familiar and predictable, though painful, reality of the conflict. As hypothesized, acceptance of uncertainty did not predict the expectation for peace. Those who accept uncertainty and those who do not have similar (low) expectations that peace in Israel-Palestine will materialize.

#### 10.4.4 Hope as a Predictor of Support for Peacebuilding

The above analyses provide insights about some of the antecedences of hope for peace. However, it is equally important to know if being hopeful has implications for conflict resolution. Therefore, the second aim of the study was to test whether hope has any influence on peace-promoting outcomes; in this case, support for bi-national peacebuilding initiatives. Due to the high levels of intergroup hostility and distrust, citizens embroiled in intractable conflict are generally against bi-national peacebuilding initiatives (Leshem 2019). We suspected that hope for peace (or lack thereof) is a determining factor in citizens' support or opposition to bi-national peacebuilding programs. Those who have strong desires and expectations for peace are postulated to be much more supportive of bi-national peacebuilding programs than those with lower wishes for peace and those who are skeptical about its feasibility. After all, why support these programs if one does not wish for peace or simply believes that peace is impossible. We should also consider the possibility that support for peacebuilding is better explained by other factors such as political ideology or religious observance. Figure 10.4 presents the relative





**Fig. 10.4** Predictors of support for bi-national peacebuilding initiatives. Note: Entries are standardized OLS coefficients of a regression model predicting support for peacebuilding with all collected variables entered as predictors. The model explains 24% of the variance of the outcome variable. All coefficients  $p < .001$ . Non-significant coefficients are not displayed

contribution of collected measures on participants' support for peacebuilding. Trends were similar in the two populations unless stated otherwise.

Results demonstrate the predictive power of the wish and expectation for peace on support for peacebuilding. In fact, wishing for peace is the most robust predictor of support for peacebuilding in the entire sample and each national sample. Simply put, even after accounting for the influence of all other factors, the desire for peace remains the strongest predictor of support for peacebuilding. Expectations for peace also significantly contribute to Israelis' and Palestinians' support for peacebuilding in the expected direction. The more one believes peace is possible, the more one supports peacebuilding efforts. Overall, these findings demonstrate the centrality of hope as a catalyzer for peace-promoting outcomes.

It also appears that Palestinians are much more inclined to support bi-national peacebuilding projects than Jewish-Israelis. Whether or not this is a surprising finding is an interesting question in and of itself, as proponents of each party try to emphasize the willingness of their side and the unwillingness of their rival to support peacebuilding efforts. However, Palestinians showed significantly more support for peacebuilding than Jewish Israelis even after controlling for covariates.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Some differences between the samples were found. In the Palestinian sample, political ideology did not predict support for peacebuilding, but gender did such that men were more supportive of peacebuilding than women.

## 10.5 Discussion

Herb Kelman, one of the most notable facilitators of track-two diplomatic efforts between Israelis and Palestinians, identified hope as a prerequisite for constructive negotiations. “This sense of possibility contributes to creating self-fulfilling prophecies in a positive direction, to counteract the negative self-fulfilling prophecies that result from the mutual distrust and pervasive pessimism about finding a way out that normally characterize protracted conflicts.” (Kelman 2010, p. 393). More recent studies also highlighted hope as a central factor influencing the dynamics of intractable ethnonational conflict (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014; Halperin et al. 2008; Hasan-Aslih et al. 2018; Leshem 2017, 2019; Rosler et al. 2017). This chapter contributes to the growing literature on hope by offering insights on some of the antecedences and consequences of hope during conflicts.

First, it appears that the more citizens believe in their capacity to be agents of political change, the more they believe that peace is possible. This finding suggests that, at least to some extent, citizens entrapped in an intractable conflict believe that peace is a bottom-up process. If achieving peace was perceived to be a purely top-down process where the success or failure of peace agreements depended solely on leaders, political efficacy would not have influenced citizens’ expectations for peace. Second, we found that accepting uncertainty as a natural part of life allows for greater wishes for peace. This finding lends empirical support for Eric Fromm’s iconic remark that “Hope requires the conviction about the yet-unproven” (1968).

Two additional points that emerge from our analyses should be accentuated. The first is that Palestinians’ expectation for peace is higher than Jewish Israelis’. At first glance, this finding may appear counterintuitive because, if anything, the adverse conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip should make Palestinians extremely skeptical about the prospect of peace. However, it could be the case that for Palestinians, pessimism is not an option. Their struggle for political independence necessitates a strong belief in the feasibility of peace and its assumed result—political independence. In contrast, Jewish Israelis, who are currently living under more favorable circumstances, can afford to be more pessimistic about the possibility of peace.

The second point is that hope is one of the sources of conflict transformation. The question of whether hope can generate social change has been debated by thinkers and scholars since Spinoza. However, empirical research testing whether hope is a catalyst for social change has begun only recently (e.g., Cohen-Chen et al. 2014; Leshem et al. 2016). This chapter adds to this line of work by showing hope’s pivotal role in creating the conditions for political change. The two components of hope predicted Jewish Israelis’ and Palestinians’ support for bi-national peacebuilding efforts. In fact, the wish for peace predicted participants’ support for peacebuilding over and above other factors, even more than political dovishness.

We would also like to highlight some implications for conflict practitioners working in conflict zones. People working in peacebuilding and reconciliation projects, organizers of grassroots dialogue groups, and others working to establish

sustainable partnerships across religious and ethnic divides have incredibly challenging jobs. In their arduous work, these peacemakers may overlook hope as a catalyst for social change. As this and other studies in the field demonstrate, hope may have a pivotal role in promoting constructive behaviors towards conflict transformation. When peace is advanced, hopes will naturally rise, creating a cyclical reaction, this time with a positive outcome. However, much more research is needed to understand how to best utilize hope in the pursuit of peace and conciliation between rival societies.

## 10.6 Conclusions

Long-lasting violent conflicts push hope for peace to its limits and thus provide a unique setting for theoretical examination and empirical scrutiny. One of the most profound conclusions is that people can live in harsh political circumstances but hold optimistic views about the future, while others could be living in benign political conditions but adopt a pessimistic outlook about future war and peace. Stated more generally, it seems that citizens' hopes for the future may be consistent with their political circumstance or in defiance of it.

Yet our work cannot stop at understanding how hope functions during conflict. We must galvanize the knowledge on hope to contribute to conflict transformation. Other chapters in this book speak about the transformative powers of hope in the domains of health, well-being, and religious faith. This chapter provides insights into the transformative potential of hope in the context of adverse political circumstances. Research on hope amidst conflict is in its early stages. The Global Hope Map Project is one of the first to take the research on hope into the heart of violent conflict zones, where hope is a scarce resource. We *hope* it will not be the last.

**Acknowledgment** Data for the first phase of the Hope Map Project were collected simultaneously among representative samples of Jewish Israelis and Palestinians living in the OPT. Administering such an elaborate study in a conflict zone was not an easy task. It required the cooperation of many individuals working in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Washington DC and necessitated significant funding. We are grateful for the many contributors who took part in the crowdfunding campaign that enabled the implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian Hope Map Project. Special thanks go to David and Audrey Sikorsky, Dan and Carole Meyer, Miriam Harel, Erez Kaminski, Bryant Lyttle, Shay Zahari, Shari Leavitt, Sandra Tombe, Tomer and Liat Cooks, Jamie Drew, Rachel Harad, Susan Kahn, Mark Jacobsen, Zohar Neumann, Alexandra Schaeerer, Iry Ricci, Kathleen Nash, Lisa M. Bernstein, Mohammad Asideh, Gadi Kenny, Mehra Rimer, Lovetta Phillips, Benjamin Leshem, and Michael Kurtz for their generous contributions. This chapter is the fruit of their commitment and a call for rigorous and engaged research aimed at understanding and resolving prolonged conflicts. We are especially grateful for Obada Shtaya, who shared his insights about Palestinian politics and helped launch the crowdfunding campaign. We also wish to thank Anthony Scioli for his insightful comments on how to improve the chapter.

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**Oded Adomi Leshem** (Ph.D.) is a postdoctoral fellow at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace and at the Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Reconciliation Lab, both housed at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He received his Ph.D. from the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, where he now serves as a visiting scholar. Dr. Leshem’s research is located at the intersection of political science, social psychology, and conflict resolution with the aim of exploring the sources, ramifications, and possible remedies of violent intergroup conflicts. In recent years he has published numerous studies on the role of hope as a catalyst for transforming intractable conflicts.

**Eran Halperin** (Ph.D.) is the former Dean of the School of Psychology at IDC—Herzliya and now a professor at the Psychology Department of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. An award-winning pioneer in examining emotional processes using field experiments, Dr. Halperin’s research uses psychological and political theories to investigate causal factors driving intergroup conflicts. More specifically, his work develops new approaches for modifying the psychological roots of intolerance, exclusion, and intergroup violence. The unique case of Israeli society in general and of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular, motivates much of his work and, hence, most of his studies are conducted within the context of that “natural laboratory.” His laboratory currently spearheads a government-sponsored project to standardize social inclusion in Israeli education. Halperin has published more than 180 peer-reviewed papers in journals such as *Science*, *PNAS* and *Psychological Science*, and has been awarded competitive research grants of more than 3 million dollars just in the last 3 years. He earned his Ph.D. from Haifa University (*summa cum laude*) and his post-doc from Stanford University (Fulbright scholar). In 2013 he was chosen as the most promising young political psychologist by the International Society of Political Psychology.

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# Chapter 11

## Hope in Health Care: A Synthesis of Review Studies



Erik Olsman

**Abstract** The objectives of this study were (1) to provide an overview of review studies on hope in health care, and to describe (2) conceptualizations of hope, (3) antecedents and consequences of hope, and (4) ethical topics related to hope. Electronic databases were searched and 73 review studies were selected and thematically analyzed. Hope was conceptualized as (a) an expectation: appraisal of a future outcome, (b) resilience: endurance of adversity, and (c) a desire: expression of meaning. Opposite concepts to hope were fear/anxiety, hopelessness, despair, and depression. Inspiring relationships, particularly relationships with peers, were an important factor that increased hope in patients. Losses, like the loss of health or (inspiring) relationships, had a negative impact on hope. Also, hope had effects on motivation for change and making decisions. The ethics of hope was addressed in palliative care, where health care providers wanted to maintain patients' hope while being honest or realistic. In conclusion, this chapter offers an overview of hope in health care and offers conceptual clarification, including ethical issues related to hope. Future studies should broaden the ethics of hope by including other values than realism and they should include the hope of health care providers.

### 11.1 Introduction

Hope is of vital importance for societies because it is part of the vision of society. This vision may be an ecological one, or a vision of a just society, in which equality and respect for human rights will reign (Bloch 1968; Freire 1994; Moltmann 2005). At an individual level, writers have also emphasized the importance of hope, such as the crucial role of hope in enduring and surviving hardship (Frankl 2014). Christian writers have held hope in high esteem, as illustrated in Paul's triad "faith, hope, and love," whereas the ancient Greeks held mixed or negative views on hope (Elliott

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E. Olsman (✉)

Section of Spiritual Care & Chaplaincy Studies, Department of Practices, Protestant Theological University, Groningen, The Netherlands

e-mail: [h.j.olsman@pthu.nl](mailto:h.j.olsman@pthu.nl)

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S. C. van den Heuvel (ed.), *Historical and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46489-9_11)

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2005, pp. 5–6; Nussbaum 1992, pp. 150, 461). Philosophers and other scholars have described some characteristics of hope: “(1) futurity—a future dimension of what is hoped for, (2) possibility—the outcome is possible but not certain (neither zero nor one), (3) desirability—what is hoped for is seen as good in some respect, and (4) agency—hoping agents engage in activities to reach their hope” (Olsman 2015, p. 8; see also, Averill et al. 1990, pp. 9–35; Martin 2014; Nunn 2005, pp. 63–77; Walker 2006, pp. 40–71).

Still, we should note that these characteristics cannot solve all conceptual problems. For example, some people with an incurable disease hope for a cure, and this calls into question the possibility of hope because the outcome of this hope will be zero. Other people hope that something bad will happen to a family member whom they hate, and this undermines the desirability of hope. Furthermore, hope may be conceptualized differently in various contexts, such as different health care contexts (Herrestad et al. 2014). An overview of the role of hope in these health care contexts, including conceptualizations of hope, has not been provided. The objectives of this study were (1) to provide an overview of review studies on hope in health care and to describe (2) conceptualizations of hope, (3) antecedents and consequences of hope, and (4) ethical topics related to hope. The findings will also aid reflection on the role of spirituality in health care, since hope is a central topic in spiritual care (Capps 2001; Gijssberts et al. 2019; Lester 1995; Olsman 2020).

## 11.2 Methods

A synthesis of review studies on hope in health care was conducted. Electronic databases were searched by a clinical librarian on March 21, 2019: PubMed (medicine), Embase (medicine), Emcare (nursing), and PsychINFO (psychology/psychiatry). The following search terms, and derivatives thereof, were used: (hope OR hopefulness) AND (review OR synthesis OR meta-analysis). Review studies were included when the Abstract explicitly mentioned hope as one of the findings, and when they described hope within the context of health care. The following were excluded:

- studies on hopelessness, or
- studies on hope in health (not on health care or illness), or
- studies that were publications other than journal papers, or
- studies with a title and abstract written in a language other than Dutch, English, German, French, or Spanish, or
- studies that had searched only one database, or
- studies that were not review, meta-synthesis or meta-analysis study

The search led to 101 references in PubMed, 219 in Embase, 161 in Emcare, and 57 in PsycINFO. In total, 538 references were found, of which 144 were duplicates. The titles and abstracts of the 394 remaining references were screened first. Of the 394 references, 166 were excluded because they did not describe hope in health care,



and 108 studies described the topic under investigation but were excluded because they were not review studies. The remaining 120 studies were then screened on full-text. Of these studies, 21 had not systematically searched in two or more databases, 11 were untraceable, whereas eight references were not conducted within the context of health care. Four references did not describe, or barely described, hope in health care, one was not written in one of the chosen languages, one was not a journal paper, and one was a study protocol and not the review study itself. Hence, based on the screening of the full-texts ( $n = 120$ ), 47 references were excluded.

This meant that 73 references were included in this study. The characteristics of the studies selected, such as objective and their health care context, were described. The research objectives of our study were used to analyze the findings of these studies thematically, utilizing Microsoft Excel. A column was created for each objective: to describe conceptualizations of hope, antecedents and consequences of hope, and ethical topics related to hope. Then, each column was analyzed, looking for similarities and differences between the various review studies.

## 11.3 Results

### 11.3.1 *Included Studies*

Seventy-three review studies were selected, published between 1997 and 2019, and are listed in Appendix Table 11.1, at the end of this chapter. For the sake of brevity, only author, year of publication, and objective of the review study are presented in this Appendix. The health care contexts of these studies were: mental health care ( $n = 16$ ), oncology ( $n = 12$ ), neurology ( $n = 10$ ), palliative care ( $n = 9$ ), pediatrics ( $n = 7$ ), geriatrics/elderly care ( $n = 4$ ), chronic health care ( $n = 3$ ), other ( $n = 12$ ).

### 11.3.2 *Conceptualizations*

Hope was found to be a multidimensional construct that might change over time (Duggleby et al. 2010; Kylmä and Vehviläinen-Julkunen 1997; Wayland et al. 2016). A frequently mentioned distinction was the difference between the doing and being of hope. The doing referred to the action or process of hoping for something in the future. The (relational) being of hope was a state of living with hope (Bright et al. 2011; Kylmä et al. 2009; Lohne 2001). I found three conceptualizations, in which these dimensions become tangible.

Hope was (1) an expectation, that was a positive, yet realistic, appraisal of an uncertain future outcome, like the hope of chronic heart failure patients that their condition would not worsen, or hope for transplants in children and adolescents with cystic fibrosis (Caboral et al. 2012; Connell et al. 2012; Duggleby et al. 2010, 2012;

Jamieson et al. 2014; Leamy et al. 2011; Olsman et al. 2014; Schrank et al. 2008; Tutton et al. 2009; Wiles et al. 2008).

Hope as (2) resilience meant that hope was the strength or a (coping) strategy to endure adversity, for example in the family members who hope for the return of a missing person or when this was no longer possible, for the return to life as it was before the loss (Chi 2007; Clarke et al. 2016; Ebenau et al. 2017; Griggs and Walker 2016; Kharrat et al. 2018; Olsman et al. 2014; Oyesanya and Ward 2016; Parslow et al. 2017; Prip et al. 2018; Schiavon et al. 2017; Similuk et al. 2016; Stewart and Yuen 2011; Tong et al. 2015; Wayland et al. 2016; Weaver et al. 2016). Within the context of mental illness, hope was a positive factor associated with recovery, empowerment, and stigma (resistance) (Deering and Williams 2018; Firmin et al. 2016; Kylmä et al. 2006; Leamy et al. 2011; Livingston and Boyd 2010; Shepherd et al. 2016; van Eck et al. 2018; van Weeghel et al. 2019; Wilson et al. 2018).

Hope as (3) a desire was the expression of something meaningful embedded in (everyday) life, like the desire for recovery or the hope for a life worth living in patients with a neurological disease (Jones et al. 2016; Olsman et al. 2014; Soundy and Condon 2015; Soundy et al. 2014b). Hope was also described as a life value and (significant) associations with quality of life and/or well-being were found (Ebenau et al. 2017; Machado et al. 2017; van Leeuwen et al. 2011; van Mierlo et al. 2014; Singh and Hodgson 2011).

Hope was conceptualized as, or found to be, the opposite of fear/anxiety (Creighton et al. 2017; Germeni and Schulz 2014), hopelessness (Laugesen et al. 2016; Mahendran et al. 2016), despair (Clarke et al. 2016; Kylmä and Vehviläinen-Julkunen 1997; Refsgaard and Frederiksen 2013), and depression (Davidson et al. 2007; Olver 2012). In sum, hope was depicted as a multidimensional construct, conceptualized as expectation, resilience, and desire. Fear/anxiety, hopelessness, despair, and depression were its opposites.

### ***11.3.3 Antecedents***

Many studies described the antecedents of hope. Several psycho-socio-spiritual interventions had a positive effect on hope. The evidence for these interventions has been provided in children exposed to traumatic events in humanitarian settings in low-income countries (Purgato et al. 2018), and in oncology (Bauerreiß et al. 2018; Best et al. 2015; Olver 2012). In mental health care, several review studies suggested that recovery-focused interventions, especially those in which peer providers were involved, enhanced hope (Thomas et al. 2018; van Weeghel et al. 2019).

Hope-inspiring relationships, particularly with peers, were reported most frequently, as contributing to hope, for example, the hope of people who self-harm or people participating in rare disease support groups (Casellas-Grau et al. 2014; Deering and Williams 2018; Delisle et al. 2017; Koehn and Cutcliffe 2007; Li et al. 2018; Lloyd-Evans et al. 2014; Prip et al. 2018; Soundy et al. 2014a; Stenberg et al. 2016; Thomas et al. 2018). A study within the context of palliative care

suggested that “affirmation of patient’s worth” may be one of the underlying factors that supports hope in patients (Kylmä et al. 2009). Other hope-engendering factors were hearing of positive stories (Kharrat et al. 2018; Stenberg et al. 2016), the ability to review one’s own expectations (Laugesen et al. 2016; Refsgaard and Frederiksen 2013), positive character traits (Broadhurst and Harrington 2016), and the use of spirituality in daily life (Agli et al. 2015; Baldacchino and Draper 2001).

Negative effects on hope were less frequently reported. The most frequently mentioned negative antecedents of hope were losses, such as the past losses of people with mental health problems, which affected their hope for the future, suggesting reduced opportunities for recovery (Connell et al. 2012). Hope was negatively affected in neurological patients who could no longer perform certain roles and/or who experienced a loss of control (Soundy et al. 2014a, b; Soundy and Condon 2015). An integrative review found that concurrent losses, such as the loss of health or income, or losing the professional interest of others, and a lack of symptom control all threatened the hope of patients with a life-threatening disease, as well as affecting their significant others (Kylmä et al. 2009). In sum, several psycho-socio-spiritual interventions and inspiring relationships, particularly peer support, engendered patients’ hope, whereas losses had a negative impact on hope.

### ***11.3.4 Consequences***

The effects of hope bore a relationship to hope as resilience, since hope helps adversity to be endured, as described above. Nevertheless, the effects of hope cannot be reduced to hope as resilience. In (forensic) mental health care patients, hope was the motivation to change. This meant that hope helped these patients to see a new way of being and generated the belief that one’s life is worth living. In that life, others who maintained hope were also important (Clarke et al. 2016). In the work of Leamy et al. (2011), hope was part of the contemplative phase of the transtheoretical model of change, after which—ideally—preparation, action, and maintenance and growth followed.

Hope affected the decisions of patients with cancer. For example, the hope for the future of patients with advanced cancer was an important drive in their decision to stop or continue anti-cancer therapy (Clarke et al. 2015). Hope for clinical benefit was the most commonly cited reason for clinical trial enrollment of young adults and adolescents with cancer (Forcina et al. 2018). This is in line with an earlier review study on the attitude toward research of patients with advanced cancer (Todd et al. 2009). In sum, hope was a motivation for change and it affected decisions on participation in research and on treatments. Hope in relation to treatments could also lead to ethical issues for health care providers, and this will be described below.

### 11.3.5 *Ethics*

The main ethical issue in relation to hope in health care was the tension between hope and truth/realism, which was addressed in palliative care. The moral background here is the duty of health care providers, especially physicians, to provide or maintain hope on the one hand, and to tell the truth, on the other. The tension between these two was intensified when patients avoided information about their poor prognosis or about the palliative rather than curative aims of a treatment (Barclay et al. 2011; Clarke et al. 2015; Clayton et al. 2008). Clinicians wanted to avoid “taking away hope” and did not want to alarm patients unnecessarily (Barclay et al. 2011; Clarke et al. 2015).

We found that the dilemma between hope and truth/realism is a dilemma between a realistic and functional perspective on hope. The former means that the basis of patients’ hope should be truthful, which requires clinicians to adjust hope to truth, whereas the functional perspective acknowledges the helpfulness of hope as patients’ way of coping with their disease, requiring clinicians to foster or maintain patients’ hope (Olsman et al. 2014). Still, a focus on (the helpfulness of) hope and maintaining hope may lead to overlooking patients’ other needs (Prip et al. 2018). In addition, clinicians may continue treatments, not only to maintain hope in their patients, but also because they have developed strong relationships with their patients (Clarke et al. 2015). A “solution” offered within the context of advanced cancer was to discuss prognosis and other issues honestly, providing it with understanding and empathy. In so doing, paradoxically, clinicians may foster hope (Clayton et al. 2008; van Gorp et al. 2013).

## 11.4 Discussion

The objective of this study was to describe hope in health care. As explained above, 73 review studies were included, covering a variety of health care contexts and the findings of these studies were thematically analyzed. This chapter suggests that hope is conceptualized as (1) an expectation: appraisal of a future outcome, (2) resilience: endurance of adversity, and (3) a desire: expression of meaning. Inspiring relationships, in particular relationships with peers, increase hope in patients. Losses, on the other hand, such as loss of health, relationships, or income, have a negative impact on hope. The findings also suggest that a central ethical issue is the tension between hope and truth in palliative care. Physicians want to be honest about poor prognosis and bad news, on one hand, while preventing harm and consequently not wanting to destroy patients’ hope, on the other.

The three conceptualizations of hope can be placed against the philosophical background of Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Utilitarianism/Radical Enlightenment (cf. Taylor 1992). The idea of hope as an expectation can be seen against the background of the Enlightenment, in which reason is used to appraise a future

outcome as realistically as possible. Hope as desire can be seen in relation to Romanticism, emphasizing the subjective experiences, including the meaning of these experiences for the individual. Hope as resilience can be understood against a background of Utilitarianism because of its focus on the consequences of hope, that it helps to endure (and minimize the effects of) adversity. Recognition of these backgrounds is essential because it helps to see that individuals not only conceptualize themselves in various ways (Gergen 2000), but they will also conceptualize their own hope in different ways.

For example, when the clinician tries to adjust hope to realism and the patient wants his desire to get better acknowledged, this may lead to conflict between them that harms their relationship. My suggestion for clinicians is to recognize the value of each conceptualization and address them as options. That would mean acknowledging a palliative care patient's unrealistic hope as a meaningful desire ("What does this hope mean to you?"), after which the clinician may ask, "Would you mind talking to me just once, about how you would feel if what you hope for were not to happen?" (Olsman 2015, pp. 115–120). Such a question also acknowledges the contradiction within patients who desire something unrealistic, while at the same time being aware that it may not come true (Olsman et al. 2015a; Robinson 2012; Sachs et al. 2013). Moreover, when the ethics of hope is limited to a binary contrast between the values of hope and realism/truth, health care providers tend to place themselves on the side of realism, while several studies suggest that health care providers may hold hopes that are unrealistic (Barclay et al. 2011; Buiting et al. 2011; Christakis and Lamont 2000; Clarke et al. 2015).

Therefore, I propose a relational approach to hope, which recognizes that hope plays a role for each individual and in relationships between individuals (Olsman 2015, pp. 115–120). I argue, in addition, that health care providers should build their relationship with patients by focusing on solicitude. Solicitude includes compassion (recognizing the patient's suffering) and empowerment (recognizing the patient's strengths) (Elliott 2013; Olsman et al. 2015b). Such an approach is furthermore important because relationships have the potential to foster hope. The importance of relationships in connection with hope has also been described in spiritual care (Capps 2001). The selected studies, in addition, suggest that peer support, in particular, can have a positive effect on hope, and this draws our attention to forms of peer support, something that deserves future research. One study, for example, suggested that besides its potential risks, peer support through online media has potential benefits, such as empowerment, an increase in hope, and resistance to stigma (Naslund et al. 2016).

The strength of this chapter is that, to the best of my knowledge, it provides a first overview of hope in various health care contexts, based on a systematic search in several databases. As well as providing this overview, it identifies gaps, offering possibilities for future studies. However, a limitation of this chapter is that the findings mainly apply to the so-called "Western" countries, requiring future studies to examine unexplored contexts. Another limitation is that only one author is responsible for the study, and as a consequence, it does not fit the criteria of a systematic review. Last but not least, an ongoing debate in hope research is how the

objects of hope—in those cases where hope *has* an object—color (conceptualizations of) hope. It is, for example, worth exploring in future studies if objects of hope and conceptualizations of hope correspond.

In conclusion, the findings gained through this study have offered insight into hope in health care. This chapter has offered conceptual clarity on hope in health care and outlined the normative backgrounds and implications of these conceptualizations. In so doing, it offers several ways of addressing the (spiritual) topic of hope in clinical practice. I conclude that the ethics of hope needs to be developed in contexts other than palliative care and should be understood in terms wider than the dualism between hope and truth. A further conclusion is that future (synthesis) studies should examine the hope that is held by health care providers because their hope affects their care provision. *My hope* is that this chapter will support health care providers when they want to address the matter of hope during encounters with patients, patients' family members, and their colleagues.

**Acknowledgements** The author thanks Jan Schoones, clinical librarian of the Walaeus library (LUMC), for his contribution to the search used in this study.

## Appendix

**Table 11.1** Objectives of the included studies

First author & Year	Objective <sup>a</sup>
van Weeghel 2019	To map the state of the art of conceptualizing recovery, its promoting and impeding factors, recovery-oriented practice, and the assessment of recovery in mental illness
Bauerreiß 2018	To synthesize the evidence of existential interventions in adult patients with cancer
Deering 2018	To explore the lived experience of what activities might facilitate personal recovery for adults who continue to self-harm
Forcina 2018	To identify perceptions and attitudes toward clinical trials in adolescents and young adults with cancer that influence trial participation
Kharrat 2018	To synthesize and describe parental expectations on how healthcare professionals should interact with them during a peripartum, antenatal consultation for extremely premature infants
Li 2018	To evaluate the efficacy of nursing interventions to increase the level of hope in cancer patients
Orhan 2018	To systematically review the current evidence regarding the racial, ethnic and cultural alterations and differences in pain beliefs, cognitions, and behaviors in patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain
Prip 2018	To summarize the literature of adult patients' experiences of and need for relationships and communication with healthcare professionals during chemotherapy in the oncology outpatient setting

(continued)

**Table 11.1** (continued)

First author & Year	Objective <sup>a</sup>
Purgato 2018	To assess the effectiveness of focused psychosocial support interventions, and to explore which children, exposed to traumatic events in humanitarian settings in low- and middle-income countries, are likely to benefit most
Thomas 2018	To synthesize findings pertaining to the study of person-oriented recovery constructs in mental health care over time and concomitants of change
van Eck 2018	To perform a meta-analysis investigating the relationship between clinical and personal recovery in patients with schizophrenia spectrum disorders
Wilson 2018	To examine the significance of factors associated with parents' treatment selection for their child with autism spectrum disorder
Baek 2017	To examine attributes and verify the definition of the recovery-oriented psychiatric nursing concept, using the hybrid model suggested by Schwartz-Barcott and Kim
Creighton 2017	To synthesize and summarize the studies examining the correlates and predictors of anxiety in older adults living in residential aged care
Deslisle 2017	To map the available evidence on (1) (perceived) benefits of participating in rare disease support groups and (2) barriers and facilitators of establishing and maintaining these groups
Ebenau 2017	To describe which life values play an important role in the lives of elderly people suffering from incurable cancer
Machado 2017	To assess the effectiveness of interventions based on the constructs spirituality, happiness, optimism, and hope concerning the rehabilitation of adults and elderly
Parslow 2017	To synthesize the qualitative studies of children's experiences of chronic fatigue syndrome/maligic encephalomyelitis
Schiavon et al. 2017	To identify what the scientific literature says about the influence of optimism and hope on chronic disease treatment
Broadhurst 2016	To review the qualitative literature and investigate the meaning of hope to patients receiving palliative care and to examine the themes that foster hope in those patients
Clarke 2016	To review and narratively synthesize qualitative literature on forensic mental health patients' perceptions of recovery
Firmin 2016	To better understand how stigma resistance impacts functioning-related domains
Griggs 2016	To describe what is currently known about the role of hope in adolescents with a chronic illness
Jones 2016	To investigate the role of spirituality in facilitating adjustment and resilience after spinal cord injury for the individual with spinal cord injury and their family members
Laugesen 2016	To identify and synthesize the best available evidence on parenting experiences of living with a child with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, including their experiences of healthcare and other services
Mahendran 2016	To examine the factors associated with hope and hopelessness in patients with cancer in Asian countries, and the instruments used to measure hope and hopelessness
Oyesanya 2016	To examine and synthesize current literature focusing on women with traumatic brain injury, comorbid with depression, and hope

(continued)

**Table 11.1** (continued)

First author & Year	Objective <sup>a</sup>
Shepherd 2016	To develop a model of the personal recovery process for people needing forensic mental health services
Similuk 2016	To conduct a systematic review of the social, psychological, and behavioral literature on primary immune deficiency, provide a critical analysis, and synthesize with the broader literature
Stenberg 2016	To give a comprehensive overview of benefits and challenges from participating in group based patient education programs that are carried out by health care professionals and lay participants, aimed at promoting self-management for people living with chronic illness
Wayland 2016	To explore hope for families of missing people
Weaver 2016	To identify current approaches to palliative care in the pediatric oncology setting to inform development of comprehensive psychosocial care standards for pediatric and adolescent patients with cancer and their families; and to analyze barriers to implementation and enabling factors
Agli 2015	To systematically review the literature examining the effects of religion and spirituality on health outcomes such as cognitive functioning, coping strategies, and quality of life in people with dementia
Best 2015	To identify what interventions are effective in treatment of holistic suffering of cancer patients
Clarke 2015	To systematically review the literature concerning the withdrawal of anticancer drugs towards the end of life within clinical practice, with a particular focus on molecular targeted agents
Soundy 2015	To consider and synthesize common experiences of motor neuron disease and better understand the effects of the illness on the patient's mental well-being and generalized hope
Tong 2015	To describe patient experiences and attitudes to wait-listing for kidney transplantation
Casellas-Grau 2014	To synthesize the evidence about the positive interventions utilized in breast cancer
Germeni 2014	To synthesize published qualitative research to provide insight into patients' motivations for cancer information seeking and avoidance
Jamieson 2014	To describe the experiences and perspectives of children and adolescents with cystic fibrosis to direct care toward areas that patients regard as important
Lloyd-Evans 2014	To systematically review trials of community-based, peer-provided support for people with severe mental illness
Olsman 2014	To describe healthcare professionals' perspectives on palliative care patients' hope found in the literature
Soundy 2014a	To help health-care professionals consider how hope is promoted and challenged during the rehabilitation of patients who have had a stroke or spinal cord injury
Soundy 2014b	To understand the importance of social identity and meaningful activities on well-being of individuals with Parkinson's disease, to identify factors and strategies that influence well-being and hope, and to establish a model that relates to an individual's hope and well-being
van Mierlo 2014	To systematically examine the relationship between psychological factors and health-related quality of life after stroke

(continued)



**Table 11.1** (continued)

First author & Year	Objective <sup>a</sup>
Refsgaard 2013	To synthesize interpreted knowledge on the illness-related emotional experiences of patients with incurable lung cancer
van Gurp 2013	To describe communication patterns in palliative care and discussing potential relations between communication patterns and upcoming telecare in the practice of palliative care
Caboral 2012	To explore the construct of hope in elderly adults with chronic heart failure
Connell 2012	To identify the domains of quality of life important to people with mental health problems
Duggleby 2012	To report a meta-synthesis review of qualitative research studies exploring the hope experience of older persons with chronic illness
Olver 2012	To describe the evolution of the definitions of hope in oncology
Barclay 2011	To review the literature concerning conversations about end-of-life care between patients with heart failure and healthcare professionals, with respect to the prevalence of conversations, patients' and practitioners' preferences for their timing and content, and the facilitators and blockers to conversations
Bright 2011	To clarify the concept of hope after stroke and to synthesize the findings to propose a working model of hope
Leamy 2011	To synthesize published descriptions and models of personal recovery in mental illness into an empirically based conceptual framework
Singh 2011	To provide a detailed overview of the literature to make an informed judgment on how teenage cancer services can be effectively delivered
Stewart 2011	To conduct a systematic review of resilience and related concepts in the physically ill to determine factors associated with predicting or promoting resilience
van Leeuwen 2011	To review the literature on relationships between psychological factors and quality of life of persons with spinal cord injury
Duggleby 2010	To describe the hope experience of family caregivers of persons with chronic illness
Livingston 2010	To provide a systematic review and meta-analysis of the extant research regarding the empirical relationship between internalized stigma and a range of sociodemographic, psychosocial, and psychiatric variables for people who live with mental illness
Kylmä 2009	To describe the current status of research on hope in palliative care
Todd 2009	To examine the literature on attitudes of patients with advanced cancer toward research and to define common themes
Tutton 2009	To examine the perceptions of hope in health care with a particular focus on: the nature of hope in nursing, the relationship of hope to other related concepts, the experience of hope in some contexts, and the contribution of nursing
Clayton 2008	To examine studies that have investigated sustaining hope during prognostic and end-of-life issues discussions with terminally ill patients and their families
Schrank 2008	To define hope in psychiatry, review current approaches to assessment, and outline research evidence linking hope with effectiveness
Wiles 2008	To explore how expectations and wants are distinguished in empirical research on hope and illness and the related issues of realistic hope and temporality

(continued)

**Table 11.1** (continued)

First author & Year	Objective <sup>a</sup>
Chi 2007	To synthesize the literature, develop generalizations, and identify issues that should be evaluated in regard to hope and patients with cancer
Cutcliffe 2007	To systematically review the literature on hope within interpersonal focused psychiatric/mental health nursing
Davidson 2007	To explore the role of hope in heart disease and the potential utility of this construct in the development of nursing interventions
Koehn 2007	To systematically review the literature on hope within interpersonal focused psychiatric/mental health nursing, with a focus on the method used and the results
Kylmä 2006	To describe the current status of research on hope and schizophrenia
Lohne 2001	To review the literature on the concept of hope related to patients with spinal cord injury and its use in rehabilitation, and to explore the substantive areas of hope in the general and theoretical literature
Baldacchino 2001	To identify those spiritual coping strategies used by the believers and non-believers followed by implications for holistic nursing care
Kylmä 1997	To describe the ontological basis of hope and the epistemological solutions adopted in research on hope by reviewing research article concerned with the subject in the field of nursing science

<sup>a</sup>In most instances the objective is a quotation derived from the abstract

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<sup>1</sup>The selected studies in this review study are marked with an asterisk.

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**Erik Olsman** (Ph.D.) is Associate Professor of Chaplaincy Studies at the Department of Practical Theology (Practices), Protestant Theological University, Groningen/Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Also, he is an Ethicist in a Dutch Review Committee Euthanasia. He graduated cum laude in Theology and worked as chaplain in palliative care and mental health care. After the defense of his PhD Thesis *Hope in Palliative Care* (2015), he was postdoctoral researcher and senior lecturer in medical ethics at academic hospitals. His work focuses on meaningful communication in tragic situations, which includes topics such as hope, happiness, tragedy and suffering. Good spiritual care for persons who struggle with existential issues is the current goal of his work.

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# Chapter 12

## Ecological Hope



Michael S. Northcott

**Abstract** Horkeimer and Adorno, and later Lynn White Jr, blame the anti-animist strain in Western Christianity, its origination of the scientific and industrial revolutions, and the European Enlightenment, as the cultural roots of the ecological crisis. But evidence shows there is no necessary connection between animism and care for other kind. I propose that a more fruitful approach is to reconsider the post-Reformation and scientific eschewal of agency in nonhuman beings and ecosystems such as forests, rivers, and the oceans. Rediscovering the “agency of the others” is also essential as a means to resolve the ecological crisis, since humans alone cannot restore or “save” the Earth from the systemic effects of 200 years of industrial pollution and destruction of resilient biodiverse habitats. Christian eschatological hope has valuable resources for this approach including evidence that in the lives of the saints new friendships were formed between humans and other animals. Analogously, recent developments in ecological restoration and “rewilding” indicate a new peaceable partnership between humans and other kind and, in the light of Christian messianism, and the “theory of hope,” may be said to anticipate a wider ecological reconciliation between humans and other kind.

### 12.1 Introduction

As the ecological crisis grows in both its effects and in public consciousness, there is a growing sense of loss, including grief, at the species that modern industrial extraction and waste processes are driving to extinction. Extinctions are principally caused by hunting and fishing, and habitat modification for agriculture and urban and industrial development. But species are also increasingly at risk of extinction from

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Research for this paper was undertaken with the support of Ford Foundation (Indonesia) grant entitled ‘Co-designing Sustainable, Just and Smart Urban Living’ awarded to the Indonesian Consortium of Religious Studies, Graduate School, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2020.

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M. S. Northcott (✉)

Indonesian Consortium of Religious Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

anthropogenic climate change which is raising temperatures and generating weather extremes in many biomes, including for example coral reefs where sea water temperatures are causing mass die offs of species. At the same time business corporations and government agencies continue to pursue a “business as usual” growth and development strategy reliant on ongoing fossil fuel exploitation and land conversion from forests and savannah to agriculture and other kinds of industrial development.

Many, since Horkeimer and Adorno (2000), and later Lynn White (1967), blame the anti-animist strain of modern civilisation on Western Christianity, and in particular its origination of the scientific and industrial revolutions, and then the European Enlightenment, which it is said are the key cultural developments in which the ecological crisis is rooted. Many also blame John Locke’s philosophical and economic prioritization of humanly generated values and purposes over against ancestral, customary, evolved or traditional values and his related theory of private property (for example Charles Taylor (2005)). The Christian idea of hope, some suggest, is also at issue in the ecological crisis, since the idea of progress in human development, and hence economic, material and technological progress, are genealogically linked with the Christian hope of creating the Kingdom of God on earth (Moltmann 1971).

In this chapter I review the evidence for the claim that animism necessarily promotes care for other kind, and find that there is no necessary correlation between animistic belief and respect for species or care for ecosystems. I argue that a more fruitful approach to redressing the ecologically destructive trajectory of industrial civilisations is to reconsider the dominant Western and scientific cultural understanding of being and agency, so that other animals, and ecosystems such as forests, rivers, and even the Earth herself, can be rediscovered as agents alongside humans in the work of halting the processes that are degrading life on earth, and of restoring habitats and communities of species that promote planetary, as well as human, flourishing. And I argue that the Christian eschatological hope as it has unfolded over two millennia has valuable resources for this project, including evidence that in the lives of the saints new friendships were formed, and peace discovered, between humans and other animals. In conclusion I suggest that recent developments in ecological restoration, and in particular “rewilding,” herald a new more peaceable relationship between modern humans and other kind. And I suggest that, from the perspective of Christian messianism, and the “theory of hope,” ecological restoration may be considered as the realization in the present of reconciliation between human and other kind, and hence as a significant source of ecological hope.

## 12.2 Animism in Question

In David Attenborough’s 2019 documentary series on the state of the planet, *Our Planet*, towards the end of the episode “Coastal Seas,” footage from an aerial camera flying towards a group of small steep volcanic jungle-covered islands in a turquoise sea hones in on the white sand beaches and crystal clear waters of the lagoon of

Pulau Misool, off the coast of West Papua, on the far east of the vast Indonesian archipelago. Underwater footage is then cut in to reveal schools of sharks swimming around the lagoon. But for many years, until 2007 when the lagoon was protected, a shark fishing camp operated there and contributed to a massive decline in shark numbers, which have shrunk globally by 90% in the last 50 years.

The principal reason for the worldwide hunting of sharks is the Chinese love of the delicacy Shark-fin soup. Reputedly first served by a Sung Dynasty Emperor, shark-fin soup is one of the four dishes—*bao* (abalone), *shen* (sea cucumber), *yu chi* (shark fin) and *du* (fish maw)—that should be served at important familial ceremonies such as marriage feasts, or to celebrate the launch of a new business project. Serving the inherently expensive dish of shark fin or “fish wing” soup (*yu chi*) is a key symbolic means by which the host of the dinner shares their good fortune with their dinner guests. Such sharing represents the value of generosity, which is a strong spiritual virtue in Chinese culture, and especially in families, where grandparents and parents should express it to their children who in turn offer filial piety.

The name of shark fin in Chinese—*yu chi*—indicates that the fish soup is high in the “*chi*” or “life force” which, in Daoist tradition, energizes all living things including mammals, birds, fish, plants, and flowing rivers. Chi is said to flow through the human body and to be focused at certain nodal points—or chakras—in the body such as the forehead, the throat, and the abdomen. Increasing the “flow” of Chi is seen as therapeutic to humans, and Chinese health practitioners often identify “blocked chi” as a cause of illness that can be unblocked through acupuncture, massage, herbal medicine, heat, and other interventions.

It is not hard to see why the flow of Chi would be thought to be especially enhanced by eating the fin of the shark. The shark is the ocean’s fastest creature: sharks are very agile, highly intelligent and powerful hunters. Chinese traditionally believe that eating certain parts from such creatures confers the same qualities on those who consume them. It is a similar spiritual logic which drives the continued hunting of rhinoceros for their horns, and lions and tigers for their bones and meat.

It is not only sharks however that have been depleted by overfishing in the oceans. Worldwide, ocean catches in the last 50 years have been advanced by radar and sonar, and their deployment on huge trawlers, and this has turned the “craft” of fishing into a science in which shoals of fish have nowhere to hide. The guesswork that occasioned the huge catch from the Sea of Galilee that Jesus is said to have enabled for his disciples during a resurrection appearance recorded in John’s Gospel, a catch so large as to risk breaking their nets, is completely gone. The result is that in the last hundred years industrial humans have extracted more than 90% by weight of *all* the living creatures that once dwelled in the world’s oceans.

When government agencies set fishing quotas and sustainable catches for industrial trawlers they use data from just the last few decades of ocean surveys and fish catch monitoring. But when historical data from analogue sources, and in particular fishing boat logs and the journals of fishers, are included in the statistics, the decline of stocks of sharks and of coastal and even deep sea fish is above 90% for each species by number (McClenachan et al. 2012). Historic records indicate quantities of creatures in the sea in abundance that have not been seen for decades. It is a similar

story for land birds and mammals, and here the documentary record of sharp declines in numbers is greater.<sup>1</sup>

While much recent public attention on the state of the oceans has focused on plastic pollution (and plastic pollution is a growing threat to marine life) the greatest threat is from industrial pelagic fishing boats primarily operating in coastal waters where most life is concentrated. These boats are licensed, and often also subsidised, by national governments. But they fish in coastal waters far from their home nations, either by treaty between their own and another government—such as that which Senegal unwisely made with the European Union fleet in the 1990s—or illegally, by night, as many nations lack the capacity to both survey and police their coastal fishing waters. The result is not only a huge depletion of ocean life but the loss of essential protein, and employment opportunities, for small coastal fishers whose boats cannot compete with the technologically sophisticated trawlers of nations such as China, Japan, Russia, and Spain that maintain the largest global fleets. The paradox, as Jean Philippe Platteau argues, is that government subsidies to industrial fishing fleets create very few jobs but the quantity of fish caught significantly undermines the subsistence livelihood of coastal fishers in both the North and the South who make up 97% of those employed in the ocean fishing sector worldwide (see Platteau 1989, and Bavinck 2005).

The solution to unsustainable fishing is to end public subsidies and tax breaks to ocean-going industrial trawlers, and for governments also to regulate the operation of these huge boats. But at the present time there continues to be a race literally to the bottom for fish stocks, in part driven by the growing weight of fish now raised in aquaculture, fed with ground up fish meal from deep ocean fisheries (Pauly et al. 2002). The destruction of coastal marine ecosystems is a major cause of human migration from the developing world. Fishers whose own ecosystems and local economies are destroyed by large foreign trawlers may turn their navigational skills to migration. This is precisely what happened in Senegal: once the Spanish fishing fleet destroyed their fisheries, many young men took to the sea, or migrated overland to Spain, to seek a living in the nation that had wrecked their living at home.

The removal of this quantity of life from the oceans is also changing marine ecosystems. As they are emptied of life, oceans become near deserts, and less capable of sustaining the ancient life-evolving processes of photosynthesis, bio-plasma formation, and calcification through the formation of phytoplankton and shellfish which, at the base of the ocean's chain of life, are a crucial terrestrial sink of greenhouse gas emissions produced by the same industrial civilization which sponsors pelagic fishing boats. A consequent apocalyptic scenario for the oceans, to which the Ellen McArthur Ocean Foundation has given credence, is that without radical action to reduce human extraction and hunting, the oceans will soon have

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<sup>1</sup>For the UK, significant depletion of wild birds and mammals began in the late middle ages with the passing of a series of “vermin acts” by successive Scots and English monarchs that mandated parish clerks to pay peasants a small sum per carcass of fox, kingfisher, crow, hare and so on handed in: the motive was to prevent other creatures from eating agricultural crops, but many of the creatures hunted to near extinction were not threats to crops (see further Lovegrove 2008).

more weight of plastic than living creatures in them.<sup>2</sup> At the same time the oceans will diminish significantly in their capacity to absorb a significant proportion of the greenhouse gas emissions that humans emit into the atmosphere.

Indonesia is the world's top region for sharks and it is therefore the prime destination for Chinese shark-fishing fleets. But the consequent depletion of stocks is of concern to the government of Indonesia, in part because tourism is rapidly replacing natural resource extraction as the more valuable industry across the archipelago, and significant numbers of high paying tourists are attracted to dive sites and islands where there is abundant marine life, including sharks. Consequently, in the shark fishing areas a number of sites have been declared Marine Protected Areas by the national government of Indonesia, in tandem with the State Government of West Papua. And one of these sites is at Pulau Misool, where the shark fishing camp was evicted in 2007. Less than a decade later, scientific surveys reveal that life has come back in huge abundance to the lagoon which is now a shark nursery filled with thousands of sharks and smaller fish, and the coral reef also has some prospect of revival although warming sea temperatures are another threat to the coral that protected areas cannot resolve (Jaiteh et al. 2016).

### 12.3 Ecological Restoration and the 'Sixth Extinction'

The capacity of the Earth, and ecosystems, to revive, and for life to recover when humans reduce their influence but at the same time "guard" the ecosystems that are home to life's greatest fertility, diversity, and abundance—sometimes called "biohotspots"—is a source of ecological hope, even as the broader picture of humanly driven climate destabilization and species extinction presents a much more gloomy prospect. This capacity of ecosystems to "come back" from a seriously industrially polluted state is not confined to the oceans. On a 2000 acre farm in Southern England, just 20 miles south of Gatwick Airport, Sir Charles Burrell decided to abandon industrial farming on his ancestral estate of Knepp in 2002. He removed all the fences over much of the farm, sold his farm machinery, and introduced ancient breeds of animals on the land. They were, in the main, left to their own devices and included Tamworth pigs, European long-horn cattle, and red deer. In the fifteen years that the animals have established themselves on the land, they have returned to living in a relatively "wild" state, adopting patterns of foraging, interaction, and reproduction which have created significant niches for the abundance of species that are now found on the farm. Without industrial tillage the soils have become much richer, and species such as hawthorn and sedge have re-established themselves, in turn providing protected cover for hardwoods such as

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<sup>2</sup>*The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the Future of Plastics*, Geneva, World Economic Forum and the Ellen McArthur Foundation, January 2016, and at [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_The\\_New\\_Plastics\\_Economy.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_New_Plastics_Economy.pdf).

English oak to re-establish naturally. The result after just 15 years is that many bird and small mammal species are now present on the farm that are rarely found elsewhere on British farmland. They are attracted by an abundance of insects, and a variety of land types including watering holes, as well as thorn bush and shrub, that are usually levelled out and ploughed up on conventional farms.<sup>3</sup> The biodiversity that now exists at Knepp exceeds in its different kinds of present and visiting species *any other area* of mainland Britain including “protected” conservation areas. The project at Knepp was partly inspired by a Dutch rewilding project at Oostvaardersplassen to the East of Amsterdam, that was designed by the Dutch ecologist Frans Vera, and has had analogous ecological results (Vera 2005).

What is particularly intriguing about both Pulau Misool and the Knepp Estate is that as humans have withdrawn industrial methods of ecosystem management and resource extraction, while still acting as stewards of the ecosystems to prevent unwanted activities, they have made it possible for *other* large mammals to again become “agents” in the ecosystems: protected from hunting, these animals are enabled, in turn, to help generate cascades of other species, and so facilitate the re-emergence of an ecologically self-sustaining increase in the diversity and abundance of species. They have also created ecologically sustainable opportunities for visitors to interact with nonhuman mammals in rewilded ecosystems that did not before exist and which paradoxically are economically more successful than the previous industrial agricultural landscape.

In the Abrahamic religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, human beings are said to be *kalipha* or “guardians” of life on earth, set in place by the divine as “vice-regents” to care for the earth as divinely chosen representatives of Yahweh, God, or Allah. This is indicated first in Genesis 1.28. The theme of guardianship is also to be found in the Qu’ran, and in Rabbinic and Christian commentaries on Genesis in the first centuries of the Common Era. But a potentially competing feature of the Abrahamic traditions with respect to nonhuman life and ecosystems is that they are, as Lynn White Jr. influentially argued, “anti-animist.” This is to say that, whereas there are scattered over the forests and coastlands of the earth numerous *local* cosmologies in which indigenous peoples attribute divine or sacred power to all living beings—and especially to places of high life value such as springs, rivers, mountains, forests, coastal reefs and mangrove swamps, and to large mammals such as jaguar, tiger, shark and whale—the Abrahamic traditions tend to have little regard for spirits said to be resident in other life forms, or places such as “sacred” groves, springs, mountains, and so on. Instead the Abrahamic conception of the *terrestrial* sacred is principally focused on the human soul, which in Greek is *anima*. This is not to say that Abrahamic traditions do not have sacred places, but the sacred places are principally in the lands of the *origin* of these religions, and in particular Jerusalem, claimed as a sacred place most of all by Jews, but also by Christians and Muslims. Rome and Constantinople are also seen as sacred cities by many Christians, and

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<sup>3</sup>For a detailed narrative, including some of the unanticipated scientific results of the “wilding” of the Knepp Estate, see further Tree (2018).

particularly those of the “mother churches” of the first Text of the Common Era, namely Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Analogously for Muslims, Mecca and Medina, and the holy land of the Prophet today known as Saudi Arabia, are holy places and places of pilgrimage.

As the Abrahamic traditions have spread globally through trade routes and the science of ‘discovery’ over the last two millennia they have become “universal” or “global” religions by definition. But, their conceptions of the divine in the main outcompete and displace the “local gods” and “spirits” of “new” lands opened up by explorers, missionaries, and traders. Hence the global spread of all three religions from Europe and the Middle East—and of Christianity and Islam especially—is also associated with what is sometimes called “ecological imperialism,” in which habitats and species far from the cultural regions which birthed these traditions are taken over and reduced in the diversity of both human cultures, and ecological and species diversity (see further Crosby 1996, pp. 350–369).

In an end of life overview of the interdisciplinary study of religions and ecology, of which he was a pioneer, anthropologist Roy Rappaport, whose first field work was on the island of Papua New Guinea, argues that indigenous cosmologies of the kind that have enabled indigenous peoples to sustain the fertility and biodiversity of the ecosystems they inhabit typically carry within them a conception of the *logos* or underlying order that sustains life in its diversity and abundance (Rappaport 1999). This conception informs their ritual practices and beliefs such that their harvesting and natural resource extraction is managed with the aid of these rituals and beliefs so that they do not exceed the carrying capacity of the ecosystem. This proposal, first outlined in Rappaport’s essay, and subsequent book of the same title, “Pigs for the Ancestors,” is an intriguing hybrid of natural and social science, including the scientific study of religion and theology (Rappaport 1984, pp. 224–242).

If Rappaport is right to identify the means by which a conception of underlying order or *logos* informs indigenous cosmologies, it raises the question how the Christian understanding of the incarnation of the *logos* in the flesh and blood of Jesus of Nazareth might inform a Christian conception of ecological sustainability and restoration in the context of what is now a system-wide emergency of global proportions. The principal drivers of the emergency are over-extraction of natural resources and the dumping of wastes from extraction processes—including most influentially greenhouse gases—back into the Earth system in ways that ecological processes are unable to resolve. This is leading to Earth system-wide destabilization of the climate, and global biodiversity loss on a scale equivalent to those of previous prehistoric extinction waves, and hence increasingly described as the “sixth extinction.”<sup>4</sup> But this raises the theological question of how to think of the cascade of events that are precipitating the sixth extinction, and its implications for the Christian hope of redemption, or the eschaton.

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<sup>4</sup>Richard Leakey, the Kenyan primatologist, together with Roger Lewin, was the first to draw an equivalence between the current wave of species extinctions and the previous five waves of Earth system wide species extinctions which are evident in the geological record: see Leakey (1996).

## 12.4 Finding Hope in Sharing Agency

The narratives of Pulau Misool and the Knepp Estate are hopeful stories because they indicate in quite striking ways that creaturely life comes back in abundance in particular places where humans exercise appropriate guardianship against destructive human practices and allow other creatures to recover *co-agency* with humans in managing and tending ecosystems. But neither story indicates that humans, in enabling this to happen, can, or even ought, to get *completely* out of the way. A classic example of what happens when humans are evicted from ancestral guardianship of place concerns the national parks in the Western United States. As is well known, the Scotsman John Muir, who is honoured as the “founding father” of the United States National Park Service, began his engagement with the American west as a shepherd, and later as a recreational walker and campaigner for the conservation of the mountainous landscapes of the Californian Sierra from industrial developments and in particular hydroelectric dams.<sup>5</sup> Muir also campaigned for the extension of the park areas, and before he died, much of what he worked for had come to pass. However, in Yosemite, the extension of the national park to include its current large area from high montane to the lower plateau, and rocky valleys through which flows the mighty Yosemite River, led to the eviction of the native Americans whom Muir himself in his diaries had regarded as superfluous to the “wilderness” he so much admired, and even as a kind of pollutant or desecrating presence to the new sacred of “wilderness” (see Spence 1996). However within ten years of the indigenous inhabitants being evicted, it soon became apparent that they had for centuries performed certain essential functions in managing the landscape, such as setting controlled fires, which were also beneficial to other resident species. And without their presence, the balance of species present when the park was set up began to change.

In recent years, the park authorities have determined that one crucial species that the native Americans had “permitted” to live in the land with them was the wolf. And it turns out the wolf provides crucial land management characteristics that keep other grazing and browsing species—especially deer—away from certain areas. Therefore, the presence of wolves enabled a richer flora and fauna to grow than when these grazing species over-dominate. The reintroduction of wolves into the American West was sponsored by the National Park Service, beginning in Yellowstone National Park, and wolves have now spread through the national parks system right down to the southwestern United States. Beneficial ecosystem results are seen in consequence, and have been charted in a number of scientific papers (Ripple and Beschta 2007; Laundré et al. 2001), as well as in other media such as televisual documentaries (for a popular account of ‘wolf restored’ habitats see Bakerslee 2017).

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<sup>5</sup>John Muir recorded his early sojourn in the Californian Sierras in a book that has become a classic of North American nature writing; see Muir (1911).



The recovery of the agency of other creatures in the management of ecosystems in what we might call late modernity reflects a realization about the asymmetric relationships that industrial humans—even when science-informed and involving “conservation projects” such as national parks—have typically developed with other creatures and their habitats. I think it is reasonable to say that Jean Calvin anticipated something along these lines when he wrote in *The Institutes* that the problem with the city—which is the most humanly-made landscape of his time—is that it is most representative of the work of humans, and since they are fallen, the glory of God is less manifest in cities than it is in those parts of the world that have been less modified since the origin of creation (for full citations of Calvin, see Northcott 2018). In effect, industrial technologies, developed in and managed by residents of industrial cities, have allowed the humanly dominated urban scape—in which human agency, human acts, and intentions overbalance the agency, acts, and intents of other creatures—to spread from cities across almost the whole surface of the Earth.

Calvin’s belief that the excess of human influence in cities reduces their capacity to reflect the divine glory of the creator, as compared to forests and “wild” landscapes, is a theological imaginary of “nature” that, as I have argued elsewhere, is a significant root of the development, first among Protestants in Western Europe and North America, of the modern idea of “wilderness” as a place where human influence is little in evidence, and where humans are over-awed by the magnificence, scale, and “sublime” qualities of the landscape (see Northcott 2018). But there is a paradox in this imaginary which, as it has become increasingly detached from its theological roots, has come to see wilderness as intrinsically nonhuman, and humanity as an alienated, over-powering and ultimately destructive presence in the landscape, and even on Earth. According to this imaginary, at some point in the future, the Earth, or ‘gaia’, will finally slough off this presence, so allowing life to return to its former path of speciation, making the Earth fertile and benign for all creatures, not just for humans. Weirdly then, as its theological underpinnings fell away, a Protestant theology of fall and redemption has produced a misanthropy, and even a despair, about human influence on the rest of creation that was not part of Calvin’s theology, and which is even more alien to the theologies, both Catholic and Orthodox, that preceded the Reformation.

This misanthropy is most evident in various kinds of ecological apocalyptic, or dystopias, such as James Lovelock’s famous metaphor of humanity as a virus the planet will eventually slough off, and the essay, and later book, of Alan Weisman entitled *The World Without Us* (Weisman 2008).<sup>6</sup> These dystopias are marked by an absence of hope. And there are those who suggest that hope is actually the enemy of action to restrain and reverse the current trajectory of human influence and that a seasoned pessimism is a more “useful” attitude than hope.<sup>7</sup> But the narratives of the

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<sup>6</sup>The metaphor of humans as a “virus” was first mobilised by James Lovelock in his *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Lovelock 1995).

<sup>7</sup>As Bruno Latour puts it: “we are all climate quietists when we hope, while doing nothing about it, that ‘everything will be all right in the end’” (Latour 2018).

ecological restoration of Pulau Misool and the Knepp Estate indicate that what works best is not the total absence of humans, but intentional restraint by humans in the management of ecosystems, and a preparedness to give space to other creatures so they recover a measure of agency and formative influence on habitats and places.

## 12.5 The Christian Hope and Moral Regard for Other Persons

Hope is a virtue, one of the three “theological virtues” that Saint Paul first identified, and that Thomas Aquinas later named as significant Christian revisions to the earlier Aristotelian virtuous tradition of moral excellences. The classical virtues, which are most in evidence in the two narratives of ecosystem recovery already discussed, are temperance and humility. In both cases humans find ways to *temper* their prior industrially-enabled asymmetric relations with other creatures. And as the other creatures literally “come back” and recover their agency in creation, an abundance of life, returns which has never been achieved by standard conservation projects that tend to focus on recovery plans for individual endangered or locally extinct species. The realization of the power of the “others” to achieve what science-informed humans have not achieved, should also provoke humility. Both narratives also point to the possibility of what some call a “good” “Anthropocene,” which does not reside so much in humans taking purposive control of the “levers” of planetary systems—as Paul Crutzen who originated the term Anthropocene proposes—but rather in finding measures in all areas of technological intervention to restrain human influence and rebalance that influence with the agency of the other creatures with whom, from the beginning, Genesis indicates, humans once dwelled peaceably in the primeval forests, such as that of Eden.<sup>8</sup>

Both narratives of ecological restoration also indicate that there is no straightforward return via re-animation to the “cosmic harmonies” of indigenous religions that, in any case, are not as harmonic as all that. While indigenous traditions have patterns of respect and honour towards other animals and birds, which to an extent prevented over-hunting, there is nonetheless good scientific evidence that wherever humans have dwelled they have hunted large mammals and birds to extinction—Moa, Mammoths et al. There is also much evidence of high death rates, by violence, among indigenous hunter gatherers. Various explanations are given by scientists of these death rates but the one that I find most convincing is that the high number of violent deaths, compared to those found among moderns, reflects the relatively small “worlds” in which indigenous people lived, and in which some still do live. In these worlds there are known resident beings and indigenous cosmologies include these beings in what we might call a “sacred canopy” of life that gives all their place. But

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<sup>8</sup>For a critical overview of the idea of a good Anthropocene see Hamilton (2016).

humans who do not live in the place occupied by a particular indigenous group may be perceived as not only unknown, and outside of the sacred canopy, but as a threat to the group that, when encountered, is therefore often met with violence.

“In” and “out” groups are a feature of all moral systems until modern efforts to establish “enlightened” or “rational” moral codes in which the category “person” indicates a culture-transcending category deserving of universal moral respect above all other categories. Immanuel Kant significantly argued that cosmopolitan regard for other persons would represent an extension of the moral law, which he believed was innate in every individual person, and that would—when expressed by every person and people group in relation to all other persons and people groups—in effect be a realization of the Christian chiliastic hope for the realization of the kingdom of God on earth.

Against Kant’s hopeful cosmopolitanism, a darker political theology, such as that of Carl Schmitt, holds that in and out groups are an inevitable feature of the human condition and that borders, geographical boundaries, even “walls”, are an essential feature for functioning governments within particular national terrains. Schmitt goes even further when he suggested that the definition of the political is the ability to distinguish at the border between the insider and the outsider, the friend and the enemy.<sup>9</sup> At the present time, Schmitt’s darker vision, rather than that of Kant, seems to be more in the ascendancy in a number of domains, including parts of both North and South America, and even in Western Europe, as Austria, Britain, Hungary, and Italy have all in recent years elected leaders or held referenda in which an anti-cosmopolitan attitude is in the ascendancy.

Neither Kant’s hopeful chiliastic cosmopolitanism nor Schmitt’s darker friend-enemy politics, include other creatures within the realm of humanly considerable moral agency, and hence neither is a source of hopeful moral energy for resolving the current asymmetry between industrial humans and the agency of other beings, and the Earth herself. Both instead assume, as Latour has often remarked, that the Earth and life are “stable backgrounds” for the newly delineated rational constitution of Enlightened peoples that conveniently, but negligently, leaves out the Earth and other creatures as co-constituents, co-agents of the terrains in which such constitutions have cultural and political writ. Here I think it is valuable to return to Christian sources and history in order to note two things that neither Kant nor Schmitt seem properly to have understood and that are rarely discussed in attempts to conceptualize what ecological restoration requires in the domain of thought and ethics.

The first point is that Christianity is the first religio-cultural tradition in history to propose in its founding texts and “laws” that *all* other persons are, and *ought* to be, subjects deserving of moral regard by humans regardless of their religious affiliation, or cultural, or gender orientation. The second point is that in the course of Christian history this conception of “other regard” that principally takes the form of “love of neighbor” begins to extend over the centuries towards other creatures.

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<sup>9</sup>For extensive discussions of Kant and Schmitt on modern cosmopolitanism and the friend enemy distinction, see Northcott (2013).

The first point is critical and should be uncontroversial. But many scholars do not see Christian ethical regard for strangers—and even enemies—as a root of modern cosmopolitan regard, arguing instead that classical Greek moral philosophy, and its rebirth at the Renaissance and in the Enlightenment, is the key root. Luke Bretherton makes a strong case that Christian cosmopolitanism is in significant respects the origin of the modern ideal of moral regard for strangers—in particular for strangers from other lands who are considered “refugees” in the modern sense of persons seeking to enter another terrain to obtain settlement rights and, ultimately, livelihood there.

Bretherton (2006) traces a genealogy for stranger regard in Western theology from the gospels through Augustine to Dante Alighieri and in the modern era, Wolfhart Pannenberg. Both Dante and Pannenberg situate cosmopolitan regard for those from distant lands not, *pace* Kant, in a universal regard for those having the status “person,” but in the eschatological telos of all persons, as revealed in the Christian story of redemption and transformation, towards ultimate union with God that Dante, like Aquinas, describes as the beatific vision.

A good case can also be made for tracing back the distinctive Christian regard for strangers to the gospel parable of the Good Samaritan, in which a Samaritan is said to have encountered a Jewish victim of robbery on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and rescues the man and arranges for his care in a roadside guesthouse. Christ narrates the story in response to the question from Jewish teachers “who is my neighbor.” By having a Samaritan make *himself* neighbor to a Jew whom he meets on the road, Christ overturns the conventional boundaries and cultural distinctions between Jews and Gentiles—for Samaritans were not considered Jewish in Second Temple Jerusalem but as a breakaway sect dwelling in a separate territory from Judea, namely that of Samaria whose capital was Jericho. But the parable also overturns the conventional boundary between a citizen and a refugee since in the parable it is a traveller—a non-citizen—in Judea who expresses the agency of a good citizen, and a good Jew, by being a neighbor, a carer, to the Jewish victim of robbery but who is neglected by those of his own religion and country in the early stages in the story.

The Samaritan story also has another import for modern cosmopolitanism and political theology because it suggests that locality, nearness, place are critical moral categories in the Christian ethic of neighbor love.<sup>10</sup> This is in contrast to Enlightenment cosmopolitanism which in both deontological and utilitarian guise tends to situate the duty of other regard beyond borders—and toward refugees—in a universal conception of what is owed to all persons by their constitution as individuals, rather than differentiating between persons who are near to other persons and persons who are far away. A Good Samaritan-influenced cosmopolitanism therefore includes within it the importance of habitat, locale, place, terrain (or *terroir*) and in this sense is a more creation-situated, and Earth-oriented, ethic of other regard than

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<sup>10</sup>On the erasure and re-appearance of ‘place’ in Western thought and theology see further Inge (2003), and Northcott (2015).

that found in modern cosmopolitanism. Hence, in a crucial sense the idea of neighbor love in the Christian tradition elides the conventional modern dualism between nature and culture by situating duties to persons in relation to their locus in the community of other persons, and other beings, in which they are encountered. This allows that duties to those who may not have rights in one's geographical political community—as fellow citizens—nonetheless find a place in a Christian political ethics when terrestrially they are linked by proximity, or by environmental damage or trading links, with a particular territory—for example by presenting themselves as refugees at the border—but not in such a way as to corrode the proper conception of politics as justice between those who dwell in, and have found customary ways to dwell justly in, political territories.<sup>11</sup> Again it needs to be emphasised that this conception of the status of the other is not based upon a liberal theory of duties that are owed to persons by virtue of their being individual persons in whatever domain they may find themselves in, but is rather eschatologically oriented to the status of all persons in the Christian drama of salvation that flows from the present towards final redemption, and is encapsulated in the beatific vision.

## 12.6 The Christian Hope and Moral Regard for Other Beings

The Christian hope stands in significant contrast to modern cosmopolitanism because it situates other persons both in creation and redemption: hence the Christian hope generates other regard that, in principle at least, does not participate in the modern dualism of nature and culture. But what about other beings, beings who are not persons? Are there grounds for including other creatures, and even the Earth herself, in this Christian sphere of moral regard for neighbors? Is the Christian hope, in other words, eschatologically oriented towards a conception of a redemptive and transforming union of *all* beings and not only persons?

The best historical ground for this claim is the documented narratives, first of Jesus Christ, and then of Christian religious, in developing relationships of other regard, and peaceableness, with other animals. Here, the animals lose their post-Fall alienation from humans in the relationships they are said to have had with Christ and the saints. There is a highly suggestive note in the Gospel of Mark that in the time between Christ's baptism and his commencement of ministry he went into the wilderness where he was not only tempted by Satan, but “was with the wild animals.”<sup>12</sup> This very brief reference to the possibility that in the Messianic era

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<sup>11</sup>For the argument I am countering here—that the Samaritan parable elides proper and politically necessary conceptions of justice and citizenship—see Dobson (2005).

<sup>12</sup>“And immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him” (Mk 1:13); see the commentary on this by Bauckham (1998).

that Christ inaugurated, the promised restoration of relations of peace between humanity and other animals had already begun, and this is the import given to this brief passage in a more extended discussion of Christ's relations with other animals in the second century text of Pseudo-Matthew, according to which lions and panthers are said to have accompanied the Holy Family in their flight into Egypt "showing them the way, bowing their heads; and showing submission by wagging their tails" because "they adored Him (Christ) with great reverence."<sup>13</sup> The early theologians interpreted this and other texts as indicating that in Christ the original peace and harmony that there was in Eden between humans and other kind would be progressively restored after Christ who had set the Earth on a path towards eschatological peace and fulfilment. Among the most extensive discussions of this claim in the first Christian millennium is in the writings of Isaac of Nineveh, also known as Isaac the Syrian.<sup>14</sup>

As Ryan McLaughlin notes, there are numerous accounts of saints developing such relationships but the two best known stories are those of Saint Jerome removing a thorn from a lion's paw, and of Saint Francis befriending a wolf (McLaughlin 2014, p. 71). In both cases animals conventionally associated with predation lose their predatory characteristics, while also losing their fear of humans. Instead they become naively familiar with humans, just as the animals who are described as coming before Adam to be named by him in the first creation story in Genesis. Both stories are also suggestive that there is an eschatological telos in Judaism and Christianity, as Walter Brueggemann argues, towards a progressive extension of the "circle of neighborliness" to a growing range of "others" who, in the course of Christian history, come to include other kind (Brueggemann 2002, p. 143; see also Miller 2013). In similar vein, that most eschatological of modern Protestant theologians, Karl Barth, argues that the progressive realization of Christian redemption as a distinctive form of human ethical life would tend towards vegetarianism over time since the original pre-fallen creaturely ethic of Adam and Eve in Paradise is said to have been vegetarian and hence one in which there was no killing (Barth 1989; see also Hauerwas and Berkman 1993, and Clough 2019).

In many of the narratives of the saints rediscovering peace with other animals it is not however so much human as animal agency which is the key: animals are drawn to the saints because in their humility and poverty they radiate compassion towards all creation, and creatures respond in kind by losing the fear of *Homo sapiens* said to have begun with the fall of Adam and Eve. The restoration of peace is reciprocal, and involves mutual compassionate recognition. This progressive unfolding, from the life of Christ through the lives of the Saints, of an extension of the circle of neighborliness to include other animals, also admits of the agency of other creatures in completing the eschatological extension of the circle of compassion exemplified in Christ's story of the Samaritan to include all creatures. I think it is also not

<sup>13</sup>Pseudo-Matthew 18, quoted in McLaughlin (2014, p. 72).

<sup>14</sup>For a fuller discussion of Isaac of Nineveh's eschatological theology of peace between humans and other animals see McLaughlin (2014, pp. 72–73).

unreasonable to make a connection between this extension of the circle of Christian compassion to include other animals and the great leap forward in primatology in which chimpanzees, gorillas and other apes are increasingly recognised by scientists as being much closer to humans in a remarkable range of cognitive, communicative, and empathic behaviors. The first contemporary scientist to go into the field and begin making observations of primates based upon a lack of fear, and an expectation of empathy, is Jane Goodall, who is a lifelong Christian (Goodall 1999, 2009). In the title as well as the narrative of her autobiography, Goodall shows how her belief in the Christian hope is a mainstay of her compassionate regard for primates and other creatures, and her charismatic and extensive campaigning efforts—in the movements she has founded—to spread compassion and care for primates, and other kind, around the Earth.

The evidence many scholars have assembled in recent years of distinctive Christian attitudes to other kind does not gainsay however another strain—and it is fair to say, the majority view—in the Christian tradition and Christian history according to which animals, and creation as a whole, are created by God instrumentally to serve humanity rather than as deserving of independent moral regard as beings who are also caught up in the story of salvation.

It is reasonable to suggest that the root of this belief is to be found in an apostolic argument in the New Testament between the apostles Peter and Paul. Peter intended that Gentile Christians should adopt Jewish ritual laws: this would have included the circumcision of Christian males before baptism, and their adoption of Jewish dietary practices as prescribed in Leviticus including proscription of eating of certain creatures—particularly pig and reptiles—and the requirement that all animals and birds that are to be eaten should be slaughtered in such a way that the blood is ritually drained and returned to the earth “which is the Lord’s” (Psalm 24. 1). Paul resisted the idea that Gentile Christians need adopt Jewish dietary and ritual laws and this became a major contest in the churches Paul founded, including those at Corinth, Galatia, and Ephesus. The conflict came to a head in Jerusalem at what was in effect the first Apostolic Council where Peter softened his stance and agreed an “ecumenical accord” which indicated that Gentile Christians would be purified “by faith” and therefore had no need of circumcision.

As for dietary laws, the judgment, which was written down in a letter that Judas and Silas were to take in person from Jerusalem to the Gentile churches, was to the effect that Gentile Christians should not be bound by ritual and dietary laws that some from Jerusalem had attempted to impose upon them but, being faithful to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ they need only “abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if you keep yourselves, you shall do well.” (Acts 15. 29). Paul suggests to the Christians at Corinth that such dietary liberty may even be extended to meat offered to idols provided that it is not consumed in the meetings of the Christians for worship, and provided that their Christian neighbors are not offended by this liberty: but if this

liberty does give offence, Paul suggests it is better to abstain from eating meat (1 Cor. 7–8).<sup>15</sup>

Jewish dietary law rests upon what many modern liberal exegetes see as a “primitive,” quasi-magical, belief in the sacredness of the life blood of animals. In the Torah, the message is clear that in Paradise there was no killing; that violence, including meat-eating, had caused the primeval Flood; and that after the flood meat eating is permitted by an apparently reluctant Creator in a new covenant with Noah, because of the weakness of men and women. But this permission is only given with a number of strict regulations and prohibitions. The most important of these is that the life blood—which is described in Torah as “inspired” by the breath of the Spirit since the same Hebrew word *nephesh* is used of blood and spirit—is returned to the earth “which is the Lord’s.” Returning the blood to the ground, and sacrificing a portion of every animal and bird eaten—first at the Ark of the Covenant and later in Solomon’s Temple—were therefore requirements to give respect to the creator spirit who breathes through all being. And when the Israelites settled in cities in the Land, butchering itself—because of the moral and polluting dangers of the act of killing—is to be conducted by only one group or tribe—the Levites—who were to live separately from the other tribes so as not to infect them with the potential evils of killing and slaughter. The Jewish apostles, it is reasonable to argue, maintained much of this ritual understanding of the significance of blood and of the theological and ethical rationale for the Jewish proscription on eating blood. And therefore it was the sole dietary requirement they imposed upon the Gentiles. But while a minority of Gentile Christians from the first century abstained from meat eating altogether because of its potentially profane associations, vegetarianism was more often associated with Gnosticism than with orthodox Christianity, and most Christians also did not follow the dietary rule of Acts 15.

In my view, the New Testament proscription on eating blood is a critical link with the sacred view of life that was sustained—however complexly—in the dietary rules of the Israelites, and subsequently in Jewish culture. The loss of this complex of rules means that Christians—uniquely among those of the Abrahamic faith—do not have any formal ritual dietary laws. It is even possible, though the evidence chain is too long and multifarious for definitive proof, that this helps to explain the distinctively instrumental relations with other animals which developed in Christianity, and ultimately into the secularized forms and practices of modern industrial capitalism (see further Northcott 2008).

Of course there are also significant non-biblical sources for this instrumental view of creatures, of which Thomas Aquinas is the most influential in the Western tradition. His instrumental view of other creatures is illustrated in his argument in the *Summa Theologiae* that the reason that cruelty towards other animals is morally problematic is because of the effects it has on humans and not on the creatures

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<sup>15</sup>For much fuller and referenced discussions of this apostolic argument and its import see further Northcott (2008, 2009).



themselves.<sup>16</sup> But there is now a significant and growing effort to revise this tradition, among a growing number of Protestant theologians, some of whom are already referenced in this article, and now in Roman Catholicism. In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the Argentinian Pope Francis challenges the mainstream Roman Catholic tradition for having a degree of instrumentalism towards other creatures. After his namesake, Saint Francis of Assisi, Francis indicates that this tradition ought now to be transcended and set aside. In so doing, Francis has arguably begun to embrace what McLaughlin and others have called the minority tradition of compassion to other animals, apart from their service of and uses to humans. In line with this minority tradition, Pope Francis effectively channels Saint Francis in his “naïve” relations with other animals when he indicates in *Laudato Si'* that all creatures, and not only persons, have “intrinsic value,” and that all creatures are redirected by the Christ events toward the “end of time” when “the Son will deliver all things to the Father,” and thus “the risen one is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end.”<sup>17</sup> In this way Francis indicates that creatures, and not only persons, are part of the eschatological transformation of all things towards their future consummation: and that this salvific status of creatures is the theological ground for Catholics to honor the divinely given worth of animals, and also by extension of plants, rivers, forests, oceans, and the atmosphere.

In his 2013 Gifford Lectures, subsequently published as *Facing Gaia*, Bruno Latour argues that the critical missing element in contemporary human ethics and politics is recognition of the *agency* of other creatures, and of Gaia, in generating and sustaining the conditions of life on the Earth that make it uniquely habitable for humans and other mammals. He also argues that recognition of their co-agency with humans requires their “re-animation,” against the tendencies of Christianity and modernity to de-animate non-human life of all kinds (Latour 2017). But, as suggested earlier, it is clear that in cultures where animals are still given this animated power, it can give rise to highly ecologically damaging practices, such as the destructive shark fishing associated with the Chinese veneration of the shark, and shark fin soup.

In this paper I am arguing that the historical evidence for a “minority report” on Christian eschatological hope for the recovery of peace between humans and other kind, and hence for ecological as well as spiritual transformation in the Kingdom of God on earth, indicates that recognition of the agency of the others also has a distinctive ethical quality. This is because it is most closely associated with the moral and spiritual qualities of humility and holiness shown by the saints rather than the “re-animation” of animals, trees, and so on. The first instance in Christian, and Jewish, texts of the connection between human hope for redemption and hope for creation, comes in the famous account in Isaiah 65 of human development and peace

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<sup>16</sup>Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* Vol 41, II.II, Question 159, 1, 2 online edition at <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3159.htm> accessed November 20, 2019.

<sup>17</sup>Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, Rome, Vatican Press, 2015, 100, 140.

in the messianic age. Then, not only will humans live long and dignified lives in their own homes, in which they also own the means of production, but other animals will live at peace with humans and predation itself will cease. And this “creation-wide” messianism recurs in the Christian revival of messianism in the New Testament, in the writings of the first theologians, and most strikingly in stories, already discussed, of animal communion in the lives of the saints.

The “sacred” status that other kind acquire in their communion with the saints arises not from a general or special ontic category of animus or being animated, but from their being enfolded in the extension of the circle of compassion sustained by the purified intentions, thoughts and actions of the saints, and above all, as Isaac of Nineveh argues (1923), in their humility and self-restraint. In this perspective, the key moral virtue for living hopefully in a geological epoch or era in which humans exercise a newly asymmetric influence over the direction of the evolution of life on earth is humility, and a willingness, as I have argued more fully elsewhere, to see the Anthropocene not as an opportunity for intentional and managed dominion by the humans of the earth, but for an increased willingness to restrain human power over other kind and over habitats in such a way as to allow the other creatures to restore the habitats of which humans, and industrial humans in particular, have shown themselves to be poor stewards (see Northcott 2017). As the story of shark fin soup indicates, animation on its own does not necessarily predict moral regard or care and may even indicate their opposite, since those creatures with the most animating “energy” become all the more objects of human predation and consumption. Restoring agency means both restraint of human powers—of the kind shown by the setting up of the Marine Protected Area in the seas off West Papua—and preparedness to trust the other animals as they recover their agency in co-managing habitats capable of generating and sustaining greater biodiversity, and of repairing human climatological and other damages, such as is evident on the Knepp Estate.

## 12.7 The Christian Hope and the Restoration of Human-Earth Relations

Much attention in theological circles has been directed to the roots—biblical, ethical, theological—or *genealogy* of Christian attitudes to and behavior towards other kind and the Earth herself. Some argue that genealogy, and the related turn to ecological metaphysics, for example by process theologians such as John B. Cobb, is unhelpful. Willis Jenkins suggests it is both more empowering for those struggling to find ecological hope in their lives and minds, and more realistic in terms of what can be achieved by Christians working in partnership with conservationists and environmentalists, to think in terms of a bottom-up strategy where narratives and instances

of hopeful ecological practices are identified and shared (Jenkins 2010).<sup>18</sup> Dalton and Simmons (2010) also suggest that the ecological crisis is more to do with practices than beliefs and, with Charles Taylor, they argue that practices more often shape and transform beliefs and values than the other way around. This suggests a more pragmatic approach to responding to the ecological crisis, and that ecological hope is engendered by engaging in *practices* that enact the core ecological belief—as enunciated in environmental classics such as Carson’s *Silent Spring* and Commoner’s *The Closing Circle* and more recently in Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si’*—that all living beings are connected. As Dalton and Simmons put it, “(I)dived practices of hope influence the way human societies function in relation to the rest of the natural world” (Dalton and Simmons 2010, p. 126). Since what Taylor calls “social imaginaries” are co-constructed around and through practices, living new ecologically-connected practices enacts new ecological futures and so begins to form a new ecological “social imaginary” of peace and harmony between humans and earth.

The cases of Pulau Misool and the Knepp Estate above are, examples of ecological habitat restoration and enrichment in partnership between humans and other beings. They are hopeful practices that point the way beyond the present continued industrialization of agriculture, aquaculture, and urban life—towards an alternative future. And there is a huge range of such practices at community and grass-roots level such as creating “edible landscapes” in urban areas, and greening roofs; substituting fossil fuelled cars for bicycles, e-bikes and e-scooters in personal transportation strategies; restraining the entry of cars into city cores and residential areas; reconnecting the food economies of cities with their direct rural hinterlands through community farms, greenhouses, and allotments; building community-owned and run renewable electricity and internet grids; new housing models, such as co-housing, in which there is a mix of private and co-ownership, private and shared interior and exterior space; reframing fossil fuel dependency as a threat to the financial system and hence promoting divestment in carbon-dependent stocks and shares; “transition towns” in which post-oil futures are already imagined and responded to through a range of bottom-up, community-based energy, food and production projects. And, last but not least, churches, mosques, and temples that choose to “green” their buildings, their preaching, their rituals, and the way of life they encourage among their members—including their members’ carbon and ecological footprints—through substantial networks of ecological change such as the North American Interfaith Power and Light network, the Illinois-originated and growing network Faith in Place, the Christian network of national faith-based conservation charities and NGOs known as ‘A Rocha’, and Eco-congregations and Eco-churches in the UK and Europe.

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<sup>18</sup>For an influential pragmatist and anti-foundationalist account of social hope see Richard Rorty (1999).

## 12.8 Conclusion

Richard Rorty argues that Christianity, in its belief in the possibility of the realization of the Kingdom of God in human history, played a major role in the *construction* of the progressive mentality of modernity, and of modern social hope (Rorty 1999, p. 37). And central to the social imaginary of modernity is that “nature” provides a stable background for the production of human cultures, values, and ways of life, and that nature is therefore not a partner in cultural production but rather a source of resources which are extracted and transformed so as to become useful to humans. In the light of this defining role of Christianity in shaping a “denatured” social imaginary, many argue that Christianity is, and remains, anti-ecological and needs replacing with a new form of eco-religious consciousness of the sacred connections between humans and all life (see for example Taylor 2003). Others argue that Christianity is no longer a powerful cultural force in secular modern societies. It is increasingly confined, or confines itself, to the personal sphere, as is evident in the fraught battles over human sexuality in contemporary Christianity, as also in Judaism and Islam, and is therefore an unlikely source of challenge and transformation in the social imaginary of modernity.

But there are counter-evidences to both claims. Among the strongest evidence is the pioneering role of Christian romantic poets and philosophers in the origination of the conservation movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Northcott 2018). And in the late twentieth century there is strong evidence of the role of Christian religious leaders and Christian scholars in fostering both an ecological turn in religious practice, and in growing the increasingly substantial and global interdisciplinary field of religion and ecology. Such leadership began in the 1960s by leaders and scholars who include France Schaeffer, John B. Cobb, Thomas Berry and Jurgen Moltmann, at a time when it was rare among other religious traditions, with the notable exception of the Iranian philosopher Syed Hossein Nasr.

There has emerged in subsequent decades a remarkable range of environmental activism in Protestant and Catholic Churches, and some Pentecostal churches and religious communities. Among the earliest pioneers of faith-based ecological activism were Roman Catholic women religious communities in the Americas. These were a crucial precursor to the greening of the Catholic magisterium under Pope Francis (see further Taylor 2007). Another crucial pioneering religious locus was the World Council of Churches, whose General Assemblies from the 1960s onwards began to address the big earth-threatening questions of nuclear weapons, global warming, biodiversity loss, and the environmental exclusion of indigenous peoples. Perhaps the most influential feature of the WCC’s engagement with ecological concerns is its role in originating the idea of sustainable development through its program Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation. JPIC was launched after the WCC General Assembly in Nairobi at which the Australian scientist Charles Birch first coined the phrase “sustainable society” (Halman 2005, p. 7).

As I argue elsewhere (Northcott 2013), living “as if” the new ecological future of peace between humans and other kind is already here, and seeing the modest

influence of new practices in transformation, is a crucial source of hope that change is coming, that it already works, and that it will come more broadly. In a more theological key, this is the essence of Christian messianism. Given that a small band of followers of a humble inspired leader could change the direction of human history, and that hope for the Kingdom of God on earth was and remains a crucial source for belief in progress in human development—as I think it unarguably does—then it is reasonable to believe that hope for restored relations of harmony and peace between humans and other kind has equivalent potential to play a critical cultural and pragmatic role in fostering broader cultural adoption of ecologically benign practices. Hope will also have a role to play in co-generating a changed ecological imaginary, in an era when traditional development goals are largely achieved in developed countries, and are being achieved for growing numbers of people in developing countries.

The Axial-age Hebrew Prophet Isaiah was the first theologian to attribute the idea of election or calling, of “being a people,” not only to his own ethnic or cultural group—Israelites—but to all people. He was the first to envisage what a post-imperial, post-slavery, post-exilic, way of living would potentially be like. And he was the first to envisage a new order of peace between humans and other kind, and the end of predation between species. Those who already train dogs to eat vegetables, or even big cats in captivity to do the same, are perhaps anticipating this. But I think a more convincing example is the “Penan Peace Park” established by Penan indigenous peoples in Sarawak on the island of Borneo (see Northcott 2019). Far from being “landowners,” like the ancestral owner of the Knepp Estate, and in the teeth of opposition from government agencies in Sarawak, and even government conservation agencies, the Penan mobilised logging track blockades and a range of other nonviolent actions to protect a large area of upland rainforest from encroachment by State-sponsored logging and oil palm companies in a struggle that lasted over twenty years. And in 2016, the Penan Peace Park was adopted by the government of Sarawak as an officially recognized protected area within the larger proposed Ulu Baram National Park (Sarawak 2016). In such stories, and their growing replication in many places on Earth, we may find hope that the ecological transformation of modernity that the Earth, her species, and many of her peoples, urgently seek, is already coming.

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**Michael Northcott** (Ph.D.) is Professor Emeritus of Ethics at New College in the University of Edinburgh. On 2019 he was appointed Professor Visiting at the Indonesian Consortium of Religious Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and in 2020 he was appointed Guest Professor at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium. He was Guest Professor in Systematic and Practical Theology in the University of Heidelberg (2018). He has also held guest positions at Dartmouth College (2017, 2011), Duke University (2005) and Claremont School of Theology (2002). Professor Northcott has held a number of research grants at the interface of religion and ecology including a large British government grant in which he led a team of researchers investigating Scottish 'ecocongregations' and community-based ecological activism. He has also taught and conducted research, at universities and research institutes in Southeast Asia having begun his teaching career in Seminari Theologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, in 1984. He has supervised over 30 doctoral students from eighteen countries, and published numerous books and papers at the interface of ecology, religion, ethics and political economy including *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge UP, 1996), *An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire* (SCM Press, 2005), *A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming* (Orbis Books 2008), *A Political Theology of Climate Change* (Eerdmans 2013) and *Place, Ecology and the*

*Sacred* (Bloomsbury 2015) and, with Peter Scott, edited *Systematic Theology and Climate Change* (Routledge 2016). He is currently working on a research monograph at the intersection of Earth System theory and religious ontology entitled *God and Gaia*.

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# Chapter 13

## An Ontology of Human Flourishing: Economic Development and Epistemologies of Faith, Hope, and Love



Jan van Vliet

**Abstract** This chapter demonstrates that the presence of poverty, and its associated pathologies, is of concern to all humankind whose innate desire is to seek the flourishing of fellow humanity. The traditional, often unsuccessful, methods of poverty alleviation have been challenged in creative, bold, and refreshing ways that are superior in both identifying poverty and moving agencies and pathways toward greater success. This involves a technical application of quantitative micro-economics which is paired with expertise and insights on human behavior gleaned from the behavioral sciences. It turns out that human behavior is often better explained by behavioral categories such as hope than by traditional assumptions of rationality. Drawing from the western philosophical and Christian theistic traditions (between which there is considerable overlap), this innate desire to hope is explained as part of that triad of virtues—faith, hope, and love—that comprise the epicenter of the human condition. The Christian-theistic tradition postulates that this condition of hope for a physically and metaphysically-redeemed humanity requires certain lived behaviors in the present, even as we approach, ultimately, the very telos of our existence. Paramount among these behaviors is the pursuit of socio-economic justice. Much use is made of narratives to illustrate the lived reality of those living in desperation but buoyed by hope.

### 13.1 Introduction

The reservoir of the poor is inexhaustible. In a world dominated by fractious public discourse in every arena—political, intellectual, social, religious, and economic—concern for the poor seems to be innate to the human spirit. But while poverty alleviation is ostensibly the one totalizing metanarrative of a fragmented humanity, upon poverty interventionist methodologies, policies, and practices, there is vast disagreement. We all have a common identifiable goal; we need to agree on agencies

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J. van Vliet (✉)  
Dordt University in Sioux Center, Sioux Center, IA, USA  
e-mail: [jan.vanvliet@dordt.edu](mailto:jan.vanvliet@dordt.edu)

and pathways to achieve this. This chapter is written in that spirit and suggests a preliminary sketch of a holistic understanding of poverty en route to effectively engaging in successful poverty alleviation through measurable and successful policy interventions. Central philosophical considerations bearing on human flourishing are reviewed before turning to a study of some promising technical methodologies employed in current poverty alleviation studies. The interrelationship between poverty and the human virtue of “hope” is then explored. Armed with a workable anthropology grounded in, primarily, the historic western intellectual and religious tradition, the chapter concludes on a note of sanguinity, recognizing that the brokenness of our world is no match for our enduring desire for human flourishing. The better angels of our nature will win the day.

## 13.2 Poverty

Mahatma Gandhi asserted that “Poverty is the worst form of violence.” Even a superficial understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty makes this statement indisputable. The violence of poverty affects all areas of human health and to fail in one vector of human flourishing is to fail in all. Economic deprivation, whether measured by relative or absolute standards of economic well-being, leads to a host of associated pathologies—breakdown in other facets of the human condition. Think only of a collapse in social health often evidenced in cultures with low levels of education. “Real poverty,” said French author and educator Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette, “is lack of books.” The United Nations, convinced “that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone,”<sup>1</sup> seeks to account for these aspects of well-being through its Human Development Index (HDI) using indicators in three categories—economics, health, and education—to establish a more holistic measure of true human poverty (United Nations *n.d.*).

But poverty is much broader than even this, in categories largely unmeasurable. As an example, consider only the social poverty evidenced in separation and estrangement between a subjugated group and the dominant culture and the institutions that give that culture its meaning. Yet these groups inhabit common space. This is particularly true of First Nations and aboriginal cultures in North America who, during the Age of Exploration, found themselves face-to-face with European settlers often armed with firearms, alcohol, and the Doctrine of Discovery. Since this usurpation of historic geo-political, economic, and social space, these cultures have experienced widespread poverty, addictions and patterns of abuse. Ultimately, social identities were lost with the concomitant loss of social mores. Today many native cultures are characterized by a disconnectedness, a lack of normative social bonds, and anomie. Or consider the emotional poverty associated with psychological

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<sup>1</sup><http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>; accessed 28 September 2019.

and mental breakdown, evidencing itself in a host of mental health issues. In this connection, think of the plight of those suffering from dementia, particularly Alzheimer’s disease and the associated loss of mental capacity and memory. This condition is particularly impoverishing since it disconnects one from loved ones who give life meaning, usually through many years of shared history and common experiences. Personhood is social at its core; relationships give life value and infuse self-worth. Finally, spiritual poverty often typifies those with no perception of life’s purpose or telos—meaning often furnished by metaphysical constructs such as religion. The HDI is not fashioned to account for these types of lived realities and the associated degradation of life.

My use of the designation “poverty” in this essay codifies this foregoing multidimensional dynamic and, as such, underscores its self-reinforcing character and the resulting suppression of the human spirit. Identifying and encouraging the innate human drive to hope is crucial, therefore, in our promotion of human flourishing.

### 13.3 Human and Economic Development: Philosophical Considerations

Much of our disambiguation of “poverty” is inspired by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen’s momentous contribution to development ontology. As one deeply immersed in moral philosophy, social choice theory, and economic and social justice, Sen developed his “capabilities” approach to economic and human development at the heart of which lies “freedom” (Sen 2000). Authentic human flourishing, argues Sen, is not possible in the absence of true freedom. “Development can be seen . . . as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen 2000, p. 3) and this involves at the very least the areas identified and measured by the HDI.

We’ve seen that good performance on the HDI brings us only part way to genuine happiness with the satisfaction of primal and second order needs. Material goods, argues Sen, are only instrumentally important in pursuit of human flourishing. Drawing on the Sanskrit tradition in Indian religious philosophy and equally on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Sen emphasizes the instrumental nature of material well-being (Sen 2019).<sup>2</sup> The demand for material wealth is a form of derived demand—derived from its utility in pursuing and obtaining those things that are central to human development. The telos of all human endeavor—a flourishing not only of economic well-being but also of a spiritual and emotional kind—includes a sense of dignity, self-respect, happiness. Even Adam Smith opined that, at life’s end, the materially rich and famous—at least those of the more reflective kind—will finally come to recognize “. . . that wealth and greatness are mere trinkets of frivolous

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/1998/sen/biographical/>; accessed 2 November 2019.

utility, no more adapted for procuring ease of body or tranquility of mind, than the tweezer-cases of the lover of toys” (Smith 1759, book IV, ch. 1) even while this very pursuit of wealth drives markets and advances the material wellbeing of all, even the poor.

Humanity’s ultimate end—to enjoy a happiness reflective of human flourishing—would mean reversing all those aspects—“unfreedoms” Sen would call them—of human development identified in the complex taxonomy of poverty we constructed earlier. Flourishing must carry broad ranges of understanding so as not to be subject to the “terrible burden of narrowly-defined identities” such as are currently popular in contemporary discourse. The earlier-mentioned self-perpetuating destruction caused by unfreedoms can be seen in the economic realm: “Economic unfreedom, in the form of extreme [material] poverty can make a person a helpless prey in the violation of other kinds of freedom. . . . Economic unfreedom can breed social unfreedom, just as social or political unfreedom can also foster economic unfreedom” (Sen 2000, p. 8). The mutually reinforcing nature of freedoms means that economic and human development involves the redemption of social systems and structures, cultural gatekeepers, national institutions, and even a culture’s popular opinion and attitudes.

For Sen, human well-being includes, not only food and drink, for example, but also complex personal states such as basic civil rights, social inclusion, and self-respect. These degrees of wellbeing can only be achieved through what Sen calls “functionings,” an integral component of the capability approach to human development. Functionings is a term designating the freedom people have to freely use commodities to which they have access. For example, consider the difference between the functions of starving and fasting, the ultimate end of which is identical in both cases if of long enough duration. Yet the capabilities of those in the former category differ considerably from those in the latter. The former are free to exercise a functioning in relation to food that they can readily access—they just choose not to use it. The latter are denied this freedom, they have no choice. They experience the imposition of limited functioning and are thus denied freedom. Freedom of choice—control over one’s own life—is central to well-being, a state of human flourishing that very much includes, indeed presupposes, true happiness (Sen 2000, pp. 3–34).

“Utility in the sense of happiness may well be included in the list of some important functionings relevant to a person’s well-being,” argues Sen. It is logical, then, that more happiness may in itself provide the scope to expand an individual’s capacity to function (Sen 1985, pp. 25–26). Empirical findings have, generally speaking, demonstrated a positive correlation between people’s level of income and happiness (Layard 2005, pp. 32–35 and 62–70).<sup>3</sup> But empirical evidence also demonstrates that the utility of happiness exhibits significant diminishing marginal

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<sup>3</sup>In fact, Layard provides evidence to show that increased levels of national happiness are positively correlated with family relationships, financial situation, work, community and friends, health, personal freedom, and personal values (summarized and cited in Todaro and Smith 2015, pp. 22–23).

returns at progressively higher levels of income. Indeed, further study of this correlation through quantitative analysis may well demonstrate the claim that the very rich are sometimes the most impoverished. From this logic we can conclude at least two things: the misguidedness of the singular objective of economic growth in high income economies, and the absolute necessity of substantive, measurable material improvement in developing countries, recognizing that economic growth alone is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for human flourishing. It has been found that such un-quantifiables as employment, stable marriages, high levels of social capital (such as moral values and trust in others), democratic governments that work well, and religious faith contribute much to high levels of happiness (Todaro and Smith 2015, pp. 21–22 and 38).

Finally, and this was also identified by Adam Smith almost a quarter of a millennium ago, the “necessaries” in one culture may be vastly different from those in another. “Under necessaries, therefore, I comprehend not only those things which nature, but those things which the established rules of decency, have rendered necessary to the lowest rank of people” (Smith 1759, Book IV, ch. 1). And the “established rules of decency”—cultural norms, we might call them—vary between cultures. What constitutes “survival” in one context could be vastly different in another. Physical survival in Niger is threatened when food and water, both highly valued, are in short supply. Starving Nigeriens have limited functionings, lacking control over their own lives. A Norwegian, well-fed but unable to afford a cellphone also has limited functionings but for an entirely different reason: social survival is at risk. Both Nigerien and Norwegian experience poverty, even though the Norwegian experience is entirely outside the social imaginary of the person from Niger. Both cases experience lack of those functionings—whether physical or social—that bring them happiness, human dignity, and flourishing in their contexts.<sup>4</sup>

The foregoing has given us the commonly-accepted three core values of economic development—sustenance, self-esteem, and freedom—that is now mainstream within the academic fraternity of economic development.

### 13.4 Human and Economic Development: Technically Considered

Amartya Sen’s work has received strong technically-driven endorsement through the microeconomic analysis of three well-known development economists Michael R. Kremer, Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo (The Nobel Prize 2019).<sup>5</sup> These forensic scientists have blazed a bold, creative, and highly unconventional trail of

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<sup>4</sup>In this regard Milton Friedman’s suggestion that the impoverished in the U.S. are still “much better off” than those in developing countries is misguided; see Friedman (2001).

<sup>5</sup>As I am writing this it was just announced that Kremer, Banerjee, and Duflo were declared the 2019 winners of the Nobel Prize in Economic Science “for their experimental approach to

technical behavioral analysis applied to development economics, that heretofore had been dominated by the traditional large aid, top-down philosophy of Jeffrey D. Sachs (2005, 2008) and the more bottom-up approach recommended by William R. Easterly (2006, 2014). To Sachs, who has been working on poverty-alleviation efforts in Africa since 1995, large amounts of aid from developing countries are absolutely essential to the successful economic development of regions in extreme poverty that is almost always self-perpetuating and entrapping. Easterly, arguing that Sachs' "large-spectrum theory" approach has neo-colonial overtones and neglects the freedom of the impoverished, maintains that successful aid must begin with bottom-up solutions to specific needs identified by the poor themselves whose rights are explicitly recognized.<sup>6</sup>

Banerjee and Duflo apply rigorous technical and quantitative analysis to the issue of poverty alleviation by identifying impoverished regions, closely examining the degree to which human behavior responds to economic and non-economic stimuli, and then measuring the extent to which human conduct may or may not have changed. The point of these "randomized controlled trials" (RCTs) in exploring cause-effect relationships is to reduce bias and to determine the direction and degree of intervention and outcome. The results of fifteen years of such testing are documented in highly readable form in their 2011 landmark volume *Poor economics: A radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty* (Banerjee and Duflo 2011a). Critical reception of the book was highly positive; Robert Solow was "fascinated and convinced" by the volume (Solow n.d.).<sup>7</sup>

One gets a sense of their originality by observing their examination of education in India which will have the world's largest working-age population in the first half of the twenty-first century. This is often referred to as the demographic dividend, which is threatened because the educational system in India, at the time the book was written, was failing miserably (Banerjee and Duflo 2011a, ch. 4 and 2011b).<sup>8</sup> It was discovered that children with grade five education read at only a first-grade level. RCTs revealed problems on the supply side. For one, there was a mismatch between teaching material and students' level of comprehension. Duflo asserted that "children should learn to read before they are taught nuclear physics." Moreover, high student enrollment did not guarantee literacy. High rates of teacher absence were in part to blame—at one school a 50% teacher absentee rate was noted. And teachers'

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alleviating global poverty;" see *The Nobel Prize* at <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/2019/press-release/>; accessed 14 October 2019.

<sup>6</sup>The two differing philosophies underlying their respective approaches to poverty alleviation are typically, if somewhat unhelpfully, designated "left-wing liberal" (Sachs) and "right wing conservative" (Easterly).

<sup>7</sup>Fellow Nobel Laureate and economic growth theorist Robert Solow at <https://www.amazon.com/Poor-Economics-Radical-Rethinking-Poverty-ebook/dp/B007CI811Q>; accessed 29 September 2019.

<sup>8</sup>"Why Indian Schools are Failing our Children" at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBBCn02LeU8>; accessed 8 Oct 2019.

school presence did not guarantee classroom presence: apparently tea-drinking was prioritized over face-to-face classroom contact. Researching more deeply, the authors identified systemic reasons why teachers' behavior might be as observed. On the demand side of the education market things were found to be equally grim. For example, the social practice of parental selection of academically more-promising children at young ages reinforced the self-perpetuating notion that those at the bottom of the caste system are less likely to succeed than those nearer the top, all but guaranteeing lives of perpetual poverty among the lower social classes (Banerjee and Duflo 2011a, ch. 4).

The lesson here is that these many micro-oriented and often counter-intuitive findings in some areas of the Indian educational market were an excellent predictor of levels of success (and failure) in education—much more accurate than the traditional, broad-sweeping generalizations on educational failure in India had indicated, and upon which large amounts of foreign aid were disbursed in pursuit of, ultimately, wrong policy prescriptions and interventions.

That matters of human dignity, self-worth, and identity are central in incentivizing human behavior and thus promoting the improvement of both the individual and the collective was demonstrated in an experiment involving young, sexually active teenage girls in Kenya. RCTs were employed to discover what would keep these girls in school and what attendant policy recommendation could then be made with some confidence of success. Traditional means were tried in one group, such as encouraging abstinence and teaching about the likely results of risky sexual behavior. No behavioral differences were detected when the test sampling was compared to the control. But in a school district where no sex education was provided but the girls were given free school uniforms, teen pregnancies were reduced (Banerjee and Duflo 2011a, 113–115). It turned out that girls in Kenya are much more informed than they are given credit for and they have reasons to avoid school and have babies. But the free uniforms are excellent motivators to stay in school. Uniforms perform a levelling and norming function. “One of the most universal and powerful of human traits,” asserts Herbert A. Simon, “is the urge to form strong attachments to groups” (Simon 2002, p. 607).<sup>9</sup> Uniforms signify membership of something larger than oneself, where the whole is so much greater than the sum of the parts.

### 13.5 Introducing Hope

The norming and levelling dynamic of group attachment is demonstrated in all its visceral power in the highly acclaimed and award-winning ESPN documentary *The Two Escobars* (2011). It is the story of the rapid rise of the Colombian national soccer team in the early 1990s, from obscurity to legitimate World Cup contender, financed by earnings from international cocaine trafficking. In an interview given for

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<sup>9</sup>Simon was an economist, political scientist and cognitive psychologist.

the filmmakers, a player spoke of the need for this desperately impoverished country to be given hope. In reference to the disparate masses of spectators inside the stadium—criminals, law enforcement, drug lords, politicians, rich and poor—he explained vehemently: “inside the stadium, we’re all the same. . . soccer unites. You need to sell our people hope!”<sup>10</sup>

Just as the Colombian team and its compatriots yearned for a better future, knowing well that the current cultural climate was unsustainable, the one final prescription was the instillation of hope. As one’s reach for that elusive last straw falls short, there is always hope. Banerjee and Duflo discovered this in their study of human behavior in health- and care-seeking instances in Asia and Africa, where hope played a significant role. After describing the illogical pattern of health-care seeking behaviors, and the determinative role played by a simple lack of basic information (principles learned in high school biology, for example, in the treatment of disease), they conclude that uninformed people generally find themselves operating within the mutually exclusive categories of faith (“a combination of beliefs and theories”) and science. Misleading beliefs about effective health care—what might work and what does not—and the erosion of trust due to sporadic healing success lead to these behaviors. Thus the poor imbibe both means of health care inconsistently and spuriously in the treatment of disease and other health issues (Banerjee and Duflo 2011a, pp. 58–62).

But it is in the midst of this ignorance that hope finds a place, for “there is potentially another reason the poor may hold on to beliefs that might seem indefensible: When there is little else they can do, hope becomes essential” (Banerjee and Duflo 2011a, p. 60). People seek care for minor ailments like fevers and diarrhea but potentially life-threatening conditions are ignored. The latter are taken to the traditional (faith) healer (the *bhopa*) because ghosts are responsible for the disease in question and therefore must exclusively be consulted for reprieve. Doctors are visited for the more minor ailments. That treatment for more serious health conditions costs much more than that for minor ailments surely has much to do with this pattern. Sufferers of certain kinds of ailments cycle between hope and disappointment as new cures for diseases prove ultimately ineffective. Banerjee and Duflo are left to conclude that “beliefs that are held for convenience and comfort” and therefore ultimately within the area of science, “may well be more flexible than beliefs that are held out of pure conviction” and within the purview of the traditional healer; the ultimate irony is that most people employing both systems (science and faith) fail to see the inherent and mutual inconsistency of these belief systems. For these people, weak beliefs (science) give rise to the necessity of hope (consulting the *bhopas*) for a better future (Banerjee and Duflo 2011a, p. 60). For the national soccer team of early 1990s Columbia, and for different reasons, hope was essential to navigate the incomprehensibly tangled social narratives of the day. For both

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<sup>10</sup><https://www.amazon.com/ESPN-Films-30-Two-Escobars/dp/B003BEE292>; accessed 15 October 2019.



occasions of a deeply hurting humanity, the exigencies differed vastly; but the solution was the same—hope.

The inchoate introduction of hope in *Poor economics* as a significant psychological category of study in human and economic development receives exhaustive analysis in Duflo’s delivery of the Tanner Lectures in 2012. She assigns “hope” its own independent and consequential category and locates it squarely within the taxonomy of Amartya Sen’s capability approach (Duflo 2012). Indeed, despite its bare mention there, she asserts that this conception of hope is a thematic undercurrent in *Poor economics*. If we commit to the principle that the ability to realize one’s own potential is central to freedom, it is but a logical next step to recognize that one is not truly free if denied access to central capabilities such as “life, good physical health, and some sense of control over one’s destiny.” The self-perpetuation of capability denial is seen in the dynamic of hopelessness in the poverty trap: low wages lead to calorie deprivation resulting in poor productivity that returns low wages. But RCTs have uncovered even more: that mental health, depression, view of the future, optimism—these invisible and unquantifiable aspects of human character—are determinative of behaviors that cannot be explained by low levels of income, states of physical health, and even degrees of education. It appears that the rational expectations paradigm (Tardi 2019)<sup>11</sup> in received economic theory is no guarantee that people behave perfectly rationally. Evidence unearthed through the use of psychology and neuroscience indicates that compromised states of mental health reveal a contradictory premise: people with rational expectations can behave highly irrationally (Duflo 2012, pp. 28–32).

Field experimentation has demonstrated that just as an optimistic and hopeful nature tend to lead to success, a pessimistic spirit, fear of failure, and lack of self-confidence often result in failure. These behavioral media Duflo labels “rational expectations” channels. Lack of enthusiasm trumps lack of knowledge which explains why training programs, such as those offered by microfinance organizations, cannot consistently claim resounding and guaranteed success. Lack of hope short-circuits even the slightest degree of risk-taking behavior. Potential goes unrealized and future prospects dim, or disappear entirely, in the mire of “hopelessness-based” poverty traps. Expectations are a powerful (de)motivator. This is particularly the case with education and children; lack of parental positive reinforcement in many areas relevant to a child’s education (particularly emotional

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<sup>11</sup>The rational expectations theory is a standard way of representing macroeconomic behavior. It is typically quantitatively modelled and is based on the premise that individuals’ decisions are driven by three primary factors: their human rationality, the information available to them, and their past experience; see

and psychological support), lack of a role model, poor teacher attentiveness, can all combine to degrade a child's sense of self-esteem; any potential potency from the educational endeavor is heavily compromised. When faced with "a step that is too high to climb," efforts at achieving latent potential are further damaged; often tender and already compromised capabilities are entirely extinguished (Duflo 2012, pp. 33–41).

Moreover, "biological" channels demonstrate that the self-perpetuating and mutually reinforcing nature of mental health issues such as depression and stress engender similar results. Compromised psychological well-being can be prompted by simply living in a high-poverty and burdensome, and thus stressful, environment. Duflo relates studies showing the anxiety associated with lack of basic infrastructure (as elementary as in-home piped water and cement floors). Prospects for poor future harvests, based on poor weather in the present, are similarly stress-inducing. These stress factors lead to gloom and despondency, exacerbating an already compromised hope for the future. Further depression sets in, mental health issues grow, resilience drops, cognitive resources degrade, chemical balances in the brain are disturbed and these physiological results of stress blunt decision-making ability. Emotional and psychological resources deplete even further, and the impoverished are further victimized by deepening entanglements in the hopelessness-based poverty trap (Duflo 2012, pp. 41–46).

Mechanisms linking hopelessness to discouragement about the future—even simple considerations about future possibilities—are found in the field of psychology. Lack of hope also encourages avoidance-behavior which results in choices that ultimately have harmful effects, including on possibilities of future success. These behaviors are also driven by the self-fulfilling nature of low expectations. In addition, compulsive spending behavior on cheaper-priced "visceral" survival needs preempts strategic saving for, typically, higher-priced personal "investment" needs such as education and household goods. For if the future is so bleak in any event, why save (Duflo 2012, pp. 46–51)? These lectures have creatively opened new avenues for further research into what this could mean for successful policy intervention.

The self-reinforcing nature of this hopelessness-based poverty trap as articulated by Duflo in these lectures, and the vast amount of field data she discloses from various RCTs in very untraditional areas of study, make for an exhilarating read. But more than that; ultimately, we must introduce policy intervention with meaningful results. The micro-oriented framing of the discussion, and the multi-disciplinary analysis executed in RCTs of the sort introduced here should give us pause to reflect deeply on what is being addressed. The wise and, unquestionably very late, identification of human development with economic development as articulated by, particularly, Amartya Sen, should focus our attention on what it means to be human. And what must be done to restore the brokenness of humanity as we see that in the violence of poverty.

### 13.6 Hope and Theological Anthropology

What does it mean to be human? In economic and human development efforts, this very question diverts our attention from singular focus on—some would say obsession with—material well-being, to something much more significant, yet still connected. If humanity is body and spirit, material and immaterial, physical and metaphysical, an appropriate—perhaps only appropriate—study of human and economic development must account for this metaphysical aspect of humanity, the spiritual nature of created beings. Moving the discussion into the spiritual realm necessarily places us within the domain of theological anthropology; all world views and religions provide some account of humanity’s metaphysical constitution. Although differing vastly in the details, these accounts do share commonality regarding the existence of a higher power, that power’s relation to humanity, humanity’s flourishing, and humanity’s ultimate destiny. In this regard, the narrative of Christian theism is particularly rich. This intellectual tradition represents the conflation of Greek (primarily Aristotelian) virtue ethics with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love as articulated by St. Paul of the Christian scriptures (c. first century CE) by late-medieval thinker Thomas Aquinas. The following demonstrates just how fertile this tradition is in identifying “hope” as a central principle in what Aristotle called *eudaimonia*—happiness, prosperity, human flourishing (“Eudaimonia,” n.d.).

What are the relative roles of faith, hope, and love? St. Paul maintained that the greatest of the divine virtues enumerated was love, a divinely infused habit, inclining the human will to cherish God for his own sake above all things, and, secondly, to cherish humanity for the sake of God. Notice that a crucial dimension to this traditional understanding of the act of love is its reciprocity, also a notion articulated in the Christian scriptures by, particularly, St. John. This imputes a dimension to the designation “love” that is extraordinarily deep and rich. The Hebrew counterpart is *hesed*, a central principle in the Hebrew scriptures. Particularly germane to our current theme is St. Paul’s assertion that “if I give all I possess to the poor . . . but have not love, I gain nothing. . . . Love always trusts, always hopes . . . . And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13: 3, 7, 13).

Faith is to believe what one does not see, while its reward is to see what is believed. This lends it an intertemporal dimension; it is oriented to the *present* and conveys the notion of trust and conviction in, typically, a metaphysical reality. Hope represents our optimistic and patient waiting for these promises, knowing they will obtain. One who has faith cannot distrust; one who has hope cannot be dissuaded. Therefore hope, too, is defined by a time dimension: but it is *forward* looking, pointing to something in the future. While faith goes before, hope follows after.

### 13.7 Hope and Inaugurated Eschatology

In the Christian tradition, both faith and hope demonstrate humanity's existential location—its eschatological reality—as inhabiting both the “already” and “not yet.” Women and men live in the present, exercising faith in the reality of living on this side of the cross and resurrection. Hope, on the other hand, locates us in the “not yet” of the parousia—the consummation of the kingdom at the return of Christ. The kingdom of God (or “heaven”) belongs to the age to come; the present age will never realize all that the kingdom of God means, for it is marred and inhabited by evil and a deeply flawed humanity upon whom the image of God continues to reside, if in deeply muted form. Perfected human flourishing in the consummated kingdom is the hope of humanity, and it is in faith and hope that humans live in a world broken by pain and suffering and the perpetration of unspeakable evil.

We have already mentioned the surfacing, however brief, of hope, in *Poor economics* and its much deeper subsequent, and primarily psychological, consideration, particularly in Duflo's Tanner Lectures. The existence of love in the faith-hope-love triad must be generally presupposed, since without love there can be no concern for the poor. Humanity is predisposed to seek the welfare of fellow humanity. Both drawing from and elaborating on Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics*, Thomas Aquinas held that the very love of self is a precondition for the love of others—these two loves are complementary, indeed better construed as a single love. One cannot properly love neighbor if lacking in self-love. One person's love for another is based on and derived from the love the lover has for him- or herself. Indeed, the love of self finds fulfillment precisely in the love of others.<sup>12</sup> In agreement, moral philosopher and political economist Adam Smith maintained that self-interest very much includes concern for neighbor.<sup>13</sup>

The foregoing convinces us that the Christian-theistic metaphysic provides a powerful philosophical toolkit, even social philosophy—for those subscribing to other religious paradigms as well—in explaining humanity's general concern for the poor. To the reflective Christian, when Jesus adjures his followers to attend “to the least of these” (Matt 25: 35–40), our minds are instructed, our hearts are stirred, and our volitions are motivated to faith-filled obedience in our active quest for human flourishing.

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<sup>12</sup>*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166a 1–2. Regularly cited by Aquinas in *Summa theologiae* (ST) II–II, q. 25, a. 4, c.; *Summa contra gentiles* (SCG) III, 153; *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, Bk. III (In III Sent.), d. 29, a. 3, ad 3. Cited by Gallagher (1999).

<sup>13</sup>Considering the complementary themes in Smith (1759) and Smith (1776).

### 13.8 Living in Hope in the Present

What does it mean to live in hope? It means to live in the consciousness of the immanence of the consummation of this kingdom as articulated in Christian-theistic thought. N.T. Wright, former Bishop of Durham and well-known scholar of the Christian Scriptures, in his highly acclaimed *Surprised By Hope* (Wright 2008) maintains that the post-Easter world has unveiled a new cosmology where heaven and earth are made for each other, where there are points of intersection and interlocking. This cosmological vision, this redemption of creation, is a three-dimensional renewal, not abandonment, of space, time, and matter (Wright 2008, p. 259). The bishop folds the proposition of “justice” within the design of humanity’s genuine hope and maintains this as part of the Christian task (Wright 2008, p. 216). And it is no different in Islam and the pillar of alms-giving. Or Judaism’s principle of *tzedakah*. Wright considers global socio-economic justice to be the specific nature of the task. Writing in 2008, he asserts that the “number one moral issue of our day” is the massive economic imbalance, the symptom of which is the “ridiculous and unpayable” Third World debt. “Glitzy and glossy Western capitalism” will stand under the condemnation of history, along with perpetrators of slavery and the holocaust (Wright 2008, pp. 216–217). Although many international agencies have launched successful programs of debt forgiveness, particularly in Africa (Monga and Lin 2015), current world economic realities indicate the continuing presence of the pain of human suffering and our unfinished work. At the self-acknowledged risk of sounding “neo-socialist,” Wright brings the traditional counter-arguments to a this-worldly concern for human justice in the historic context of, chiefly, slavery and capitalism and closes with this: “Reading the collected works of F. A. Hayek in a comfortable chair in North America simply doesn’t address the moral questions of the twenty-first century” (Wright 2008, p. 218). If your religion is “what’s good for America is good for God” and rising GDP at environmental cost can be dismissed on the grounds that Armageddon is imminent and the planet is slated for destruction anyway, you are supporting a kind of economic Darwinism—survival of the fittest in world markets and in military power (Wright 2008, p. 220).

For Wright, hope represents an anticipatory aspiration that, in the Christian-theistic tradition, involves obedience to the lordship of Jesus Christ and “insists” on an inaugurated eschatology. Life in the Spirit produces radical transformation of behavior in the present life—a behavior that has at center the desire to labor toward the flourishing of all humanity. Concern for the stranger—the “other”—requires the Augustinian notion of a rightly ordered love, the “mother and root of all virtues” (Aquinas n.d.). Commenting on 1 Cor 13, N. T. Wright’s emphasis is somewhat broader. He posits that because of the incompleteness inherent in our temporal state, to stress love as our duty would be mere moralism and subsequent failure in execution. Rather, “love is our destiny. . . this is at the very heart of the surprise of hope” (Wright 2008, p. 288). This does not mean that “love” is either/or which one may conclude from a surface reading of Aquinas and Wright. To one committed to inaugurated eschatology—inhabiting both the “now” and “not yet”—we exercise

love now, however imperfectly, recognizing that our future hope lies in experiencing love in all its perfections. This Wright refers to as the “epistemology of love” (Wright 2008, p. 72).<sup>14</sup>

### 13.9 Faith, Hope, and RCTs

Whether intentional or not, the work of economists such as, among others, Travis J. Lybbert and Bruce Wydick demonstrates that concerns of economic justice are being addressed employing the development apparatus summarized in this essay.<sup>15</sup> Multiple studies have been conducted by these economists in which RCTs are utilized to determine the results of policy interventions in different facets of development economics across many regions throughout the world (for example Glewwe et al. 2018; Valdes et al. n.d.; Lybbert and Wydick 2016). Mining widely and deeply in the field of economic and human development, it turns out, unearths many rich and valuable deposits. Given the innate complexity of humanity and the human experience, it should not surprise us that imbibing a plethora of academic disciplines in this exercise, again proves more profitable than the limited field provided by overwhelming dependence on the singular and reductionistic assumption of rationality represented in traditional studies. The advantages offered by disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, and theology, when paired with the powerful analytical apparatus of microeconomic theory and quantitative methodology, have served to move the development agenda significantly forward, even from that of Banerjee and Duflo.

In a recent landmark publication, insights from these disciplines are employed to analyze the complex role played by aspirations and hope in development economics (Lybbert and Wydick 2018). “Hope” is assigned an “aspirational” and a “wishful” character, the former indebted to the field of psychology while the medical literature yields the latter. And not surprisingly, most individuals display a combination of both. Reviewing briefly the meaning of hope across the major world religions, the authors conclude that religious hope is primarily more patient and passive—a wishful hope outside one’s own agency. The field of psychology, on the other hand, engaged the study of hope much more recently, inaugurated, as it were, with the atrocities endured during the Second World War and the resulting renewed

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<sup>14</sup>This brings completion to the theological virtues in the narrative of the Christian scriptures. For Wright, doubting Thomas points to the need for an epistemology of faith; St. Paul represents an epistemology of hope; and St. Peter an epistemology of love. “Where Thomas is called to a new kind of faith and Paul to a radically renewed hope, Peter is called to a new kind of love” (Wright 2008, p. 72).

<sup>15</sup>See for example, Bruce Wydick’s explicit Christian commitment come through in his most recent work, a highly-accessible and untechnical *Shrewd Samaritan: Faith, Economics, and the Road to Loving Our Global Neighbor* (2019) and see also his more standard textbook, *Games in Economic Development* (2008). See also Taylor and Lybbert (2015).

interest in hope as a valid category of study in human development (Lybbert and Wydick 2018, pp. 1–6). The field of positive psychology both widened the scope and provided greater nuance in determining to what degree an individual has self-determining capabilities—a “locus of control” with its companion concept, “self-efficacy.” But to complete this frame of reference, think of the counter-factual: to what degree does an individual feel his or her destiny to be determined by an “external” locus—a state or condition in which the subject is completely at the mercy of factors outside the individual’s control:

An individual’s locus of control is generally defined as a forward-looking assessment of the determinants of future outcomes, but this is clearly related to past experiences and lessons learned from these experiences. Specifically, the way an individual explains the causes of events in one’s life—his so-called “attributional style” shapes self-efficacy and the evolution of a perceived locus of control more generally (Lybbert and Wydick 2018, p. 8).

Drawing from the literature of positive psychology, particularly the insights of C. Snyder from the early 1990s on, these scholars present hope as a combination of three key elements: pro-active goal-orientation, visualization of pathways towards these goals, and agency to progress along these pathways. This is considered the “goals-agency-pathways” framework. Thus, while hope as “emotion” is *reactive*, the *proactive* framework just described—goal, path, agency—meets the definition of “aspirational” as opposed to “wishful” hope. The presence of agency limitations introduces an element of uncertainty which necessarily differentiates hope from expectation and “endows hope with a degree of built-in resilience and frames the achievement of goals as a gain rather than as a potential loss that was avoided” (Lybbert and Wydick 2018, p. 10). The authors anticipate further helpful discoveries related to the biology and neurology of hope.

How do these breakthroughs in positive psychology help us in human and economic development? When applied to developing economies and combined with Amartya Sen’s capability approach, it becomes most obvious that human dignity, functionings, and freedoms, if absent, constitute internalized constraints that are more binding than (external) economic constraints to economic development. This could result in poverty traps of “low-agency hopelessness” (Lybbert and Wydick 2018, p. 13), or “psychological poverty traps” where people’s dim view of their future economic prospects stifles proactive behavior like saving and investing (Taylor and Lybbert 2015, p. 35). At this point, the research of Lybbert and Wydick conflate nicely with the theme of Esther Duflo’s Tanner Lectures; there is unanimity on the question of the significance of hope as an essential category within Sen’s capability taxonomy (Taylor and Lybbert 2015, p. 35).

Moving yet broader and deeper, recent literature from the field of anthropology is gleaned for yet more insights into human behavior that fall outside the area of rationality. An individual’s “capacity to aspire” is community-determined and dependent. Any given community provides the larger frame of reference—dominant worldviews and ideologies—within which individuals understand their own lived reality and their place in it—the “network.” Things like the meaning of life, importance of material goods, or social relations, family, etc., affect the aspirations

to a “good life” that itself has different meanings in contexts where systems of ideas differ substantially. The resources of a subject’s situatedness may limit or bound the capacity to aspire or the “navigational capacity.” In developing countries, limited navigational capacity can represent significant navigational constraints to economic and material improvement and social mobility. It is the task of development economists and policy interventionists, then, to determine whether aspirations can be changed through careful and contextual interventions; an RCT with this goal in view found that modest, context-specific interventions resulted in “measurable and persistent” impacts on aspirations and human behavior (Lybbert and Wydick 2018, pp. 13–16).

Casting the terms within the framework, the language, and the sophisticated tools of neoclassical economics—technical equations and graphics, utility functions, problems of constrained optimization—yields an economic model of hope from a variety of cases in which changing exogenous variables led to helpful endogenous responses. A further step involved lifting certain *ceteris paribus* assumptions to more accurately enter the authentic experience of the destitute. The authors conclude with clear affirmations of the helpfulness of the concept of hope in understanding poverty and development: “There appears to be great scope for greater collaboration between psychologists and economists, who each bring strength and their respective skills of psychological measurement, research design, and rigorous identification of the effects of interventions” (Lybbert and Wydick 2018, pp. 17–34). Misperceptions of those in poverty that result in an attenuated and restricted view of the poor can be corrected through studying interdisciplinary perspectives on hope with attendant fruitful interventionist prescriptions. Wydick, in particular, has uncovered fruitful ground in the study of poverty identification and alleviation in non-traditional places (Wydick 2008, 2019).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Interestingly, this innovative system of research pioneered by Kremer, Banerjee, and Duflo and further developed by Lybbert, Wydick, and others, follows closely the model outlined in a recent business journal. Nestled somewhere between “A Tattoo Won’t Hurt Your Job Prospects” (*Idea Watch*) and “Africa: A Crucible for Creativity” (*International Business*) one finds a highly inventive series of propositions by Cyril Bouquet, et al. (2018) entitled “Bring Your Breakthrough Ideas to Life” (*Innovation*), 105. RCTs conform very well to the recommended framework in combining social, philosophical, economic, and political philosophies with associated multidisciplinary technical methodologies to determine data-driven results. These observations then constitute the basis for efficacious policy-intervention recommendations. It is an interesting sidebar that this article is centered on the discoveries of an Indian environmental researcher in Hyderabad, India, in examining the mystery of falling groundwater levels when rainfall records were unchanged. See this very luminous story in *Harvard Business Review*, November–December, 2018: 104–13. Economic development enthusiasts will also benefit from the article on African creativity (pp. 116–25), cited above, and authored by Cameroon native Acha Leke, currently the chair of the African practice of McKinsey and Company.



### 13.10 Africa in America

How do we create a better world in the midst of abject pain and suffering in the here and now? What do we say to Mariama Bâ (1981), whose semi-autobiographical epistolary cries out for justice in the midst of the entrapments of a social philosophy ruled by the principles of fundamentalist religion, androcentrism, and polygyny.<sup>17</sup> Although she personally found a measure of escape through a “liberal” father who emphasized education, her voice speaks for the masses of women for whom escape is not an option. Central to such situatedness is emotional and psychological bankruptcy where an aspirational hope is pre-empted entirely through lack of goals, non-existent pathways, and resistant counter-agencies. Or consider the narrative of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the strident anti-fundamentalist from Somalia, who became one of Europe’s most controversial political figures, emerging from a nomadic existence, experiencing religiously-driven female mutilation, drifting through four countries, escaping arranged marriages and more, before eventually claiming refugee status, situating in the Netherlands, and forcefully advocating for secularism as a social philosophy in Dutch society (see Kaemingk 2018, as well as my review of this work: van Vliet 2019). With the aid of friends, and against all odds, she created her own goals, pathways, and agencies in the educational, social and political realms (narrated in Ali 2007). But it required escape from her situatedness in time and space, an option also open to Mariama Bâ of an earlier generation, even if she chose not to exercise it.<sup>18</sup> We are given two inspiring stories of two sub-Saharan African woman who surmounted their circumstances, who created their own goals, pathways and agencies, and whose respective ends were remarkably dissimilar. I provide these two illustrations because the most vulnerable of all humanity are women in sub-Saharan African countries, whose lives are predetermined, as it were, by censures associated with fundamentalist religion, inhospitable locale, personal and psychological abandonment, caste, and some measure of economic deprivation.

But we don’t have to go to Africa to see similar destitution. Yes, our orientation for restorative economic development has historically been the far east and sub-Saharan Africa. But within the growing membership in the “country club” of the rich west—the OECD—one also discovers pockets of destitution.<sup>19</sup> And even closer to home for many, we find the United States of America, still the richest

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<sup>17</sup>It is a visceral account of the disempowered and abused African woman during the period of late colonialism, seeking justice—if not deliverance—from an Africa hamstrung between the claims of primitive culture and those of modernity and the many counternarratives that ensue. I wish to credit Jolanda J. van Vliet-Sandy for introducing me to this riveting collection of literature, a poignant depiction of the simultaneous cries of pain and hope of the African woman.

<sup>18</sup>Kenneth W. Harrow, in closing his “Introduction,” notes that despite options open to Bâ on account of her success in career and finances, she “embraces her fate as the woman of her times . . . who reminds us of the importance of values grounded in Senegalese ways, which account for the strength of this enduring figure” (Bâ 1981, vi).

<sup>19</sup>Label used by Swedish physician and academic Hans Rosling, an expert in issues of international health and co-founder and chairman of the Gapminder Foundation which developed the

country in the world, yet populated with pockets of deep poverty, deprivation, and absence of human capabilities and freedoms. In an informative, even entertaining, and at times passionate lecture delivered in 2005 at the University of California—Berkeley, former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich demonstrated the worsening loss of social mobility in the U.S. with the familiar metaphor of the ladder. In his opinion, the U.S. was at a momentous crossroads in history: the ladder of economic and social mobility was under such tension that it was being stretched, elastic-like, to the breaking point. There were only two options for U.S. society: repair and re-establish social cohesion—“snap-back”—or unravel further with the inevitable result of widespread social disintegration—“snap-break.” The latter would issue in a “politics of resentment” and “invite class warfare,” the political philosophy utilized by demagogues to further their own agenda. Reich was optimistic that the U.S. would snap-back, an optimism “based on faith and a political courage of conviction.” Recovery of the “habits of the heart, the ability to empathize and understand others, to be able to say ‘there but for the grace of God go I’” Reich hoped, would prevail in this “high-stakes” game (Reich 2005). He sees democracy itself at stake.

*The economist* magazine (2019) recently ran a special report entitled “Poverty in America.”<sup>20</sup> Its gloomy content may help answer Reich’s question of this broken ladder posed fourteen years ago. The account was comprehensive in scope and among many shocking statistics and narratives noted that life expectancy is lower in one county in South Dakota, U.S., than in Sudan. That county is populated by native Americans whose plight is desperate. The author of the report concludes that efforts to recalibrate a society characterized by such tremendous social and economic injustice must be focused on future generations. Today’s interventions must focus on the children.

### 13.11 In Closing

I wonder if our spotty success in the promotion of human flourishing and economic development can be attributed to the very nature of the human condition proposed by John Kenneth Galbraith? Commonly considered the most celebrated public economist of twentieth-century America and advisor to many presidents, this Canadian-American economist warrants a hearing. Writing thirteen years prior to Reich’s talk, he gave a sweeping indictment of western culture—his eye on the U.S. in particular—in his volume *The culture of contentment* (1992). He begins:

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Trendalyzer software system. This highly creative and entertaining statistical genius gained a world-wide following; among many other TEDS talks, see Rosling 2009.

<sup>20</sup>“Special Report: Poverty in America,” *The Economist*, 28 September, 2019. 3–12.

I have lived nearly all my life in the world of self-approving contentment. As to the rewards accruing to that community, I am, in a personal way, without complaint. . . . Were I not personally aware of, even experienced in, the ethos of contentment and its highly motivated resistance to change and reform, there would be valid doubt as to my qualification for writing this book (Galbraith 1992, p. 12).

Galbraith's central conviction is that contentment resists change and does so vigorously and "frequently with strongly-voiced indignation" (Galbraith 1992, p. 12). The contented and complacent majority are driven by a sense of entitlement. He explained the economic doctrine of the day—Reaganomics, or supply side economics—like this: "broadly the doctrine that if the horse is fed amply with oats, some will pass through to the road for the sparrows" (Galbraith 1992, pp. 18–27).

Galbraith unpacks these premises by demonstrating the perceived need, in America, of a "functional underclass," a tax and public service system that favors the rich, a multi-layered system of bureaucracy (especially the U.S. military), and the pursuit of an untrammelled doctrine of *laissez faire* (for which they appeal to, even while entirely misunderstanding, Adam Smith). With a nod to Robert Reich as an exception to this conventional wisdom (Galbraith 1992, p. 154, n. 1), Galbraith concludes that without a changing leadership committed to righting this social and economic imbalance a scenario much like that outlined in Reich's snap-break illustration of thirteen years later is in the offing: "The present and devastated position of the socially-assisted underclass has been identified as the most serious social problem of the time, as it is also the greatest threat to long-run peace and civility" (Galbraith 1992, p. 180).

An entrenched social norm as Galbraith describes above can only be countered by a radically new social philosophy that offers hope and a future to those entrenched in poverty. It is not enough to move the goalposts; we must relocate the pitch. Our poverty-alleviation discourse must focus on human development by bringing to bear the love and care that are central to our built-in sense of moral obligation to our neighbor. Speaking at a TEDS talk in Monterey, California, development economist Paul Collier (2008) presented a "fundamental challenge" to those concerned about economic and human development for the one billion or so people living in economies that had been stagnant for 40 years and diverging from the rest of humanity<sup>21</sup>: We should be optimistic in our ability to offer "credible hope" to these billion, and he proceeded to offer a "recipe," a combination of the two forces that will change the world for the good: "the alliance of compassion and enlightened self-interest":

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<sup>21</sup>He describes this as the thesis of his well-known and highly-celebrated book that articulates the tragedy of the bottom billion, identifies four poverty traps, discusses the impact of globalization, and closes with an agenda for action. See Collier (2007).

Compassion, because a billion people are living in societies that have not offered credible hope. That is a human tragedy. Enlightened self-interest, because if that economic divergence continues for another forty years, combined with social integration globally, it will build a nightmare for our children. We need compassion to get ourselves started, and enlightened self-interest to get ourselves serious. That's the alliance that changes the world. So, what does it mean to get serious about providing hope for the bottom billion? (Collier 2008)

Continuing his channeling of Adam Smith, but fitted for the twenty-first century, Collier's answer lay in four areas of political economy and social philosophy: encouraging international free trade (vs protectionism); establishing internationally coordinated security policies (vs isolationism), forging international economic agreements through systems of mutual government support (vs introspective focus on national sovereignty, the "eleventh commandment") and international aid. He used the post-World War II experience of the United States' bailout of Europe as his case study. And while the "waterfront of effective policies" remained—aid, trade, security, and governments—he emphasized that the details of policy would be different and directed specifically to the peculiar exigencies of the bottom billion. If for no other reason, said Collier, we must do this for the sake of our children (Collier 2008).

The habits of the heart—oriented to agape love for fellow humanity—are infused in each of the over seven billion of us, even in the diversity of our religious and civic commitments. Although these habits may at times appear muted, even opaque in their expression, they will ultimately bear fruit. Early twentieth-century philosopher, theologian, and statesman, Abraham Kuyper, knew well how to navigate the obstructions that rose in the way of those seeking social and economic justice. Committed to living life *coram deo*, he prescribed a social philosophy in which compassion and enlightened self-interest could be harmoniously exercised by those who differed on many fundamental levels, but whose inner drive—compelled by *amicitia dei*—sought the telos of human flourishing and strove for policies that brought this about. Today we call his social philosophy a "principled pluralism."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Abraham Kuyper and his thought and work have spawned a vast body of literature. Concerning his views on poverty, see particularly *Het Sociale Vraagstuk en De Christelijke Religie* (Kuyper 1891), translated into English numerous times and under various titles and represents Kuyper's theological, philosophical, and ideological opposition to the late nineteenth-century social conditions and the political ideologies reigning in Europe and the U.S. at the time, underneath all of which lay the Enlightenment ideologies of the forces that gave rise to the French revolution. This talk will be available in fresh translation in the twelve volume *Collected Works in Public Theology* (Kuyper 2016–2020). Coming later in the twentieth century, Bob Goudzwaard, well-known and like-minded Dutch intellectual, emeritus professor of economics and social philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam, and former cabinet minister in the Dutch parliament during the 1970s, authored numerous volumes along the same theme. See for example, Goudzwaard (1984, 1997), Goudzwaard and de Lange (1994), and Goudzwaard et al. (2007). Goudzwaard was always involved in international development issues, even chairing a two-year consultation between the World Council of Churches, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; see (<https://www.ivpress.com/bob-goudzwaard>; accessed 16 November, 2019).

We have seen creative alternatives already being explored, nurtured, and reified in the area of human brokenness, healing, and flourishing. For the Columbian soccer team, for the African woman, for the native Americans populating Oglala County in southwestern South Dakota, for the First Nations peoples inhabiting the Canadian sub-Arctic, these breakthroughs constitute hope. Rays of hope penetrate the darkness of poverty, their luminosity growing even as the blackness deepens. That is the existential reality of the human condition and the irrepressible human spirit with its innate perception that “there is a crack in everything—that’s how the light gets in” (Cohen 2008). Mariama Bâ recognized this crack as she closed her epistle: . . . I have not given up wanting to refashion my life. Despite everything—disappointments and humiliations—hope still lives within me. It is from the dirty and nauseating humus that the green plant sprouts into life, and I can feel new buds springing up in me. . . . The word “happiness” does indeed have meaning doesn’t it? (Bâ 1981, p. 94.)

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**Jan van Vliet** (Ph.D.) is Professor of Economics at Dordt University in Sioux Center, Iowa, USA. He has advanced degrees in economics and Christian theology from educational institutions in Canada and the U.S. with his Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary. He has spent many years in these two fields in both countries in private sector consulting, in the public service, and in the academy. His scholarly contributions and competencies focus on Christian theology and philosophy, postmodern and Reformational thought, and shifting economic paradigms in the areas of political and philosophical economics, social philosophy, quantitative analysis, and poverty recognition and alleviation. Among other works, he authored *The Rise of Reformed System* (Paternoster/Wipf and Stock 2013) and was the Dutch-to-English translator of the *On Islam* volume in Abraham Kuypers, "Collected Works in Public Theology" (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press 2017). His work on Scottish intellectual, moral theorist and political economist Adam Smith is scheduled for release later this year. Van Vliet has spoken at conferences in North America and Europe and his work has been translated into Dutch and Korean. In 2018, Dordt University honored van Vliet's scholarly contributions to these different fields by conferring on him the Dordt University Faculty Award for Noteworthy Scholarship.

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